EMOTIONAL SKILLFULNESS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MARRIAGE: INTIMATE SAFETY AS A MEDIATOR OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL SKILLFULNESS AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The decline in African Americans choosing to marry and the increase in African Americans deciding to divorce (U.S. Census, 2003) are juxtaposed against a dearth of research on African American marriage and marital intervention models specifically tested with African Americans. Cordova and his associates attempted to expand on the "fuzziness" of definitions of intimacy in marital research with their behavioral theory of intimacy (Cordova & Scott, 2001). They expanded this view into a model, Emotional Skillfulness Theory, of how specific emotional skills, intimacy, and marital satisfaction are related (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Cordova, Gee, and Warren's (2005) study exploring emotional skillfulness and subsequent studies supported the basics of this model. However, like much research in the marital field, these studies were done with a predominantly Caucasian sample.

The current study examined emotional skillfulness theory and the possible impact emotional skillfulness may have on marital satisfaction and the intimacy process among African Americans. Emotional skills were defined by the ability to identify and communicate emotions; specifically, the differences between husbands' and wives' scores on measures of emotional skills, the relationship between participants' self-perceived emotional skills and one's own intimate safety and marital satisfaction, and whether intimate safety mediates between emotional skills and marital satisfaction.

Two hundred and sixty four participants (132 married couples) completed measures that assessed emotional skillfulness, marital satisfaction, and intimate safety.

The results supported much of Emotional Skillfulness Theory with African American couples. No significant differences were found between husbands' and wives' scores on Difficulty Identifying Emotions and Difficulty Communicating Emotions. For both husbands and wives one's own Difficulty Identifying Emotions was negatively correlated with spouses' Marital Satisfaction and Intimate Safety. Husbands' Difficulty Communicating Emotions was also negatively correlated to wives' Marital Satisfaction and Intimate Safety; wives' Difficulty Communicating Emotions was negatively correlated with husbands' Marital Satisfaction but was not significantly associated with husbands' Intimate Safety. Finally, it was found that Intimate Safety mediated between emotional skills and marital satisfaction.

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DEDICATION

"I always wanted to be somebody. If I made it, it's half because I was game enough to take a lot of punishment along the way and half because there were a lot of people who cared enough to help me"

Althea Gibson

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my godfather Mr. Gerald Baucom and the following mentors for caring enough to encourage me to be my best. Mr. Donald F. Taylor, Mrs. Stephany Hewitt, Mrs. Ernestine C. Brittingham-Brown, Dr. Maria Carroll, Dr. Carol S. North, Mr. Dana Downs, Dr. Catherine Ford-Sori, and Dr. Shannon B. Dermer.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One hundred and twenty-seven million people in the United States are married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Although most adult Americans will eventually marry, if divorce rates remain constant, approximately 40% of married couples will eventually divorce (Hurley, 2005). Even among those couples who do not divorce, not all will be happily married. In an attempt to stem the tide of divorces researchers have worked to find predictors of divorce and to isolate the factors that increase the satisfaction of those who stay married (Gottman, 1994). Two prominent models that are used to explain factors that make one prone to marital dissatisfaction and factors that lead to marital health are Gottman's Sound Marital House (SMH) (1999) and Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) (Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994)

While doing research that eventually culminated in a theory of marital stability and health, Gottman (1994, 1999, 2000) found that couples that are unhappily married, and more likely to divorce report that their interactions are more negative during conflict and their daily interaction with their spouse is more negative than happy, stable couples. The factors that increase the likelihood that couples will remain married with high marital satisfaction are: at least a 5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative events, ability to participate in repair processes and negotiating solvable conflict, and validating one's spouse rather than being defensive. Factors that increased a couple's likelihood of divorce were called

the Four Horsemen of the Apocolypse: Criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling (emotionally shutting down).

Gottman's Sound Marital House Theory (SMH) (later re-named Sound Relational House Theory) is based on a combination of teaching couples antecedent-focused and response-focused emotion regulation strategies. Antecedent-focused regulation strategies describe internal processes completed before an emotional reaction and are directed at modifying the potential emotional response; response-focused strategies are enacted after an emotion has already been generated (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). For instance, in SMH some of the interventions are geared toward strengthening the relationship in non-conflictual times (enhancing relational friendship), which is more likely to lead to a positive cognitive reappraisal of behavior or communication. Gottman explains the emotion regulation strategy of cognitive reappraisal in terms of positive sentiment override. Those who have strong relational friendships and fondness/admiration for their partners tend to be in positive sentiment override and tend to perceive behavior and communication in a neutral or positive light. When a person is in negative sentiment override, he or she will tend to interpret a partner's behaviors and communication as negative. So, if a wife snaps at her husband and the husband is in positive sentiment override, he may chalk the comment up to her having a rough time with the kids and try to de-escalate the situation (cognitive reappraisal that prevents a negative reaction); or if he is in negative sentiment override, he may be more likely to attribute her snappiness to her personality and will have to modulate his response (a response-based strategy such as altering experiential, behavioral, or physiological response once it has been evoked) (Gross et al., 2006; Simpson et al., 2006)

Johnson and Greenberg's (1994) EFT can also be conceptualized in terms of emotion regulation with a different focus than SMH. In EFT the focus is on attachment and affect regulation (a global feeling of distress). A person's attachment model and attachment system are influenced by affective reactivity (events that evoke the need for security) and affect regulation strategies (behavior aimed at restoring feelings of security) (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). In EFT, rather than focusing on marital friendship, they focus on the attachment bond between spouses, the events that threaten the security of that bond, and the responses spouses use to control the emotions associated with threats to the attachment bond.

Emotionally focused Therapy blends the ideas of attachment theory, experiential models, and systemic models. Johnson and Greenberg focus on the restrictive, patterned ways that people interact when their bond to an attachment figure is threatened. Johnson and Greenberg attempt to create a safe environment where emotion can be evoked and vulnerabilities can be exposed, experienced, and validated. In EFT the therapist uses empathetic attunement to validate each person's vulnerabilities and experience in the here-and-now and then coaches the clients to validate each other's emotions and experience. Rather than hypothesizing that cognition or behavior is the key to marital satisfaction, they see emotions as motivating long lasting change and key to marital satisfaction.

In EFT clients are viewed as already possessing the skills needed to emotionally connect with one another, but the flexibility and skills needed are restricted because people tend to edit themselves and become less flexible when feeling threatened (Johnson, 2003; Johnson,2004). In other words, it is assumed in EFT that couples have

the emotional skills they need, but the therapist assists them in breaking down the walls they have put into place to protect themselves. Emotionally-focused therapists evoke emotion and collaborate with the couple to help them validate each other's attachment needs and emotions, but they do not focus on the actual level of emotional skills of each person or how those skills are related to marital satisfaction.

Cordova and his associates (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Cordova & Scott, 2001; Dorian & Cordova, 2004; Mirgain, 2003; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006) have added to the literature on marital satisfaction by operationally defining intimacy and specific emotion regulation skills (e.g., emotional skills), and their relation to marital satisfaction. Cordova and Scott (2001) attempted to define intimacy in behavioral terms in order to make the observation of intimacy in research easier. Cordova and Scott (2001) conceptualized intimacy as a term that describes interaction between couples, the relationship, and feelings that result. Feelings are operationalized as internal experiences that people eventually learn to give names to. The feelings that tend to be elicited, over time, by intimate partnerships are feelings of safety and comfort, which will lead to intimate safety. If the cumulative history of the relationship is rich in intimate events, then intimate safety eventually results—a comfort in being vulnerable (rather than a fear of being hurt or rejected by a partner) (Cordova & Scott, 2001).

Intimate safety is related to one's proficiency at identifying, expressing, and reciprocating emotion. Emotional skillfulness theory (EST) refers to one's level of proficiency and comfort identifying and communicating emotions, expressing empathy, and controlling emotions (Cordova, Warren, & Gee, 2005; Mirgain, 2003; Mirgain & Cordova, in press). Emotional skillfulness reinforces interpersonal vulnerability leading

to feelings of intimate safety, which may mediate marital satisfaction (Cordova, Warren, & Gee, 2005).

Cordova's studies have added to the understanding of intimacy and marital satisfaction, but his studies have limited generalizability because of the homogeneity of ethnicity and socioeconomic status of his samples. Like much of marital research (including the research related to the SMH and EFT), his studies have been done with predominantly Caucasian couples. According to Dorian and Cordova (2004), a behavioral theory of intimacy should generalize across populations, but exactly which behaviors are interpersonally vulnerable and which responses are reinforcing should vary from population to population. Therefore, in order to make marital research more generalizable, studies should include diverse samples or be replicated with diverse samples.

Statement of the Problem

The original study conducted by Cordova, Gee, and Warren (2005) (and the majority of studies on marriage) was done with a primarily Caucasian sample (98% White). Their original study supported the hypothesis that emotional skillfulness is important to marital satisfaction, as mediated by intimate safety. One question that remains is whether the same findings will hold true for African American couples.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the relationship between the ability to identify and communicate emotions and marital satisfaction through its effects on the intimacy process with African American couples. Essentially, this is a replication of Cordova, Gee, and Warren's (2005) study with two major changes: using an African

American sample, and using a revised version of two of the instruments, the Intimacy Safety Questionnaire Revised and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

Significance of the Problem

The studies on emotional skillfulness, thus far, have been done with predominantly Caucasian samples (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Cordova, 2007, Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). Since the participants in these studies were overwhelmingly White (98%, 86%, and 86%), it is not known if these findings also hold true for African American couples. Although the process of emotional skillfulness may be similar in all couples, the importance of being emotionally skillful may not have the same impact on intimacy and marital adjustment/satisfaction for all cultural groups.

Despite the fact that there are 10.3 million married African Americans in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), there have been few studies aimed at understanding African American marriage and divorce rates (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Orbuch et al., 2002). Over the last 30 years African American families have experienced significant changes, particularly within the institution of marriage. According to the 2003 U.S. Census, between 1970 and 2000, the percentage of African Americans who decided to marry in their lifetime declined from 64% to 55% among men and 72% to 58% among women (Tuker, Subramanian, & James, 2004).

Research indicates that 20% of all first marriages in the United States will either experience a separation or divorce after a 5-year period, and of the first marriages that surpass 5 years and survive to 10 years, one-third will end in either separation or divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Although divorce rates may be high overall, they are even higher for African Americans. After 10 years of marriage 32% of Caucasian women have

ended their marriage compared to 47% of African American women (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Overall, African American men and women are less likely to get married, less likely to see marriage as a lifelong commitment, and are less likely to identify benefits associated with marriage compared to Caucasian men and women (Bulanda & Brown, 2007).

Researchers have hypothesized that the difference in marital and dissolution trends among African American and Caucasian couples could be accounted for by socioeconomic status, education, values, and/or the history of discrimination in the United States (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Trent & South, 2003). One reason provided to explain lower marriage rates and commitment is the perception of a "marriage squeeze," held by African American women. This idea refers to the belief among African American women that the "marriageable pool" of African American men is low because of high rates of unemployment, incarceration, and mortality (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002).

Contrary to popular hypotheses about the differential rates of marriage and divorce between African Americans and Caucasians, several studies have found that the higher perceived divorce risk and lower marital commitment among African American couples cannot be attributed to racial differences in socioeconomic and demographic predictors of marital quality (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch, Verhoff, Hassan & Horrocks, 2002; Trent & South, 2003; Tuker, Subramanian, & James, 2004). It is important to mention a weakness of the previously mentioned studies in that they did not look at in-group comparison, investigating higher and lower socioeconomic status

between an African American population; instead they compared socioeconomic status of a Caucasian and African American sample.

Bulanda and Brown (2007), using data from over 10,000 respondents in the National Survey of Families and Households, found that Blacks were 1.45 times more likely to separate or divorce than were Whites. This higher risk of relationship dissolution could be accounted for by poorer marital quality. Their study did not find that economic factors played a significant role in explaining the racial differences in marital quality. The authors suggested that future research focus on how the stress of racism and discrimination may impact the quality of marriage of Black couples. Also the term marital quality should be operationalized with Black couples since most of the research has been done with Whites.

Researchers have begun to turn away from demographic and socioeconomic explanations of marital dissolution and turn toward exploring group norms and sociocultural hypotheses. "Past research has given little focus to specific cultural factors, beyond the structural, in terms of their role in explaining differential rates of quality and stability among Black and White marriages. In terms of divorce rates, these meanings are important to understanding the nature of racial differences" (Hairston, 2000, p. 20). African American couples may have different meaning than Caucasian couples attached to marriage, conflict, and emotion due to different culture, historical backgrounds, and experiences in the United States (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Trent & South, 2003). Rather than looking at structural predictors (e.g., socioeconomic status, income, race, and age), differences in divorce rates and marital quality would be better understood by assessing racial differences in marital experiences and identifying how

predictors of marital quality may differ for racial groups (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch et al., 2002; Raley, Durden, & Wildsmith, 2004; Trent & South, 2003). Although marital quality is negatively associated with divorce, there is little research looking at racial differences in marital quality and how different variables may contribute to marital quality for various groups (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Orbuch et al., 2002). Also the current research has not looked at within group differences for African American marriages. For example, future research needs to compare African American couples from lower socioeconomic statuses with African American couples from higher socioeconomic statuses on a wide range of variables including the effects of racism and oppression and marital quality before the negative effects of socioeconomics on African American marriages can be ruled out.

Consistent with these ideas, Cordova, Gee, and Warren (2005) believed that while people are born with a basic set of emotions, over time people learn how to identify and express those emotions differently. Hence, a person's emotional skill set may be influenced not only by individual experiences and family context, but also by group norms. Emotional skills influence the process of creating marital intimacy, which contributes to marital satisfaction (Mirgain, 2003). For example, the identification of emotions helps facilitate a spouse's ability to reinforce their spouse's vulnerable behavior. The ability to identify emotions helps their spouse to distinguish and communicate emotional hurt within the relationship that is healthy and less conflictual, therefore, promoting intimate events and positive interactions resulting in greater marital satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Thus far, their research supports the idea

that emotional skillfulness relates to intimacy and marital health for Caucasians but has not been tested with an African American sample.

The aforementioned research suggests that marital researchers need to look at the experience of emotional expression, intimacy, and marital satisfaction as experienced specifically by African Americans rather than generalizing from other groups. Cultural values regarding intimacy may influence the importance of intimacy and how it is expressed in couples (Prager, 1995). Emotional expression and the interpretation of emotional communication may be different for African American couples than for Caucasian couples (Hairston, 2000).

Therefore, the central research question in this study was "Does emotional skillfulness theory apply to African American couples in the same way that it does for Caucasian couples?" More specifically, the purpose of this study was to extend Cordova et al.'s (2005) study to look at the relationship among emotional skillfulness, intimate safety, and marital satisfaction for African American couples. Self-report, couple-level data were collected from married African Americans using the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), the Intimate Safety Questionnaire Revised (ISQ-R), and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). The TAS-20 was used to assess emotional skills, the ISQ-R was used to assess intimate safety, and the RDAS was used to assess marital satisfaction.

Delimitations

The study was limited to African American couples who were legally married and volunteered to participate in the study. Thirty-three percent of the sample was referred to participate by a church member; therefore, the level of religiosity may skew the results.

Finally, participants voluntarily consented to complete all questionnaires as written in precise instructions, so the results may be limited by self-selection.

Definitions

Alexithymia: According to Bagdy et al. (1988), alexithymia is a versatile and comprehensive construct that describes an individual's ability to express and experience their emotions. The constructs of alexithymia consist of (a) difficulty in recognizing and describing feelings, (b) a struggle to distinguish between feelings and one's unique bodily sensations, (c) limited creative processes as evidenced by a lack of fantasies, and (d) a cognitive approach that is concrete and founded in reality.

Emotional Skillfulness*:* According to Cordova (2005), emotional skillfulness is the "ability to identify emotions, express emotions, empathize, and manage challenging emotions" (p. 219). Emotional skillfulness is viewed as an individual's learned way of organizing and executing emotions. Emotional skillfulness is not emotions; rather it is one's proficiency in utilizing emotion to regulate oneself and one's relationships.

Intimate Safety: Intimate safety is self-reportable feelings of safety and a comfort in being vulnerable within the context of a particular relationship (Cordova & Scott, 2001). If the ratio of intimate to suppressive events is weighted significantly more toward intimate events, then the relationship should be described as safe and comforting (Dorian & Cordova, 2004). Intimate safety is the mediating factor between emotional skillfulness and marital satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005).

Marital Satisfaction: Marital satisfaction is defined as a spouse's conceptualization of the level of quality in the marital relationship based on his or her

subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure when considering all aspects of marriage (Rollins & Gallian, 1978, p. 76).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although African Americans are less likely to get married, have lower marital commitment, and are more likely to get divorced, there has been relatively little research to account for the differences in marriage dissolution between African American and Caucasian couples (Broman, 2005; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch, Verhoff, Hassan, & Horrocks, 2002; Trent & South, 2003). Despite hypothesized relationships between higher divorce rates being due to lower marital commitment, socioeconomic factors such as poverty and demographic predictors such as race, research has not supported these explanations (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch, Verhoff, Hassan & Horrocks, 2002; Trent & South, 2003). Since looking at structural predictors such as race or poverty has yielded modest explanatory usefulness in understanding racial differences in marital quality, it has been suggested that looking at racial differences in marital experiences may be more fruitful (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch et al., 2002; Raley, Durden, & Wildsmith, 2004; Trent & South, 2003). Nevertheless, there is little research looking at how marital experiences may be different for African American couples and how their marital satisfaction may have different contributing factors than other racial groups (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Orbuch et al., 2002).

Although not explored extensively with African American couples, emotions and their expression have been an important focus of marital research and intervention in general (Goldman & Greenberg, 2006). For example, the research of Greenberg and Johnson (1986, 1988) on Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and John Gottman's work on building a Sound Relational House (SRH) (1994, 1999) emphasized the powerful influence of emotional expression and regulation in intimate relationships. Specifically, in EFT, an empirical, evidenced-based approach for working with couples, therapists focus on evoking and re-processing emotion between couples within a safe environment (Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Greenberg, 1985; Johnson & Greenberg, 1988;). Gottman (1994) found that specific expressions by wives (e.g., harsh start-up) and by husbands (e.g., stonewalling) were related to marital instability and dissatisfaction. In addition, recent studies on emotional skillfulness (the ability to identify and express emotions, empathize, and manage challenging emotions) showed that certain emotional skills were vital to the maintenance of strong and healthy marriages (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006). How couples acknowledge and communicate their emotions and respond to a partner's emotions relate to greater comfort and happiness (Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

Each of these theories (EFT, the SRH, and EST) notes the importance of emotions and communication in couple relationships. Gottman (1994, 1999, 2000) has demonstrated the importance of the rate, tone, and intensity of emotional reactions in marital distress and relationship stability. Johnson and Greenberg (1986, 1994) have highlighted the significance of evoking emotion in a way that promotes intimacy and conflict resolution. However, both EFT and the SRH overlook specific emotional skills

that may lead to intimacy and marital satisfaction. The SRH focuses more on specific skills than EFT but does not emphasize feelings of vulnerability; EFT focuses on vulnerability and safety but incorporates less about specific skills that might help lead to a more secure, safe relationship. Emotional skills play an important role in the management of personal vulnerability and the effective handling of a partner's vulnerability (Cordova et al., 2005). Emotional Skillfulness Theory helps in understanding the development of interpersonal distress as an outcome of ineffective emotional repertoires in the context of an intimate relationship where challenging and vulnerable emotions are likely to be expressed (Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

An individual's learned skillfulness in identifying, expressing, and reacting to emotions in a relationship can influence the reported relationship satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). Research studies have verified that the occurrence and intensity of every day emotions experienced in relationships serve as the gauge of how relationships are assessed by the couple (Barrett, Robin, Pitetromonaco, & Eyssell, 1998). One study found the highest marital satisfaction was linked with the maximum rate of recurrence of expressing feelings verbally (Merves-Okin et al., 1991).

Consistent with these ideas, Cordova, Gee, and Warren (2005) believed that emotional skills influence the process of creating marital intimacy, which contributes to marital satisfaction (Mirgain, 2003). For example, the identification of emotions helps facilitate a spouse's ability to reinforce vulnerable behavior. The ability to identify emotions helps spouses distinguish and communicate emotional hurt in a way that promotes intimate events and positive interactions resulting in marital satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Thus far, their research supports the idea that

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Emotion and Emotional Awareness

Emotions are more than just a feeling (e.g., sad, happy, angry). They are physiological, psychological, cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes that begin based on either internal or external events that cue a person that something important has happened or is about to happen (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). Emotions are a basic human instinct serving as a motivational tool which has the important job of "organizing, motivating, and sustaining behavior" (Bowman, Watson, & Trotman-Beasty, 2006, p. 637). Emotion permeates a human's physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral system.

> Emotion is a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural/hormonal systems, which can (a) give rise to affective experiences such as feelings of arousal, pleasure/displeasure; (b) generate cognitive processes such as emotionally relevant perceptual effects, appraisals, labeling processes; (c) activate widespread physiological adjustments to the arousing conditions; and (d) lead to behavior that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed, and adaptive. (Kleinginna & Kleinginna, as cited in Plutchik, 2003, p. 22)

People are born with a set of fundamental emotions; however, how people become trained and skilled in identifying and conducting themselves in the context of their emotions can differ drastically (Ekman & Friesen, 1971). It is not only the ability to identify and express emotion that is important, but to do so accurately. This ability has been labeled emotional awareness (Croyle & Waltz, 2002; Lane & Schwartz, 1987; Lane et al., 1990). Awareness is different from merely feeling and experiencing an emotion. Awareness includes feeling or perceiving physiological and emotional changes with at least a modicum of cognitive reflection on the emotion and feeling. External markers of emotion (i.e., body language, verbalization, facial expression) do not necessarily indicate awareness since expression can occur without awareness (Croyle & Waltz, 2002).

Often the initial step made in defining a problem is labeling the individual's emotions (Greenberg, 2008). However, identifying and labeling emotion is not just a cognitive process. Emotional awareness is "not a thinking about feeling; it involves feeling the feeling in awareness" (Greenberg, 2008, p. 52). A person's level of awareness ranges on a continuum from a general recognition of physiological markers (e.g., racing heart rate) and emotions experienced (e.g., "I feel good") to a more explicit recognition of higher-order emotions (e.g., disappointment, resentment, guilt) (Croyle & Waltz, 2002). There are five levels of emotional awareness: physiological changes, action tendencies, single emotions, blends of emotion, and combination of blends (Lane et al., 1990). The levels of emotional awareness indicate a significant relationship with self-restraint and impulse control, demonstrating that the better emotional awareness one has the better impulse control one has (Greenberg, 2008).

Although emotional awareness is an individual skill, level of awareness influences relationships. For instance, Croyle and Waltz (2002) studied whether emotional awareness was related to couple satisfaction. They found that emotional awareness plays a part in couple satisfaction and that there were some differences for men and women. Women tended to report more emotions, elaborate more on emotions in response to salient couple situations, and give more elaborate responses when asked how partners would feel than male respondents. Men and women did not differ in awareness in response to more general life situations. This lends credence to Gottman's (1994, 1998) findings that men, when emotionally aroused within the confines of a relationship, tend to become more easily flooded by their physiology and emotions (entering diffuse physiological arousal) which would affect their ability to be aware of their own emotions and communicate effectively. In situations that are perceived as less emotionally "threatening" by men, they should be able to be aware of their emotions and communicate just as effectively as women.

In the Croyle and Waltz (2002) study discrepancies between men and women in levels of emotional awareness were related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Men reported lower satisfaction if there was a discrepancy in emotional awareness regardless of which partner had the higher level. Women who had equal or lower levels of awareness than their partner reported higher levels of satisfaction, but women who had higher levels of emotional awareness than their partner had lower levels of satisfaction.

These findings are congruent with several current theories and models of intervention (Croyle & Waltz, 2002). For example, these results fit with Gottman's contention that it is not having a high level of communication and expressiveness that is

important, rather it is that the couple is matched on their meta-emotion style (their feelings about emotional expression) (Gottman, 1998). In addition, the concept of emotional awareness is compatible with the goals of EFT. Although Greenberg and Johnson (1988) do not specifically utilize the term emotional awareness in EFT, the model is designed to help couples identify, express, and redefine the couple's interactions in the context of underlying emotion and vulnerability. From an emotional awareness perspective, emotionally focused therapists enhance emotional awareness and then teach couples to utilize their emotional awareness to increase relationship satisfaction.

Emotion and Expression

It is assumed that emotion contains priceless information that impacts an individual's overall well-being, and an individual's ability to express his/her feelings liberally is essential to one's mental health (Mongrain & Vettese, 2003). Emotional suppression is linked to the "inner tension of unexpressed feelings, a failure to resolve the issues leading to the emotions, and an absence of support or validation from the environment" (Mongrain & Vettese, 2003, p. 546). Moreover, Greenberg et al. (1993) found that when people are in dispute about emotions, internally an obstruction (block) is created and interferes with the natural emotional process. When an obstruction is present, the emotional experience is disrupted resulting in "maladaptive secondary emotions such as depression and distress" (as cited in Mongrain & Vettese, 2003, p. 546).

Emotions are a form of communication to self and others (Goldman & Greenberg, 2004). Emotional awareness is a communication to oneself and emotional expression is about communication to others.

> Emotions . . . emerge in relation to the social environment, arising in response to events real or imagined that are appraised as implying possibilities for gratifying

> or obstructing needs, goals, and desires. People not only have emotions but also experience the need to regulate them. Too much or too little emotion can disrupt effective responding to environmental challenges. In the narrow sense, emotion regulation refers to the processes by which people influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and most important, how they experience and express them. . . . Emotion regulation refers to all aspects of emotional processing, to its awareness, utilization, and transformation (Greenberg, 2002). One needs to specify what types of emotion to access, which ones to down-regulate, and which to increase. (Goldman & Greenberg, 2004, p. 233)

Emotion Regulation

People usually do not go around expressing everything they feel. There are conscious and unconscious regulatory systems that guide emotional awareness, expression, and suppression. Emotion regulation occurs intrapersonally and interpersonally; it is a process that happens within and between (Simpson, Hughes, & Snyder, 2006). Although there is not a consensus on the definition of emotion regulation, there are similar assumptions underlying various definitions of emotion regulation: voluntary and involuntary physiological, behavioral, and emotional processes that determine which emotions occur, how they are experienced, and how they are expressed (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006; Simpson, Hughes, & Snyder, 2006). Such efforts may be relatively automatic or controlled, conscious or unconscious (Snyder, Simpson, & Hughes, 2006, p. 14).

Emotion regulation can be conceptualized as a set of abilities to monitor and label one's own feelings accurately, the ability to utilize effective strategies to alter emotions, and having self-confidence in the ability to modify feelings (Grewel, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006). Conceptualizations of emotion regulation share some basic views, but there are also different beliefs that differentiate these conceptualizations. Various schools of thought depict emotion regulation as a substrate of emotional intelligence (a cluster of

abilities) (Grewel, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006); an aspect of an individual's attachment style and level of security in relationships (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Horesh, 2006); or as a factor influenced both by nature and nurture (Valiente & Eisenberg, 2006).

Emotion regulation strategies can be categorized in numerous ways (Simpson, Hughs, & Snyder, 2006). For example, Gross, Richards, and John (2006) classified emotion regulation based on whether it is antecedent-focused or response-focused. Antecedent strategies are things one does before the emotional reaction and are directed at modifying the potential emotional response. For instance, if a husband comes home in a bad mood, instead of attributing his mood to the relationship, the wife might make a conscious effort to attribute his mood to a bad day at work, thus potentially altering her emotional response to his actions. Alternately, response-focused strategies are activated after an emotion has been generated. The wife tries to manage her emotions after she feels hurt because of her husband's mood. There are also more specific strategies: situation selection (approaching or avoiding specific situations, people, or activities in order to regulate emotion), situation modification (modifying a situation to influence its impact), attentional deployment (pick which aspects of a situation to focus on), cognitive change (after focusing on a particular aspect deciding the meaning that should be attached), and response modulation (attempts at altering experiential, behavior, or physiological response patterns once they have been evoked). Others, such as Parkinson and Totterdell (as cited in Grewal, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006), grouped emotion regulation strategies based on conceptual similarities and created the following categories: avoidance, distraction, confrontation, and acceptance.

Some emotion regulation strategies are more helpful in the short term and/or long term than others. For example,

> *Cognitive reappraisal* is a form of cognitive change that involves construing a potentially emotion-eliciting situation in a way that changes its emotional impact. . . . Suppression, by contrast, comes relatively late in the emotion-generative process and primarily modifies the behavioral aspect of the emotion response tendencies, without reducing the experience of negative emotion. (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006, p. 18)

Suppression is often not an effective strategy in the long run.

Particular emotions are sometimes assumed to be dangerous to relationships. While it is true that there is a short-term increase in marital satisfaction (especially the husband's when women comply during marital conflict), in the long run it is related to decreases in marital satisfaction (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). It is not anger itself that is related to marital satisfaction and dissolution but rather how it is expressed and the consequent patterned reactions. Gottman named destructive styles of expression "The Four Horsemen of the Apolcalypse (Gottman, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1999; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). The Four Horsemen are Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotion Regulation

Human abilities are often described in terms of different kinds of intelligence, and abilities related to emotion are no exception. Emotional intelligence joins together the concepts of emotions and intelligence by presenting emotions as helpful and efficient resources of information that aid in gaining understanding and facilitating one's direction through their social surroundings. The concept of emotional intelligence marks a divergence in psychology of previous views of emotions as dysfunctional and the limited view of what defines a person's intelligence (Grewal, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006). "These

two converging trends set the stage for the introduction of a new kind of intelligence -- one that would recognize the functional utility of emotions in everyday life and people's differing abilities in harnessing them" (Grewal, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006, p. 38).

After some refinements of their original concept of emotional intelligence, Mayer and Slovey (1997) created a four-branch model of emotional intelligence: emotional perception and expression (perceiving emotions), emotional facilitation of thought (using emotions), emotional understanding (understanding emotions), and emotional management (managing emotions). Being able to perceive emotion accurately in self and others is the building block of emotional intelligence. It includes the ability to identify emotion in one's own physical and psychological states, to identify others' emotions, the ability to express emotions accurately and express needs related to those feelings, and the ability to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate feeling. Conversely, the inability to accurately perceive emotions in self is known as alexithymia (Lundh & Simonsson-Sarnecki, 2001).

Emotionally intelligent people are able to recognize when their partner and themselves are experiencing certain emotions. They correctly recognize and differentiate between emotions that are negative, such as anger, and positive, such as love. An emotionally intelligent person is aware of how they are feeling and correctly identify the nature of those feelings. Emotionally intelligent people have an extremely complicated and fine-tuned knowledge of emotions. They can distinguish between the source, characteristics, and consequences of emotions that are closely linked (Fitness, 2001).

There are several important abilities that are essential to emotional intelligence. These general categories include facilitation, understanding, and management.

Facilitation describes the ability to utilize emotion to facilitate thought. These abilities include redirecting and prioritizing thinking based on associated feelings, generalizing emotions to facilitate judgment and memory, using emotions to appreciate multiple points of view, and using emotions to facilitate problem-solving and creativity. Understanding of emotions includes awareness of relationships among various emotions; understanding the causes and consequences of emotions; understanding complex feelings, emotional blends, and contradictory states; and understanding transitions among emotions. Managing emotions includes the ability to be open to both pleasant and unpleasant feelings, ability to monitor and reflect on emotions, ability to engage, prolong, or detach from an emotional state, and ability to manage emotions in self and others.

Research has shown that emotional intelligence has an impact on significant "life outcomes" such as creating fulfilling and rewarding interpersonal relationships and also experiencing success at work (Grewal, 2005, p. 281). Emotional intelligence has also been tied to stable and healthy marital relationships (Fitness, 2001). Marital satisfaction has been linked to precisely recognizing emotions, understanding emotions and their motives, and efficiently and successfully managing/controlling emotions (Fitness, 2001).

Grewel, Brackett, and Salovey (2006) point out that even if someone is overall emotionally intelligent, he or she may have different abilities related to specific emotions. Those abilities may also differ depending on contexts and relationships. For example, someone may have an overall high level on emotional intelligence but is stymied when speaking to a boss at work. In addition, there may be mediators between particular types of emotional intelligence and certain outcomes. Lerner and Brackett (as cited in Grewal, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006) have searched for mediators between specific emotional

skills and specific outcomes. Others have explicitly searched for mediators between emotional skills and marital satisfaction (Cordova, 2007; Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006).

Attachment and Emotion Regulation

Similar to child-parent relationships, romantic partners may seek proximity to one another when distressed and may enhance or disrupt each other's attempts to manage distress (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). Attachment styles are thought to reflect affect regulation strategies. The term affect is used because a global feeling of distress is being referred to instead of the awareness and regulation of specific emotions (e.g., sadness, anger) (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). It is assumed that two affect-based processes influence an individual's attachment model and the attachment system (affective reactivity and affect regulation strategies) (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). Affective reactivity is the frequency with which an individual experiences a feeling of threat, which evokes the need for a feeling of security. Affect regulation strategies are the patterns of relationship behavior enacted in order to maintain or restore feelings of security (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). "People who are more emotionally reactive will more frequently perceive a threat, thereby leading them to experience more frequent activation of the attachment system, and as a consequence, a more frequent need to regulate their feelings of distress" (Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006, p. 61).

A romantic attachment perspective posits that couples are better at communicating during conflict when both partners are secure (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994; Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers,

2006). One's own attachment style as well as a partner's attachment style influences a person's ability to regulate negative affect; the nature of affect regulation is reciprocal (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994; Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). When a relationship is secure, partners are more likely to access and experience emotions in a way that increases vulnerability and react to a partner's vulnerability in a way that soothes them and makes them feel safe (Goldman & Greenberg, 2004). From this perspective, over control and/or under control of emotion can be damaging. Over-controlled people avoid feelings, intellectualize, avoid emotional expression to others, and avoid situations that might evoke feelings (Goldman & Greenberg, 2004).

From an attachment perspective, emotion-focused therapists concentrate on emotional awareness and expression, emotion control, reflection on emotion, and transforming emotion. This view of transforming emotion is perhaps the most unique – "*changing emotion with emotion*. Change from this perspective involves focusing on each individual's maladaptive emotional response, helping partners access the maladaptive emotions at the core of their vulnerabilities, and then transforming them by accessing more attachment- and identity-related adaptive emotions" (Goldman & Greenberg, 2004, p. 241).

Meta-Emotion

Besides experiencing emotions and expressing them, people's thoughts and feelings about experiencing and expressing emotion are part of emotion regulation (Gottman, 1999; Gottman, Katz, & Hoven, 1997). The term meta-emotion is used to broadly "encompass both feelings and thoughts about emotion, rather than in the more

narrow sense of one's feelings about feelings (e.g., feeling guilty about being angry)" (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996, p. 234). Meta-emotion is one's thoughts and feelings about the expression and experience of emotion (Gottman, 1999).

The concept of meta-emotion addresses the executive (decision-making on how one feels about that emotion) function of emotions (Gottman et al., 1997). For example, the emotion of anger is similar in most people, but what separates individuals is the variety of feelings one may experience about the common (anger) emotion. For instance, one individual may think that expressing anger is good and productive, while another person may feel embarrassed or guilty about becoming angry. When an emotion is elicited, the person is faced with that emotion in that moment and is also faced with thoughts and emotions about previous experiences or felt emotions (Gottman et al., 1997).

Understanding meta-emotion and its relationship to couples and gender is essential to understanding problems related to marital satisfaction. Mismatches in partners' meta-emotion predict divorce with 80% accuracy (Gottman et al., 1996). The value of specific emotions may be different for men and women. It has been suggested that women place value on the expression of emotion, whereas men emphasize hiding expressions of vulnerability such as fear and sadness (Gottman, 1999). Women tend to view experiencing and expressing vulnerability as healthy and as a way to gain self-awareness. Men, however, tend to discard emotions such as fear and sadness because they view them as a waste of time and as having the potential to cause harm since men are more apt to support positive thinking as a way to override negative emotions (Gottman, 1999).

On spontaneous, unedited expressions of emotion people do not differ much (Ekman, 1971; Gottman, 1999; Greenberg & Johnson, 1986), but they do differ greatly on other aspects of emotion regulation. Gottman et al. (1996) demonstrated that differences in emotional regulation (specifically values about emotional expression) can have deleterious effects on marriages. People differ greatly in how much awareness they have about the emotions they experience in their lives, how they think and feel about the basic emotions, how much they monitor their own emotions, how much they permit themselves to express emotion, and how well developed their language is for describing emotion (Gottman, 1999). In general, people's overall philosophy of emotion fell into three categories; those who felt emotional expression was important, those who felt emotional expression was not important, and those who felt there must be a balance between expressing positive and negative emotions (Gottman et al., 1996).

Emotional Skillfulness Theory

Emotion regulation includes aspects of physiology, cognitive, and behavioral processes that may be voluntary or involuntary and applies these conceptualizations to a broad range of abilities, problems, and contexts for individuals, couples, and families. Emotional skillfulness theory is a specific application of the process of emotion regulation that can be behaviorally defined (e.g., positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment), and focuses on the process of how particular emotional skills are important to the process of intimacy, feelings of safety, and satisfaction in romantic relationships. The theory integrates several concepts that have been described -- emotion awareness, emotion expression, emotion regulation, emotional intelligence, and meta-emotion.

Intimate safety refers to one's feeling of security in a relationship, which is used as a gauge of intimacy. One's emotional skills may differ depending on security in a particular relationship. Couples might be more skillful in a secure romantic relationship rather than in an insecure relationship (Olsen, 2006; Pietromonaco, Barrett, & Powers, 2006). Cordova and his associates measured security in a relationship and found that measures of intimate safety do indeed mediate between emotional skills and marital satisfaction (Cordova et al, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007).

Emotional Skillfulness Theory is a set of interrelated ideas that explain how a couple's emotional abilities relate to the development of intimate safety and relationship satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007, Olsen, 2006). Cordova and his associates created a behavioral theory of intimacy (explained later) that clarifies how higher levels of emotional skillfulness within a relationship make it safe for partners to be vulnerable with one another, creating intimacy and relational satisfaction (Cordova & Scott, 2001; Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Dorian & Cordova, 2004; Mirgain, 2003; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006). Emotional skills is a broad category that describes the "ability to identify emotions, express emotions, empathize, and manage challenging emotions" (Cordova, Gee & Warren, 2005, p. 219). In other words, emotional skillfulness is an individual's learned way of identifying, organizing, and expressing one's own emotions and how one responds to the emotions of others. Emotional skillfulness is not emotions; rather it is one's proficiency in utilizing emotion to regulate one's actions and one's relationships. Mirgain, (2003) "suggested that the phenomenon of emotional skillfulness is a single construct consisting of at least four

emotional skills (i.e., emotional control, comfort with emotional expression, identification and communication of emotions and empathy)" (p.iii).

Specifically, in adult relationships "reciprocity" is pivotal in the emotional exchange process. In adult relationships emotional exchange through communication is frequently expressed through feelings that are similar to the previous emotional exchanges experienced by their partner (Gaelick et al., 1985; Gottman, 1999). Couples make an effort to reciprocate the emotions they think their partner deliberately expressed to them (Gaelick et al., 1985).

The problem is that spouses do not always identify their spouse's emotional intentions correctly. In fact, when in conflict, they are more likely to identify expressions of hostility than expressions of love, which makes it more likely they will reciprocate hostility (Fletcher & Fincham, 1991; Gaelick et al., 1985; Gottman, 1996). The ability to be aware of physiological correlates of emotion, the feelings related to emotion, and the ability to communicate emotions and react to other people's emotion appropriately has been conceptualized in several different ways. The terms emotional awareness (Croyle & Waltz, 2002), emotional regulation (Goldman & Greenberg, 2006; Simpson, Hughes, & Snyder, 2006), emotional intelligence (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso,2004), emotion-focus (Johnson & Greenberg, 1988, Greenberg, 2002; Johnson, 2004;), and meta-emotion (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996, 1997) have been used to conceptualize the importance of emotions in intimate relationships.

Recently, the idea of emotional skillfulness theory has shown promise in helping to explain intimacy and marital satisfaction. (Cordova, 2007; Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain, 2003). The main contention of EST is that emotional abilities (skills) such

as abilities to identify emotions, expressing emotions in an appropriate manner, conveying empathy, and regulating emotions when appropriate are important to creating a feeling of safety and enhancing intimacy (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006). Emotional skillfulness helps maintain intimacy and intimate safety, which play an important role in maintaining marital satisfaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006). However, similar to much of the marital research, this theory has not been tested with African American couples and needs to be tested with a more diverse sample (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005).

It is important that authors and researchers link their conceptualization and measurement of emotion regulation to theory (Simpson, Hughs, & Snyder, 2006). The theory can relate to broad understandings of emotion regulation or to emotion regulation in specific contexts (e.g., marital satisfaction, intimacy, parenting). Rather than focus on all types of emotion regulation, it is easier to choose certain aspects, contexts, or relationships to focus on. Emotional skillfulness theory focuses on emotion but is guided by behavioral theory to explain why certain emotions do or do not get expressed within the context of a particular relationship. This theory focuses on particular aspects of emotion regulation within the context of romantic relationships and seeks to understand how those aspects of emotion regulation relate to the intimacy process and relationship satisfaction.

Emotion and Intimacy

Emotions are an important part of relationships and are most likely important because of how the process of handling emotionally challenging situations influences

intimacy in close relationships (Dorian & Cordova, 2004). One of the most frequent complaints of couples seeking therapy is lack of intimacy (Dorian & Cordova, 2004). Both men and women desire intimacy and intimacy and marital satisfaction are positively correlated (Dandeneau & Johnson, 1994; Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Merves-Okin et al., 1991; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983; Waring, 1981; Waring & Chelune, 1983). Surprisingly, physical intimacy may have a minimal impact on marital satisfaction. Although a couple may be experiencing a low level of physical intimacy, they can experience a satisfying marriage with positive verbal intimacy and a high-quality of affective intimacy (Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983).

Although researchers agree that intimacy is important, there is no agreed upon definition of intimacy or theory of intimacy. The typical conceptualization of intimacy is as a feeling of closeness to another person that involves a sharing of one's inner self and usually includes self-disclosure (Coner-Edwards, 1988; Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; McAdams, 1988, 1989; McAdams & Vaillant, 1982; Prager, 1995; Reis & Shaver, 1988; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Accordingly, Thompson and Walker (1989) define emotional intimacy as "sharing one another's innermost life; expressing and listening to each other's feelings, thoughts, desires, doubts, joys, and fears; attending to, understanding, and accepting one another's 'true' self'" (p. 846). This meaning complements Johnson's (1994) definition of intimacy from an emotionally focused perspective. She sees intimacy as the ability to be vulnerable and accept the vulnerability of a partner. Vulnerability is the expression of need for the intimate bond between two people and is an important part of intimacy (Dandeneau & Johnson, 1994).

However, it is not just the ability to be vulnerable that creates intimacy; it is also the response of the partner (Cordova & Scott, 2001, Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Dandeneau & Johnson, 1994; Dorian & Cordova, 2004; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Wynne & Wynne, 1984). When two people are involved in an intimate relationship, there are actions and reactions on both people's part. Therefore, intimacy is a relational event involving both vulnerability and a response from a partner.

An important part of intimacy is empathetic responsiveness to vulnerability (Dandeneau & Johnson, 1994). Dandeneu and Johnson (1994) found that understanding and being able to express the affect underlying interactional processes facilitates intimacy. However, few researchers have actually operationalized intimacy, the specific skills needed to express vulnerability and empathetically respond, or the theoretical process by which these all influence marital satisfaction.

Similar to Johnson (2004), Cordova and associates (Cordova & Scott, 2001, Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Dorian & Cordova, 2004; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006) have focused on the relationship between vulnerability, empathy, intimacy, emotional expression, safety, and marital satisfaction. They focused on more than self-disclosure, believing that self-disclosure in of itself does not create intimate actions, intimate relationships, or elicit intimacy feelings (Cordova & Scott, 2001). In their behavioral explanation of intimacy, they go further than other researchers in operationalizing intimacy, explicating the process of intimacy, and describing specific emotional skills needed to express one' self and reinforce the vulnerable expressions of others.

At first thought the idea of a romantic idea like "intimacy" being described in behavioral terms seems like an oxymoron. Yet, if researchers are to truly understand intimacy, it needs to be defined in terms that can be "observed, predicted, and influenced" (Cordova, 2001, p. 76). Cordova and his associates attempted to account for weaknesses in previous conceptualizations of intimacy in marriage.

> Those conceptualizations that emphasize intimate feelings tend to neglect the intimate interactions that elicit those feelings, as well as the developing relationships that provide the context for those feelings. Those that emphasize intimate interactions tend to neglect the developmental formation of intimate relationships and the development of intimate feelings. An integrative theory of intimacy should synthesize these facets of intimacy into one unfolding process that accounts for individual learning histories and variability in the development of emotional outcomes. (Cordova & Scott, 2001, p. 4)

Cordova and Scott (2001) created a theory that explains the process of intimacy formation. In their view intimacy is created when people feel safety and solace when expressing physical and emotional vulnerability in the presence of their mate. The continued promotion of intimacy is predicated upon feelings of intimate safety. The development of intimate safety is akin to the development of interpersonal trust in that it involves (a) predictably probable reinforcement of interpersonal vulnerability, (b) development of a relationship with the partner that feels dependable and safe, and (c) an increasing faith in the partner's positive responses (Rempel et al., 1985 as cited in Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005).

Part of the intimacy process is sharing information about one's thoughts and feelings that are viewed as personal. Not all sharing of thoughts are considered part of the intimacy process. Disclosure of thoughts and feelings that make a person at-risk or vulnerable are seen as contributing to intimacy. Examples include when one chooses to self-disclose information, thoughts, or feelings that one views as painful such as "sadness

or hurt, or thoughts such as fears, worries, anxieties, embarrassments, failures, and disappointments" (Cordova & Scott 2001, p. 76). In addition to sharing non-hostile, negative feelings, sharing positive experiences, thoughts, and feelings also promotes intimacy. Love, closeness, joy, and modesty can also be viewed as intimacy-building affect. Intimacy goes beyond the process of communicating personal information; it includes interactions that validate intimate communication and reciprocation of intimate communication (Cordova & Scott, 2001). According to Cordova and Scott (2001) "intimacy refers to individual behavior (e.g., self-disclosure), to interactions between partners, to types of relationships, and to specific feelings" (p. 76).

The encouraging and discouraging of the intimacy process is affected not only by someone's current relationship, but also by one's relational history and through knowledge/experience of others being punished for the same or similar behaviors. Cordova and Scott (2001) refer to this type of behavior as "behavior vulnerable to interpersonal punishment." Nevertheless, expressing behavior vulnerable to interpersonal punishment alone does not define intimacy. The vulnerability has to be reinforced by the other person's response (Cordova & Scott, 2001, p. 77). Intimacy is inhibited if the expression of vulnerability leads to interpersonal punishment.

The closely related concept of emotional intelligence and emotional awareness are complex, helpful concepts for understanding the role emotions play in individuals' lives and relationships. However, neither concept is integrated into a theory of intimacy that could help researchers and clinicians more clearly understand how emotional abilities are theoretically interrelated to intimacy and relationship satisfaction. Hence, the idea of "emotional skillfulness" may be more helpful in understanding emotional abilities in the

realm of relationship satisfaction. Emotional Skillfulness Theory (EST) is part of Cordova and his associates' behavioral theory of intimacy (Cordova & Scott, 2001, Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Dorian & Cordova, 2004; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007).

Behavioral Perspective of Intimacy

Dorian and Cordova (2004) have criticized "fuzzy intimacy" in marital theory and therapy. The common complaint with the traditional definitions of intimacy is they are often confusing, vague, or limited. Recently, researchers have investigated intimacy beyond the traditional lens of closeness, personal disclosure, and shared experiences. Cordova and Scott (2001) conceptualize intimacy as a concept that describes a type of interaction (interpersonally vulnerable), specific types of behavior (intimate event), a type of relationship (intimate partnership), and certain feelings. The advantage of defining intimate events, intimacy, and intimate safety behaviorally is that they can be observed and experienced, which fosters research. This conceptualization lends itself to observational and self-report measures (Cordova & Scott, 2001).

Interpersonally Vulnerable Behavior

A behavioral theory of intimacy posits that intimacy is a developmental process involving partners' ability to participate in behaviors and acts of sharing perceived to be interpersonally vulnerable. Being vulnerable in an interpersonal context opens one to censure and the possibility of being punished. Therefore, interpersonally vulnerable behavior is defined as actions and verbalizations susceptible to punishment. People learn what kind of behaviors are susceptible to punishment through a history of being punished for the behavior or similar behavior, observing someone else being punished for the

same/similar behavior, and/or being told that the behavior will be punished (Cordova & Scott, 2001).

Vulnerable behaviors may include specific actions, hostile verbalizations, or soft expressions as hurt, sadness, love, loneliness, insecurity, shame, and disappointment (Dorian & Cordova, 2004). Basically, interpersonal vulnerability is an interaction with another person that "experience has taught us risks punishment by someone else; thus, anything one might do that has in the past been associated with an aversive response by others constitutes interpersonal vulnerability" (Cordova & Scott, 2001, p. 76).

The way people express themselves increases or decreases their level of vulnerability. For example, hostile expressions of hurt entail less vulnerability than soft expressions of hurt (Dorian & Cordova, 2004). There is a range of frequency and severity of punishment associated with interpersonally vulnerable behavior. Responses can range from infrequent or mild to frequent or severe. Depending on the frequency and severity, a behavior will be seen as more or less vulnerable (Cordova & Scott, 2001). Each person's vulnerability continuum would be different depending on his or her individual history comprised of personal experience, family-of-origin, group norms, and societal norms (Mirgain, 2003; Prager, 1995).

Intimate Event

If one partner's response is supportive of the other partner's expression of vulnerability, it is labeled an intimate event. In an intimate event vulnerable behavior is reinforced, consequently increasing the probability that the vulnerable behavior will occur more often (Cordova & Scott, 2001, Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). Specifically, an

intimate event is defined as a two-component sequence where one person reinforces a behavior vulnerable to interpersonal punishment (Cordova & Scott, 2001).

A reinforcing response increases the likelihood that a person will engage in the same interpersonally vulnerable behavior again in similar contexts and may include responses from the partner such as validation, apologies, sympathy, support, normalization, admitting fault, clarifying a situation, and acceptance (Dorian & Cordova, 2004). Although reinforcement can happen through positive actions and warm responses, it can also occur through a lack of punishment. Intimate events frequently consist of both positive and negative reinforcement, a blend that can be a powerful influence in the relationship. Paradoxically, negative and positive reinforcement encourages the expression of interpersonally vulnerable behavior, and the increase in vulnerability also strengthens the odds of being hurt by one another (Cordova, 2007, p. 943).

Intimacy refers directly, indirectly, or historically to expressions of vulnerability that are reinforced. All intimate relationships consist of both reinforcement and punishment of interpersonal vulnerability. Partners tend to engage in expressions of vulnerability that are safe. These isolated events result in a cumulative history of a ratio of reinforcement and punishment. After a sufficient history of intimate vents has accumulated, people tend to call that relationship an intimate partnership (Cordova & Scott, 2001).

Intimate Partnership

As a couple experiences multiple intimate events over time and in multiple contexts, an intimate partnership develops. An intimate partnership will include the accumulation of both intimate and suppressive events (Cordova & Scott, 2001). As

intimate events increase in frequency the likelihood that some behaviors will result in contingent or unintentional punishment also increases. Interpersonally vulnerable behavior that is punished is referred to as a suppressive event. Such interactions decrease the likelihood that a person will engage in the same interpersonally vulnerable behavior again in similar contexts (Cordova & Scott, 2001). Although suppressive events interfere in the formation and maintenance of intimate partnerships, all intimate relationships inescapably include both reinforcement and punishment of vulnerability.

In relationships people are more likely to increase the frequency of expressing vulnerable behavior that feels safe than those expressions that are not deemed safe, resulting in an accumulation effect technically called "accumulated ratio" (Cordova & Scott, 2001). This is similar to Gottman's (1994) ratio of negative to positive behavior. A ratio of at least five positive interactions for every negative interaction is correlated with marital stability and positive marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1994).

The ratio of reinforcing to suppressive events is more important than the raw number of intimate events or that a relationship is void of suppressive events. It is not required or probable for an intimate relationship to consist entirely of intimate events. "The reliance on a ratio also allows that the reinforcement of interpersonal vulnerability need not necessarily occur at a constantly high rate for intimate partnerships to develop and be maintained, only that the probability of reinforcement must sufficiently exceed that of punishment" (Cordova & Scott, 2001, p. 79).

The intimate event illustrates a unique process that, given the chance, essentially evolves from isolated exchanges into an accumulating set of interactions. Both intimate and suppressive events are inevitable in an intimate partnership as the frequency and

variety of vulnerable behavior/expressions increase. However, the more heavily the ratio of intimate to suppressive events is weighted toward intimate events, the more likely vulnerable behaviors will continue to occur and the intimate partnership will continue. In addition, a higher ratio of intimate events will eventually lead to feelings of safety and comfort (Dorian & Cordova, 2004).

Intimate Safety

Intimate safety is the ability to feel safe and reassured when one is being vulnerable in the company of one's intimate partner without fear of experiencing a negative (emotional) consequence (Cordova, 2007). Intimate feelings are created out of relational exchanges that are positive and engaging vulnerable behavior in interpersonal relationships. Within interpersonal relationships if one's ability to be vulnerable is reciprocated by the other partner responding with creating a feeling of safety for their partner, then intimacy thrives.

It is important to note that vulnerability is necessary to start the intimacy process and that vulnerability within a calming and reassuring context creates the process of developing feelings of intimate safety (Cordova, 2007). Intimate partners are exceptionally sensitive to experiencing hurt by one another due to the development of intimacy linked to an enhanced level of interpersonal vulnerability. Simply stated, in intimate relationships where partners interact very closely with one another, they are more likely to experience hurt both accidentally and purposefully (Cordova, 2007).

In understanding intimate exchanges within relationships it is important that one is aware of the increase in reinforcement and the decrease in punishment of behavior that is viewed as vulnerable by one's partner. Thus the resulting feelings should create an

environment of safety and comfort when one chooses to behave vulnerably within an intimate relationship. In summary, intimate incidents serve as the device that assists in the integration of a variety of characteristics of intimacy, as intimate incidents increase into "intimate relationships and develop feelings of intimate safety" (Cordova, 2007, p. 6).

The basis of EST is that individuals are created with a fundamental set of emotional reactions and through their lived experiences gain knowledge of how one should act when interacting with others in the context of those emotions (Mirgain, 2003). The theory of emotional skillfulness is closely related to emotional intelligence. The distinctive difference is that emotional skillfulness emphasizes the social framework and individual's "self-efficacy" utilizing emotional skills when interacting with others in social situations; it also includes "empathy" and the investigation of individual conceptualization in social interactions (Mirgain, 2003). Cordova's EST links emotional skillfulness to intimate safety in that it leads to marital satisfaction.

Research on Emotional Skillfulness

Several studies have specifically tested Cordova and his associates' hypotheses about the intimacy process (Cordova, 2007; Cordova et al., 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006). Emotional skills predicted marital satisfaction (Cordova, 2007; Cordova et al., 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006); the influence of emotional skills on marital satisfaction was mediated by intimate safety (Cordova et al., 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006); and there was some support for gender differences related to intimacy (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007).

Original EST Study

Cordova et al. (2005) studied the influence emotional skills had on intimate safety and marital adjustment. They found that emotional skills were related to an individual's own marital adjustment and intimate safety, and marital satisfaction was mediated by intimate safety. Husbands' emotional skills were related to their wives' marital adjustment and intimate safety, but wives' emotional skills were not related to their husbands' marital adjustment and intimate safety. Emotional skills seem to be more important to women. Perhaps, similar to the findings for emotional awareness (Croyle & Waltz, 2002), it is not the level of emotional skills, but rather the discrepancy between husbands' and wives' scores that might be more important to men.

Cordova et al.'s study consisted of 92 married couples who completed: the Toronto Alexithymia-20 (TAS-20), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and Intimate Safety Questionnaire (ISQ). Husbands ranged in age from 19 to 78 years, with a mean age of 41.0. Wives ranged in age from 20 to 72 years, with a mean age of 38.8. Partners' marriages ranged in length from 3 months to 50 years, with a mean of 11.2 years. Number of children ranged from 0 to 6, with a mean of 1.7. Mean annual income was $53,000. The sample was 98% white. Years in school ranged from 8 to 26, with a mean of 16.3. The assessments measures utilized in Cordova et al.'s (2005) study were selected to investigate specific areas. The study utilized the TAS-20 (only two subscales) to assess the emotional skills of interest. The DAS measured marital satisfaction and the ISQ was used to assess intimate safety through a variety of relationship domains.

The results supported the emotional skillfulness theory. Hypothesis one received mixed support that men had more difficulty communicating emotions; but contrary to the

hypothesis, there were no sex differences for difficulty identifying emotions. Hypothesis two was supported in that self-perceived difficulty identifying and communicating emotions were negatively correlated with participants' own dyadic adjustment and intimate safety. In addition, hypothesis three was supported by the results. Self-perceived difficulties identifying emotions was negatively correlated with partners' dyadic adjustment for both wives and husbands. However, only husbands' difficulty identifying emotions was negatively correlated with wives' intimate safety; wives' difficulty identifying emotions were not significantly associated with husbands' intimate safety. Also in keeping with their hypothesis four husbands' difficulty communicating emotions was negatively correlated with wives' dyadic adjustment and intimate safety, but as expected, wives' difficulty communicating emotions was not significantly correlated with husbands' dyadic adjustment or intimate safety.

Hypotheses five through seven were mediation hypotheses. Baron and Kenny's (1986) model of mediation was used to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that intimate safety fully mediated the relationship between difficulty identifying emotions and dyadic adjustment for both men and women. The results also indicated that intimate safety fully mediated the correlation between the difficulty communicating emotions and dyadic adjustment for women and partially mediated the association of men.

The purpose of Cordova et al.'s (2005) study was to provide a preliminary test of emotional skillfulness theory (i.e., that emotional skills contribute to marital health by maintaining intimacy). In general, the results of the study were consistent with that theory. The results suggested that emotional skills were associated with an individual's own marital adjustment and intimate safety. Hence, emotional skill deficits may diminish

a person's capacity for marital happiness. Emotional skills should facilitate intimacy through the role they play in the management of one's own interpersonal vulnerability and the handling of partner's interpersonal vulnerability. Also, results of the mediation analysis provided preliminary support for the theory by demonstrating that the relationship between one's own self-perceived emotional skillfulness and marital adjustment is mediated by one's own sense of intimate safety.

When examining the influence of a spouse's emotional skillfulness on the other spouse's marital adjustment and intimate safety, they found that although husbands' emotional skills (both identification and communication of emotions) were clearly related to their wives' marital adjustment and intimate safety, generally wives' emotional skills were not significantly related to their husbands' marital adjustment and intimate safety. Again, results supported their general theory of how skillful husbands are at identifying and communicating their emotions influences how safe wives feel being vulnerable in a relationship, which in turn influences wives' marital satisfaction. Mediation analysis showed that the association between husbands' emotional skills and wives' marital adjustment was mediated by wives' intimate safety.

There were some significant and non-significant differences between men and women on measures of emotional skills and intimate safety. As far as sex differences related to identification and communication of emotions, results also supported the hypotheses that men have greater difficulty communicating emotions than women. However, the results did not support the hypothesis that men have greater difficulty identifying emotions than women. Men and women did not differ significantly in their levels of reported intimate safety.

In conclusion the results of the study were consistent with their supposition that emotional skills (ability to identify and communicate emotions) influence marital satisfaction because of the role they play in the intimacy process. The implication was that emotional skills help create intimacy, strengthening marital health. Therapeutic interventions aimed at increasing intimacy in couples may need to directly assess and intervene in the emotional skillfulness of clients.

Association Between Observed and Self-Reported Emotional Skills

Mirgain and Cordova's (2007) study provided more support for the hypothesis that emotional skills influence marital satisfaction partially through their influence on intimacy. Both wives' and husbands' emotional skills were positively associated with their own marital satisfaction and the marital satisfaction of their spouses. Although intimate safety mediated the effect on marital satisfaction, their results also suggested that emotional skills have a direct influence on marital satisfaction apart from intimate safety. The results revealed a few gender differences in emotional skills, and in each case, women were found to be more skillful, on average, than men. For example, husbands showed less empathetic concern and more distress in response to others than did their wives. The ability to stay positive during conflict may depend, for men, on a combination of emotional control, emotional knowledge, and emotional comfort. Emotional skills were measured by self-report and by observer ratings of emotional skills. In the Mirgain and Cordova (2007) study observer ratings of emotional skills were compared with self-ratings. An interesting finding for women was that observers' ratings of wives' emotional skills were better predictors of marital satisfaction than wives' self-report of emotional

skills. Though women tended to be more emotionally skillful than men, wives overestimated their level of skillfulness.

Interestingly, there were a few correlations between observed and self-reported emotional skills.

> For example, wives' observed ability to respond positively to criticism was associated with their own self-assessed ability to control anger and other, nonhostile, negative emotions, their ability to identify and communicate emotions, and their degree of empathy . . . an observed emotional skill that may appear fairly simple on the surface (responding well to a spouse's criticism) may involve a complex set of underlying skills composed of emotion control, emotion knowledge, and empathy. (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007, p. 962)

The results provided further support for the theory that emotional skills influence marital health as mediated by intimate safety. In addition, the study supported the idea that emotional skills can be reliably observed. Although emotions are often thought of as internal, private sensations, they are played out in interpersonal interactions and can be observed. The authors believe that further exploration of emotional skills in intimate relationships will contribute to the literature on interpersonal functioning and individual emotional functioning.

Intimate Safety

Cordova (2007) also conducted a study focusing specifically on intimate safety. He found that 57% of the variance in marital satisfaction was accounted for by intimate safety. Intimate safety appeared to be composed of five inter-correlated factors: (1) comfort engaging in emotionally vulnerable behavior with the partner (Emotional Safety), (2) comfort engaging in physical and sexual vulnerability (Physical/Sexual Safety), (3) comfort with the vulnerability involved in being oneself (Safety Being Yourself), (4) comfort with the vulnerability involved in being out together in public

(Safety in Public), and (5) comfort with the vulnerability involved in voicing disagreement (Safety Disagreeing). People that reported higher levels of intimate safety also reported greater trust in their relationship, greater commitment, and greater global relationship satisfaction. "An absence of trust may interfere with a person's inclination to engage in interpersonally vulnerable behavior, thus limiting the opportunity for intimate events and for the development of feelings of intimate safety" (p. 16). However, if over time the intimate events in a relationship outnumber and outweigh suppressive events, then the relationship should become a safer context in which to be vulnerable. Emotional skills and marital health is based upon the association between observed and self-reported emotional skills, intimacy, and marital satisfaction.

Mindfulness and Emotional Skillfulness Theory

One example of an intervention that can assist in enacting emotional skills is mindfulness. Wachs and Cordova (2007) believed that mindfulness would have positive implications for relationship health. "Mindful relating holds that an open and receptive attention to the present moment (mindfulness) promotes a more accepting and less experientially avoidant orientation to challenging emotions such that more responsive and relationally healthy modes of responding become possible" (p. 464). They looked at the theoretical relationship between mindfulness, emotional skills (i.e., recognition and identification of emotions, empathy, and thoughtful responding in the context of anger), and marital adjustment. They believed that the ability to be in-the-moment characterizes a greater ability to be aware of emotions, have insight into emotions, and tolerate the expression of negative emotions. Specifically, they hypothesized that mindfulness would be positively associated with marital quality; mindfulness would be positively associated

with emotion recognition and identification, empathy, and anger reactivity; these emotional skills would be positively associated with marital quality; and emotional skillfulness would mediate the relationship between mindfulness and marital quality.

Wachs and Cordova (2007) found support for their hypotheses with 66 (33 married couples) participants. Participants filled out the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (measure of marital satisfaction), the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised, the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (a measure of difficulty identifying and difficulty communicating emotion), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (measures perspective-taking and empathetic concern), the Self-Expression and Control Scale (control of internalization of anger, control of externalization of anger, anger in, and anger out), the Emotional Control Questionnaire (benign control, impulsivity, aggression control, and lack of aggression control), and the Mindful Awareness Attention Scale. First, there was a positive correlation between mindfulness and marital adjustment. Second, there was an association between mindfulness and the ability to identify and communicate emotions, empathy, and anger reactivity. Third, identifying and communicating emotions were associated with marital adjustment, but some of the subscales of the other measures were not significantly associated with marital adjustment. Lack of Personal Distress subscale was significantly associated with marital adjustment, but the subscales for Perspective-Taking and Empathic Concern were not. Global marital quality scores were also significantly related to most of the anger reactivity subscales. Marital adjustment was significantly correlated with Anger Out (hostile anger expression) and Control of Anger Out (control of anger expression), but was not significantly correlated with Control of Anger In (self-soothing anger) nor Anger In (stuffing of anger). Marital quality scores

were also a significant correlation with impulsivity and acts of aggression, but were not significantly associated with the Lack of Aggression Control subscale. Fourth, they found support for a model in which partners' anger-related emotional skills mediated the association between mindfulness and marital quality. The findings "suggest that mindfulness, a state of consciousness in which one is oriented to the present moment, confers specific benefits in the context of intimate relationships" (Wachs & Cordova, 2007, p. 478).

This initial body of research on Cordova's EST model has supported his basic hypotheses. Some weaknesses in the research are that some of the measures are not reliable (such as the Dyadic Adjustments Scale and the Intimate Safety Scale). Also the research tells nothing about how EST applies to various multicultural groups.

African Americans

Although Cordova and his associate's research is important, it is also limited. One of the glaring problems with his research is that his samples are overwhelmingly Caucasian. Research specifically on African American couples related to emotional intelligence, Emotionally Focused Therapy, Gottman's Sound Relational House, and emotional skillfulness is non-existent to minimal, leaving a large gap in the literature related to African American couples.

The acquisition and ability to utilize skills for managing emotionally charged interactions may be influenced by societal norms, group norms, family-of-origin processes, life experiences, and relational experiences (Mirgain, 2003; Olsen, 2006; Prager, 1995). If the acquisition and expression of emotional skills is influenced by one's life contexts, then it follows that there may be differences, based on cultural norms,

relating to which specific emotional skills are most strongly associated with marital. The studies on emotional skillfulness, thus far, have been done with predominantly Caucasian samples (Cordova, 2007, Cordova et al., 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006). Since the participants in these studies were overwhelmingly Caucasian (ranging from 86% to 98% Caucasian in the various studies), it is not known if these findings also hold true for African American couples. Although the process of emotional skillfulness may be similar in all couples, the importance of being emotionally skillful may not have the same impact on intimacy and marital satisfaction for all cultural groups, and different emotional skills may be more important for certain populations.

Typically, conceptions of intimacy and marital satisfaction focus on behavioral interdependency -- how each partner's behavior influences the other, the fulfillment of needs, and emotional attachment (Brehm, 1992). Currently, two camps are leading the field in research aimed at increasing marital stability and satisfaction: Johnson's (1996) emotionally focused couples therapy (EFT) and Gottman's (1994) Sound Relational House Theory. Both focus on research explaining the factors that impact marital satisfaction and interventions that increase intimacy and satisfaction, but their concentrations are different. Johnson focuses on the relationship between evoking emotion, attachment bonds, intimacy, and marital satisfaction. In contrast, while Gottman acknowledges the importance of emotion in the marital relationship, he tends to focus on the behavioral, physiological, and cognitive aspects of the marital friendship. When Gottman specifically focuses on emotion, it is in terms of how emotional expression can enhance or deteriorate a relationship and philosophies of emotional expression (meta-emotion).

Even with the impressive theoretical development and growing amount of research on marital satisfaction, there is a glaring hole in the marital research. Despite the fact that there are 10.3 million married African Americans in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), there have been few studies aimed at understanding African American marriage and divorce rates (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Orbuch, et al., 2002). Over the last 30 years African American families have experienced significant changes, particularly within the institution of marriage.

According to the 2003 U.S. Census, between 1970 and 2000, the percentage of African Americans who decided to marry in their life-time declined from 64% to 55% among men and 72% to 58% among women (Tuker, Subramanian, & James, 2004). During this time period African Americans who initially decided to take the plunge into the marital abyss decreased from 57% to 39% for men and from 54% to 31% among women, and for those African American women who pursued marriage, half divorced compared to 40% of Caucasian women (Tuker, Subramanian, & James, 2004). The research indicates that 20% of all first marriages in the United States will either experience a separation or divorce after a 5-year period, and of the first marriages that surpass the 5 years and survive to 10 years, one-third will end in either separation or divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Although divorce rates may be high overall, they are even higher for African Americans. After 10 years of marriage 32% of Caucasian women have ended their marriage compared to 47% of African American women (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Overall, African American men and women are less likely to get married, less likely to see marriage as a life-long commitment, and are less likely to identify

benefits associated with marriage compared to Caucasian men and women (Bulanda & Brown, 2007).

Researchers have hypothesized that the difference in marital and dissolution trends among African American and Caucasian couples could be accounted for by socioeconomic status, education, values, and/or the history of discrimination in the United States (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Trent & South, 2003). One reason provided to explain lower marriage rates and commitment is the perception of a "marriage squeeze," held by African American women. This idea refers to the belief among African American women that the "marriageable pool" of African American men is low because of high rates of unemployment, incarceration, and mortality (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Contrary to popular hypotheses about the differential rates of marriage and divorce among Blacks, several studies have found that the higher perceived divorce risk and lower marital commitment among African American couples cannot be attributed to racial differences in socioeconomic and demographic predictors of marital quality (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch, Verhoff, Hassan & Horrocks, 2002; Trent & South, 2003; Tuker, Subramanian, & James, 2004).

Bulanda and Brown (2007), using data from over 10,000 respondents in the National Survey of Families and Households, found that Blacks were 1.45 times more likely to separate or divorce than Whites. This higher risk of relationship dissolution could be accounted for by poorer marital quality. Their study did not find that economic factors played a significant role in explaining the racial differences in marital quality. The authors suggested that future research focus on how the stress of racism and discrimination may impact the quality of marriage of Black couples and to operationalize

marital quality with Black couples since most of the research has been done with Whites. In addition, future research should use couple-level data.

Researchers have begun to turn away from demographic and socioeconomic explanations of marital dissolution and turn toward exploring group norms and sociocultural hypotheses.

> Past research has given little focus to specific cultural factors, beyond the structural, in terms of their role in explaining differential rates of quality and stability among Black and White marriages. . . . In terms of divorce rates, these meanings are important to understanding the nature of racial differences. (Hairston, 2000, p. 20)

African American couples may have different meanings than Caucasian couples attached to marriage, conflict, and emotion due to different culture, historical backgrounds, and experiences in the United States (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Trent & South, 2003). Rather than looking at structural predictors (e.g., socioeconomic status, income, race, and age), differences in divorce rates and marital quality would be better understood by assessing racial differences in marital experiences and identifying how predictors of marital quality may differ for different for racial groups (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Orbuch et al., 2002; Raley, Durden, & Wildsmith, 2004; Trent & South, 2003). Although marital quality is negatively associated with divorce, there is little research looking at race differences in marital quality and how different variables may contribute to marital quality for various groups (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Hairston, 2000; Orbuch et al., 2002).

African American Marriage/Relationships

As previously stated, African Americans are opting to postpone or forego marriage. African American divorce rate has seen a negative shift nearly quadrupled from

1960-1990 (U.S. Census, 2003). Unfortunately there is a lack of literature examining African American marital satisfaction or marriage period (Allen & Olson, 2001; Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hairston, 2000). However, there is one study that concluded that African Americans are less likely to view their marriage as harmonious as Caucasians (Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1993). Caucasian women are more likely to be satisfied within their marriage than African American women (Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1993). Three suggested explanations for the previously stated differences are "spousal emotional support, household task performance, and financial satisfaction" (Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1993, p. 729). "These marriages also are influenced by larger social trends, such as increased economic pressures on wage earners, greater participation of females in the workplace (often precipitating reassignment of gender roles), and the diminishing stigma associated with marital dissolution" (Allen & Olson, 2001, p. 308).

In an attempt to understand African American marital quality and stability Allen and Olson (2001) investigated typologies of African American marriages and how afrocentric characteristics (extended family, egalitarian relationships, and religious orientation) relate to marital types. They believed that there may be similarities and differences between ethnic groups on factors shaping marital relationships. They compared their results to a previous study (Olson & Fowers, 1993) which investigated five types of marriages with a mostly European-American (94%) sample.

The results of Allen and Olsen's (2001) study of five African-American marital types were similar to the findings of Olson and Fowers's (1993) results. The five types (from highest to lowest marital satisfaction) were categorized as vitalized (6.7% vs. 12.3%), harmonious (12.0% vs. 11.1%), traditional (14.9% vs. 16.3%), conflicted (26.7%

vs. 25.4%), and devitalized (39.5% vs. 34.9%). The marital types were not significantly differentiated by any of the three afrocentric characteristics.

Vitalized couples exhibited the highest level of marital satisfaction. Thus, couples identified as vitalized were characteristically "comfortable with their spouses' habits and personality, felt comfortable with their ability to communicate, and resolved conflict successfully" (Olson & Fowers, 1993, p. 205). Couples that are vitalized are likely to be older and married longer; also, vitalized couples had higher education, income, and job status (Olson & Fowers, 1993). The previously mentioned characteristics are usually related with decreased stress and high marital satisfaction (Olson & Fowers, 1993).

Harmonious couples exhibited moderately high level (interaction) of marital satisfaction (Olson & Fowers, 1993). Like vitalized couples, harmonious couples were older, highly educated, and higher job status. The characteristic that separated harmonious couples from the other types of marriages is they typically had the fewest children and had a "drastically lower level of consensus on issues involving parenting" (Olson & Fowers, 1993, p. 205).

Traditional couples exhibited slightly above average scores on examination of marital interaction and satisfaction. However, traditional couples were the most satisfied of all the other marriage types (Olson & Fowers, 1993). Traditional couples differed from other marriage types in that these couples had a "relative high on their agreement about the place of religion in their marriages" (Olson & Fowers, 1993, p. 205). Traditional couples were younger, with more children, and remained married longer. Traditional couples also possessed more education and higher income levels than other less satisfied marital types.

Conflicted couples had moderately low scores with comparatively greater consensus on having equal roles within the marriage along with making religion a significant part of the couple's relationship (Olson & Fowers, 1993). In African American marriages a religious point of reference is viewed as a possible resource for more contemporary African Americans (Allen & Olson, 2001; Boyd-Franklin, 1999). Conflicted couples scored lowest in communication and resolving conflict (Olson & Fowers, 1993). Characteristically, conflicted couples were less educated, had lower job status and income, and more heterogamy (Olson & Fowers, 1993).

Finally, devitalized couples had the lowest scores than any of the marital types. Devitalized couples were unhappy with their marriages. Devitalized couples were younger, had shorter courtships, were married for less time, and possessed lower education, income, and job status. Husbands were more likely to have two jobs than the other marital types. An important factor in devitalized couples was that they had a "higher incidence of racial and religious heterogamy" (Olson & Fowers, 1993, p. 204). These characteristics were linked to lower marital satisfaction (Olson & Fowers, 1993).

African Americans and Gender Role Conflict

Gender roles within the African American population have been viewed by some as confusing compared to other groups (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Some therapists make critical errors when working with African American couples and families because of the assumption that gender roles within the African American population are similar to the general population or to their own group (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Gender role can be conceptualized as:

> The acceptance of and identification with socially defined roles and behaviors associated with being biologically female (or male in the case of men). It includes

> cognitive and affective factors that reflect the way one sees oneself and the way one wishes to be perceived by others in terms of one's adequacy as a female or male (Thomas, 1986). Gender role identity is often operationalized as the degree to which individuals possess personality traits that are stereotypically associated with being male (e.g., strong, independent, aggressive) and traits that are stereotypically associated with being female (e.g., warm, nurturing, expressive). (Littlefield, 2003, p. 95)

However, because African Americans have a unique history in the United States and have different experiences than other groups, their views of typical gender roles may also be different. In the United States both African American men and women have been subjected to oppression through vessels of slavery and racism (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Harmon, 2005). Currently, both African American men and women experience the "invisibility syndrome" defined as a "paradoxical process in which African American men, because of their high visibility, are perceived with fear and distrust and are more often ignored or avoided by White society (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 88). It is important to acknowledge that African American men's invisibility may be eliminated when they are viewed as being threatening, challenging, or dangerous (Littlefield, 2003).

African American women experience a different kind of invisibility based on the combination of racism and sexism. African American women have to deal with the same issues/conflicts in life that many other women face (e.g., wife, mother, and domestic goddess). The difference is the additional pressure of racism. Boyd-Franklin and Franklin (1998) address how African American women are also invisible:

> The femininity and beauty of Black women have historically been denied in a society that imposes. White features as the standards against which all are judged. In recent years, these standards have eased somewhat, but nevertheless the complex interplay of skin color, hair texture, body type, and the negative messages from society (as well as internalized racism and sexism) continue to cause many African American women a great deal of pain and anger. (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 89)

It is important to acknowledge that gender roles help to socialize African American men's and women's interpersonal relationships. African American women's experiences are often modeled by other significant women (e.g., mothers, aunts, and grandmothers) in their life that influence their overall view of life. The information gained through the observation of their role models shape their roles as women and gender differentiation (Boyd-Franklin, 2003).

Gender role conflict can impact psychological functioning in African American men and women and their overall marital well-being. The messages received are to be competent, raise children, work, be self-reliant, and believe in their own capabilities and strengths (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). African American women may place African American men in one or more of the following six categories: (1) absent father, (2) transient male relationship, (3) weak or dysfunctional father, (4) egalitarian marriage, (5) strong or authoritarian father, or (6) abusive male-female relationship (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 91). This view impacts their ability to view relationships with African American men as committed relationship material; instead they may view them as "no good" and "unreliable." African American women with negative early observed experiences often "don't know how to have a positive relationship with a man" (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 91).

African American male gender roles are related more to their social worlds such as other African American men in their social network, their primary group of African American men, and the mainstream media (Brewer, 1998). African American men receive messages that masculinity is important (Levant, Majors, & Kelley, 1998; Pinderhughes, 2002) and that they cannot show weakness because they risk the

possibility of being rejected from their peer group (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). If their masculinity is compromised, they can feel powerless in other areas of their lives (Pinderhughes, 2002). This issue can significantly impact African American marriages negatively (Taylor, Tucker, & Mitchell-Kernan, 1999).

Emotions and African Americans

Emotional expression and interpretation of emotional communication may be different for African American couples than for Caucasian couples (Hairston, 2000). Associations between behaviors and experience are typically moderated by the cultural backgrounds of partners (Prager, 1995). Variables such as race may actually reflect higher order contextual variables such as group and sociocultural norms (Prager, 1995). Cultural group norms for African Americans may result in different expectations, behaviors, and interpretations of the intimacy needed for a successful relationship. The African American relationship (as are all relationships) and cultural group norms are embedded within the larger sociocultural context. The sociocultural norms may not support or may be in conflict with African American cultural group norms.

A particular sociocultural norm that conflicts with African American cultural norms is self-disclosure. In the African American culture self-disclosure is viewed as "telling one's business" or "putting one's business in the street" (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hill, 2005). African Americans often choose not to reveal personal and private information because it is counterproductive to the goal of keeping up appearances and protecting family secrets in order not to be seen a failure or sellout but maintain one's pride and dignity (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Perhaps it is not structural factors that account for these differences, as has been hypothesized, rather it may be group norms that account

for possible differences in expectations and experiences which could explain different rates of marriage and divorce for African Americans.

Generally the African-American culture is viewed as more comfortable expressing intense emotions than Caucasians (Samter, Whaley, Mortenson, & Burleson, 1997). For example, African-Americans are more likely to express anger and/or intensify conflict than Caucasians (Kochman, 1981; Ting-Toomey as cited in Samter et al., 1997). Also, African-Americans tend to be more vocal when celebrating or expressing unity than Caucasians (Franklin, 1992). In general, African Americans value the ability to be emotionally expressive rather than repress emotions (Kochman, 1981). However, there is little information or research geared toward investigating how African Americans' values about emotional expressiveness may influence interpersonal relationship.

Current Study

Based on the shortcomings in Cordova et al.'s (2005) research which has been conducted almost exclusively with Caucasian couples and the different cultural emphases on emotional expression between Caucasian and African American couples, the purpose of this study was to replicate Cordova et al.'s (2005) study with an African American sample of couples and use two revised measures. Therefore, the main question was, "Does Emotional Skillfulness Theory apply for African American couples as it does for Caucasian couples"? In addition, this study also examined several subquestions: 1) Will there be differences between African American men and women on difficulty identifying and difficulty communicating emotions? 2) Will African Americans' perceived ability to identify and communicate emotions be associated with participants own marital adjustment and intimate safety? 3) Will African Americans' perceived ability to identify

emotions be associated with their partners' marital adjustment and intimate safety? 4) Will husbands' ability to communicate emotions be associated with their wives' marital adjustment and intimate safety? 5) Will the relationship between the participants' ability to identify/communicate emotions and participants' own marital adjustment be mediated by participants' intimate safety? 6) Will the association between self-perceived ability to identify emotions and their partners' marital adjustment be mediated by their partners' intimate safety? and 7) Will the association between self-perceived ability to communicate emotions and partners' marital adjustment be mediated by partners' intimate safety?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

There is evidence that emotional skillfulness theory helps explain the relationship between the ability to identify and communicate emotions and marital adjustment (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Cordova and his associates have shown that intimate safety mediates that relationship, but the relationships between emotional skillfulness, intimate safety, and marital adjustment have not been explored with an African American sample. The question explored in this study was whether emotional skillfulness theory, particularly the ability to recognize and communicate emotions, plays a key role in the process of marital adjustment primarily through the intimacy process for African Americans. The effects of emotional skillfulness on marital satisfaction were expected to be mediated by intimate safety (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Intimate safety is considered a mediating variable because, hypothetically, it is the mechanism through which emotional skillfulness influences marital adjustment (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Markland, 2000).

Hypotheses

Since this study is a replication of Cordova et al.'s (2005) study of emotional skillfulness in marriage and intimacy as a mediator between emotional skillfulness and marital satisfaction with an African American sample, rather than a predominantly Caucasian sample, the specific hypotheses have been adjusted accordingly:

Hypothesis 1: There will be significant differences between African American males and African American females on Difficulty Identifying Emotions and Difficulty Communicating Emotions.

Hypothesis 2: African Americans' self-perceived ability to identify and communicate emotions will be associated with participants' own marital adjustment and intimate safety.

Hypothesis 3: African Americans' self-perceived ability to identify emotions will be associated with partners' marital adjustment and intimate safety.

Hypothesis 4: African American husbands' ability to communicate emotions will be associated with African American wives' marital adjustment and intimate safety, but wives' ability to communicate emotions will not be associated with husbands' marital adjustment and intimate safety.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between the participants' ability to identify/ communicate emotions and participants' own marital adjustment will be mediated by participants' intimate safety.

Hypothesis 6: The association between participants' self-perceived ability to identify emotions and partners marital adjustment will be mediated by partners' intimate safety.

Hypothesis 7: The association between self-perceived ability to communicate emotions and participants' marital adjustment will be mediated by partners' intimate safety.

Data Analysis

Correlations, *t* tests, and regression analyses were used to test the seven hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

Independent *t* tests were used to examine possible sex differences on difficulty identifying emotions and difficulty communicating emotions.

Hypothesis 2

Zero-order correlations were performed between self-perceived ability to identify and communicate emotions and participants' own marital adjustment/satisfaction and intimate safety.

Hypothesis 3

Zero-order correlations were used to examine the association between African American couples' self-perceived ability to identify emotions with partners' marital adjustment and intimate safety.

Hypothesis 4

Zero-order correlations were performed between husbands' and wives' ability to communicate emotions and their partners' marital adjustment and intimate safety

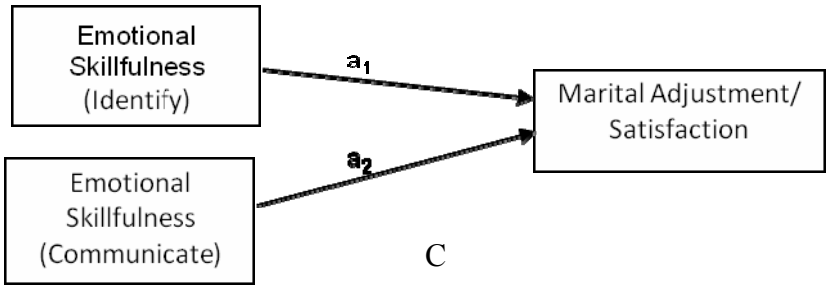
Hypothesis 5

In order to test mediation Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested the researcher follow four steps (performed with three regression equations). Mediation is defined by Baron and Kenny (1986) as a "given variable may be said to function as a mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion (p. 1176). Mediators explain how "external physical events take on internal psychological significance. Mediators speak to how or why such effects occur" (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1177). The first step is to show that there is a significant relation between the predictor (i.e., emotional skillfulness) and outcomes (i.e., marital adjustment/satisfaction (see path a^1 and a^2 in Stage 1, Figure 1).

The second stage is to show that the predictor (i.e., emotional skillfulness) is related to the mediator (i.e., intimate safety) (see path a^1 and a^2 in Stage 2, Figure 1). The

third step is to show that the mediator (i.e., intimate safety) is related to the outcome variable (i.e., marital adjustment/ satisfaction). This is path b^1 in Stage 2, Figure 1) and it is estimated controlling for the effects of the predictor on the outcome. The final step is to show that the strength of the relation between the predictor and the outcome is significantly reduced when the mediator is added to the model. Compare path c and c^1 in Figure 1 or path a^1 Stage 1 and path c^1 in stage and a^2 in Stage 2 and path a^2 Stage 1 and path c^2 in Stage 2 in Figure 1. If intimate safety is a complete mediator, the relation

Stage 1 Regression Model



Stage 2 Mediation Model

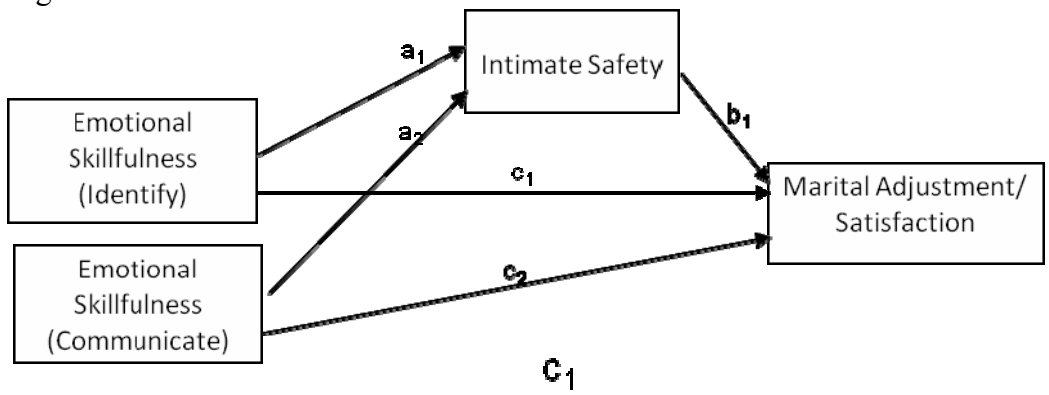


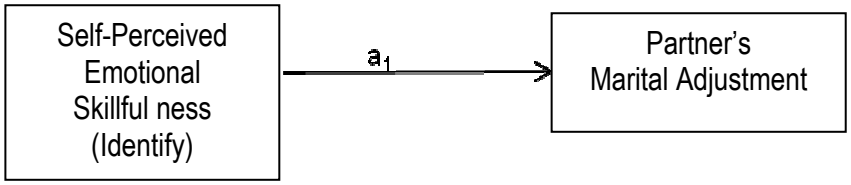
Figure 1. Modeling relations among emotional skillfulness, intimate safety, and marital adjustment/satisfaction.

between emotional skillfulness and marital adjustment/satisfaction will not differ from zero after intimate safety is included in the model. If intimate safety is a partial mediator, the relation between emotional skillfulness and marital adjustment/satisfaction will be significantly smaller when intimate safety is included but will still be greater than zero.

Hypothesis 6

Mediation analyses were used to test whether partners' intimate safety mediated between self-perceived ability to identify emotions and partners' marital adjustment. This hypothesis was tested by using the four step criteria of Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation model.

Stage 1 Regression Model



Stage 2 Mediation Model

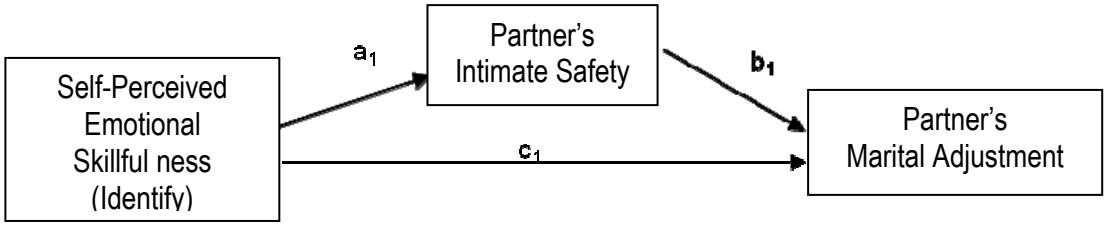
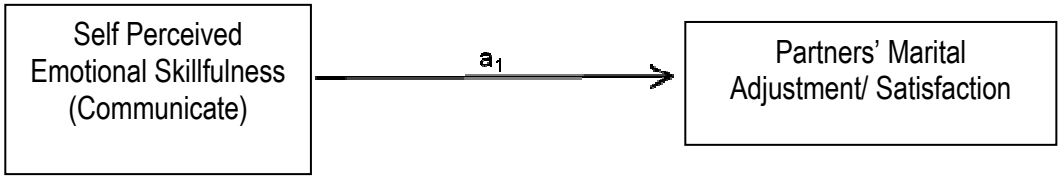


Figure 2. Modeling relations among self-perceived difficulty identifying emotion, partner's intimate safety, and partner's marital adjustment/satisfaction

Hypothesis 7

Mediation analyses were used to test whether African American partners' intimate safety mediates African American self-perceived ability to communicate emotions and African American partners' marital adjustment. This hypothesis was tested by using the four step criteria of Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation model.

Stage 1 Regression Model



Stage 2 Mediation Model

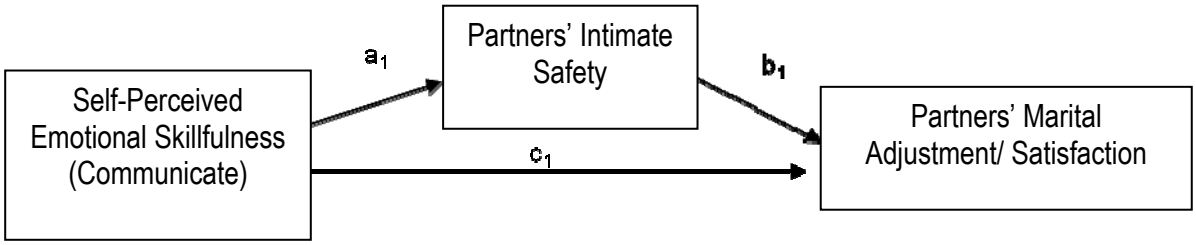


Figure 3. Modeling relations among self-perceived communication, partners' intimate safety, and partners' marital adjustment/satisfaction.

Participants

Participants were 132 African American married couples (264 individuals) accessed from local area churches in North and South Carolina, couples known to the author and couples identified by research participants. The sample population was delimited to African American couples who were legally married. African American couples regardless of age, socioeconomic status, or number of children were included, allowing for a diverse sample and greater generalizability. Data collected were run on

264 participants (males/husbands were 132 and females/wives were another 132) and the design was not nested nor run by couples.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 15 presents the descriptive statistics for the participants (see Appendix F). A reading of Table 15 shows that there were a total of 264 participants (132 couples) participating in this study. The average age of female participants was 45.68 years and the average age of males was 48.5 years. Couples were married for an average of 18 years and had an average of 1.3 children. Females had a mean income of $67,709.18 and males had an average income of $70,351.95.

Table 16 presents participants' religious affiliation at the time of the study (see Appendix F). A reading of Table 16 indicates that 46.2% of female participants indicated Baptist as their religious affiliation and 18.2% indicated Christian as their religion. The majority of male (53.8%) participants indicated they were Baptists whereas 13.6% reported as Christian.

Table 17 summarizes participants' highest level of education completed at the time of the study (see Appendix F). A reading of Table 17 indicates that 36.6% of female participants reported that their highest level of education completed was a high school diploma or GED and 26.0% of female participants indicated they had completed a bachelor's degree. The majority of male (39.5%) participants indicated that their highest level of completion of education was high school diploma or GED whereas 30.2% received a bachelor's degree.

Table 18 summarizes participants' current employment status at time of this study (see Appendix F). A reading of Table 18 indicates that 80.0% of female participants

reported that they were employed full-time and 16.5% reported that they were employed part-time. The majority of male (86.1%) participants indicated that they employed full-time whereas 10.4% were employed part-time.

Table 19 presents descriptive statistics for referral sources broken down by sex (see Appendix F). A reading of Table 19 indicates that 45.5% of female participants were referred by friends and 21.2% by church. The majority of male (46.2%) participants were referred by friends whereas 17.4% were referred by church. It is important to note that the sample of participants was obtained chiefly by snowballing procedures.

Participants were asked whether or not their parents were still married. Table 20 (see Appendix F) indicates that 15.9% of female participants reported that their parents were deceased and 15.2% of participants' parents were divorced at the time of the study. The majority of male (16.7%) participants indicated their parents were deceased whereas 13.6% were divorced. Participants were asked to report their age when their parents were legally separated.

Participants were asked to report their age when their parents divorced. Table 21 (see Appendix F) summarizes ages when participants' parents divorced. The majority of females and males' parents divorced before the participants were 10 years old.

Table 22 summarizes participants' parents' living arrangement when the participants were growing up (see Appendix F). A reading of Table 22 indicates that 75.2% of female participants reported that their parents were married and living in different households and 6.2% parents were divorced and living in the same household. The majority of male (71.9%) participants indicated that their parents were married and

living in the same household whereas 7% were divorced and living in different household.

Procedures

Participants received an informed consent letter (see Appendix E), a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), three assessment questionnaires (see Appendices A, B, and C), and referral information, either hand delivered (clergy, principle investigator, and/or associate) or by mail. The husbands and wives were instructed to complete the questionnaires separately. The participants had the option of returning their questionnaires either in person (clergy, principle investigator, and/or associate) or by mail.

A power analysis demonstrated that with an alpha level of .05 and power of .80 one needs an N of approximately 96 to detect a medium effect size ($f2 = .15$) according to Cohen (1992) and McNeil, Newman, and Kelly (1996). The power of a statistical test is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is false. A high level of power is desirable since the researcher is expected to reject a null hypothesis that is not true (Cohen, 1992).

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board at The University of Akron, the researcher contacted the CEO of Campus Connection in Charlotte, North Carolina who had agreed to solicit the help from 31 clergy (or church representatives) from local churches in the state of North Carolina. The clergy/church representatives were invited to a meeting in which the principal investigator informed them of the study. At this meeting, the researcher asked if approximately 25 clergy/church representatives would introduce the study to church attendees during Sunday services or other church

activities. The purpose and procedures were explained, and attendees were assured that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymity was clearly explained.

The participants were provided an informed consent containing the name and contact information of the principle investigator. This form consisted of information detailing the possible risks and benefits of participating in the research and offered referrals to mental health agencies if any discomfort was experienced relating to participation. The consent form also outlined how confidentiality would be maintained and that participation was voluntary (see Appendix E).

The participants were requested not to discuss the questionnaire with their spouse until they had completed and returned the information in order to encourage accurate and complete data. The participants were allowed to complete the questionnaire before or after Sunday service or other church activities. Preaddressed and prepaid postage envelopes were provided. It was estimated that it would take approximately 35 minutes to complete the assessment instruments.

The principle investigator kept the completed questionnaires in a locked filing cabinet and entered the data into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Anonymity and confidentiality were protected by securing data collected and concealing the identity of the participants in all documents utilized in this study. Participants were not asked to provide signatures or identifying information in order to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. The questionnaires were assigned numbers and letters in order to allow the researcher to compare spouses' responses.

Statistical Treatment

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized. Descriptive statistics were computed for the demographic variables, criterion variables, and predictor variables. Descriptive statistics included means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. According to Newman, Newman, Brown, and McNeely (2006), descriptive statistics are "used for describing the population or sample on which one has data" (p. 5).

Inferential statistics were computed in two stages. The first stage utilized a correlation matrix and explored the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables (Newman et al., 2006). The second stage of the inferential statistics utilized multiple linear regression and the General Linear Model (GLM) to test the selected research hypotheses (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; McNeil, Newman, & Kelly, 1996). Regression models were written to reflect each research question. Full and restricted models were tested to determine if the research hypotheses would be accepted or rejected.

Multiple linear regression procedures were used to determine the significance of the predictor variables (PV) in predicting the Criterion variable (CV). Multiple linear regression was selected because it is more flexible than traditional analysis of variance. When using multiple linear regression, one can test relationships between categorical variables, between categorical and continuous variables, or between continuous variables. Additional advantages of GLM include an easier way to calculate and interpret analysis of covariance, the ability to control for possible confounding effects, and its utility in discovering structural relationships among complex multivariate variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; McNeil et al., 1996; Pedhazer & Schmelkin, 1991).

Two-tailed tests of significance were used to test the relationships of those variables where the direction of the correlation was uncertain. According to Newman et al. (2006), the two-tailed test of significance is a nondirectional test, meaning that the relationship tested is not predicted prior to analysis. Because there is little evidence in the current research to demonstrate directionality related to the emotional skillfulness hypotheses utilized in this study, two-tailed tests of significance were used. The .05 level of significance was selected if the consequences of rejecting a true null hypothesis were shown not so serious as to warrant a more stringent confidence level, in the opinion of this researcher.

The F test, analysis of variance, was used in this study to test the statistical significance of the proposed relationships. An F test was used to determine if the R^2 of the full and restricted models were significantly different at an alpha of .05. The F test was chosen as it is very robust and is the most frequently used test of significance (Newman et al., 2006; Pedhazer & Schmelkin, 1991). The assumptions of random selection of subjects and normal distribution of the variables can be violated without doing serious harm to the procedure, especially when the N is large (Newman et al., 2006; Pedhazer & Schmelkin, 1991).

Instruments

Participants completed three self-report questionnaires. The three measures were the 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), the 14-item Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), and the 28-item Intimate Safety Questionnaire Revised (ISQ-R). The self-report questionnaires were selected to evaluate each African American partner's level of marital emotional skillfulness, marital satisfaction, and intimate safety.

Toronto Alexithymia Scale

Emotional skillfulness was measured by the TAS-20. The TAS-20 is a 20-item self-report questionnaire that is used to measure constructs, such as (a) difficulty in recognizing and verbally describing feelings; (b) difficulty in separating actual feelings from sensations experienced by one's body, "restricted imaginative processes, as evidenced by a paucity of fantasies;" (c) a cognitive approach that is tangible and supported by one's reality; (d) the propensity to daydream; and (e) the propensity to demonstrate an external way of thinking by individuals who have difficulty with identifying and communicating their emotions (TAS-20; Bagby, Taylor, & Atkinson, 1998; Bagby, Taylor & Parker, 1994).

The initial factor in the TAS-20 model consists of seven items that assess one's capability to recognize internal processes and distinguish them from somatic sensations that go along with one's emotional arousal. The Ability to Recognize Emotions subscale consists of seven items that indicate one's difficulty identifying their own emotions. Examples of items on this subscale are "When I am upset, I don't know if I am sad, frightened, or angry," and "I have feelings I can't quite identify." The second factor consists of five items that measures one's capability to describe and express their feelings to other people, essentially how one communicates their emotions. Examples of items on this subscale are "I am able to describe my feelings easily," and "It is difficult for me to reveal my innermost feelings, even to close friends." Exploring the items on this subscale shows that the items relate primarily to a common sense of discomfort a person has talking about their emotions and an acknowledgment of pressure to be more disclosing (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). The third and final factor in the TAS-20 model consists

of eight items assessing externally oriented thinking. This scale will not be used in this study because this scale is externally oriented thinking with items such as "I prefer to analyze problems rather than just describe them." The items on this subscale do not support the conceptualization of emotional skillfulness (Cordova et al., 2005; Smith, 2005). Items are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale of agreement ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher scores on each scale indicate higher levels of emotional skillfulness.

Although the TAS-20 was used to measure emotional skillfulness in this study, it was created to assess alexithymia. Research has recognized the unique characteristics of alexithymia as a restriction in the ability to identify and be aware of feelings, trouble in the ability to describe and verbalize feelings, and a fondness toward thinking externally as opposed to internally (Sifneos, 1996; Smith, 2005). The TAS-20 three factors assess the "difficulty identifying feelings, difficulty describing feelings, and externally oriented thinking," which all claim to assess the constructs of alexithymia (Smith, 2005, p. 42). In this study two (Identification of Emotions and Communication of Emotions) of the three subscales were used to measure emotional skills. Questions 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, and14 in the TAS-20 were used to identify emotions; none were reversed scored. Questions 2, 4, 11, 12, and 17 were used to communicate emotions; question 4 was reversed scored. Individuals who score high on the TAS-20 tend to suppress emotions (Bagby, Taylor, & Parker, 1988). If individuals score low on TAS-20, they tend to identify and express emotions better than those who score high on the TAS-20. On the two subscales utilized in this study the range of possible scores is a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 60. In

the current study internal consistency for the TAS-20 two subscales (Identification of Emotions and Communicating emotions) were alpha = .86 and .72, respectively.

The TAS-20 exhibits sufficient "test-retest reliability and internal consistency as well as good convergent and discriminant validity" (e.g., Taylor, Bagby, & Ryan, 1990 as cited in Mirgain & Cordova, 2007, p. 952). Findings indicate a "high test-retest reliability (values ranging from .83 to .86 (e.g., Bressi et al., 1996; Dion, 1996; Pandey et al., 1996 as cited in Loiselle & Cossette, 2001, p. 350). Regarding the validity of the TAS-20 as an index of emotional skills, evidence indicates that those that score high on the TAS-20 tend to repress anger rather than express it (Bagby, Taylor, & Parker, 1988b). "High TAS-20 scores have been associated with greater discomfort experiencing negative emotions and ambivalence about expressing emotions" (Berenbaum & James, as cited in Cordova et al., 2005, p. 224).

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The original Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a 32-item self-report scale designed to assess the quality of the relationship of married, unmarried, or cohabitating couples. The majority of the items attempt to evaluate the respondent's perceived view of the adjustment and satisfaction of the couple in their relationship (Spanier, 1976). The scale is grounded in theory and shown to be valid and reliable (Spanier, 1976).

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) was created due to indications that there were issues with some of the subscales and individual items on the DAS (Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christensen, 1995). Researchers found that the DAS

> subscales were found to contain some items that were homogeneous and others that were more heterogeneous. This problem was corrected by selecting out items that were homogeneous; 7 first-order scales were created which were combined to

> create the 3 second-order concepts of consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. (Busby et al., 1995, p. 289)

Although the RDAS is consistent with the original dyadic adjustment's initial definition, there are several significant differences between the RDAS and the original DAS (Busby et al., 1995). First, the RDAS has satisfactory levels of construct validity as confirmed through many factor analyses with more than one sample. Second, the RDAS has shown to have a higher convergent and discriminate validity with other instruments. Third, the RDAS is successful at discriminating the differences between individuals that are distressed and non-distressed. Finally, the RDAS and its subscales have "sufficient internal consistency estimates and excellent split-half reliability coefficients, estimates which were larger than those of the DAS" (Busby et al., 1995, p. 304). At this point there is some evidence that the RDAS can be split into two forms and utilized if recurrent testing is needed (Busby et al., 1995). Internal consistency estimates were found to be .90 (Alonzo, 2005).

The RDAS provides a total score range 0-69, a = .90 (Busby et al., 1995, p. 303). The RDAS items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale, except for question 11, which is scored on a 4-point scale. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 were reversed scored. High scores on each scale indicated higher marital satisfaction whereas low scores indicated distress within the couple relationship. In the current study internal consistency for the RDAS was .85.

Intimate Safety Questionnaire- Revised

The original ISQ was a 14-item self-report questionnaire created to assess intimate safety across a wide variety of areas within a relationship. The ISQ-R was developed to assess the participant's level of comfort being vulnerable with their partner

across a variety of areas within the relationship. The ISQ-R provides a total score range of 0-112. Participants score each statement in the questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (never) to 4 (always). The higher a person's score, the more intimate safety that person experiences. Questions 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, and 28 were reversed scored. In the current study internal consistency for the ISQ-R was .88.

Internal reliability was found to be sufficient. The original ISQ 14-item questionnaire showed "alphas of .93 for men and .96 for women and test-retest reliabilities over a 1-month period of .83 for men and .92 for women" (Cordova et al., 2005, p. 225).

Construct validity was established by investigating the correlations among the ISQ-R and measures of constructs that are theoretically related (Cordova, 2007, p. 13). Convergent validity was established between the ISQ-R and the PAIR ($r = .85$, $p < .01$) (Cordova, 2007, pp. 13-14). In order to provide more evidence of convergent validity researchers ran a correlations test between the ISQ-R, DAS, and Trust scales. The result revealed "large positive correlations ($r = .75$, $p < .01$ and $r = .71$, $p < .01$, respectively)." The results provide support that the ISQ-R converges on these theoretically related constructs (Cordova, 2007, p. 14). The final investigation of convergent validity was between ISQ-R and the Commitment Inventory. Again, the results provided more support for the validity of ISQ-R in revealing a large correlation "$r = .64$, $p < .01$ between the Commitment Inventory and the ISQ" (Cordova, 2007, p. 14). Noteworthy, positive correlations were revealed between the ISQ-R and all of the subscales of the PAIR ranging from $r = .58$ to $r = .83$, further supporting data confirming that the ISQ-R does assess the emotional component of intimacy (Cordova, 2007, p. 14).

Research examining ISQ-R discriminate validity correlations between the ISQ-R, and Shyness, and Extraversion scales was conducted. The research supported the initial hypothesis that shyness and extraversion would not be substantial contributors to intimate safety. The effect sizes were small, supporting that they do not substantially overlap with the construct of intimate safety; however, there was a significant negative correlation between intimate safety and shyness (r = -.28, p < .01) and a positive correlation between intimate safety and extroversion, (r = .22, p < .01) suggesting some effect of shyness and extraversion on the construct of intimate safety (Cordova, 2007, p. 14).

The initial factor analyses of the ISQ yield14 factors; however, with some investigation Cordova (2007) concluded:

> examination of eigenvalues and scree plot suggested that five-factors created the most reasonable model. Items with factor loadings above .50 were accepted if they were uncomplicated with other factors and interpretable with two exceptions for items with loadings in the mid-.40 range resulting in a total of 28 items. (pp. 13-14)

The revised form of the ISQ, the ISQ-R questionnaire, also displayed high internal reliability (alpha =.93). Alphas for the subscales emotional safety, physical/sexual safety, safety being yourself, safety in public, and safety disagreeing were .87, .88, .80, and .77, respectively" (Cordova, 2007, p. 13). This researcher has decided to use the entire ISQ-R for this study.

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to gather information including age, sex, number of children, level of education, number of years married and previous marriages, religious affiliation, employment status, and approximate current

income. The demographic questionnaire also was used to gather information regarding the participants' parents' marital status during their childhood.

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to examine, whether for African American couples, the relationship between emotional skills and marital satisfaction was mediated by intimate safety. It is a replication of Cordova, Gee, and Warren's study (2005), but with an African American sample. Participants included African American couples solicited through churches in North Carolina, Delta Sigma Theta (a historically Black sorority) chapters, and participants solicited through snowball sampling. Participants completed the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), the Intimate Safety Questionnaire Revised (ISQ-R), and a demographic questionnaire. Multiple regression analyses were utilized to test the relationship between emotional skillfulness, marital satisfaction, and intimacy safety.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Results of the research are presented in this chapter, which is organized into two sections. The first section covers descriptive statistics that describe the means, standard deviations, and frequencies for all of the relevant variables. The second section, inferential statistics, answers the research questions posed by this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Data Screening

Data were entered into SPSS version 16. Because missing data were random in nature and were judged to not significantly impact the overall sample, missing participant data were excluded for the specific analysis in which they were missing (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002). The two outliers that were found using Mahalanobis distance had no leverage and were therefore not deleted from the dataset. The data were normally distributed so no transformations were required. Then demographic and descriptive statistics were computed for the sample. Demographic statistics for the participants were described in Chapter III under participants. Then demographic and descriptive statistics were computed for the sample.

Reliability

An internal consistency alpha coefficient was computed for each scale. Table 1 presents these results. A look at Table 1 shows that the reliability of the instruments

utilized in this study was relatively high. For example, both of the subscales from the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), Difficulty Identifying Emotions and Communicating Emotions were high with Cronbach's alphas of 86 and 72, respectively. The Intimacy Safety Questionnaire-Revised (ISQ-R) total scale had an overall alpha of .88. Lastly, overall marital satisfaction as measured by the Revised Dyadic Adjustment scale (RDAS) had a total alpha of .85 (See Table 1)

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Internal Reliability Estimates of Instruments

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Difficulty ID	.86
Difficulty COM	.72
ISQ-R	.88
RDAS	.85

Note. ID = Identification of emotions; COM = Communication of emotions; ISQ-R = Intimate Safety Questionnaire Revised; RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the scores on the measures for the whole sample. A look at Table 2 shows that for the sample as a whole, the mean for Difficulty Identifying Emotions was 12.39, for Difficulty Communicating Emotions the mean was 12.28, for Intimate Safety it was 85.66, and for Marital Satisfaction it was 48.86.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Minimum and Maximum Ranges on the Scales for the Whole Sample

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Difficulty ID	264	2.00	35.00	12.39	5.86
Difficulty COM	264	5.00	23.00	12.28	3.57
ISQ-R	264	47.00	112.00	85.66	14.33
RDAS	264	21.00	68.00	48.86	8.24

Note. ID = Identification of emotions; COM = Communication of Emotions; ISQ = Intimate Safety Questionnaire; RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

Difficulty Identifying Emotions, Difficulty Communicating Emotions, ISQ-R, and RDAS were also disaggregated by sex. Table 3 displays the results of these disaggregated means. A look at the Table 3 reveals that there were no significant differences between males and females on these subscales. Females scored slightly higher than males on Difficulty Identify Emotions (12.80 for females to 12.51 for males), while males scored

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for African American Participants by Sex

	Female		Male	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
Difficulty ID	12.80	5.65	12.51	6.07
Difficulty COM	11.98	3.30	12.57	3.81
ISQ-R	86.53	14.89	84.78	13.76
RDAS	48.55	8.49	49.17	8.01

Note. ID = Identification of emotions; COM = Communication of emotions; ISQ = Intimate Safety Questionnaire; RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

higher on Difficulty Communicating Emotions (12.57 for males to 11.98 for females). The biggest difference was on Intimate Safety where females scored higher with a mean score of 86.53 compared to the male mean of 84.78. There was no significant difference between males and females on the RDAS.

Primary Analysis

This section reviews the statistical results as well as presents the findings in table form for the research hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested using *t* test, correlations, multiple regression procedures, and the Baron and Kenny (1986) model for testing mediation.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be significant differences between African American males and African American females on Difficulty Identifying Emotions and Difficulty Communicating Emotions. Table 4 presents the results of *t* test between the groups of husbands and wives. A reading of Table 4 shows that this hypothesis was not supported in that neither Difficulty Identify Emotions ($t = -0.32$, $p > 0.5$) nor Difficulty Communicating Emotions ($t = -1.33$, $p > 0.5$) differed significantly across sex.

Table 4

Results of Sex Differences in Difficulty Identifying and Communicating Emotions Gender Differences (N = 264)

	t	*df*	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Difficulty Identifying Emotions	-0.32	262	0.75	-0.23	0.72
Difficulty Communicating Emotions	-1.33	262	0.19	-0.58	0.44

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that African Americans' self-perceived difficulty identifying and communicating emotions will be associated with participants' own marital adjustment/satisfaction and intimate safety. Table 5 presents the correlations between all the scales used in this study. The results as shown in Table 5 indicate that this hypothesis was supported. Difficulty Identifying Emotions was negatively correlated with Marital Satisfaction ($r = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$) and Intimate Safety ($r = -.43$, $p < .01$). Therefore, higher scores on Difficulty Identifying Emotions were associated with lower scores on Marital Satisfaction and Intimate Safety. Likewise, Difficulty Communicating Emotions was negatively correlated with Marital Satisfaction ($r = -.28$, $p < .01$) and Intimate Safety ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$). Therefore, higher scores on Difficulty Identifying Emotions and Difficulty

Table 5

Bivariate Correlation Between Difficulty Identifying and Communicating Emotions and Own Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction and Intimate Safety (N=264)

	Identify emotions	Communicate emotions	RDAS total	ISQ-R total
Difficulty Identify Emotions	1.000			
Difficulty Communicate Emotions	.55**	1.000		
Marital Sat. RDAS Total	-.34**	-.28**	1.000	
Intimate Safety (ISQ-R)	-.43**	-.35**	. 61**	1.000

Note. **$p < 0.01$ level.

Communicating Emotions were associated with lower scores on participants' own Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction and Intimate Safety.

When disaggregated by sex, the hypothesis was still supported. Table 6 presents the correlations between Difficulty Identifying Emotions, Difficulty Communicating Emotions, Marital Satisfaction, and Intimate Safety. A reading of Table 6 shows that for husbands their Difficulty Identifying Emotions was negatively correlated with their own Marital Adjustment ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$) and Intimate Safety ($r = -.43$, $p < .01$), and their Difficulty Communicating Emotions was negatively correlated with their own Marital Adjustment ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$) and Intimate Safety ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$). For wives, their Difficulty Identifying Emotions was negatively correlated with their own Marital Adjustment ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$) and Intimate Safety ($r = -.44$, $p < .01$), and their difficulty

Table 6

Bivariate Correlations Between Husbands' and Wives' Identification and Communication Skills, Marital Adjustment, and Intimacy (N= 264)

	HID	HCOM	HISQ	HRDAS	WID	WCOM	WISQ	WRDAS
HID	-	.50**	-.43**	-.36**	.33**	.27**	-.41**	-.35**
HCOM		-	-.32**	-.32**	.15	.06	-.29**	-.29**
HISQ			-	.61**	-.26**	-.22*	.47**	.40*
HRDAS				-	.-22**	-.13	.52**	.58*
WID					-	.63**	-.44**	-.32**
WCOM						-	-.39**	-.19*
WISQ							-	.61**
WRDAS								-

Note. H = Husband; W = Wife; ID = Difficulty Identification of emotions; COM = Difficulty Communication of emotions; ISQ = Intimate Safety Questionnaire; RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Communicating Emotions was also negatively correlated with their own Marital Adjustment (r =-.19, $p < .05$) and their Intimate Safety (r =-.39, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that African Americans' self-perceived ability to identify emotions will be associated with partners' marital adjustment and intimate safety. A reading of Table 6 shows that this hypothesis was supported in that Difficulty Identifying Emotions was significantly correlated with the Partner's Marital Satisfaction and the Partner's Intimate Safety. For males Difficulty Identifying Emotions was significantly negatively correlated with their wives' Marital Adjustment (r = -.35) and their wives' Intimates Safety (r = -.41). For females their Difficulty Identifying Emotions was significantly negatively related to their husbands' Marital Adjustment and their Intimate Safety (r = -.22 and r = -.26), respectively.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that African American husbands' ability to communicate emotions will be associated with African American wives' marital adjustment and intimate safety, and wives' ability to communicate emotions will not be associated with husbands' marital adjustment and intimate safety. Table 7 presents the correlations between Difficulty Identifying Emotions, Difficulty Communicating Emotions, Marital Satisfaction, and Intimate Safety for husbands and wives. A review of Table 7 shows that this hypothesis was partially supported. Husbands' Difficulty Communicating Emotions was negatively correlated with their wives' Marital Satisfaction (r = .29, $p < .01$) and Intimate Safety (r = -.29, $p < .01$). However, wives' Ability to Communicate was not significantly correlated with their husbands' Marital Satisfaction (r = -.13, $p = 0.>.05$),

but was significantly negatively correlated with their husbands' Intimate Safety (r = -.22, $p < 0.05$).

Table 7

Correlations Between Difficulty to ID Emotions and Difficulty Communicating Emotions and Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction and Intimate Safety of Husband and Wife (N=132)

	HCOM	WCOM
WRDAS	-.29**	-.19**
WISQ	-.29**	-.39**
HRDAS	-.32**	-.133
HISQ	-.32**	-.22*

Note. H = Husband; W = Wife; COM = Communication of Emotion; WRDAS = Wives' Marital Satisfaction; WISQ = Wives' Intimate Safety; HRDAS = Husbands' Marital Satisfaction; HISQ = Husbands' Intimate Safety.
** $p < .05$, **$p < 0.01$ level.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that the relationship between participants' ability to identify and communicate emotions and participants' own marital adjustment will be mediated by the participants' own intimate safety. Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria for mediation analysis was used to test hypothesis 5 (see Figure 1 on page 65). Four steps were followed in the analyses. The results for steps on through four and their specific hypotheses are presented in Table 8 and Table 9.

Step 1: Specific Hypothesis 5a. There is a significant relationship between Identify Emotions and Communicate Emotions in predicting Marital Adjustment.

Full: Marital Satisfaction $= \beta + \beta 1(ID\_Emotions) + \beta 2(Communicate\_Emotions) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction $= \beta + \varepsilon$

Table 8 presents the regression results for the predictions between participants Difficulty Identifying Emotions, Difficulty Communicating Emotions, Marital Satisfaction, and Intimate Safety. A reading of Table 8 shows that this hypothesis was found to be significant for both husbands and wives run separately. The husbands' Difficulty Identifying and Difficulty Communicating Emotions significantly predicted their own marital satisfaction ($F_{(2)(131)} = 10.59$, $p < .001$), ($R^2 = .141$) (see analysis for husbands in Table 8). However, only husbands' Difficulty Identifying Emotions accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance ($t = -2.77$, $p < .01$). For wives, Difficulty Identifying and Communicating Emotions also significantly predicted their own marital satisfaction ($F_{(2)(131)} = 3.14$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .046$) (see analyses for wives' in Table 8). For wives (as with husbands) only Identifying Emotions accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance ($t = -2.04$, $p = .044$).

Step 2: Specific Hypothesis 5b. Difficulty Identifying Emotions and Difficulty Communicating Emotions will significantly predict participants' Intimate Safety.

Full: Intimate Safety $= \beta + \beta 1(ID\_Emotions) + \beta 2(Communicate\_Emotions) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Intimate Safety $= \beta + \varepsilon$

Participants' scores on Difficulty Identifying and Difficulty Communicating Emotions was statistically significant in predicting participants' own Intimate Safety for both husbands ($F_{(2)(131)} = 14.31$, $p < .001$) (see analysis 2 for husbands in Table 8) and wives ($F_{(2)(131)} = 5.16$, $p < .00$) (see analysis 2 for wives in Table 8). Husbands' Difficulty Identifying and Communicating Emotions accounted for 18.4% ($R^2 = .18$) of the variance in their own Intimate Safety while wives' Identifying and Communicating

Table 8

Predictions Between Participants' Difficulty Identifying Emotions, Difficulty Communicating Emotions, Marital Satisfaction, and Intimate Safety

Analysis and Predictor	B	SE	R^2	t	F	Sig	Criterion
Husband							Husbands
Analysis1			.14		10.59**	<.001	Marital Adjustment (RDAS)
ID	-.39	.12		-2.77**		.004	
COM	-.34	.19		-1.52		.109	
Analysis2			.18		14.31**	<.001	Intimate Safety (ISQR)
ID	-.88	.23		-3.90**		<.001	
COM	-.45	.36		-1.25		0.21	
Analysis3			.38		78.33**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction (RDAS)
ISQ	.35	.04		8.85**		<.001	
Wives							Wives
Analysis1			0.046		3.14*	.047	Marital Satisfaction (RDAS)
ID	-.32	0.16		- 2.04*		.044	
COM	-.04	.27		.14		.89	
Analysis2			.07		5.16**	<.001	Intimate Safety (ISQ-R)
ID	-.49	.26		-1.85		.067	
COM	-.41	.45		-.90		.371	
Analysis3			.37		76.45**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction (RDAS)
ISQ	.35	.41		8.74**		<.001	

Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$
ID = Difficulty Identifying Emotions; COM = Difficulty Communication Emotions; ISQ = Intimate Safety; RDAS = Marital Satisfaction.

Emotions only accounted for 7% ($R^2 = .07$) of their own Intimate Safety. For husbands, only Identifying Emotions accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance ($t = 3.90$, $p < .001$) in predicting their own intimate safety (see analysis 2 for husband in Table 8). For husbands Communicating Emotions did not add unique variance. For wives, neither Identifying Emotions ($t = -.185$, $p > .05$) nor Communicating Emotions ($t = -.90$, $p > .05$) added unique variance for predicting Intimate Safety (see analysis 2 for wives in Table 8).

Step 3: Specific Hypothesis 5c. There is a significant relationship between Intimate Safety and Marital Satisfaction.

Full: $Marital\ Satisfaction = \beta + \beta 1(Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: $Marital\ Satisfaction = \beta + \varepsilon$

This hypothesis was also significant for both husbands and wives with $F_{(1)(131)} = 78.33$, $p < .001$) for husbands and ($F_{(1)(131)} = 76.45$, $p < .001$) for wives. Thirty seven percent of the variance in Marital Satisfaction was accounted for by the Intimate Safety for both husbands ($R^2 = .38$) and wives ($R^2 = .37$) (See Table 8, Analysis 3 for husbands and wives).

Step 4: Specific Hypothesis 5d. Ability to Identify and Communicate Emotions will account for a significant proportion of unique variance in predicting Marital Satisfaction while controlling for the mediating variable of Intimate Safety.

Full: $Marital\ Satisfaction = \beta + \beta 1(ID\_Em) + \beta 2(Com\_Em) + \beta 3(Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: $Marital\ Satisfaction = \beta + \beta 4(Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Table 9 presents the results for the full model of Identifying and Communicating Emotions predicting Marital Satisfaction while controlling for Intimate Safety for both

the husbands and wives. A reading of Table 9 shows that for the husbands ($F_{change\ (2)(130)} = 1.82$, $p = .166$) and for the wives ($F_{change(2)(130)} = 0.68$ $p = .510$) there was not a significant relationship between identifying and communicating emotions and marital satisfaction after controlling for the mediating variable of intimate safety. Therefore, Intimate Safety is a complete mediator between Difficulty Identifying and Difficulty Communicating Emotion in predicting marital adjustment/satisfaction.

Table 9

Regression Results for Emotional Skills Predicting Marital Satisfaction While Controlling for Intimate Safety for Husbands and Wives

Step and Predictor	B	SE	R^2	R^2_{Change}	F_{Change}	Sig
Husbands						
Step 1			.38		78.33**	<.001
ISQ	.35	.04				<.001
Step 2			.39	.017	1.82	.166
ISQ	.32	.04				<.001
ID	-.11	.12				.353
COMM	-.19	.18				.272
Wives						
Step 1			.370		76.45**	<.001
ISQ	.35	.03				<.001
Step 2			.377	.007	.68	.510
ISQ	.35	.04				<.001
ID	-.15	.13				.250
COMM	.178	.22				.417

Note. ** $p < .01$
ID = Difficulty Identifying Emotions; COM = Difficulty Communication Emotions; ISQ = Intimate Safety; RDAS = Marital Satisfaction .

Hypothesis 6

The association between self-perceived ability to identify emotions and partners marital adjustment will be mediated by partners' intimate safety. Mediation analyses were used to test whether partners' intimate safety mediates between self-perceived ability to identify emotions and partners' marital adjustment. This hypothesis was tested by using the four step criteria of Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation model (see Figure 2 on p. 66).

The results for steps one through four and their specific hypotheses are presented below. Tables 10 and 11 present the results.

Step 1: Specific Hypothesis 6a. Self-perceived ability to identify emotions will significantly predict partners' marital satisfaction.

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction (P) $= \beta + \varepsilon$

A reading of Table 10, Analysis 1, shows that this hypothesis was found to be significant for both husbands ($F_{(1)(131)} = 18.34$, $p < .001$) and for wives ($F_{(1)(131)} = 6.30$, $p = .13$). For the husbands 12.4% ($R^2 = .124$) of the variance in their marital satisfaction was accounted for by the wives' Identifying Emotions. For the wives 4.6% ($R^2 = .46$) of the variance in their marital satisfaction was accounted for by the husbands' Identifying Emotions (see Table 10, Analysis 1).

Step 2: Specific Hypothesis 6b. Self-perceived ability to identify emotions significantly predicts partners' Intimate Safety.

Full: Intimate Safety (P) $= \beta + \beta 1(ID\_Emotions) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Intimate Safety (P) $= \beta + \varepsilon$

Table 10

The Relationship Between the Self-Perceived Ability to ID Emotions and Partner's Marital Satisfaction and Intimate Safety for Husbands and Wives

Analysis and Predictor	B	SE	R^2	t	F	Sig	Criterion
Husbands							Wives
Analysis 1			0.124		18.34**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction
ID	-0.49	0.12		-4.28**			
Analysis 2			0.172		26.94**	<.001	Intimate Safety
ID	-1.02	0.19		-5.19**			
Analysis 3			0.376		78.33**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction
ISQ-R	0.35	0.04		8.85**			
Wives							Husband
Analysis 1			0.046		6.30*	.013	Marital Satisfaction
ID	-0.30	0.121		-2.51**			
Analysis 2			0.068		9.53**	<.001	Intimate Safety
ID	-.635	0.206		-3.09**			
Analysis 3			0.370		76.45**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction
Intimate Safety	0.35	0.41		8.74**			

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.
ID = Identification of Emotions; ISQ-R = Intimate Safety

A reading of Table 10 Analysis 2 shows that this hypothesis was significant for both husbands ($F_{(1)(130)} = 26.94$, $p < .001$) and wives ($F_{(1)(130)} = 9.53$, $p < 0.001$). The ability to identify emotions accounted for about 17.2% ($R^2 = .172$) of variance in

predicting Intimate Safety for the husbands and 6.8% (R^2 = .0.68) for their wives' Intimate Safety (see Table 10, Analysis 2).

Step 3: Specific Hypothesis 6c. There is a significant relationship between Partner's Intimate Safety and Partner's Marital Satisfaction.

Full: Marital Satisfaction (P) $= \beta + \beta 1(P\_Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction (P) $= \beta + \varepsilon$

A reading of Table 10 Analysis 3 shows that this hypothesis was also significant for both husbands ($F_{(1)(131)} = 78.33$, $p < 0.001$) and wives ($F_{(1)(131)} = 76.45$). Thirty seven percent of the variance in Marital Satisfaction was accounted for by the Intimate Safety for both groups (see Table 10, Analysis 3).

Step 4: Specific Hypothesis 6d: Ability to Identify and Communicate Emotions will account for a significant proportion of unique variance in predicting Marital Satisfaction while controlling for the mediating variable of Intimate Safety.

Full: Marital Satisfaction (P) $= \beta + \beta 1(ID\_Em) + \beta 2(Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction (P) $= \beta + \beta 3(P\_Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Table 11 presents the results for the full model of self-perceived Identifying Emotions predicting Partner's Marital Satisfaction while controlling for Partners' Intimate Safety. For both husband and wife groups this hypothesis was not significant, ($F_{change(2)(131)} = 2.12$, p =.122 and $F_{change(2)(131)} = 0.69$, p =.407, respectively). In both groups partners' Intimate Safety was the only variable that accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance in predicting partners' marital adjustment/satisfaction with significance (see Table 11). Therefore, partners' intimate safety mediates the relationship

between self-perceived ability to identify emotions and the partners' marital adjustment/ satisfaction.

Table 11

Relationship Between Self-Perceived Ability to Identify Emotions and the Partners' Marital Satisfaction While Controlling for Partners' Intimate Safety for Husbands and Wives

Step and Predictor Variables	B	SE	R^2	R^2_{Change}	F_{Change}	Sig
Husbands						
Step 1			.376		78.33**	<.001
Partners' Intimate Safety	.35	.04				<.001
Step 2			.387	.011	2.12	.122
Partners' Intimate Safety	.32	.04				<.001
ID Emotions	-.17	.11				.122
Wives						
Step 1			.370		76.45**	<.001
Intimate Safety	.35	.04				<.001
Step 2			.374	.003	.69	.407
Intimate Safety	.35	.04				<.001
ID Emotions	-.09	.10				.407

Note. **$p < .01$.
ID = Identification of Emotions; ISQ-R = Intimate Safety

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 stated the association between self-perceived ability to communicate emotions and partners' marital adjustment will be mediated by partners' intimate safety. A mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986) was used to test hypothesis 7. The results

for steps one through four and their specific hypotheses are presented below. Tables 12 and 13 present the results.

Step 1: Specific Hypothesis 7a. Difficulty Communicating Emotion significantly predicts marital satisfaction for males and females.

Full: Marital Satisfaction (F) $= \beta + \beta 1(Communicate\_Emotions) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction (F) $= \beta + \varepsilon$

A reading of Table 12 Analysis 1 for husbands and for wives shows that this hypothesis was only significant for husbands. For the husbands, Communicating Emotions significantly predicted their wives' Marital Satisfaction ($F_{(1)(130)} = 11.81$, $p =$ .001 $R2 = .083$). There was no significant relationship between the wives' Communicating Emotions and their husbands' Marital Satisfaction ($F_{(1)(130)} = 2.08$, $p = .152$) (see Table 12, Analysis 1).

Step 2: Specific Hypothesis 7b. Husbands and wives' Difficulty Communicating Emotion will significantly predict Intimate Safety.

Full: Intimate Safety (F) $= \beta + \beta 1(Communicate\_Emotions) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Intimate Safety (F) $= \beta + \varepsilon$

A review of Table 12 Analysis 2 for husbands and wives reveals that this hypothesis was significant for both husband and wife groups ($F_{(1)(130)} = 12.10$, $p <$ .001and $F_{(1)(130)} = 6.79$, $p = .01$, respectively). The results show that for males Difficulty Communicating Emotion accounted for 8.5% of variance in predicting Intimate Safety. For the wives Difficulty Communicating Emotions accounted for 5% of the variance in predicting Intimate Safety (see Table 12, Analysis 2).

Table 12

Relationship Between Self-Perceived Ability to Communicate Emotions and Partners' Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction and Intimate Safety for Husbands and Wives Intimate Safety

Analysis and Predictor	B	SE	R^2	t	F	Sig	Criterion
Husbands							Wives
Analysis 1			.083		11.81**	.001	Marital Satisfaction
Communicate Emotions	-.64	.19		-2.89**			
Analysis 2			.085		12.10**	.001	Intimate Safety
Communicate Emotions	-1.14	.328		-3.48**			
Analysis 3			.376		78.33**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction
Intimate Safety	.35	.04		8.85**			
Wives							Husbands
Analysis 1			.016		2.08	.152	Marital Satisfaction
Communicate Emotions	-.31	.21		-1.41*			
Analysis 2			.05		6.79**	.010	Intimate Safety
Communicate Emotions	-.93	.35		-2.61*			
Analysis 3			.370		76.45**	<.001	Marital Satisfaction
Intimate Safety	.35	.41		8.74**			

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Step 3:Specific Hypothesis 7c. There is a significant relationship between Males and Females' Intimate Safety and Males and Females' Marital Satisfaction.

Full: Marital Satisfaction (F) $= \beta + \beta 1(F\_Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction (F) $= \beta + \varepsilon$

A look at Table 12 Analysis 3 for husbands and wives reveals that this hypothesis was also significant for both husbands ($F_{(1)(131)} = 78.33$) and wives ($F_{(1)(131)} = 76.45$). Both of these were significant at a $p < .001$. Thirty seven percent of the variance in Marital Satisfaction was accounted for by the Intimate Safety for both groups (see Table 12, Analysis 3).

Step 4: Specific Hypothesis7 5d. Males' and Females' Communicating Emotions will account for a significant proportion of unique variance in predicting their partners' Marital Satisfaction while controlling for the mediating variable of Intimate Safety.

Full: Marital Satisfaction (F) $= \beta + \beta 1(Com\_Em) + \beta 2(Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Restricted: Marital Satisfaction (F) $= \beta + \beta 3(F\_Intimate\_Safety) + \varepsilon$

Table 13 presents the results for the full mediation model for the relationship between self-perceived Difficulty Communicating Emotions and partners' Marital Satisfaction while controlling the partners' for Intimate Safety. For both husbands and wives this hypothesis was not significant, ($F_{change(1)(129)} = 2.226$, $p = .098$) and ($F_{change(1)(129)} = .022$, $p = .881$). For husbands and wives Communicating Emotions accounted for less than 1% of the unique variance of the partners' Marital Satisfaction over and above the variance accounted for by the partners' Intimate Safety. Once again only males and females Intimate Safety accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance $p < .001$(see Table 13). Therefore, for both husbands and wives the partners' intimate safety mediated the relationship between self-perceived ability to communicate emotions and the partners' marital satisfaction.

Table 13

The Prediction of Self-Perceived Ability to Communicate Emotions on the Partner's Marital Satisfaction While Controlling for the Partners' Intimate Safety for Husbands and Wives

Step and Predictor	B	SE	R^2	R^2_{Change}	F_{Change}	Sig
Husbands						
Step 1			.376		78.27**	<.001
Intimate Safety	.34	.04				
Step 2			.389	.013	2.226	.098
Intimate Safety	.35	.04				<.001
Communicate Emotions	-.27	.16				.098
Wives						
Step 1			.370		78.27**	<.001
Intimate Safety	.35	.04				
Step 2			.370	0	.022	.881
Intimate Safety	.36	.04				<.001
Communicate Emotions	.026	.17				.881

Note. **$p < .01$.

Summary of Quantitative Research

Many of the hypotheses were supported and some were partially supported or not supported. There was no significant difference between African American males and African American females in their self-reported ability to identify and communicate emotions. Thus hypothesis 1 was not supported. There was a significant relationship between African Americans' self-perceived ability to identify and communicate emotions and their own marital adjustment and intimate safety. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was

supported. Hypothesis 3 was supported in that African Americans' self-perceived ability to identify emotions was associated with partners' marital adjustment and intimate safety. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. There was a significant relationship between African American males' ability to communicate emotions and African American wives' intimate safety and marital satisfaction. Husbands' difficulty communicating emotions was negatively correlated with wives' satisfaction and intimate safety. However, wives' ability to communicate emotions was not correlated with husbands' marital satisfaction although it was significantly negatively correlated with husbands' intimate safety. These results also partially supported hypotheses 5, 6, and 7. Intimate safety was found to be a mediating variable for the self-perceived ability to identify and communicate emotions predicting one's own and partners' marital satisfaction.

The results of this study are similar to the results of Cordova et al.'s study, which was replicated using a different sample population and revised versions of the marital satisfaction scale and the intimate safety scales. A brief comparison of the results of this study and the replicated study appear in Table 14. A more detailed comparison of results appears in Chapter V.

Table 14

Comparison of Studies

Studies	Cordova et. al., (2005)	Dunham (2008)
Participants	92 married couples Mean age: men 41 women 38.8 Mean years married 11.2 Mean income 53,000 Mean number of children 1.7 98% white	132 married couples Mean age: men 48.45 women 45.68 Mean years married 18 Mean income $69,000 Mean number of children 1.4 100% African American
Measurements	TAS-20; ISQ; DAS	TAS-20; ISQ-R; RDAS
Hypothesis 1	Not supported- no gender differences on ID emotions & COMM emotions	Not supported-no significant difference between husbands' and wives' scores. ID emotions (t= -0.32, p> 0.5), Difficulty Communicate Emotions (t= -1.33, p> 0.5)
Hypothesis 2	Supported	Supported -both ID emotions COMM emotions were negatively correlated with Marital Satisfaction and Intimate Safety.
Hypothesis 3	Partially supported –self-perceived ID emotions was neg. correlated with partners' satisfaction for both wives & husbands. Wives' ID emotions was not sig. associated with husbands' ISQ-R	Supported -both husbands' and wives' own difficulty ID emotions was negatively correlated with spouses' marital satisfaction/ Intimate Safety (IS)
Hypothesis 4	Supported	Partially supported-Partially Supported – Husbands' difficulty comm. emotions were negatively correlated with wives' marital adjustment and IS. Contrary to the hypothesis, wives' difficulty comm. emotions was associated with husbands' IS
Hypothesis 5	Partially Supported –IS fully mediated the association b/t the ability to COMM emotions & satisfaction for women & partially mediated for men	Supported (IS fully mediated b/t Emotional Skillfulness & Marital Satisfaction)
Hypothesis 6	Partially Supported –association b/t husbands' difficulty ID emotions & wives' marital adjustments were fully mediated by wives' IS. Mediation analyses were not performed because they were not supported by preliminary correlations.	Supported -Partners' IS mediated between self-perceived ability to ID emotions and partners' marital satisfaction.
Hypothesis 7	Supported	Supported -Partners' IS mediated between self-perceived ability to COMM. emotions and partners' marital satisfaction

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF STUDY

This chapter includes an analysis of the results of this study and is divided into four sections: study overview, conclusions and discussion, implications of findings, and recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

The current study was conducted for several reasons. The first reason was to expand the research base for working with African American couples. Although there are several evidenced-based models on working with couples in therapy (Gottman, 1999, Greenberg, 2008; Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Greenberg, 1985, 1988), few studies supporting these models have specifically focused on African-American couples. Second, it is important to continue to expand studies on emotional expression and regulation, especially within the context of couples. The role of emotions in mental, physical, and relational health has made a resurgence in psychotherapy literature (Greenberg, 2008) and is the basis for several major theories of emotional health such as emotionally focused therapy, emotional intelligence, and emotional skillfulness. Third, the current study was meant to replicate Cordova et al.'s (2005) investigation of emotion regulation and expression and its relationship to intimacy and marital satisfaction. Cordova and his associates have operationally defined emotional skills and built a theory to explain the

correlation between feelings of intimate safety (intimacy), marital satisfaction and emotional skillfulness (Cordova, 2007; Cordova & Scott, 2001; Cordova et al., 2005; Dorian & Cordova, 2004; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Olsen, 2006).

People learn how to enact different emotions and that there are different levels of interpersonal effectiveness, with some enactments increasing the health of a relationship and some corroding relational health (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). Hurt is inevitable in a relationship. However, if one has acquired effective emotional skills, interpersonal hurt is enacted as assertive communication, relationship-enhancing attributions, self-disclosure, empathy, repair seeking, empathy, et cetera (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). Basically, an emotionally skillful couple hurts and feels hurt less often, but when feeling vulnerable, is able to enact relationship enhancing strategies that facilitate the development of intimacy (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007).

While emotional skillfulness theory and related research are promising, research thus far has utilized predominantly Caucasian participants. In order to extend Cordova's research and to explore the generalizability of these ideas with African American couples, the author replicated Cordova et al.'s (2005) study on emotional skillfulness, intimacy, and marital satisfaction utilizing African American couples. Revised versions of measures used by Cordova et al. (2005) were administered in this study. In general, the results of this study were consistent with that theory and replicated, with an African American sample, Cordova et al.'s (2005) study of EST.

Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore EST with African American couples. The theory posits that emotion al skills provide a basis for marital health because it helps to maintain marital intimacy.

One hundred and thirty-two married, African-American couples completed measures of emotional skillfulness (identifying emotion and communicating emotion), marital adjustment, and intimacy. As with the Cordova et al.'s, (2005) study, the main purpose of this research was to test the relationship between emotional skillfulness, marital adjustment, intimate safety and how emotional skillfulness might differ based on sex. The findings supported the belief that for both African American women and men perceived deficits in one's own emotional skills may decrease one's intimate safety and satisfaction in marriage. Results of the mediation analyses supported the hypothesized relationship between emotional skillfulness and marital satisfaction. Intimacy (as measured by intimate safety) mediated between emotional skills and marital satisfaction as Cordova et al. (2005) had originally argued. "Theoretically, emotional skills facilitate the intimacy process through the role they play in both (a) the management of an individual's own interpersonal vulnerability in the relationship and (b) the skillful handling of the partner's interpersonal vulnerability" (Cordova et al., 2005, p. 229).

In addition to the findings that perceptions of one's own skills have an influence on one's own marital satisfaction and intimate safety, there also was a relationship between perceived skills and partner's marital satisfaction and intimate safety. African Americans husbands' emotional skills (both identification and communication of emotions) were related to their wives' marital adjustment and intimate safety; however

only identifying emotions added significant variance; African American wives' emotional skillfulness (both identifying and communicating emotions) was related to their husbands' intimate safety, but only identifying emotions was significantly associated with marital adjustment (neither added unique variance). This is somewhat different than what Cordova et al. (2005) found. In their study, wives' ability to identify emotions was related to husbands' marital adjustment, but it was not related to husbands' intimate safety, nor was wives' difficulty communicating emotions correlated with husbands' dyadic adjustment or intimate safety.

The difference in results could be spurious or related to differences in the way couples express emotions, feel safe in intimate relationships, and feel satisfied in the marriage based on race and subculture. For Caucasian husbands, only wives' ability to identify emotions (not their ability to communicate them) was related to marital satisfaction. For African American husbands, the wives identifying emotions had an effect on their marital satisfaction and intimate safety. However wives' difficulty communicating emotions did not correlate with husbands' satisfaction. Generally the African-American culture is viewed as more comfortable expressing intense emotions than Caucasians (Samter, Whaley, Mortenson, & Burleson, 1997). Some scholars argue that African Americans value the ability to be emotionally expressive, rather than repressing emotions (Kochman, 1981). However, there is little information or research geared toward investigating how African Americans' values about emotional expressiveness may influence their interpersonal relationships. Also, the TAS-20 may not tap into the differences in the way emotions are communicated between African American couples compared to Caucasian couples. More research is needed to clarify the

role of emotional expressiveness and intimate safety and marital satisfaction in African American couples.

In regard to the general theory, as Cordova et al. (2005) found with their 98% Caucasian sample, there was support for the idea that African American husbands' level of skillfulness at identifying and communicating their emotions influences wives' feeling of vulnerability (intimate safety), which influences their level of satisfaction in the marriage. The association between husbands' emotional skills and wives' marital adjustment was mediated by wives' intimate safety.

There was no significant difference between African American men's and women's scores on Difficulty Identifying and Difficulty Communicating Emotions. This finding differed from Cordova et al. (2005), who found significant differences between men (who had more difficulty communicating emotion) and women, but no significant differences based on sex in regard to identifying emotion. The difference in findings in this replication with African American couples could indicate that African American men and women are similar in their self-perceived abilities to identify and communicate their feelings and that gendered expectations around identification and communication of feelings has less of an impact on African American couples than on Caucasian couples.

The nonsignificant difference between African American men and women could also be due to the nature of self-reports. In Mirgain and Cordova's (2007) study, observed emotional skills were better predictors of marital satisfaction for wives than self-report. This suggested that women tend to overestimate their own emotional skills. Perhaps African American men overestimate their skills or African American women underestimate their skills. In addition, it could be due to cultural differences between

African American and Caucasian couples. The findings may be accurate and African men and women do not actually differ in their skills. Perhaps African American women and men do not differ on self-perceptions of emotional skills because African American women do not overestimate their own emotional skills or African American men have similar emotional skills. African Americans may tend to value more egalitarian relationships (Allen & Olson, 2001) and may be exposed to different role models in terms of gender roles, especially as they relate to emotion, than Caucasian samples. Future research using observations of emotional skills with African American couples may shed light on this issue.

Of course, the lack of difference in self-perceived skills could also be due to context. A person's perceived and/or actual skills may change depending on context and the type of relationship in which they are tested. For instance, Croyle and Waltz (2002) studied whether emotional awareness was related to couple satisfaction. They found that emotional awareness plays a part in couples satisfaction and that there were some differences for men and women. Women tended to report more emotions, elaborate more on emotions in response to salient couple situations, and to give more elaborate responses when asked how partners would feel than male respondents. Men and women did not differ in awareness in response to more general life situations. This lends credence to Gottman's (1994, 1998) findings that men, when emotionally aroused within the confines of an intimate relationship, tend to become more easily flooded by their physiology and emotions (entering diffuse physiological arousal) which would affect their ability to be aware of their own emotions and communicate effectively. In situations that are perceived as less emotionally "threatening" by men, they should be able to be aware of

their emotions and communicate just as effectively as women. Emotional skills may change across contexts and relationships (Croyle & Waltz, 2002; Grewel, Brackett, & Salovey, 2006). One may have the same skills independent of context but may be able to access and utilize them differently depending on context and relationship (e.g., a husband may handle an emotionally charged encounter well with a friend but have more difficulty with his wife).

Overall, the findings were remarkably similar to the original study that utilized 98% Caucasian couples. The current study with African American couples also lends support to the theory that emotional skills are associated with marital health because they help maintain intimacy (Cordova et al., 2005) and that this theory may be useful for both Caucasian and African American couples. Although the few differences between the two studies warrant further investigation to see if there are some differences between African American couples and Caucasian couples, that would be important in understanding intimacy and marital happiness.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that need to be addressed. First, the data were cross-sectional so the direction of the relationship between emotional skills and marital satisfaction cannot be determined. Does emotional skillfulness determine intimate safety and marital satisfaction or are they are reflection of a happy marriage? Second, the researcher utilized self-report measures to collect data. There were no ratings by outside observers so there may have been shared variance biases influencing the results. Using self-report measures may also limit the information that participants were willing to acknowledge and disclose. Although self-report is the traditionally used method to gain

information on participants, data gathered using self-report could be biased due to social desirability issues or because participants may have completed the measure in the presence of their spouse. Third, the mean reported income in this sample was somewhat high, $69,042 (n = 110). Some of the findings may not be generalizable to lower socioeconomic levels. Further studies will need to be conducted to address the generalizability of these findings to a more representative diverse sample. Fourth, the majority of participants identified themselves as Christian (wives' 18.2% and husbands' 13.6%), and/or Baptist (wives' 46.2% and husbands' 53.8%) in the demographic questionnaire. The findings may not be generalizable to other religious groups of African Americans. Fifth, participants chiefly came from North Carolina so the results may not be generalizable to African American couples in other geographic locations. Sixth, all the measure may not be sensitive to African American couples' styles of communicating intimacy from a cultural perspective. Measures normed on one ethnic population and/or with restricted socioeconomic status may not be valid with another population and socioeconomic group (Jones, 1996). For example the TAS-20 has items "I prefer to just let things happen rather than to understand why they turned out that way" or "being in touch with emotions is essential." These kinds of items may not capture the specific ways African American couples communicate emotions.

In addition, only two emotional skills were measured in this study utilizing self-report methods (as mentioned previously) in an uncontrolled context. A larger number of emotional skills should be explored and should include other measures than just self-report. Self-reports are useful but do have their limitations. For example, those with poorer emotional skills most likely will not be very good judges of their own skills. Also,

there may be a difference between people's self-assessment of skills and their ability to behave in emotionally challenging situations. So the person's overall assessment of himself or herself may be accurate but under distress the person's enactment of emotional skills may be restricted. Gottman (1999) lends some support for this hypothesis with his work on diffuse physiological arousal. Men tend to be more prone to physiological "flooding" than their wives (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1994).

Implications for Future Research

The research to date has only begun to investigate the relationships between emotional skillfulness and intimate safety and marital satisfaction. Future research needs to examine whether different emotional skills have a differentially larger or smaller impact on the marital satisfaction and intimate safety of husbands and wives (Olsen, 2006) and whether certain emotional skills are more important in different situations (e.g., an argument). Emotional skillfulness can be conceptualized as a broad construct encompassing various specific skills. Mirgain and Cordova (2006) found that being emotionally competent is associated with skillfulness in emotional control, the identification and communication of emotion, empathy, and comfort with the manner and amount of emotional expression. In addition, marital satisfaction is a global measure and may be less influenced by emotional skills than perhaps specific marital interactions (Olsen, 2006). For example, specific emotional skills may be important for problem-solving, de-escalation of arguments, increasing feelings of positive sentiment, or sexual intimacy. Future research needs to explore these more discrete aspects of the global concepts of emotional competence and marital satisfaction. In addition, further research needs to be done to see if there are core emotional skills that are common to all stable,

happy couples that a person must have (regardless of how many other skills he/she has) or if there are an optimal number of skills (Mirgain & Cordova, 2006). Also, besides influencing marital satisfaction through intimate safety, there are most likely other mediators between emotional skills and marital satisfaction (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007).

Furthermore, researchers need to explore whether the essential and/or optimal amount of skills may differ across sex, race, cultural groups and/or time. Perhaps which skills are most important may also change across the developmental life of a marriage. For example, there may be different skills that are important in the beginning, middle, and later stages of marriage and depending on the transitions a couple has in their marriage (e.g., children, death, illness, retirement).

Future research should include different research methods and measurements. For instance, qualitative methods may help to explore how African American couples express emotions related to intimacy and how they perceive intimacy safety. In addition, research needs to include other empirical measures that will be more sensitive to African Americans. Finally, the current study compared African American men as a group with African American women as a group. It did not compare African American husbands and wives as a couple. Future research needs to use nested designs that look at behavior between the couples not between large groups of husbands versus large groups of wives in general.

As EST is expanded and understood better there will need to be a more complex model and nomenclature created to conceptualize skills and their relation to one another and to the intimacy process. Some of the nomenclature can be borrowed from the larger emotion regulation literature. This expansion should lead to interventions that will be

evidence based. Currently, interventions based on this theory are limited (Wachs & Cordova, 2007). As EST grows various intervention models will need to be integrated with the theory.

Implications for Marital Therapy

The current study and possible future research on Emotional Skillfulness Theory with African Americans has several implications for marital therapy. First, clinicians need to be aware of how interventions may be differentially effective for various groups. The current study points to the possible effectiveness of increasing intimacy and marital satisfaction through increasing emotional skills. In addition, there were some possible differences between Caucasians and African Americans. African American men and women seemed to be more similar in regards to the influence of emotional skills than were the Caucasian sample in Cordova et al.'s (2005) study. Clinicians may have to address Caucasian husbands and wives differently based on gender, but African American wives and husbands had less gender differences when it came to emotional skills.

The results of this study suggest that emotional skillfulness is related to African American's own marital satisfaction and intimate safety. Therefore, when working with African American couples it is important to be aware of possible deficits in their emotional skills which may impact (weaken) their own marital satisfaction. When working specifically with African American married couples, it is important to be aware of the cultural context from which they come and how it impacts their ability to express emotions. Clinicians must also consider their own assumptions regarding issues such as the history of racism and oppression and the impact it can have on African American

marriages. Clinicians must take into consideration the unique experiences of African Americans and how those experiences shape their interpersonal relationships (marital satisfaction and intimate safety) and how exploring those experiences can serve as a vessel for change. Clinicians that overlook African American experiences can hinder the therapeutic experience. However, clinicians that shows an understanding and respect for the African American (unique) experience may help African American clients to feel understood, decrease the historically (negative) view of counseling held by some African Americans, and improve African American marital satisfaction. Most importantly, addressing their unique experiences may help African American married couples to feel that they are recognized as a group of people that have their own strengths and cultural differences rather than being treated as if they are carbon copies of all other couples seeking counseling.

As EST is explored in more detail with African American couples and couples in general, researchers may find that specific emotional skills may be more or less important for African American couples than for other couples. In addition, specific processes in marriage may be more important for specific couples. For example, it may be more important for African American couples to focus on specific emotional skills relating to problem-solving and sexual intimacy. Research may also reveal that African Americans and Caucasians are more similar than dissimilar in their views on emotional skills, their views of intimacy, and on marital satisfaction. Currently, clinicians do not know if evidenced-based approaches like EFT and SRH are also valid and effective for African Americans. Marital and family therapists will need to be aware of the findings from future research on these approaches with African American clients. Until this research is

conducted therapists working with couples need to sensitively monitor the impact of their interventions with couples and families from different multicultural groups.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN COUPLES

Thank you very much for agreeing to complete this survey on marital satisfaction among African American couples. Below are several questions that will be used to provide background information about the couples who have participated in this study. Please answer all of the questions below as well as those on the attached questionnaires. Again, thank you very much for helping to broaden our understanding of marital satisfaction in the African American community.

---

1. How did you hear about this study on marital satisfaction (ex. from a friend)?
   _____

2. How old are you today? _____

3. What is your gender? ☐ Male or ☐ Female

4. What is your religious affiliation? _____

5. Are you currently married? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If "**YES**," how many <u>years</u> have you been married? _____

   If "**YES**," how many <u>times</u> have you been married? _____

6. Are you currently not legally married but cohabitating and your state recognizes your relationship as a "**common law marriage**"? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If "**YES**," how many <u>years</u> have you been married? _____

7. How many children are currently living in your household?_____

8. Were your parents married before you were born (please check)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8a. **If you answered "YES" to question 8**, please write-in if your parents are currently legally separated *or* divorced: _____

8b. **If you specified "legally separated" or "divorced,"** please write-in how old you were when your parents legally separated _____ or divorced _____?

9. While you were growing up, which of the following is *mostly true* of the marital status and living arrangements of your parents? (Please select only one)

a. My parents were married and lived in the same household
b. My parents were married and lived in different households
c. My parents were legally separated and lived in the same household
d. My parents were legally separated and lived in different households
e. My parents were divorced and lived in the same households
f. My parents were divorced and lived in different households
g. My parents were never married and lived in the same household
h. My parents were never married and lived in different households

10. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (Please check one). *If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received*:

_____ Less than a high school degree
_____ High school (diploma or equivalent, *for example: GED*)
_____ Associates degree (*for example: AA, AS*)
_____ Bachelor's degree
_____ Master's degree
_____ Professional degree (*for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD*)
_____ Doctorate degree (*for example: PhD, EdD*)

11. Are you currently employed part-time or full-time? ☐ Part-time ☐ Full-time

12. What is your current household income? $_____

APPENDIX B

TORONTO ALEXITHYMIA SCALE (TAS-20)

Instructions

Using the scale provided as a guide, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the corresponding number. Give only one answer for each statement.

Circle 1 if you STRONGLY DISAGREE
Circle 2 if you MODERATELY DISAGREE
Circle 3 if you NEITHER DISAGREE NOR AGREE
Circle 4 if you MODERATELY AGREE
Circle 5 if you STRONGLY AGREE

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am often confused about what emotion I am feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is difficult for me to find the right words for my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have physical sensations that even doctors don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am able to describe my feelings easily.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I prefer to analyze problems rather than just describe them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I am upset, I don't know if I am sad, frightened, or angry.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am often puzzled by sensations in my body.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I prefer to just let things happen rather than to understand why they turned out that way.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have feelings that I can't quite identify.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Being in touch with emotions is essential.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I find it hard to describe how I feel about people.	1	2	3	4	5
12. People tell me to describe my feelings more.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I don't know what's going on inside me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I often don't know why I am angry.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I prefer talking to people about their daily activities rather than their feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I prefer to watch "light" entertainment shows rather than psychological dramas	1	2	3	4	5
17. It is difficult for me to reveal my innermost feelings, even to close friends.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I can feel close to someone, even in moments of silence.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I find examination of my feelings useful in solving personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Looking for hidden meanings in movies or plays distracts from their enjoyment.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C

REVISED DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE (RDAS)

Instructions

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Using the scale provided as a guide, please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the corresponding number. Give only one answer for each statement.

Circle 0 if you ALWAYS AGREE
Circle 1 if you ALMOST ALWAYS AGREE
Circle 2 if you OCCASIONALLY AGREE
Circle 3 if you FREQUENTLY DISAGREE
Circle 4 if you ALMOST ALWAYS DISAGREE
Circle 5 if you ALWAYS DISAGREE

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Religious matters	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Demonstrations of affection	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. Making major decisions	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sex relations	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Career decisions	0	1	2	3	4	5

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, terminating your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	0	1	2	3	4	5

10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	0	1	2	3	4

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
12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. Work together on a project .	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Calmly discuss something	0	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX D

INTIMATE SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE REVISED (ISQ-R)

Instructions

Using the scale provided as a guide, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the corresponding number. Give only one answer for each statement.

Circle 0 if you NEVER
Circle 1 if you RARELY
Circle 2 if you SOMETIMES
Circle 3 if you OFTEN
Circle 4 if you ALWAYS

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. When I am with my partner I feel safe and comfortable.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I feel comfortable when my partner initiates sex with me.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I feel threatened when my partner tells me I have done something to upset him/her.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I like to tell my partner about my day.	0	1	2	3	4
5. When my partner and I meet at the end of the day, I feel tense and anxious.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I feel comfortable telling my partner when I'm feeling scared/anxious.	0	1	2	3	4
7. It makes me uncomfortable for my partner to disagree with me.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Sharing a difference of opinion with my partner is upsetting.	0	1	2	3	4
9. When I need to cry I go to my partner	0	1	2	3	4
10. I feel comfortable listening to my partner talk about his/her day.	0	1	2	3	4

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
11. I feel uncomfortable disagreeing with my partner when we are with other people.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I am comfortable being physically affectionate with my partner.	0	1	2	3	4
13. When I have thoughts of feelings that . are vague or uncertain, I find it helpful to talk with my partner.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Being physically affectionate with my partner makes me uncomfortable.	0	1	2	3	4
15. In public, I feel like I'm in danger of being "put down" by my partner.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Sex with my partner makes me uncomfortable	0	1	2	3	4
17. I feel comfortable initiating sex with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
18. I feel comfortable telling my partner things I would not tell anyone else.	0	1	2	3	4
19. When things aren't going well for me, it's comforting to talk to my partner.	0	1	2	3	4
20. When we are out with other people my partner hurts my feelings or makes me mad.	0	1	2	3	4
21. I feel comfortable telling my partner when I'm feeling sad.	0	1	2	3	4
22. I feel comfortable consoling my partner when he/she cries.	0	1	2	3	4
23. When I'm upset, there are other people that I would rather talk to than my partner.	0	1	2	3	4
24. I avoid having sex with my partner	0	1	2	3	4
25. My friends seem to genuinely like my partner.	0	1	2	3	4
26. When I am with my partner I feel anxious, like I'm walking on eggshells.	0	1	2	3	4
27. It's hard to apologize to my partner when when I've done something wrong.	0	1	2	3	4
28. I feel like I have watch what I do or or say around my partner	0	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX E

THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

The purpose of this letter is to seek your participation in a research project and to provide related information regarding the study. Participants are invited to voluntarily participate in a research project being conducted by Shea M. Dunham, a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling at The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio 44325-5007.
The general purpose of this research study is to look at the relationship between communication patterns and marital adjustment with African American couples. The results of this study will assist researchers, clinicians, and people in general to gain a better understanding of various aspects within marital satisfaction among African American couples.

As a participant in this study you and your spouse will be asked to complete, ***individually*** three assessments and one demographic questionnaire. The assessments use a Likert type scale in which participants just have to circle a rating for each item. This process will take approximately 35 minutes to complete.
There are no known risks for participating in this research study. However, there is the potential for discomfort associated in providing personal and sensitive information. The researcher has included in the assessment packets referral information for crisis and counseling centers along with a crisis hotline number in the event that emotional distress should occur.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to refuse or withdraw your participation from this study at anytime. No identifying information will be collected, and your anonymity is further protected by not requesting you to sign and return an informed consent form. The data collected will be entered into a password protected computer and written protocols will be locked in a filing cabinet. If you have any questions about this study, you may email Shea M. Dunham at smd41@uakron.edu or my doctoral advisor, Linda Perosa, Ph.D. at lperosa@uakron.edu or call at 330-972-6735.
Acceptance: I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. My completion and return of this packet will serve as my consent. I have been given a copy of this consent form for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Shea M. Dunham M.S.W, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling
The University of Akron

APPENDIX F

TABLES

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics of Male and Female Participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female					
Age	131	25	71	45.68	10.82
Years Married	130	1	52	18.28	12.43
Income	109	0	200,000	67,709.18	37,545.63
Number of Children	237	0	5	1.35	1.12
Male					
Age	132	28	73	48.5	11.61
Years Married	128	1	52	18.16	12.41
Income		0	250,000	70,351.95	43,387.91
Number of Children	120	0	5	1.34	1.1

Table 16

Participant Religion

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female				
Blank	14	10.6	10.6	10.6
Apostolic	1	.8	.8	11.4
Baptist	61	46.2	46.2	57.6
Christian/ Methodist	1	.8	.8	58.4
Christian	24	18.2	18.2	76.5
Christian / Nondenominational	12	9.1	9.1	85.6
Church of Christ	2	1.5	1.5	87.0
Church of God	1	.8	.8	87.8
Holiness	4	3.0	3.0	90.8
Jehovah's Witness	1	.8	.8	91.6
Methodist	10	7.6	7.6	99.2
Pentecostal	1	.8	.8	100
Total	132	100.0		
Males				
Blank	14	10.6	10.6	10.6
All	1	.8	.8	11.4
AME	1	.8	.8	12.1
Apostolic	1	.8	.8	12.9
Baptist	71	53.8	53.8	66.7
child of God	1	.8	.8	67.4
Christian	18	13.6	13.6	81.1
Christian /Methodist	1	.8	.8	81.8
Church of Christ	1	.8	.8	82.6
Church of God	1	.8	.8	83.3
Holiness	3	2.3	2.3	85.6
Methodist	8	6.1	6.1	91.7
Non-Denominational	9	6.8	6.8	97.5
None	1	.8	.8	98.5
Open	1	.8	.8	100.0
Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Table 17

Participants' Highest Level of Education Completed

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Females				
Less Than High School	6	4.5	4.6	4.6
High School Diploma or GED	48	36.4	36.6	41.2
Associates Degree	25	18.9	19.1	60.3
Bachelor's Degree	34	25.8	26.0	86.3
Master's Degree	14	10.6	10.7	96.9
Professional Degree	2	1.5	1.5	98.5
Doctorate Degree	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total Reported	131	99.2	100.0	
Missing	1	.8		
Total	132	100.0		
Males				
Less Than High School	10	7.6	7.8	7.8
High School Diploma or GED	51	38.6	39.5	47.3
Associates Degree	16	12.1	12.4	59.7
Bachelor's Degree	39	29.5	30.2	89.9
Master's Degree	8	6.1	6.2	96.1
Professional Degree	2	1.5	1.6	97.7
Doctorate Degree	3	2.3	2.3	100.0
Total Reported	129	98.5	100	
Missing	3	1.5		
Total	132	100		

Table 18

Participants Current Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Females					
Part-time		19	14.4	16.5	16.5
Full-time		92	69.7	80.0	96.5
Blank		4	3.0	3.5	100.0
		115	87.1	100.0	
	Total	115	87.1	100.0	
	Reported				
	Missing	17	12.9		
	Total	132	100.0		
Males					
	Part-time	12	9.1	10.4	10.4
	Full-time	99	75.0	86.1	96.5
	Blank	4	3.0	3.5	100.0
Total		115	87.1	100.0	
Reported					
Missing		17	12.9		
Total		132	100.0		

Table 19

How Participants Were Referred to Participate in the Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female					
	Blank	7	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Church	28	21.2	21.2	26.5
	Co-worker	1	.8	.8	27.3
	Doctoral Student	1	.8	.8	28.0
	Family	8	6.1	6.1	34.1
	Family member	1	.8	.8	34.8
	Friend	60	45.5	45.5	80.3
	Husband	4	3.0	3.0	83.3
	Pastor	15	11.4	11.4	94.7
	Relative	1	.8	.8	95.5
	Researcher	1	.8	.8	96.2
	Spouse	5	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	132	100.0	100.0	
Male					
	Blank	9	6.8	6.8	6.8
	Acquaintance	1	.8	.8	7.6
	Church	23	17.4	17.4	25.0
	Co-worker	1	.8	.8	25.8
	Family	11	8.3	8.3	34.1
	Friend	61	46.2	46.2	80.3
	Minister	1	.8	.8	81.1
	Pastor	1	.8	.8	81.8
	Pastor	13	9.8	9.8	91.7
	Pastor/Wife	1	.8	.8	92.4
	Professor at school	1	.8	.8	93.2
	Relative	1	.8	.8	93.9
	Researcher	1	.8	.8	94.7
	Spouse	5	3.8	3.8	98.5
	Wife	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Table 20

Participants Parents That Are Currently Legally Separated or Divorced

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female					
	Blank	77	58.3	58.3	58.3
	1	1	.8	.8	59.1
	Both deceased	1	.8	.8	59.8
	Both Deceased	2	1.5	1.5	61.4
	Deceased	21	15.9	15.9	77.3
	Divorced	20	15.2	15.2	92.4
	Father Deceased	4	3.0	3.0	95.5
	Married	2	1.5	1.5	97.0
	Mother Deceased	1	.8	.8	97.7
	Separated	1	.8	.8	98.5
	Separated	1	.8	.8	99.2
	Widowed	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	132	100		
Male					
	Blank	74	56.1	56.1	56.1
	Both Deceased	3	2.3	2.3	58.3
	Deceased	22	16.7	16.7	75.0
	Divorced	18	13.6	13.6	88.6
	Father Deceased	7	5.3	5.3	93.9
	Married	1	.8	.8	94.7
	Mother Deceased	1	.8	.8	95.5
	One Deceased	1	.8	.8	96.2
	Separated	5	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Table 21

Age of Participants When Their Parents Divorced

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Females					
	0	1	.8	5.0	5.0
	0.75	1	.8	5.0	10.0
	2	1	.8	5.0	15.0
	3	2	1.5	10.0	25.0
	4	3	2.3	15.0	40.0
	10	3	2.3	15.0	55.0
	12	1	.8	5.0	60.0
	18	1	.8	5.0	65.0
	19	1	.8	5.0	70.0
	20	1	.8	5.0	75.0
	21	1	.8	5.0	80.0
	22	1	.8	5.0	85.0
	23	2	1.5	10.0	95.0
	25	1	.8	5.0	100.0
Total		20	15.2	100.0	
Reported					
Missing		112	84.8		
Total		132	100.0		
Males					
	0	1	.8	7.1	7.1
	3	2	1.5	14.3	21.4
	4	2	1.5	14.3	35.7
	6	2	1.5	14.3	50.0
	8	1	.8	7.1	57.1
	12	1	.8	7.1	64.3
	15	1	.8	7.1	71.4
	21	1	.8	7.1	78.6
	25	1	.8	7.1	85.7
	32	1	.8	7.1	92.9
	35	1	.8	7.1	100.0
Total		14	10.6	100.0	
Reported					
Missing		118			
Total		132			

Table 22

Living Arrangements of Participants' Parents When Growing Up

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Females				
Married In Living in the Same House	97	73.5	75.2	75.2
Married In Living in Different House	7	5.3	5.4	80.6
Legally Separated in the Same House	0	0	0	80.6
Legally Separated in Different House	2	1.5	1.6	82.2
Divorced in Living in the Same House	0	0	0	82.2
Divorced in Living in Different House	8	6.1	6.2	88.4
Never Married Lived in Same House	4	3.0	3.1	91.5
Never Married Lived in Different House	11	8.3	8.5	100.0
Total Reported	129	97.7	100.0	
Missing				
Total	3	2.3		
	132	100.0		
Males				
Married In Living in the Same House	92	69.7	71.9	71.9
Married In Living in Different House	5	3.8	3.9	75.8
Legally Separated in the Same House	0	0	0	75.8
Legally Separated in Different House	2	1.5	1.6	77.3
Divorced in Living in the Same House	0	0	0	77.3
Divorced in Living in Different House	9	6.8	7.0	84.4
Never Married Lived in Same House	5	3.8	3.9	88.3
Never Married Lived in Different House	15	11.4	11.7	100.0
Total Reported	128	97	100	
Missing				
Total	4	3.0		
	132	100.0		

APPENDIX G

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

The University of Akron

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Date: April 1, 2008

To: Shea M. Dunham
555 East Avenue
Akron, Ohio 44320

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20080401
"*Emotional Skillfulness in African American Marriage: Intimate Safety as a Mediator of the Relationship between Emotional Skillfulness and Marital Satisfaction*"

Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on April 1, 2008. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ **Exemption 1** - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ **Exemption 2** - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ **Exemption 3** - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ **Exemption 4** - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ **Exemption 5** - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ **Exemption 6** - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☒ Approved consent form/s enclosed

Cc: Advisor - Linda Perosa
Cc: Rosalie Hall - IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7666 • 330-972-6281 Fax