

THE CONTRIBUTION OF FAMILY COMPOSITION TO ATTACHMENT, EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE, AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING

by

Kristine Soft

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The Faculty of Graduate Studies  
Laurentian University  
Sudbury, Ontario

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## **Abstract**

Family composition is defined as a caregiver (or more than one caregiver) and other people (such as siblings, half-siblings, or step siblings) who live within a household and are related or unrelated. Family composition has been studied in many areas related to physical well-being, psychological well-being, and emotional well-being. Though an abundance of information exists in some areas, information specifically concerning family composition and attachment, emotional intelligence, and family functioning is limited. The available literature neglects the adult child population and has focused primarily on an adolescent population. Several researchers have referred to the importance of studying these variables. The present study aimed to further the literature by primarily investigating the moderation of attachment and emotional intelligence by family composition and the differences in family functioning according to family composition and length of time in a specific family composition. It assessed the prior mentioned hypotheses in 143 undergraduate university students through a variety of questionnaires. The results revealed that family composition did not moderate attachment and emotional intelligence and family functioning did not differ according to family composition and length of time. The findings of the present study contributes to the scarce literature in these areas.

*Keywords:* family composition, biological family, step family, single parent family, attachment, family functioning, emotional intelligence

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**The Contribution of Family Composition to Attachment, Emotional Intelligence, and Family Functioning**

Families are an important part of people's lives (Grevenstein, Bluemke, Schweitzer, & Aguilar-Raab, 2019). Families are typically a secure base for members to seek comfort and to resolve issues (Grevenstein, Bluemke, Schweitzer, & Aguilar-Raab, 2019). Family members that receive needed support and care from their families may experience exceptional mental health and thrive in their daily life, despite environmental stressors (Dunn, McLaughlin, Slopen, Rosand, & Smoller, 2013). However, some families may not provide the necessary psychological support that results in a member flourishing psychologically, physically, and emotionally (Kim, Birditt, Zarit, & Fingerman, 2019). Some research has indicated that the family composition a person presently resides in or has resided in in the past may contribute to lower psychological (Ganong & Coleman, 2016), physical (Sauvola et al., 2000), and emotional well-being (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2007), among other issues. A family composition may consist of a caregiver (or more than one caregiver) and other people (such as siblings, half-siblings, or step siblings) who live within a household and are related or unrelated (Statistics Canada, 2016). Typically, studies concerned with family composition have considered a biological family (two biological parents and a biological child) and have rarely studied step families (a unit wherein a child or children reside with one biological parent and a non-biological parent) or single parent families (one parent and a child or children). This may be due to the somewhat recent development of these family compositions within society. Prior to the 1980s, a stepfamily was formed primarily as a result of the death of one of the biological parents as opposed to divorce and remarriage and single parent family statistics were unheard of due to the rarity of this family composition (Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 2001). In such a society, two parents were necessary in order to maintain the

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homestead (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Since the 1980s, biological families have declined, while step and single parent families have increased (Love & Murdock, 2001). This may be due to a novel and improved thought process in regards to remaining within a marriage or relationship (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabelle, 1998). Specifically, prior cognition may have related to maintaining a relationship despite complex problems; whereas, currently, couples may decide to end a relationship on the basis of the same complex issues (Ganong & Coleman, 2017).

In the past, studies have referred to a biological family as the golden standard for family member well-being (e.g., Love & Murdock, 2004; Orgiles & Samper, 2011). This reference may have developed from findings that step families and single parent families both experience turmoil, such as ongoing challenges within the family unit and a possible decrease in member well-being (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010; Freistadt & Strohschein, 2013; Sweeney, 2010). However, research on family composition has not, as of presently, uncovered information on all topics concerning well-being including attachment, emotional intelligence, and family functioning in adulthood.

Attachment may be an important component in the well-being of an individual. It dictates that the behaviour of a parental figure towards their children may contribute to the quality of the relationship with their children as well as possibly influence their children's well-being (Bohn, Holtmann, Luhmann, Koch, & Eid, 2019). Though many variables have been associated with attachment, family composition may be a particularly important piece to study as the family environment may be one of the most significant components in an individual's life. In studying family composition and attachment, some research has found that non-biological family compositions have an increased risk for a less secure attachment. However, this link has been primarily found in an adolescent population and is not well-formed in an adult population. The

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available research is also ambiguous (Love & Murdock, 2004; Planitz, Feeney, & Peterson, 2009). Love and Murdock (2004), along with Planitz, Feeney, & Peterson (2009), indicated that it is pertinent to investigate adult attachment in non-biological families as the results of such analyses may have a significant impact on the functionality of families and may also influence psychological treatment for family members.

Emotional Intelligence, another factor that is not well-studied when considering its relationship to family composition, concerns emotional self-awareness, interpersonal awareness, and ability to adjust adequately within an environment, despite stressors and challenges. Like attachment, the link between emotional intelligence and family composition has been studied with an adolescent population, but research is even more scarce when looking at an adult population (Adegboyega, 2019; Katyal & Awasthi, 2006; Ruiz & Esteban, 2018; Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019). Some of the available research with an adult population has suggested that no significant association exists between emotional intelligence and family composition (Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016; Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019). However, some methodological concerns were revealed from both of these studies. Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) recommended further research in this area to address the methodological concerns.

Family Functioning is family behaviour that can be, either, productive or counterproductive in contributing to family goals, family well-being, and overall functionality within society. Family functioning may differ when considering family composition. For instance, Schrodts (2008) found that communication was more prevalent in a step father family than a step mother family within an adolescent population. The research is limited regarding differences in family functioning according to family composition in an adult population and

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findings are often ambiguous (e.g., Leake, 2007; Schrodt, 2008). Due to the limited amount of research and ambiguity within studies, Leake (2007) recommended that future research be conducted.

The primary purpose of the current study was to understand the role of family composition when considering attachment, emotional intelligence, and family functioning. This paper begins with an examination of the link between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence. This also includes analyzing research concerning the following sub-hypotheses: differences in attachment according to family composition, the link between attachment and life satisfaction, the link between attachment and emotional intelligence, and the prediction of emotional intelligence by family composition. It proceeds to discuss the link between family composition, length of time, and family functioning as well as the association between family composition and family functioning without length of time. The following final sub-hypotheses will also be addressed at this juncture: length of time in family composition and family functioning and the link between family functioning and emotional intelligence. This paper goes on to provide details of methodology, the interpretation of results, and discusses findings in relation to prior and future research.

### **Family Composition, Attachment, and Emotional Intelligence**

#### **Attachment**

Attachment is the necessary emotional and psychological bond between a child and a caregiver that begins as an absolute need for survival. Ainsworth (1979) determined two main attachment styles: secure attachment (a child has a responsive, affectionate, and reliable caregiver) and insecure attachment (a child has an unresponsive, unreliable caregiver with little affection provided). Insecure attachment can be further divided into two sub-categories including

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avoidant attachment (a child not pursuing necessary affection or resources from the primary caregiver) and ambivalent/anxious attachment (a child attempting to receive more attention or resources than necessary from the primary caregiver; Agrawal, Gunderson, Holmes, & Lyons-Ruth, 2003). Attachment is important in ensuring that a child has a secure base to explore the world and seek comfort when needed. It is still of significance as the child grows and transitions into adulthood.

Attachment security behaviours in adulthood may appear similar to the behaviours in childhood (for instance, an adult with an anxious attachment may attempt to receive more attention or resources than necessary). Attachment in adulthood has been thought of as arising from the caregiver's prior responsive or non-responsive behaviours in childhood (e.g., Zayas et al., 2011). However, Fraley (2019) has indicated that studies depicting this finding may have weaker correlations and results may vary according to the assessment utilized or how attachment-related memories were defined. Fraley and Roisman (2018) suggested that adult attachment can be adjusted through caregiver behaviour throughout the lifespan (as opposed to primarily in infancy/childhood) and other experiences in life (e.g., relationship with friends, romantic relationships). Research has suggested that many different variables may influence changes to attachment security including but not limited to discord or comfort (e.g., Chopik et al., 2014; Chow et al., 2016), age in adulthood (e.g., Chopik, Edelstein, & Fraley, 2013), the interpretation of experiences (e.g., Davila & Sargent, 2003), becoming a parent (e.g., Simpson et al., 2003), alterations in residence (e.g., Fraley et al., 2013), the use of psychotherapeutic resources (e.g., Taylor et al., 2015), and family composition (e.g., Deater-Deckard & Dunn, 2001).

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### *Family Composition and Attachment*

Family composition is one of the variables that has received some interest in the adult attachment literature (e.g., Deater-Deckard & Dunn, 2001). Researchers studying family composition and attachment in childhood have suggested an association between the two variables. Typically, research has found that non-biological family compositions have an increased risk for a less secure attachment. It has been theorized that this link may transpire due to societal stigma (e.g., Jensen & Howard, 2015), parental well-being (e.g., Bray & Berger, 1993), improper familial integration (e.g., Kellas et al., 2014), or intergenerational attachment (e.g., Dunn, Davies, O'Connor, & Sturgess, 2000), among other reasons. In adult children, however, this link is not well-formed (e.g., Planitz, Feeney, & Peterson, 2009). The existing research is ambiguous.

One study, Love and Murdock (2004), aspired to contribute to the literature on the link between family composition and attachment in an adult population. They hypothesized that psychological well-being would be predicted by attachment and that residing within a step family would be associated with an insecure attachment. They further hypothesized that attachment would arbitrate the link between family composition and psychological well-being, though this mediation was contingent upon three necessary results: family composition was linked to attachment, psychological well-being was predicted by attachment, and an insecure attachment is more likely when subjects resided in a step family environment. Love and Murdock (2004) conducted their study by recruiting more than 170 college and university students. Out of their sample, approximately 48% of subjects identified with a step family unit. They collected information through questionnaires including the Parental Bonding Inventory to measure attachment, the affective scales of the Comprehensive Affective Personality Scale to

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measure psychological well-being, the Brief Life Satisfaction Scale, the Family Environment Scale to measure conflict in families, and a general demographic questionnaire to gather subject's personal information. Results revealed that conflict and care (mother and father) predicted psychological well-being and family composition did not moderate the relationship between attachment and psychological well-being. Further to this, differences were found between family composition and attachment (in particular, higher rates of maternal and paternal care for biological families), and family composition was found to predict well-being (individuals from biological families had higher well-being scores). Finally, for Love and Murdock (2004), attachment was considered a significant mediator of the association between family composition and psychological well-being. However, upon in-depth analysis of this association, attachment was found to only somewhat influence the link between psychological well-being and family composition. Love and Murdock (2004) indicated that this finding suggested that the link between psychological well-being and attachment was similar when comparing a biological family and a step family. For future research, Love and Murdock (2004) suggested exploring the replication of this study on a different population and utilizing a different measurement of attachment. Love and Murdock (2004) also recommended the inclusion of individuals from a broad range of family compositions (for example, single parent families, grand parent families, and other).

Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009) also conducted a study concerning the direct link between attachment and family composition. They included potential confounding variables (such as length of time in family unit) that might influence this link. Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009) hypothesized that those raised in a biological family composition were more likely to have a secure attachment than a step family composition. They also hypothesized that

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attachment components (such as working models) would be more positive for the biological family composition than the step family composition. Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009) subsequently hypothesized that attachment and family structure would be mediated by happiness with primary attachment(s) and method of disagreement/disputing in the family unit. Their final hypothesis expected adults from a step family unit to depend more so on their partner than their biological father in comparison to a biological family composition. Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009) collected data from more than 360 university students on the Relationships Questionnaire and the Attachment Style Questionnaire. They found that their first and second hypotheses were somewhat supported. The first hypothesis was confirmed, in that, biological families had a more secure attachment than step families did when two attachment categories were utilized (secure and insecure), however, no significance emerged when four attachment categories were utilized. The next hypothesis was confirmed with respect to step families referring to more negative aspects than biological families on only one attachment component – working models. They also confirmed that family structure and attachment were mediated by perception of happiness with one's attachment with their biological father. The final hypothesis consisting of step families depending more so on partners than on biological fathers was supported. Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009)'s finding suggesting a link between family composition and attachment was corroborated by Killmann, Carranza, and Vandemia (2006). However, Killmann, Carranza, and Vandemia (2006) contrasted a biological family and a single parent family. They found that participants were more likely to have a more insecure attachment when they resided in a single parent family as opposed to a biological parent family composition.

While Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009), Killmann, Carranza, and Vandemia (2006), and Love and Murdock (2004) have discovered a link between family composition and

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attachment, Randall (2002) did not. However, the discrepancy between these studies may be related to Randall (2002)'s attachment groups. Randall (2002) reported that most participants in his attachment groups were securely attached and this resulted in a disproportionate attachment sample. Further, Randall (2002) reported that his study may have been influenced by the unequal number of subjects in each family composition (the majority of participants reported residing within a biological family). According to Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009), it is pertinent to investigate adult attachment in non-biological families as the results of such analyses may have a significant impact on the functionality of families and may also influence psychological treatment for family members.

In partial replication of Love and Murdock (2004), the present study aimed to analyze family composition and attachment, not only to contribute to the literature, but also to satisfy the condition specified by Love and Murdock (2004). Love and Murdock (2004) dictated that a moderation analysis concerning family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence could not be conducted unless sub-hypotheses were satisfied, including a distinct link between family composition and attachment.

### ***Attachment and Life Satisfaction***

Life satisfaction, or subjective well-being, refers to ideas or beliefs concerning positivity/negativity or quality in overall life or in specific areas (e.g., education, employment). What is meant by positive emotionality is described according to individual differences. What makes one individual happy or increases life satisfaction may not do the same for another individual.

Some research has focused on the life satisfaction of adults and its association with relationship variables (e.g., Odaci, Cinkkci, Cinkkci, & Aydin, 2019). Studies have found that

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attachment is related to life satisfaction (e.g., Galinha, Oishi, Pereira, Wirtz, & Esteves, 2014; Martikainen, 2012; Temiz & Comert, 2018; Terzi & Cankaya, 2009). Temiz and Comert (2018) aspired to understand the link between life satisfaction and attachment as well as the resilience of adults. Further, they sought to examine if resilience of an adult would influence life satisfaction. They collected data from 425 university students. Subjects filled in a demographic information form, the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-II, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the Resilience Scale for Adults. Temiz and Comert (2018) did not find a link between resilience and avoidant attachment. They did not find a link between resilience and anxious attachment. However, they did find a significant correlation between life satisfaction and avoidant attachment as well as life satisfaction and anxious attachment. Finally, Temiz and Comert (2018) discovered that resilience influenced life satisfaction. Temiz and Comert (2018) recommended that future research study the possible link between resilience and attachment.

Other research, such as Perrone, Webb, and Jackson (2007) and Nabi and Rizvi (2015), have produced evidence contrasting Temiz and Comert (2018)'s findings. However, according to Perrone, Webb, and Jackson (2007), non-significant findings may be due to the self-report questionnaires utilized. Perrone, Webb, and Jackson (2007) indicated that the self-report measures used in their study may not have captured the full essence of attachment.

Antaramian, Huebner, and Valois (2008) has indicated that it is important to study life satisfaction as it is a very influential variable in every person's life. In addition, the literature regarding attachment and life satisfaction is ambiguous. The current study aimed to address this ambiguousness by examining the correlation between attachment and life satisfaction as a sub-hypothesis.

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### *Summary*

In summary, attachment is a well-known construct which relates to the responsiveness of a caregiver to their offspring's needs and the bond that develops as a result. Ainsworth (1979) referred to two main attachment styles: secure and insecure attachment. As an individual becomes an adult, attachment is still an important part of life. Attachment in adults has been related to several different constructs, including family composition. In adults, however, the link between attachment and family composition is not well-formed. Love and Murdock (2004) as well as Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009) found that biological families were more likely to have a secure attachment than non-biological families. However, further research is needed on the link between family composition and attachment according to Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009). The link between family composition and attachment was analyzed by this study, not only to contribute and address gaps within the literature, but also as a condition to complete an analysis concerning family composition moderating attachment and emotional intelligence.

Attachment has also been linked to life satisfaction. Life satisfaction concerns the ideas, beliefs, or areas that result in happiness for a person. Studies (e.g., Martikainen, 2012; Temiz & Comert, 2018) have found that insecure attachment is associated with a decrease in life satisfaction. Perrone, Webb, and Jackson (2007) did not find a significant relationship between attachment and life satisfaction. Though Antaramian, Huebner, and Valois (2008) has referred to the importance of studying life satisfaction, the ambiguity throughout the literature is another reason to explore attachment and life satisfaction.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is conceptualized as a person's aptitude to effectively manage environmental stressors (Bar-On, 2002). Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Bar-On (2002) indicated

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that emotional intelligence is a person's competency in self-reflecting on emotion, regulating their own emotion, and effectively understanding and acknowledging other people's experiences and emotion, whether these emotions were verbal or non-verbal. Generally, individuals with effective emotional intelligence respond well interpersonally, are optimistic, creative, and are readily able to cope with stressors. Mayer and Salovey (1995) indicated that a person may be considered emotionally unintelligent if they express emotions that are against ideas, thoughts, and/or beliefs about emotional expression.

### *Attachment and Emotional Intelligence*

Limited research has pointed to a link between attachment type and emotional intelligence (e.g., Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009; Kafetsios, 2004; Sabri, Khoshbakht, & Golzar, 2015; Samadi, Kasaei, & Pour, 2013). Samadi, Kaseai, and Pour (2013) aspired to understand the link between emotional intelligence and type of attachment. They hypothesized that attachment type would predict emotional intelligence. These authors collected data from the Relationship Scale Questionnaire and the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory from 300 university undergraduate students. They found that a secure attachment in adulthood was associated with higher emotional intelligence on intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood scales. It was also found that more of a dismissive attachment in adulthood was associated with a more enhanced interpersonal intelligence and overall emotional intelligence; while, a fearful attachment was negatively linked to intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. Samadi, Kasaei, and Pour (2013) indicated that an anxious attachment was associated with a more enhanced interpersonal intelligence, but also linked to a less enhanced adaptability intelligence. They also found that interpersonal intelligence was predicted by secure attachment.

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Hamarta, Deniz, and Saltali (2009) also conducted a study concerning attachment styles predicting emotional intelligence. They endeavoured to understand the link between attachment (secure or insecure types) and emotional intelligence. These authors also desired to investigate if emotional intelligence sub-components were predicted by attachment type. Hamarta, Deniz, and Saltali (2009) collected data from more than 460 university undergraduate students utilizing the Relationships Scales Questionnaire and the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory. They found that emotional intelligence was predicted by attachment type. Specifically, a more secure attachment was linked to a more enhanced and effective emotional intelligence. In addition, Hamarta, Deniz, and Saltali (2009) indicated that the intrapersonal scale was predicted by the secure attachment type and the dismissive attachment type. They also found that a more dismissive attachment type was related to a less enhanced interpersonal intelligence. Hamarta, Deniz, and Saltali (2009) suggested that attachment may be related to emotional intelligence due to securely attached individuals maintaining favorable features such as high self-esteem which enables them to preserve an enhanced emotional intelligence. The converse may be true with respect to insecure attachment, that is, individuals with an insecure attachment are more likely to harbour unfavourable features such as low self-esteem which may result in emotional intelligence requiring enrichment.

Little research has demonstrated a direct relationship between emotional intelligence and type of attachment. Typically, the literature refers to attachment and/or emotional intelligence in the context of emotional intelligence mediating the link between attachment and another variable (e.g., Lanciano, Curci, Kafetsios, Elia, & Zammuner, 2012; Sabri, Khoshbakht, & Golzar, 2015). According to Schutte et al. (2001), more research is necessary to study the link between emotional intelligence and attachment.

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The present study aimed to contribute to the scarce amount of literature regarding emotional intelligence and attachment. It also intended to evaluate if attachment was associated with emotional intelligence in order to satisfy a condition similar to Love and Murdock (2004)'s study. This condition must be satisfied in order to proceed with an analysis involving family composition moderating the link between emotional intelligence and attachment.

### *Family Composition and Emotional Intelligence*

In the literature, emotional intelligence has been associated with well-being. For example, emotional intelligence has been linked to anxiety, emotional eating (e.g., Zysberg, 2018), post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., Janke, Driessen, Behnia, Wingenfield, & Roepke, 2018), alexithymia (e.g., Onur, Alkin, Sheridan, & Wise, 2013), and athletic performance (e.g., Laborde, Dosseville, & Allen, 2016). It has also been studied in relation to family composition, though the available research is limited (e.g., Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019). The majority of the available research has been conducted on an adolescent population (e.g., Adegboyega, 2019; Katyal & Awasthi, 2006; Ruiz & Esteban, 2018) in areas such as attitude toward test-taking and gender differences, but rarely does it focus on the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and family composition. Given that the majority of the available research has been conducted on an adolescent population, it is expected that literature would be very scarce when considering family composition and emotional intelligence in an adult population (Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016). It is clear that research is needed on the link between family composition and emotional intelligence on an adult population. This study addressed this gap in the literature.

Though the studies on family composition and emotional intelligence are limited, some information does exist. Lekaviciene and Antiniene (2016) studied the growth of emotional

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intelligence in adolescents and adults along with the family factors possibly influencing same. They found that family composition and emotional intelligence were not linked. This finding is similar to the results of other studies (e.g., Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019, Zeppa & Huisinga, 2008). Lekaviciene and Antiniene (2016) suggested that no link between family composition and emotional intelligence may have been found due to unequal family composition groups (specifically, non-biological families with less than ideal group sizes). With that being said, Lekaviciene and Antiniene (2016) also found a significant, individual correlation between recognizing and comprehending experiences involving others' emotions and residing within a single parent family environment.

Another study, Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019), conducted research regarding the possible correlation between emotional intelligence and familial demographics. They sought to understand the relationship between amount of siblings, family composition, birth order, and emotional intelligence. These authors indicated that total emotional intelligence as well as all sub-variables of emotional intelligence were utilized in their analyses of stated hypotheses. Data from more than 380 university students was gathered and the Profile of Emotional Competence was administered. Data was also gathered regarding the familial demographics of subjects (i.e., family composition, amount of siblings, and the delivery of children in their family in ascending order). Their results revealed no significant association between family composition and emotional intelligence. There was no significant correlation between birth order and emotional intelligence. Moreover, there was no significant relationship between amount of siblings and emotional intelligence. Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) indicated that the non-significant results could simply be due to population differences (i.e., child subjects versus adult subjects). It was also suggested that emotional

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intelligence may be associated with the amount of siblings or sibling birth order in a younger population, but not an adult population, due to proximity of siblings. Given the proximity, siblings would potentially alter the way emotional intelligence is formulated. An adult population may have acquired emotional intelligence from other aspects in their life, such as colleagues from their place of employment. In discussing future research, Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) suggested an inclusion of multiple family compositions, longitudinal research in this area, increasing the sample size, utilizing objective psychological tests or other non-subjective methods, ensuring equal gender sample size, and analyzing other familial demographics and emotional intelligence. Given, firstly, that Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) was allegedly the only study considering familial demographics and emotional intelligence (as well as emotional intelligence sub-components), and, secondly, that these authors recommended further investigation in this area, conducting a study to address these factors would be of importance.

The present study incorporated some of the recommendations of Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) for future research. It included various family compositions, analyzed family demographics, and utilized a different measure of emotional intelligence. This study, in partial replication of Love and Murdock (2004), utilized emotional intelligence in the place of Love and Murdock (2004)'s psychological well-being measure. This was to address the issue surrounding the lack of research on emotional intelligence and family composition, as suggested by prior studies (e.g., Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016; Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019) since psychological well-being and family composition has been studied elsewhere.

### **Family Composition, Attachment, and Emotional Intelligence**

Though several studies exist regarding emotional intelligence mediating the link between attachment and an external variable (e.g., rumination, physical health; Lanciano, Curci, Kafetsios, Elia, & Zammuner, 2012; Marks, Harrocks, & Schutte, 2016), no studies to date exist, to the knowledge of the current researchers, regarding family composition moderating the link between emotional intelligence and attachment.

The examination of this stems from Love and Murdock (2004). However, in Love and Murdock (2004)'s analyses, affective psychological well-being was utilized. In the present study, emotional intelligence, similar to affective psychological well-being, was incorporated due to missing literature concerning the relationship between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence. Since the literature has found a relationship between emotional intelligence and family composition, emotional intelligence and attachment, and attachment and family composition, it is also important to study the relationship between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence to determine if family composition influences the strength or direction of the link between attachment and emotional intelligence.

### **Summary**

In summary, emotional intelligence is an individual's response to pre-made, societal informed items. It is conceptualized as a person's aptitude to effectively manage environmental stressors. A review of the limited emotional intelligence literature reveals a link between emotional intelligence and attachment (e.g., Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009; Kafetsios, 2004). Some research has found that a secure attachment was associated with higher emotional intelligence, while other studies have suggested that insecure attachment is related to a more enhanced emotional intelligence (e.g., Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009; Samadi, Kasaei, & Pour,

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2013). Schutte et al. (2001) recommended that further research be conducted concerning the link between emotional intelligence and attachment. Along with Schutte et al. (2001)'s recommendation, the association between emotional intelligence and attachment was examined by this study in order to fulfill a condition, similar to Love and Murdock (2004). This link was necessary in order to conduct an analysis concerning family composition moderating attachment and emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence has also been linked to family composition. The majority of studies concerning emotional intelligence and family composition are conducted with an adolescent population. Research including an adult sample has found no significant association between emotional intelligence and family composition (e.g., Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016; Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019). However, Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) recommended further investigation as research in this area is still in its early stages. In addition, emotional intelligence and family composition were analyzed by this study to satisfy a condition necessary to move forward in discerning if family composition moderated attachment and emotional intelligence.

Though research exists concerning emotional intelligence mediating the link between attachment and an external variable (e.g., Laniciano, Curci, Kafetsios, Elia, & Zammuner, 2012), there are no studies regarding family composition moderating the link between emotional intelligence and attachment. Since research is available regarding the links between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence, but no analysis of moderation has been completed, it was important to study the moderation of emotional intelligence and attachment by family composition to determine if family composition influenced the strength or direction of the

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link between attachment and emotional intelligence. The analysis of these variables was also a partial replication of Love and Murdock (2004).

### **Family Composition, Family Functioning, and Emotional Intelligence**

#### **Family Functioning**

Familial behaviours can be either productive or counterproductive in contributing to a specific objective, contributing to accumulation and maintenance of necessary resources, contributing to psychological and mental well-being, and contributing to the flourishing and growth of individuals within the unit. Healthy family functioning may contribute to a well-rounded, efficient individual, while unhealthy family functioning may result in the decline of a person's contribution to society and deterioration of their positive emotionality (Johnson, Gans, Kerr, & LaValle, 2010).

Some research has referred to family functioning from the perception of the individual, while other research has referred to family functioning from an external point of view (e.g., teacher, psychologist). Some research has focused on reviewing current family characteristics, while other research has focused on historical information (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Sitarenios, 2000). The present study focused on current family functioning from the perception of the adult child.

#### **Length of Time in Family Composition and Family Functioning**

One variable that, according to research, may be capable of impacting family functioning is length of time that a family composition has been united for (e.g., Pryor, 2014; Stewart, 2007). Pryor (2014) indicated that length of time has been important in the family functioning of a family composition as, unlike a biological family composition, a step family composition may experience initial stressors and challenges in coping with the family transition change (e.g.,

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Coleman et al., 2013; Stewart, 2007). As time progresses, family functioning typically becomes more stable (Pryor, 2014).

Most research (e.g., Love & Murdock, 2004; Vangelisti, 2004) refers to length of time within a family composition as a potential confounding variable. That is, it is important to control length of time should it be associated with family functioning as it could misconstrue results otherwise. However, some research has not addressed length of time in a family composition as a crucial factor in analyses and, as such, further studies are necessary (Jensen, Shafer, & Holmes, 2015). The present study aimed to understand the link between family functioning and the length of time within a given family composition. It proposed that, should a significant link be found, length of time would be controlled for so that it would not misconstrue the results of the current study.

### **Recently Remarried Step Mother and Step Father Families and Family Functioning**

Some literature has suggested that recently formed step families were more likely to struggle with family functioning and the implementation of individualized family systems (e.g., Coleman et al., 2013). King, Amato, and Lindstrom (2015) indicated that it is important to research the step family formation as it is first developed in order to understand how family processes are formulated. Research has pointed out that, when step families begin forming bonds, attempting to communicate efficiently, discern appropriate roles, and start other crucial family processes from the onset of forming a family unit, their family is more likely to be stable (e.g., Pryor, 2014).

Researchers have yet to reach a succinct amount of years, after which, a step family is considered established and members have adapted well to familial processes and roles. Studies, including Visher and Visher (1996), have suggested that the typical rate of establishment for step

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families is more than 2 years. However, according to Vangelisti (2004), more research is necessary to discern the amount of time that it takes a step family unit to become established in its processes.

The majority of the available literature on recently formed step families has mainly focused on the relationship between a step parent and step child as opposed to family functioning (e.g. Amato, King, & Thorsen, 2016). Along with the lack of literature on family functioning, almost all studies, such as King, Amato, and Lindstrom (2015) have focused on the younger population, such as adolescents, and few have focused on the family functioning with adult stepchildren. Research utilizing an adolescent population has, as opposed to focusing on the direct link between recently formed step families, step parent gender, and family functioning, concentrated on topics such as adjustment in stepfather families (Amato, 2010) and lack of closeness to stepfathers (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). The present study aimed to contribute to the literature by analyzing recently remarried step mother and step father families and family functioning in an adult population, which has scarcely been addressed in the past.

### **Step Mother and Step Father Families and Differences in Family Functioning**

Though it is important to understand that the amount of time in specific family compositions may influence family functioning, it is also of significance to consider the differences in family functioning without recent remarriage. Limited research has been conducted concerning the differentiation of step mother families and step father families with respect to family functioning in children and adolescents. Available studies comparing step parent gender and family functioning in childhood and adolescence have indicated that more communication was present in a step father family than a step mother family (Schrodt, 2008). Other research has not found any significant differences in belonging and involvement in family

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functioning between step mother and step father families in adolescents (Leake, 2007). Leake (2007) suggested that significant findings when comparing step parent gender and family functioning in research was likely due to historical studies focusing primarily on step father families, with a recent, increasing interest in step mother families. Leake (2007) also pointed out that joint custody is on the rise in society and may contribute to the interest in studying both step genders. Leake (2007) recommended that future research concentrate on family functioning variables and step parent gender in different population. The present study followed Leake (2007)'s suggestion and aimed to complete research which concentrated on differences in family functioning variables between a step mother family and step father family in adults.

### **Family Functioning and Emotional Intelligence**

Family functioning is an important component in the well-being of an individual. Research has considered the association of a wide range of variables with family functioning, leading to either the deterioration, or optimal functioning of an individual. The current study focused on the link between family functioning and emotional intelligence.

The majority of the available research, though scarce (e.g., Koleoso, Uwadiae, & Nnakife, 2019), has used an adolescent sample. It has revealed that a more enhanced emotional intelligence may be evident when family functioning is strong (e.g., Alavi, Mehrinezhad, Amini, & Singh, 2017; Chandran & Nair, 2015). In adolescents, enhanced emotional intelligence has been associated with parental involvement (Alegre, 2012), familial adjustment, familial malleability, and unity (Koutra et al., 2016). Chandran and Nair (2015), in their study with adolescents, found that almost all sub-components of emotional intelligence were linked to family functioning. They indicated that the only sub-component not associated with family functioning was interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence, according to the further

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analyses run by Chandran and Nair (2015), may not have been associated with family functioning due to the influence on this variable from the emotional well-being of mothers and the negative or positive relationship with a sibling.

In adulthood, though research is still lacking, one study has noted the positive link between emotional intelligence and communication/patterns of communication (Tajalli & Latifian, 2008). Another study has found relationships between the sub-components of family functioning and emotional intelligence including emotion regulation and interpersonal well-being (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004).

It is apparent that further research is required regarding emotional intelligence and family functioning (e.g., Alavi, Mehrinezhad, Amini, & Singh, 2017) in order to fill in the age gaps. This study aimed to address this gap with an adult sample and as a sub-hypothesis.

### **Summary**

In summary, family functioning concerns the healthy or unhealthy behaviours of family members that contributes to either the optimal functioning or the deterioration in functioning. Length of time in a given family composition has been linked to family functioning in prior studies and should be studied with family functioning since it may exist as a confounding variable (Pryor, 2014; Love & Murdock, 2004). Length of time may also reveal dysfunctional family functioning in non-biological families as they adjust to life in a new family composition.

Length of time can also apply in differentiating recently remarried step mother and step father families in family functioning. However, almost all research in this area has focused on children or adolescents and few have focused on adults (e.g., King, Amato, and Lindstrom, 2015). Adult studies that exist do not concentrate on the direct link between recently formed step families, step parent gender, and family functioning, but tend to attend to adjustment and

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relationship stability (e.g., Amato, 2010; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). As the literature is scarce in this area, more studies are necessary.

Family functioning has also been associated with parent gender in step families, without considering length of time. The majority of the research has collected data from children and adolescents. Schrodts (2008) has found that family functioning was stronger in a step family composition than in a step mother family. Other research has found no significant differences in family functioning when comparing step families (e.g., Leake, 2007). Further research was recommended that would ultimately concentrate on family functioning and parent gender in step families in a different population (Leake, 2007).

Finally, a link between family functioning and emotional intelligence has been suggested in the literature within an adolescent population, though studies are scarce (e.g., Koleoso, Uwadiae, & Nnakife, 2019). The literature has typically indicated that a more enhanced emotional intelligence may be evident when family functioning is strong (Koleoso, Uwadiae, & Nnakife, 2019). Studies on family functioning and emotional intelligence using an adult population are non-abundant. Some of the existing research has pointed to a relationship between enhanced emotional intelligence and strong family functioning (e.g., Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Tajalli & Latifian, 2008). It is apparent that further research is required regarding emotional intelligence and family functioning (e.g., Alavi, Mehrinezhad, Amini, & Singh, 2017) in order to fill in the age gaps.

### **Rationale for Present Study and Hypotheses**

The current study was a partial replication of Love and Murdock (2004), with a sample from Canada. It addressed some of the limitations Love and Murdock (2004) which included

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using a diverse family composition sample and incorporating an attachment measurement which differed from the questionnaire Love and Murdock (2004) had utilized.

1. **It was hypothesized that insecure attachment would be linked to family composition. Specifically, anxious or avoidant attachment would be significantly associated with a step family or single parent family.** This hypothesis is one of the noted conditions to complete an analysis surrounding the moderation of attachment and emotional intelligence by family composition. Love and Murdock (2004) also reported the need for further research on attachment, with various family compositions. In addition, Planitz, Feeney, and Peterson (2009) referred to the importance of investigating adult attachment in non-biological families as the results of such analyses may have a significant impact on the functionality of families and may also influence psychological treatment for family members.
2. **It was hypothesized that attachment would be linked to emotional intelligence. Specifically, secure attachment would be negatively correlated to emotional intelligence (negative correlation as, with the attachment measure used in this study, secure attachment consists of lower numbers, while insecure attachment consists of higher numbers).** This hypothesis was a necessary condition to be satisfied prior to conducting an analysis to determine if family composition moderated attachment and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, it addressed the suggestion of Schutte et al. (2001) for more research on the link between attachment and emotional intelligence.
3. **It was hypothesized that family composition would predict emotional intelligence.** This hypothesis was a necessary condition to be satisfied prior to

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conducting an analysis to determine if family composition moderated attachment and emotional intelligence, similar to Love and Murdock (2004). This study, in partial replication of Love and Murdock (2004), utilized emotional intelligence in the place of Love and Murdock (2004)'s psychological well-being measure. This was to address the issue surrounding the lack of research on emotional intelligence and family composition, as suggested by prior studies (e.g., Lekaviciene & Antiniene, 2016; Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019) since psychological well-being and family composition has been studied elsewhere. Moreover, this hypothesis was incorporated into the present study as per Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019)'s recommendations for future research. They suggested that future research focusing on family composition and emotional intelligence include various family compositions and a different measure of emotional intelligence than what they had utilized.

- 4. It was hypothesized that family composition would be a moderator of attachment and emotional intelligence. Similar to Love and Murdock (2004), family composition will only be considered as a moderator of attachment and emotional intelligence if it is an adequate prognosticator of emotional intelligence, if emotional intelligence and attachment are linked, and if the possibility of developing an anxious or avoidant attachment is associated with residing within a step family or single parent family.** The examination of this hypothesis stemmed from Love and Murdock (2004). In Love and Murdock (2004)'s analyses, affective psychological well-being was utilized. In the present study, emotional intelligence, similar to affective psychological well-being, was

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incorporated due to missing literature concerning the relationship between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence. Since the literature has found a relationship between emotional intelligence and family composition, emotional intelligence and attachment, and attachment and family composition, it is also important to study the relationship between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence to determine if family composition influences the strength of the link between attachment and emotional intelligence.

5. **It was hypothesized that lower life satisfaction would be associated with insecure attachment and higher life satisfaction would be associated with secure attachment.** Antaramian, Huebner, and Valois (2008) indicated that it was important to study life satisfaction as it is a very influential variable in every person's life. The literature regarding attachment and life satisfaction is ambiguous. The current study aimed to address this ambiguousness by examining the correlation between attachment and life satisfaction.
6. **It was hypothesized that the length of time within a specified family composition would be related to family functioning. This study proposed that, should a significant link be found, the length of time within a family composition would be controlled for so that it would not misconstrue the results of the present research.** This hypothesis was necessary as length of time within a given family composition may be a confounding variable when examining the link between family functioning and other variables (e.g., Love & Murdock, 2004). In addition, Jensen, Shafer, and Holmes (2015) referred to the importance of future research studying the

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- length of time within a family composition as most present studies have not done so and may have inaccurate results.
7. **It was hypothesized that adults from step father families that have remarried recently will have stronger family functioning than adults from step mother families that have remarried recently.** Prior research has indicated that recently formed step families are more likely to struggle with family functioning and the implementation of individualized family systems. However, the length of time before a step family becomes more adjusted is still controversial. Research, such as King, Amato, and Lindstrom (2015), has indicated the importance of studying differences in step family well-being and step family functioning when considering the length of time the family has been together to inform the literature.
  8. **It was hypothesized that adults with a step mother family composition are more likely to have lower family functioning, while adults residing within a step father family composition are more likely to have higher family functioning.** This hypothesis stemmed from Leake (2007), who recommended that researchers consider other populations, besides adolescents, when studying the differences in family functioning variables between a step mother family and step father family.
  9. **It was hypothesized that family functioning would be negatively related to emotional intelligence.** This hypothesis addressed the recommendation of Alavi, Mehrinezhad, Amini, & Singh (2017) for future research to be conducted on the link between family functioning and emotional intelligence with different populations (as the present available research has focused on adolescents).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants included 143 undergraduate students from Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. There were more female students (N = 115) in comparison to male students (N = 28). Students, ages 18 to 43, were in several different programs including biomedicine, psychology, chemistry, and neuroscience. The students in this study were fairly equally represented by year of program.

### **Instruments**

#### ***The General Demographics Form***

A demographic form was prepared to collect information about gender identity, age, year of university, recent family type, length of time in recent family type, prior family types, length of time in prior family types, length of time in each family type, ethnicity, primary language, primary caregivers' education, step parents' education, estimation of total income within recent family type, religious affiliation, children in recent family, psychological disorder, and physical illness (see Appendix A).

#### ***The Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised Adult Attachment Questionnaire***

The Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000; ECR-R) measures adult attachment. It is an instrument capable of being altered according to which relationship is being measured (for example, romantic relationships or parental relationships). Specifically, the wording of the measure can be changed, for instance, from “romantic partner” to “mother” without altering its reliability as items are worded to apply to any relationship. For the present study, the ECR-R was used to evaluate the relationship between an adult and their mother, step mother, or, alternatively, their parental figure. If an individual did

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not have a biological mother, but had a step mother, this person would rate their relationship with their step mother. If an individual did not have a biological mother or step mother, this individual would evaluate their relationship with a parental figure in their life. The ECR-R was based on Item Response Theory and includes questions from the prior version – the Experiences in Close Relationships Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). The ECR-R was developed to determine anxious attachment and avoidant attachment in romantic relationships (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). It consists of 36 self-report items designed to assess the avoidance or anxiety within a specific relationship. For example, “I’m afraid that I will lose my mother’s/stepmother’s/primary caregiver’s love.” Items were answered on a 7 point likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The ECR-R took participants approximately 10 minutes to complete. After administration, some items were reverse-scored, summed, and two average scores were produced (as per the scoring procedure of Fraley et al., 2000). The two average scores generated per subject were: anxious attachment (for example, 2.34) and avoidant attachment (for example, 3.13). Each score could be compared to the category median score of the sample collected to determine the participant’s attachment category (either secure attachment, preoccupied attachment, dismissing-avoidant attachment, or fearful avoidant attachment). For example, the anxious attachment median score is 2.67 and the avoidant attachment median score is 2.87, as generated from the scoring procedure. A participant is classified as securely attached if their anxiety score is less than the median anxious attachment score (2.67) and their avoidance score is less than the median avoidant attachment score (2.87). A participant is classified as dismissively attached if their anxiety score is less than the median anxious attachment score and their avoidance score is more than or equal to the median avoidant attachment score. A participant is classified as fearfully attached if their anxiety score is more

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than or equal to the median anxious attachment score and their avoidance score is more than or equal to the median avoidant attachment score. A participant is classified as preoccupiedly attached if their anxiety score is more than or equal to the median anxiety attachment score and their avoidance score is less than the median avoidant attachment score. The participant's anxious attachment score is 1.32 and their avoidant attachment score is 3.26. Given that the participant's anxiety score is less than the anxious attachment median and their avoidance score is more than the avoidant attachment median, the participant would be classified as dismissively attached.

The reliability and validity of the ECR-R are within the moderate to high range and such properties formed the basis of utilizing the ECR-R. Studies evaluating reliability have determined approximately .90 for internal consistency of both ECR-R sub-scales (e.g., Fraley et al., 2000; Lu, Huo, Gao, & Cong, 2006). Sibley, Fischer, and Liu (2003) concluded that the ECR-R has exceptional validity. The ECR-R was normed on over 17,000 males and females over the internet in the early 2000s. The normative information indicates that average attachment-related avoidance was 2.92 and average attachment-related anxiety was 3.56. This provided the range and border for secure and insecure attachment.

### ***The Family Assessment Measure-III***

The Family Assessment Measure III (FAM-III) is considered one of the most universally utilized instruments when assessing family well-being (Laghezza, Delvecchio, Pazzagli, & Mazzeschi, 2014). The FAM-III (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1995) focuses on the particular strengths and weaknesses of the individual family being assessed through a self-report technique. The Family Assessment Measure – III is founded on the Process Model of Family Functioning which focuses on evidence-based therapy for families. The FAM-III contains 50

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items in total. Items were rated on a 4 point likert scale with the answers being “strongly agree,” “agree,” disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” An example of one of the items is “we spent too much time arguing about what our problems are.” Each item corresponds to a specific sub-scale and the total scale.

The sub-scales of the FAM-III include Task Accomplishment, Role Performance, Communication, Affective Expression, Involvement, Control, and Values and Norms. Task Accomplishment consists of the family unit engaging in behaviours in order to complete various environmental objectives. In Task Accomplishment, a family unit is made aware of an environmental challenge/issue, brain storms to determine plausible solutions, incorporates processes to solve the challenge, and analyzes outcome of processes to determine future solutions. In order to complete objectives accurately, Role Performance for each individual within the unit is crucial. Role Performance consists of determining the appropriate family member for the particular objective, mutual contract to abide by given roles, and engagement in the specific role. Adequate Communication is necessary as it is important for each member to relay clear information in order to complete tasks appropriately and to ensure that information is not misconstrued. A variable aiding Communication is Affective Expression. Affective Expression concerns relaying the exact emotion to family members. This involves the nature and strength of the emotion as well as the period of time during which the emotion is present. Affective Expression concerns regulation of an individual’s emotional state in order to adequately complete their familial objectives and could influence the successful completion of the objective. The next variable, known as Control, concerns the familial unit’s independence and adjustment of behaviour in order to complete objectives effectively. Finally, Values and Norms considers what tasks are completed on the basis of the moral affiliations of the family unit

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and the ideas and beliefs incorporated into the family unit. The FAM-III also encompasses validity scales including Social Desirability and Defensiveness.

After administration of the FAM-III is complete and the items are summed into their appropriate categories, the total score of the FAM-III and the sub-scale scores, after being transferred from a raw score to a T-score, are classified as either a strength ( $\leq 40$ ) or a weakness ( $\geq 60$ ). For example, a T-score of 70 on Communication would reveal that the participant felt as though communication was problematic in the family unit. The validity scales, Social Desirability and Defensiveness, are also transferred from a raw score to a T-score. Validity of the FAM-III profile is considered to be compromised if the T-score on Social Desirability and/or Defensiveness is above 60.

The FAM-III was created in order to provide a measurement to assess the Theoretical Model of Family Functioning. The FAM-III was normed on 247 adults and adolescents who were considered “normal” in regards to multiple factors such as mental health. Reliability of the FAM-III was studied according to participants in the normative data group responding consistently to all questions. According to a study conducted by Skinner, Steinhauer, and Santa-Barbara (1983), the overall reliability of the general scale within the FAM-III is good ( $r = .93$ ). Specific subscale reliabilities were also significant, with none less than .67. The Task Accomplishment subtest had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .67; Role Performance had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .73; Communication had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .73, Affective Expression had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .74; Involvement had a moderate correlation of .78; Control had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .71; Values and Norms had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .70; Social Desirability had a very good reliability co-efficient of .87; and Defensiveness had a moderate reliability co-efficient of .65.

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Test-retest reliability was also examined by Jacob (1995) who reported that the FAM-III reliability was satisfactory over close to two weeks. Overall, the reliability and validity of this instrument is considered good and has been extensively researched. According to Skinner, Steinhauer, and Santa-Barbara (1995), the FAM-III is capable of discriminating clinical from non-clinical families. This includes problem families; a discriminant function analysis that problem families are more likely to have higher scores in Role Performance and Involvement, whereas, families that were functional with little problems provided higher scores in Social Desirability and Defensiveness. A multivariate analysis was also conducted to determine predictive validity and indicated that groups are capable of being determined on the basis of scores on the sub-components of the FAM-III. For example, children and adults differ on the basis of Control, Values and Norms, and Affective Expressions (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1995). Concurrent and Construct validity were evaluated in determining the link between the FAM-III and other family functioning measures. It was determined that strengths and weaknesses exist regardless of which family functioning measure is utilized (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1995). Validity has been considered “satisfactory” (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1995). In studying non-clinical, undergraduate university students’ families, Bloomquist and Harris (1984) found that the means of these students are marginally higher than the sample collected for normative information.

### *The Satisfaction with Life Scale*

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) evaluates global or overall life satisfaction of adults (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS consists of five short items that are rated on a 7 point likert scale, 1 – strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. For example, one of the items is “in most ways my life is close to my ideal.” The entire self-report administration

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is completed within five minutes. Individuals are asked to endorse statements that were developed according to the theory that individuals rate their overall life satisfaction in agreement with personal expectations and societal standards.

When developing the SWLS, positive and negative factors were included and ten statements appeared to have a sufficient loading. However, five of these were eliminated from the SWLS to ensure clear, direct, and individual, unique statements (Pavot & Diener, 1993). In order to determine efficiency of the SWLS, it was normed on several different adult populations (i.e., clinical, non-clinical, senior citizens, university students) and utilized in different cultural environments. The results of the normative study showed differences dependent on the specific population (for example, clinical populations versus non-clinical populations).

According to Pavot, Diener, Colvin, and Sandvik (1991), the SWLS has good reliability and validity in measuring subjective well-being. Research has indicated a high reliability coefficient for internal reliability (.79 to .89) as well as sufficient test-retest data (.80 to .84). Good convergent and discriminant validity was also determined by Pavot and Diener (1993). That is, the SWLS is able to measure life satisfaction similarly to other global life satisfaction assessments and it is also differentiated from other measures.

**Scoring/Interpretation.** A score between 5 and 9 indicates extreme global dissatisfaction; a score between 10 and 14 concludes dissatisfaction; a score between 15 and 19 refers to slight dissatisfaction; a score of 20 is neutral; a score of 21 to 25 refers to slight satisfaction; a score between 26 and 30 indicates satisfaction; and a score between 31 and 35 refers to extreme satisfaction. Research has found that the majority of scores fall within the slightly satisfied to satisfied level. This is indicative of non-clinical groups in several cultures

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and nations. This is recognized, for example, in the college students sample ( $M = 23.5$ ) of Diener et al. (1985).

### *The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Short*

The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Short (EQI:S) measures emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence focuses on abilities of individuals which are not cognitive, but increase or decrease an individual's capability to adapt to stressors and challenges within an environment. It considers a person's ability to empathize with others, acknowledge and comprehend their own emotions, and utilize emotional resources in solving complex problems, while also supporting others in doing the same.

The EQI:S is based on 7 sub-scales: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Stress Management, Adaptability, General Mood, Positive Impression Management and Total EQ. The Intrapersonal scale refers to the comprehension of one's own emotions and the capacity to recognize each emotion individually. The Interpersonal scale refers to developing positive, beneficial, and reciprocating emotional relationships with other people. It also consists of understanding how other people feel and what other people may want. The Stress Management scale refers to coping with emotions effectively when stressors arise. The Adaptability scale refers to the abilities of an individual to adjust their behaviour according to environmental stressors. The General Mood scale refers to the maintenance of emotions and directing them in a positive/satisfying way. It also consists of directing emotions to help achieve success in aspirations. The Positive Impression scale evaluates the positive impression management of an individual. Finally, the Total Emotional Intelligence scale consists of the general emotional well-being of an individual including their interpersonal relations.

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The EQI:S consists of 51 questions answered on a five-point likert scale: Very Seldom or Not True of Me, Seldom True of Me, Sometimes True of Me, Often True of Me, and Very Often True of Me or True of Me. An example of one of the items on the EQI:S is “it’s hard for me to make decisions on my own.” Participants were directed to indicate whether the statement refers to them or not. The administration of the EQI:S took approximately 15 minutes and was scored according to manual instructions.

**Scoring.** In order to score the EQI:S, raw scores were calculated and transferred to the gender appropriate profile sheet (male or female). Raw scores were summed on the basis of appropriate scales which each item belonged to. The Intrapersonal Scale consisted of the sum of 10 items on the EQI:S; the Interpersonal Scale consisted of the sum of 10 items on the EQI:S; the Stress Management Scale consisted of the sum of 8 items on the EQI:S; the Adaptability Scale consisted of the sum of 7 items on the EQI:S; the General Mood Scale consisted of the sum of 10 items on the EQI:S; the Total EQ consisted of the sum of all of the sub-scales raw scores, divided by 5, and rounded to the nearest whole number; the Positive Impression Scale (a validity sub-scale) consisted of the sum of 6 items on the EQI:S; and, finally, the Inconsistency Index (a validity index) consisted of determining the difference between specific items (for example, item 8 subtracted from item 14 equals 4) and summing the result of each of these differences (for example, item 8 subtracted from item 14 is 4. Item 10 subtracted from item 34 is 5. The sum of the differences – 4 + 5 is 9). T-scores were determined on the basis of age, according to research generated for the manual (M1 = Males 16 to 29 years of age, M2 = Males 30 to 39 years of age, M3 = Males 40 to 49 years of age, M4 = Males 50+ years of age; F1 = Females 16 to 29 years of age, F2 = Females 30 to 39 years of age, F3 = Females 40 to 49 years of age, F4 = Females 50+ years of age). Raw scores were transferred to T-scores and placed into a category of

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either Enhanced Skills, Effective Functioning, or Area for Enrichment for each of the 7 sub-factors of the EQI:S.

With respect to interpreting the components of the EQI:S, a T-score of  $\leq 85$  indicates an area of enrichment, a T-score of 85-115 indicates an area of effective functioning and a T-score of  $\geq 115$  indicates enhanced skills in the particular area. Considering validity scales, positive impression T-scores greater than 130 indicate probable invalid results; positive impression T-scores between 115 and 130 indicate probable valid results; and T-scores less than 115 represent that there is no indication of invalidity. For the inconsistency index, a raw score of 12 or above indicates probable invalid results; a raw score of 10 or 11 indicates probable valid results; and a raw score of below 10 represents that there is no indication of invalidity.

In terms of the reliability and validity of the EQI:S, there are few studies which analyze its psychometric values. However, Dawda and Hart (1999) indicate that the EQI was consistent, had good test-retest reliability, had convergent validity in differentiating normal and abnormal affect, and also determined that there were no significant gender differences. The discriminant validity has also been previously determined as satisfactory due to the differentiation of emotional and personality measures (Dawda & Hart, 1999). Validity remained consistent when examining the sub-components of the EQI (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptation, stress management, general mood, total EQ). Another study (Parker, Keefer, & Wood, 2011) confirmed the exceptional reliability and validity of the EQI:S. The convergent validity was confirmed by comparing the EQI:S to the MSCEIT (a different emotional intelligence measure) and alexithymia. Parker, Keefer, and Wood (2011) found that the EQI:S and MSCEIT were positively and moderately correlated (.56); while the EQI:S and alexithymia scale were also moderately, but negatively correlated (-.54). The EQI:S demonstrated its convergent validity by

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measuring similar emotional variables as the MSCEIT and alexithymia. Discriminant and incremental validity were discerned for the EQI:S as a result of a comparison to scores on the NEO-FFI. The discriminant and incremental validity analyses resulted in the differentiation of a personality measure (the NEO-FFI) and the EQI:S. Finally, Parker, Keefer, and Wood (2011) noted the internal consistency and test-retest (reliability) of the EQI:S as exceptional for all sub-components. For the full sample, the internal consistency of the intrapersonal scale was .80; the interpersonal scale, .82; the adaptability scale, .80; the stress management scale, .75; and the total scale, .87, all considered strong correlations. With respect to test-retest reliability, Parker, Keefer, and Wood (2011) found that the intrapersonal scale had a reliability of .77 and the stress management scale had a reliability of .72, both correlations were considered strong. The interpersonal scale had a reliability of .60; the adaptability scale had a reliability of .61; and the total scale had a reliability of .60, all three considered moderate correlations.

### **Procedure**

Prior to recruiting participants, ethical approval was sought through Laurentian's Research Ethics Board (REB; refer to Appendix B). After approval was granted, recruitment occurred via posting recruitment information on Umentioned Laurentian, a Facebook page dedicated to Laurentian students. Further to this, students were recruited by entering into various Laurentian University classrooms, such as Introduction to Psychology and Neurobiology. Students who volunteered were asked to sign an informed consent form. After receiving consent to continue, either with one student or with a group of students no larger than five, the five questionnaires were provided: the general demographics form, the ECR-R, the BarOn EQI:S, the SWLS, and the FAM-III. The questionnaires were completed in this particular order in order to divide the amount of work the participants had to complete in increments. Students were allowed approximately 45 minutes in order to complete all of

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the questionnaires; however, completion could take as little as 30 minutes. When participants completed all questionnaires, all students were provided with a debriefing form, which included mental health resources – should the participants require mental health assistance as a result of the study.

Other questions regarding the study were also answered at this time and emotions regulated, if emotion arose as a result of the study.

### **Results**

The primary purpose of the current study was to determine if family composition moderated the link between attachment and emotional intelligence and to understand the differences in family functioning and emotional intelligence according to family composition and length of time within the specified family composition. This study also addressed sub-hypotheses concerning the prediction of emotional intelligence by family composition, the differences in attachment according to family composition, the link between emotional intelligence and attachment, the relationship between family functioning and emotional intelligence, and, finally, the link between life satisfaction and attachment.

#### **Normality**

Distribution was assessed for all variables utilizing SPSS. It was determined that all variables within the present study had an abnormal distribution, with the exception of the sub-component known as General Mood within the BarOn EQI. A decision was made, after determining persistent abnormality in variables after transformation, to utilize robust and non-parametric analyses.

#### **Exclusion of Data**

Two questionnaires (the EQI and the FAM-III) embodied validity scales. Invalid data on the EQI and the FAM-III were excluded in order to ensure accuracy in analyses. Data from the EQI were deemed “probable invalid results” if the individual had a score of 12 or above on the Inconsistency Index. Data from the FAM-III were considered invalid if the Social Desirability or Defensiveness scales were a T-score of 60 or above. This meant that participants were not being honest when answering the items on the FAM-III. If this was the case, participants were either answering items according to what would be societally expected (Social Desirability) or

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withholding accurate familial information in order to protect their family or avoid negativity associated with issues their family might have (Defensiveness).

In total, 16 participants were excluded from the EQI, while 27 participants were excluded from the FAM-III. This invalidity may have arisen from the sample the present study used.

If a participant's data was valid on all other measures, the participant was included in the analyses (e.g., if participant's data was valid on the EQI but invalid on the FAM-III, the participant was still included on the EQI and all other measures in the study with the exception of the FAM-III).

### Comparisons to Norms

The normative results of the various measures of the current study are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Present Study's Instrument Mean Raw Scores in Comparison to Normative Values*

Test	Normative Mean Raw Score	Present Study Mean Raw Score
ECR-R		
- Anxious Attachment	3.56 (SD = 1.12)	1.83 (SD = .744)
- Avoidant Attachment	2.56 (SD = 1.19)	2.56 (SD = 1.47)
EQI:S		
- Intrapersonal	37.50 (SD = 6.0)	26.60 (SD = 5.12)
- Interpersonal	41.10 (SD = 5.30)	41.30 (SD = 3.82)
- Adaptability	24.60 (SD = 4.40)	26.47 (SD = 4.41)
- Stress Management	30.80 (SD = 5.20)	33.32 (SD = 3.42)
- Total	34.6 (SD = 3.95)	28.71 (SD = 1.77)
FAM-III		
- Family Task Accomplishment	6.00 (SD = 2.50)	5.86 (SD = 2.78)
- Role Performance	6.40 (SD = 5.3)	6.08 (SD = 2.58)
- Communication	5.70 (SD = 4.5)	5.59 (SD = 2.93)
- Affect	5.50 (SD = 2.7)	5.59 (SD = 3.08)
- Involvement	4.50 (SD = 6.4)	3.59 (SD = 2.90)
- Control	6.00 (SD = 7.4)	5.16 (SD = 2.62)
- Values and Norms	5.30 (SD = 2.3)	5.03 (SD = 2.89)
SWLS	23.50 (SD = 6.43)	24.49 (SD = 6.15)

*Note.* The mean raw score for all instruments is presented with the standard deviation in brackets.

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### **General Demographic Descriptions**

Data descriptors are presented in Table 2. With respect to family composition, the majority of individuals resided within a biological family composition (67.1%), followed by Single Parent Family (15.4%), and Step Family (14.7%). When considering the various family compositions an individual resided in over a period of time, it is clear that a considerable number of transitions occurred. The time in years spent in any specific family composition varied from 2 years to 36 years. How long ago participants were within their primary family composition ranged from 2 to 21 years. How long ago participants were in a second family composition varied from 1.5 years to 15 years. The length of time spent in a different family composition ranged from 3 months to 16 years.

Physical illness was not prominent among the current sample. The minority of participants indicated that a physical illness was present (5.6%). Psychological disorders was also not prominent among the current sample. Out of the 32 participants (22.4%) who indicated a psychological disorder, 26 were female (81.2%).

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**Table 2**

*Demographic Information*

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Family composition		
- Biological Family	96	67.1
- Step Family	21	14.7
- Single Parent Family	22	15.4
- Other Family Composition	4	2.8
Resided in Other Family Composition		
- Biological Family	21	14.7
- Step Family with Biological Mother	3	2.1
- Step Family with Biological Father	3	2.1
- Step Family with Biological Mother	5	3.5
- Step Family with Biological Father	2	1.4
- Single Mother Family	3	2.1
Resided in Third Family Composition		
- Biological	2	1.4
Ethnicity		
- Caucasian	117	81.8
- Black	6	4.2
- Indigenous	2	1.4
- Arab	4	2.8
- Asian	8	5.6
- Caucasian & Black	2	1.4
Language Proficiency		
- English	124	86.7
- French	12	8.4
Primary Caregiver		
- Mother	80	55.9
- Father	23	16.1
Secondary Step Parent		
- Step Mother	5	3.5
Income		
- 0 – 30 000	11	7.7
- 31 000 – 50 000	14	9.8
- 51 000 – 70 000	18	12.6
- 71 000 – 79 000	14	9.8
- 80 000 – 110 000	30	21.0
- 111 000 – 150 000	18	12.6
- 151 000 – 200 000	16	11.2
- 201 000 +	10	7.0
Religious Affiliation		
- Muslim	4	2.8
- Protestant	5	3.5
- Roman Catholic	32	22.4
- Jewish	2	1.4
- Christian	38	26.6
- Atheist	54	37.8
- Agnostic	2	1.4
Children in Family		
- 1	19	13.3
- 2	55	38.5
- 3	47	32.9
- 4	10	7.0
- 5	11	7.7
Psychological Disorder		
- Anxiety	7	4.9
- Depression	7	4.9
- Anxiety & Depression	11	7.7

*Note.* N refers to number of participants for each demographic variable; % refers to percentage of participants for each demographic variable.

### **Family Composition and Attachment**

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was utilized to test the hypothesis that the continuous variable avoidant attachment (N = 43), as measured by the ECR-R, was associated with residing within a step family (N = 21) or a single parent family (N = 22). A comparison of the median scores indicated that the avoidant attachment scores were higher for the single parent group ( $Mdn = 2.91$ ) than the step family group ( $Mdn = 2.19$ ). The Kruskal-Wallis H Test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the family composition groups,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.27, p < .05$ .

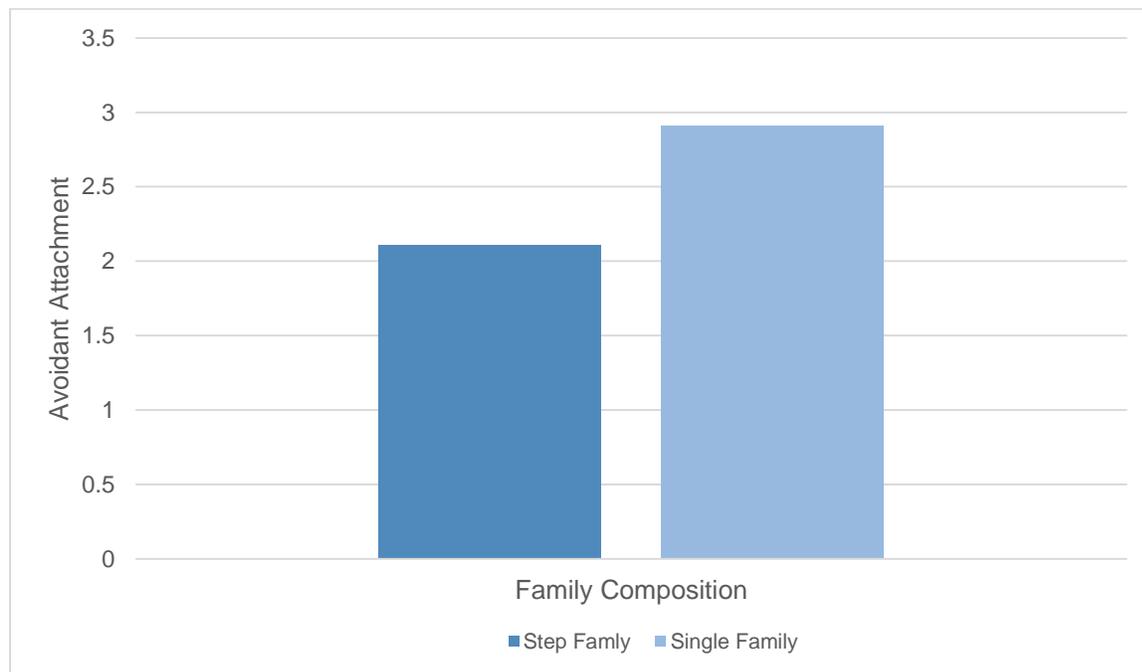
Since there were statistically significant differences in avoidant attachment between the step family group and the single parent family group, a post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine the exact differences in scores. A Mann-Whitney U test was performed. Median avoidant attachment scores were statistically significantly higher in the single parent family composition ( $Mdn = 2.91$ ) than it was in the step parent family composition ( $Mdn = 2.11$ ),  $U = 334, z = 2.50, p < .05$  (refer to Figure 1).

A second Kruskal-Wallis H test was utilized to test the hypothesis that the continuous variable anxious attachment (N = 43), as measured by the ECR-R, was associated with residing within a step family (N = 21) or a single parent family (N = 22). A comparison of the median scores indicated that the anxious attachment scores were identical for both the step parent family group and the single parent family group ( $Mdn = 1.61$ ). The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups,  $\chi^2(1) = .021, p > .05$ .

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**Figure 1**

*Bar Graph Representing the Difference between Step Family and Single Family on Avoidant Attachment Medians*



*Note.* Avoidant attachment median scores were statistically significantly higher in the single parent family group than the step family group.

### **Attachment and Emotional Intelligence**

It was hypothesized that emotional intelligence and attachment would be related. Specifically, as a continuous variable, secure attachment would be negatively related to emotional intelligence. In order to examine this hypothesis, data from the EQI:S and the ECR-R was utilized. All in all, forty-one participants had a secure attachment, while eighty-six participants had an insecure attachment. A total of 127 participants were included in this analysis. Six scales of emotional intelligence were utilized in this analysis: intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, general mood, stress management, and overall emotional intelligence.

A Spearman's Rank-Order correlation indicated that there was a positive and moderate correlation between anxious attachment and intrapersonal well-being,  $\rho(125) = .426, p < .01$ . A

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Spearman's Rank-Order correlation further indicated a negative and weak association between danxious attachment and interpersonal well-being,  $\rho(125) = -.20, p < .05$ . A weak and positive association was subsequently noted between degree of anxious attachment and stress management,  $\rho(125) = .25, p < .01$ . A Spearman's Rank-Order correlation noted that degree of anxious attachment was weakly and negatively related to adaptability,  $\rho(125) = -.20, p < .05$ . Degree of anxious attachment was also weakly and positively associated with overall emotional intelligence,  $\rho(125) = .21, p < .01$ .

With respect to avoidant attachment, a Spearman's Rank-Order correlation indicated that a positive and weak correlation existed between degree of avoidant attachment and intrapersonal well-being,  $\rho(125) = .26, p < .01$ . In addition, the Spearman's Rank-Order correlation noted a negative and weak correlation between degree of avoidant attachment and interpersonal well-being,  $\rho(125) = -.21, p < .05$ . A Spearman's Rank-Order correlation also revealed a weak and positive correlation between degree of avoidant attachment and stress management,  $\rho(125) = .24, p < .01$ .

### **Family Composition and Emotional Intelligence**

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was utilized to test the hypothesis that family composition (biological family –  $N = 86$ ; other family composition –  $N = 41$ ) was associated with emotional intelligence, measured by the EQI:S. A comparison of the median scores indicated that the median overall emotional intelligence scores were 76 for the biological family group and 77 for the other family composition group. The Kruskal-Wallis H Test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between family composition groups,  $\chi^2(1) = .53, p > .05$ .

### **Attachment and Life Satisfaction**

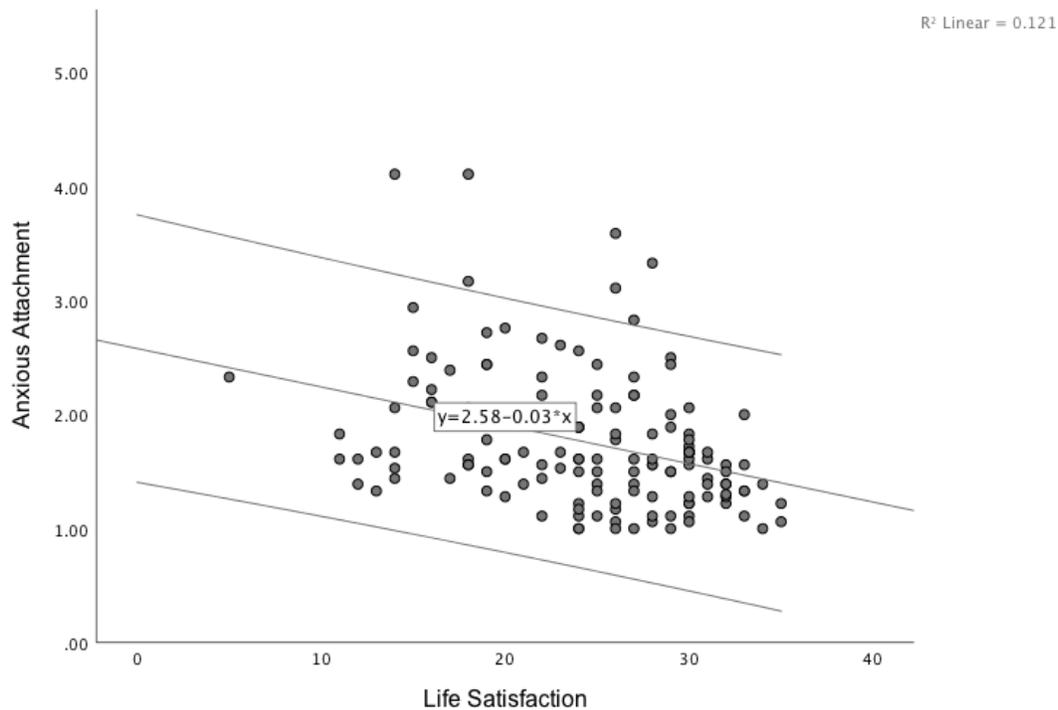
It was hypothesized that lower life satisfaction, as measured by the SWLS, would be correlated with a more insecure attachment, as measured by the ECR-R, and higher life satisfaction would be associated with a more secure attachment. A Spearman's Rank-Order correlation indicated a negative

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and moderate correlation between life satisfaction and anxious attachment,  $\rho(141) = -.37, p < .001$  (refer to Figure 2). That is, the more satisfied a participant was with their life, the more likely it was that this individual had a less anxious attachment (probable secure attachment). A Spearman's Rank-Order correlation conducted between life satisfaction and avoidant attachment also indicated a negative and moderate correlation,  $\rho(141) = -.40, p < .001$  (refer to Figure 3). This meant that the higher a participant's life satisfaction, the more likely it was that this individual had a less avoidant attachment (probable secure attachment).

**Figure 2**

*Scatterplot Representing the Association between Anxious Attachment and Life Satisfaction*

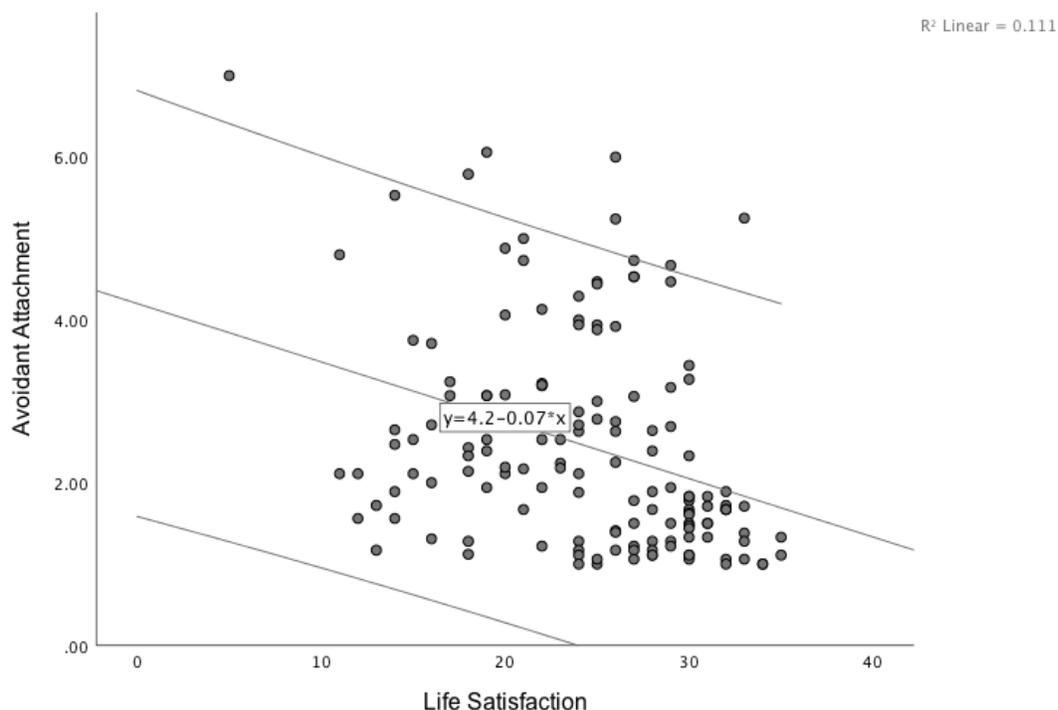


*Note.* A Spearman's Rank-Order Analysis indicated that there was a moderate and negative correlation between anxious attachment and life satisfaction.

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**Figure 3**

*Scatterplot Representing the Association between Avoidant Attachment and Life Satisfaction*



*Note.* A Spearman's Rank-Order correlation indicated that there was a moderate and negative correlation between avoidant attachment and life satisfaction.

### **Length of Time in Family Composition and Family Functioning**

In order to address the hypothesis that the length of time ( $N = 141$ ) within a specified family composition would be associated with family functioning, as measured by the FAM-III, multiple Spearman Rank-Order correlations were conducted. The Spearman Rank-Order analyses indicated that there were no statistically significant correlations between length of time and family task accomplishment,  $\rho (113) = .03, p > .05$ , role performance,  $\rho (112) = -.06, p > .05$ , communication,  $\rho (112) = .05, p > .05$ , affect,  $\rho (112) = .09, p > .05$ , involvement,  $\rho (112) = -.02, p > .05$ , control  $\rho (112) = .08, p > .05$ , values and norms,  $\rho (112) = .10, p > .05$ , and overall family functioning,  $\rho (112) = .03, p > .05$ .

### **Step Mother and Step Father Families and Differences in Family Functioning**

Multiple Kruskal-Wallis H tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in family functioning scales between the step mother family group (N = 5) and the step father family group (N = 10). Specifically, analyses were run to determine if adults within a step mother family composition were more likely to have lower functioning than individuals within a step father family composition as measured by the FAM-III. A comparison of the family task accomplishment median scores indicated that the step father family composition had a median score of 58 and the step mother family composition had a score of 54. The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups with respect to family task accomplishment,  $\chi^2(1) = .25, p > .05$ . A comparison of the role performance median scores indicated that the step mother family composition had a median score of 56, while the step father family group had a median score of 50. The Kruskal-Wallis H test found no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on role performance,  $\chi^2(1) = .24, p > .05$ . A comparison of the communication median scores indicated that the step mother family had a median score of 60, while the step father family group had a median score of 52. The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on communication,  $\chi^2(1) = .65, p > .05$ . A comparison of the affect median scores indicated that both step family groups had identical scores ( $Mdn = 50$ ). The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on affect,  $\chi^2(1) = .15, p > .05$ . A comparison of the involvement median scores indicated that the step father family had a median score of 52, while the step mother family group had a median core of 50. The Kruskal-Wallis H test noted that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on

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involvement,  $\chi^2(1) = .004, p > .05$ . A comparison of the control median scores indicated that the step father family had a score of 56, while the step mother family group had a score of 52. The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on control,  $\chi^2(1) = .67, p > .05$ . A comparison of the values and norms median scores indicated that the step father family had a score of 54, while the step mother family group had a median score of 52. The Kruskal-Wallis H test noted that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on values and norms,  $\chi^2(1) = .10, p > .05$ . A comparison of the overall family functioning median scores indicated that the step mother family had a score of 58, while the step father family group had a score of 53. The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the family composition groups on overall family functioning,  $\chi^2(1) = .02, p > .05$ .

**Table 3**

*Family Functioning Descriptives based on Family Composition*

Family composition	<b>Family Functioning Scales</b>							
	Fam Tsk Accomp	Role Perf	Comm	Affect	Involv	Cntrl	Vals & Norm	Overall
Step Father	N = 7 (EF)	N = 6 (EF)	N = 1 (S)	N = 8 (EF)	N = 2 (S)	N = 7 (EF)	N = 1 (S)	N = 7 (EF)
	N = 3 (W)	N = 4 (W)	N = 6 (EF) N = 3 (W)	N = 2 (W)	N = 4 (EF) N = 4 (W)	N = 3 (W)	N = 7 (EF) N = 2 (W)	N = 3 (W)
Step Mother	N = 3 (EF)	N = 3 (EF)	N = 1 (EF)	N = 1 (S)	N = 1 (S)	N = 4 (EF)	N = 4 (EF)	N = 4 (EF)
	N = 2 (W)	N = 2 (W)	N = 4 (W)	N = 2 (EF) N = 2 (S)	N = 2 (EF) N = 2 (W)	N = 1 (W)	N = 1(W)	N = 1 (W)

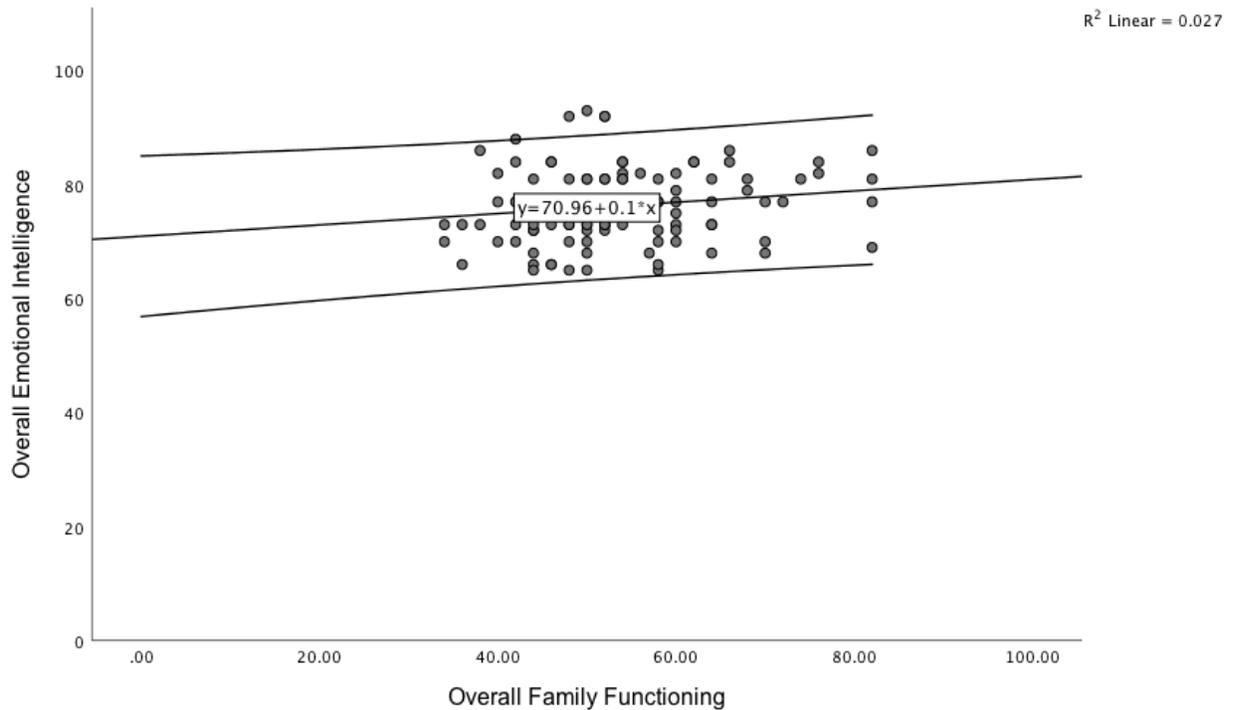
*Note.* (W) is equivalent to an area of familial weakness; (EF) is equivalent to an area of effective familial functioning; (S) is equivalent to an area of familial strength. All numerical values represent participants.

**Family Functioning and Emotional intelligence**

A Spearman’s Rank-Order correlation was conducted to investigate the hypothesis that overall family functioning (N = 116), as measured by the FAM-III, would be negatively correlated with overall emotional intelligence (N = 127), as measured by the EQI:S. A weak, positive correlation was discovered between overall emotional intelligence and overall family functioning,  $\rho(108) = .21, p < .05$  (refer to Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Scatterplot Representing the Association between Emotional Intelligence and Family Functioning*



*Note.* A Spearman’s Rank-Order correlation determined a weak and positive correlation between overall emotional intelligence and overall family functioning.

### **Discussion**

The primary purpose of the current study was to determine if family composition moderated the link between attachment and emotional intelligence and to understand the differences in family functioning and emotional intelligence according to family composition and length of time within the specified family composition. This study also addressed sub-hypotheses concerning the prediction of emotional intelligence by family composition, the differences in attachment according to family composition, the link between emotional intelligence and attachment, the relationship between family functioning and emotional intelligence, and, finally, the link between life satisfaction and attachment.

#### **Family Composition and Attachment**

Love and Murdock (2004) have referred to the detrimental effects on stepchildren when residing within a step family environment. The step family environment was particularly influential to an individual's attachment. Other research has indicated that the single parent family environment is a less than optimal environment for the development of attachment (e.g., Kilmann, Carranza, & Vandemia, 2006). Little research has referred to the study of both the step family and single parent family and adult children (e.g., Love & Murdock, 2004; Planitz, Feeney, & Peterson, 2009).

This study sought to understand these family compositions further. Family composition and attachment were also examined in order to satisfy the condition specified by Love and Murdock (2004). They specified that the link between family composition and attachment must be present in order to complete an analysis regarding the moderation of attachment and emotional intelligence by family composition. It was hypothesized that the possibility of developing an anxious or avoidant attachment would be associated with residing within a step family or single parent family. The results confirmed one of the hypotheses. It was found that avoidant attachment was higher in the single parent

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group than the step family group. However, no significant results were found with regard to anxious attachment.

The finding that avoidant attachment is more prominent in the single parent group than the step family group may be present due to several circumstances and variables, according to prior literature. Research (e.g., Breivik, Olweus, & Endresen, 2009; Carlson, 2006; Moor et al., 2015; Pagani, Tremblay, Vitaro, Kerr, & McDuff, 1998) has suggested that single parents may lack adequate resources to raise their children, lack attention for children, have higher stress levels, an inability to be relieved of caretaking duties, and a higher likelihood of mental illness. With an inadequate income to sufficiently provide for their children, a single parent would be forced to potentially secure multiple forms of employment in order to increase income, even if only slightly. The single parent's absence from her children due to an increase in time commitments via employment, would contribute to the development of an insecure attachment. What may also contribute to the development of an insecure attachment, is the single parent's stress levels and an inability to be relieved of caretaking duties. Without sufficient and consistent time alone to re-generate energy levels and self-reflect, it makes sense that a single parent would lack sufficient psychological, emotional, and physical resources to keep up with a child. Finally, mental illness, according to researchers (e.g., Behere, Basnet, & Campbell, 2017), is particularly prominent within a single parent family composition.

The present study also found that anxious attachment did not differ according to family composition. It may be that, individuals within this sample are more likely to present with avoidance attachment symptomology as opposed to anxious attachment symptomology. Alternatively, given the nature of anxious attachment and the child ensuring that their behaviour maintains the caregiver's attention, perhaps the individuals within this study were more likely to answer in a positive light in

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order to conceal attachment, in case this would, by some means, reduce the availability of their primary attachment person (the concept is described by Campbell & Marshall, 2011).

### **Attachment and Emotional Intelligence**

Limited research has pointed to a link between attachment type and emotional intelligence (e.g., Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009; Kafetsios, 2004; Sabri, Khoshbakht, & Golzar, 2015; Samadi, Kasaei, & Pour, 2013). Samadi, Kaseai, and Pour (2013) found that a secure attachment in adulthood was associated with higher emotional intelligence. It was also found that more of a dismissive attachment in adulthood was associated with higher emotional intelligence; while, a fearful attachment was negatively linked to emotional intelligence. Samadi, Kasaei, and Pour (2013) indicated that an anxious attachment was associated with a more enhanced interpersonal intelligence, but also linked to a less enhanced adaptability intelligence. They also found that interpersonal intelligence was predicted by secure attachment. Other research, such as Hamarta, Deniz, and Saltali (2009), has also found that emotional intelligence was predicted by attachment type. Specifically, a more secure attachment was linked to a more enhanced and effective emotional intelligence. In addition, Hamarta, Deniz, and Saltali (2009) indicated that the intrapersonal scale was predicted by the secure attachment type and the dismissive attachment type. They also found that a more dismissive attachment type was related to a less enhanced interpersonal intelligence. The above studies were the main available studies concerning the link between attachment and emotional intelligence, to date. Given the limited research, Schutte et al. (2001) recommended the further exploration of the link between attachment and emotional intelligence.

It was hypothesized by the present study that attachment would be linked to emotional intelligence. Specifically, secure attachment would be negatively correlated to emotional intelligence (negative correlation as, with the attachment measure used in this study, secure

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attachment consists of lower numbers, while insecure attachment consists of higher numbers).

This hypothesis was a necessary condition to be satisfied prior to conducting an analysis to determine if family composition moderated attachment and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, it addressed the suggestion of Schutte et al. (2001) for more research on the link between attachment and emotional intelligence.

With respect to relationships among the data, it was found that a less secure attachment was associated with a more enhanced overall emotional intelligence. In addition to the prior findings, this study did find that individuals with an insecure attachment were more likely to be aware of their own emotionality, were more likely to be expressive regarding their feelings, and were more likely to be autonomous. It also found that the more of an insecure attachment an individual has, the more likely it is that the individual will have higher stress management abilities as well as a higher likelihood of overall emotional intelligence. Finally, this study found that a more secure attachment was associated with enhanced coping and adaptation abilities to one's environment.

The majority of these findings are partially inconsistent with prior literature, such as Hanmarta et al. (2009). Secure attachment typically predicts effective emotion regulation, emotional expression, as well as the interpretation and comprehension of one's emotional state. One explanation for the positive link between insecure attachment and emotional intelligence variables may be the consideration of compensatory mechanisms. Perhaps an individual with anxious attachment has an increased self-awareness of emotionality because he or she must acknowledge an emotional state and learn how to effectively control it to ensure consistent and somewhat stable attachment patterns with a caregiver (i.e., Costello, 2013) or to survive within their environment. Another theory as to why the present study found the above results pertains to age. Some studies have indicated that both of the variables, attachment and emotional intelligence, can vary with the age of the individual. Emotional intelligence,

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in youth, can be altered or influenced by variables such as siblings or other components directly within the environment an individual resides in as a youth. While emotional intelligence, in adulthood, can be associated with adult related contexts (e.g., employment or other environments one attends).

Attachment, in adulthood, may focus more so on other relationships, such as romantic relationships and less so on prior caregivers.

Individuals with an insecure attachment might learn how to restrict and release emotions according to what would be beneficial in maintaining the affection that is desired. As individuals with anxious attachment are preoccupied with other people's perception of them, it is clear that self-awareness of emotions is important in ensuring the maintenance of relationships. Meifen Wei, Vogel, and Zakalik (2005) confirmed the efficient emotion regulation process of insecurely attached individuals, in that, such people are over sensitive to their emotional processes. With respect to the current research, individuals with an insecure attachment are over sensitive to their emotionality which may result in unhealthy relationships.

The present study also found that interpersonal intelligence was associated with attachment. This meant that an individual that is fluent in understanding other people's emotions and empathizing appropriately is likely to have less of an insecure attachment. This is in keeping with past research which suggests that higher emotional intelligence is associated with more of a secure attachment (e.g., Hamarta, Deniz, & Saltali, 2009; Samadi, Kasaei, & Pour, 2013) and theories indicating that parental dependability, reliability, and responsiveness may result in the growth, flourishing, and optimal psychological well-being of an individual.

The findings mentioned above could lay the foundation for the implementation of resources and intervention strategies in order to generate effective and healthy emotional awareness as opposed to maintaining the over-analyzation of each and every emotional response.

### **Family Composition and Emotional Intelligence**

Literature has varied when considering family composition and emotional intelligence. Schrodt and Ledbetter (2007) compared biological families to single parent families and pointed out that individuals within biological families were more likely to have beneficial interpersonal relations than single parent families. The findings of Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) contrasted Schrodt and Ledbetter (2007) by indicating that there were no differences in emotional intelligence between family compositions.

In the current study, it was hypothesized that family composition predicted emotional intelligence. The results lined up with prior research which indicated that emotional intelligence did not differ between family compositions (i.e., Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, & Comino, 2019). In explaining this finding, the present study turns to Sarrionandia, Fernandez-Lasarte, and Comino (2019) for an explanation. They indicated that family composition may not be associated with emotional intelligence because an adult population may have acquired emotional intelligence from other aspects in their life besides family composition, such as colleagues from their place of employment.

Given the results of this study, it is necessary to explore the possibility that all family compositions may be similar in emotional intelligence levels, in that, emotional intelligence may need enrichment in all family compositions or emotional intelligence is sufficient, despite family composition.

### **Family Composition, Attachment, and Emotional Intelligence**

The examination of family composition and attachment stems from Love and Murdock (2004), in their study of the moderation of attachment and psychological well-being by family composition. They found that no substantial moderation effect was present. Love and Murdock (2004) concluded that attachment may not be impacted by the biological or step family

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environment itself, but recommended that future research include further family compositions in this analysis to determine if diversity of family compositions influenced results differently. The present study, partially utilizing Love and Murdock (2004)'s hypothesis, had proposed that family composition would moderate attachment and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was included as a variable in this analysis as, though some studies exist regarding emotional intelligence mediating the link between attachment and an external variable (e.g., Lanciano, Curci, Kafetsios, Elia, & Zammuner, 2012; Marks, Harrocks, & Schutte, 2016), no studies to date exist regarding family composition moderating the link between emotional intelligence and attachment. Since the literature has found a relationship between emotional intelligence and family composition, emotional intelligence and attachment, and attachment and family composition, it is also important to study the relationship between family composition, attachment, and emotional intelligence to determine if family composition influences the strength of the link between attachment and emotional intelligence.

In order to conduct an analysis concerning family composition moderating the link between attachment and emotional intelligence, similar to Love and Murdock (2004), three conditions needed to be met. Family composition must predict emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence and attachment must be significantly linked, and family composition must be linked to attachment. As a result of a condition violation (family composition did not predict emotional intelligence), it was concluded that family composition did not moderate the relationship between attachment and emotional intelligence. Family composition may not have predicted emotional intelligence as the adult population used in this sample may have acquired emotional intelligence from other aspects in their life besides family composition, such as colleagues from their place of employment.

### **Attachment and Life Satisfaction**

It was hypothesized that life satisfaction would be associated with attachment. That is, higher life satisfaction would be related to a more secure attachment, while lower life satisfaction would be associated with less of a secure attachment. The results of the current study confirm the hypothesis. The findings of the present study also corroborate with prior research conducted concerning the association between life satisfaction and attachment (e.g., Temiz & Comert, 2018; Odaci, Ciknkcı, Ciknkcı, & Aydin, 2019). The results of this study contrast other researchers (e.g., Perrone, Webb, & Jackson, 2007). It contributes to the current literature, which relays conflicting information regarding life satisfaction and attachment. The association between life satisfaction and attachment may exist due to the well-known principals of secure in comparison to insecure attachment. That is, a caregiver's ability to provide necessary comfort and support, even in adulthood.

Unfortunately, the results of this study also indicate that some individuals have insecure attachments associated with lower life satisfaction. Similar to other research (i.e., Temiz & Comert, 2018), this study's results can direct focus to the individuals with an insecure attachment and what the next steps may be in order to improve their quality of life, if necessary.

### **Length of Time in Family Composition and Family Functioning**

One variable that, according to research, may be capable of impacting family functioning is length of time that a family composition has been united for. Pryor (2014) has indicated that length of time is important in the family functioning of a family composition as, unlike biological family compositions, step families may experience stressors and challenges in coping with the family transition change (e.g., Coleman et al., 2013; Gangong & Coleman, 2004; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Stewart, 2007).

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In the present study it was hypothesized that the length of time within a family composition would be related to family functioning. No significant results were found for any of the sub-components of family functioning. This is in corroboration with Love and Murdock (2004) who did not find any significance between these two variables.

The finding of no significance between length of time in family composition and family functioning may be positive in this study as, in other studies (e.g., Love & Murdock, 2004) it has been indicated that it has the potential to be a confounding variable in family functioning results. In addition, no significance for this hypothesis could indicate that this particular sample has effective family functioning, regardless of length of time in the particular family composition. However, as the majority of this sample is individuals from biological family compositions, there is the possibility that the amount of participants within each family composition may have influenced this study (i.e., adult participants would reside in a biological family for a longer period of time and more adult participants indicated affiliation with a biological family in this sample).

### **Family Functioning and Emotional Intelligence**

Several scientific studies have pointed to a significant association between family functioning and emotional intelligence (Keaten & Kelly, 2007; Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Montpetit, Nelson, & Tiberio, 2017; Tajalli & Latifan, 2008). Multiple studies have indicated that emotional intelligence was associated with familial communication, in that, the higher the individual's emotional intelligence, the more likely it is that familial communication is considered a strong suit. This was also the case for involvement within a family composition and emotional intelligence: an ability to effectively regulate emotions varied on the basis of effective and positive family involvement. Clearly, the literature has delved slightly into the relationship between emotional intelligence and family functioning. However, most of the literature pointed to sub-components of

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family functioning as being related to emotional intelligence as opposed to the overall determination of both variables. Further, Alavi, Mehrinezhad, Amini, & Singh (2017) recommended that future research be conducted on the link between family functioning and emotional intelligence with different populations (as the present available research has more so focused on adolescents).

The present study had hypothesized that family functioning would be negatively correlated with emotional intelligence. It was revealed that a positive and significant relationship existed between family functioning and emotional intelligence. Specifically, enhanced emotional intelligence was found to be related to weaker family functioning. This is in contrast to the literature available for family functioning and emotional intelligence. According to Ghanawat, Muke, Chaudhury, and Kiran (2016), Houtmeyers (2000), and Shapiro (2000), the environment one is raised in is capable of contributing significantly to the formulation of emotional intelligence. This may be the case for the current findings. Adults raised in an environment more conducive to developing healthy emotionally intelligence, are more likely to utilize these methods in their own regulation of emotion moving forward. However, family functioning may also play a role in the development of emotionality. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), the family environment teaches individuals methods on communication with others, comprehension of others' emotions, as well as comprehension and processing of one's own emotions. Perhaps the findings of this study occur due to the majority of participants within this study having family environments which model enriched emotional expression and processing. However, perhaps the family environment is riddled with various other issues that, when combined to form the overall family functioning score, overrules the potentially higher affective expression score.

Effective family functioning, according to Chandran and Nair (2015), may increase and enrich one's emotional intelligence. Ozbaci (2006) indicated that family functioning may be strengthened

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with enriched intrapersonal and interpersonal processes. Thus, it seems that emotional intelligence and family functioning processes are intertwined and, in order to address dysfunctionality within one of these life processes, the other may also have to be investigated.

### **Recently Remarried Step Mother and Step Father Families and Family Functioning**

Some literature suggests that recently formed step families are more likely to struggle with family functioning and the implementation of individualized family systems (e.g., Coleman et al., 2013). King, Amato, and Lindstrom (2015) indicated that it is important to research the step family formation as it is first developed in order to understand how family processes are formulated. The majority of the available literature on recently formed step families mainly focuses on the relationship between a step parent and step child as opposed to family functioning (e.g. Amato, King, & Thorsen, 2016). Along with the lack of literature on family functioning, almost all studies, such as King, Amato, and Lindstrom (2015) have focused on the younger population, such as adolescents, and few have focused on the family functioning with adult stepchildren. The present study aimed to contribute to the literature by analyzing recently remarried step mother and step father families and family functioning in an adult population, which has scarcely been addressed in the past.

The present research hypothesized that recently remarried single mother families and single father families would differ on the basis of family functioning. An analysis could not be conducted due to small group sizes. The present study may not have been able to collect enough participants to conduct this analysis due to adults from a biological family composition possibly being more likely to attend university than other family compositions.

### **Step Mother and Step Father Families and Family Functioning**

Family functioning is a crucial part of an individual's development. Healthy family functioning may contribute to a well-rounded, efficient individual, while unhealthy family functioning may result

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in the degradation of a person's contribution to society and deterioration of positive emotionality (Johnson, Gans, Kerr, & LaValle, 2010). Optimal family functioning refers to healthy behaviours within the family unit (Zwane, Venter, Termane, & Chigeza, 2012). White (1994) studied the influence of a step family environment on family functioning, specifically, whether the gender of the step parent may result in differences in an individual's family functioning. White (1994) concluded that having a step father rather than a step mother is beneficial when considering family functioning. Schrodt (2008) and Ahrons (1994) had similar findings to White (1994). The theory behind this refers to the mother, historically, as being the primary nurturing parent and the father being the secondary nurturing parent. This indicates that a biological mother may be necessary in the family unit in order to ensure adequate overall functioning.

The present study proposed that adults residing within a step mother family composition were more likely to have lower family functioning than adults residing within a step father family composition. The results revealed that family functioning did not differ according to step family composition. These results may differ from prior research results due to the small sample size in the current study. However, the present study may also have contrasting results to other research because, perhaps, there may be no differences between parental gender with respect to family environment, if only for this specific sample.

### **Summary**

In summary, the current research sought to primarily examine the moderation of attachment and emotional intelligence by family composition and the differences in family functioning according to family composition and length of time. It also sought to examine sub-hypotheses surrounding family composition and attachment, attachment and life satisfaction, attachment and emotional intelligence, family composition and emotional intelligence, and length of time in a family composition and family

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functioning. This study found that avoidant attachment was higher (more insecure) in the single parent family than the step family composition. There were no significant differences in anxious attachment when comparing a single parent family and step family composition. It investigated the relationship between life satisfaction and attachment and found that higher life satisfaction was linked to a more secure attachment. This study also examined attachment and emotional intelligence and found that insecure attachment was related to intrapersonal intelligence, stress management abilities, and overall emotional intelligence. This study found that family composition did not predict emotional intelligence and, as a violation of one of the necessary conditions, family composition did not moderate attachment and emotional intelligence. Moreover, no significance was found in examining family functioning and length of time in a given family composition, the differences in family functioning between a step mother and step father environment, and the differences between recently remarried single mother families and single father families in family functioning. In analyzing the association between emotional intelligence and family functioning, the current study indicated that enhanced emotional intelligence was associated with weaker family functioning.

### **Limitations**

Despite the significance of the present study, limitations do exist which future studies should consider addressing.

Addressing general demographics, there were several more female students than male students in the present sample which may have biased the results, despite gender not being directly studied. Age of participants may have influenced the results of this study as participants that were age 17 or 18 may have been in the midst of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Age of participants may have influenced the findings of the emotional intelligence and family functioning variables. The current study sample was based primarily on biological families. With a small sample size of step families and

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single parent families, it was difficult to reach a solid conclusion. It may have been challenging to collect an adequate sample from step families and single parent families due to location (northern Ontario) or due to students with a higher income, from a biological family composition being more likely to attend university than an individual from a lower income, step family or single parent family. A larger sample size of at least 50 per group within the step family and single parent family may have increased the power within this study. Further to this, income was collected from participants but ultimately not utilized in analyses. Income may be higher in a university student population than a sample collected external to a university. The findings of the emotional intelligence and life satisfaction variables from the present study may have been influenced by higher income as higher income may be related to increased well-being. Moreover, since higher income may be more prevalent in all university students, the present study's findings may not reveal the true differences between a biological, step, and single parent family. The present study also did not inquire regarding past stressful events capable of influencing mental health in the general demographics questionnaire (i.e., divorce, separation; Henry & Holmes, 1998). Another limitation of the present study is that many of the demographic components collected were not utilized in result analyses. Some of these components could have confounded results.

With respect to limitations on the measurements used, the ECR-R, although flexible for alteration, was specifically developed for use with romantic relationships. Moreover, research shows that, despite being asked to provide in depth information regarding attachments, individuals with a dismissive attachment are more likely to provide inaccurate information (Planitz, 2009). Another limitation concerns the EQI:S. This instrument was phased out and is no longer used, with the exception of research purposes. In addition, the reliability of the EQI:S is primarily based off of psychometric studies conducted for the EQI (full version). The reliability of this measure may be

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questionable given that scarce studies exist concerning it. The FAM-III, although still valid in the current study, should utilize the perceptions of all family members as opposed to just one for comprehensive information on family functioning. If information is provided with no facts or evidence available to prove or disprove it, the results from the FAM-III could be invalid and impact part of a study. Considering potential sub-components of family functioning, parental conflict was not inquired about and this has the potential to become a confounding variable in family composition studies (Dun, 2002; Henry & Holmes, 1998; Noller, Feeney, & Peterson, 2001; Kobak, 1999; Planitz, 2009; Rodrigues & Kitzmann, 2007). Further to this, the FAM-III in this study focused on current family functioning as opposed to prior family functioning. Finally, not inquiring regarding how often the family communicates could be a fallback of the present study as, if the family did not regularly interact, the family no longer has a “shared identity” (Vangelisti, 2004).

A further limitation of the current study is the lack of assessment replication. That is, for each psychological assessment, only one assessment tool was utilized. As per prior literature, it is in best practice to include multiple instruments for one specific topic before concluding an interpretation. Furthermore, Vangelisti, (2004) indicated that, although self-report questionnaires are useful in research, sometimes they do not grasp the entire picture. She recommended that interviews take place in order to fully conceptualize the family functioning style.

Moreover, prior research (Garling & Gamble, 2012), indicates that the current mood of an individual may be capable of influencing life satisfaction. This is an important factor as current mood of participants was not collected and could have potentially confounded the life satisfaction provided. Finally, completing data collection in groups may have influenced participants’ responses to questionnaire items.

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### **Future Research**

Future studies should attempt to include diverse family compositions, including understudied family compositions, such as same-sex couples with children. It should consider various gender identities as identity might be associated with or influence the variables within this study. and consider attachment instruments which are primarily adapted for child-parent relationships as well as multiple family functioning measures to ensure comprehensive data collection. It may also be important to include multiple ratings of familial behaviour (e.g., mother, father, child, siblings) to determine if consistency in ratings is present across multiple family members. Reports from one family member may not include a behaviour or experience from another individual within the family unit as it is a one-sided perspective. Multiple raters could also contribute to validity of the behaviour being described. Future research should also incorporate multiple assessment tools per psychological topic in order to ensure a valid interpretation of results. Finally, it is recommended that future research integrate interviews regarding the participant's familial, psychological, and emotional background in order to ensure that no confounding variables are interfering with overall results. Finally, future research should identify and compare family compositions according to parental gender (i.e., single mother family) with a larger sample size.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the present study aimed to address gaps in the literature regarding family composition and attachment, emotional intelligence, family functioning, and length of time in a given family composition in a university population. The results revealed that a more insecure attachment was more prevalent in a single parent family composition than a step family composition, a less secure attachment was linked to a more enhanced emotional intelligence, higher life satisfaction was associated with a more secure attachment, family composition did not

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predict emotional intelligence, and family composition did not moderate attachment and emotional intelligence. It was also found that family functioning was not related to the length of time in a family composition, a recently remarried step mother family and step father family did not differ in family functioning, family functioning did not differ between a step mother and step father family composition, despite length of time, and enhanced emotional intelligence was linked to weaker family functioning. Future studies should focus on collecting a large and diverse family composition sample size, incorporating multiple instruments for one measure, collecting family functioning ratings from all family members, and adapting a method of interview to control for potential confounding variables and to increase the amount of information obtained.

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**Appendix A: Questionnaires**

General Demographics Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the current study. We appreciate you taking the time to fill out this form. Please note that you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. The majority of the following questions will require you to circle an answer. Other questions will require you to write down an answer. If you choose “other” from a question, please write down an answer on the line provided within the question. A lot of the following questions will ask about your primary caregiver (the person who took care of you for the majority of your life → ex. biological mother, father, grandmother, both parents) or your step parent (if you have one).

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How do you self-identify (ex. female)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What year of university are you in? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your most recent family type?
  - a. Biological family (you are related to mother and father)
  - b. Step family with biological mother (you are related to mother and have a step father)
  - c. Step family with biological father (you are related to father and have a step mother)
  - d. Single mother family (you live/ previously lived primarily with your mother)
  - e. Single father family (you live/ previously lived primarily with your father)
  - f. Other, please state your family type: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Based off of your answer from question # 4, how long have you been within your current/most recent family type? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you lived in any other family types? If so, please list \_\_\_\_\_
7. If yes to #6, how long ago did you live in the other family type(s)? Please write year(s) on line \_\_\_\_\_
8. If yes to #7, how long did you live in each family type? Please write amount of time for each family type on this line \_\_\_\_\_

## FAMILY COMPOSITION, ATTACHMENT, AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING

9. What is your ethnicity?
- White/ Caucasian
  - Black
  - Indigenous or Aboriginal
  - Arab
  - Asian
  - Other, please state your ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your primary language?
- English
  - French
  - Other, please state your primary language: \_\_\_\_\_
11. What is your primary caregiver's/parent's highest educational level? Please write on the line which parent's educational level this is (ex. mother, father, grandmother) \_\_\_\_\_
- Completion of high school
  - Completion of some college
  - Completion of some university/degree
  - Completion of post-university or graduate school
  - Completion of professional school (ex. medical school)
  - Completion of doctoral/ Ph.D.
12. If you live with more than one parent. What is your second parent's highest educational level? Please write on the line which parent's educational level this is (ex. father, mother) \_\_\_\_\_
- Completion of high school
  - Completion of some college
  - Completion of some university/degree
  - Completion of post-university or graduate school
  - Completion of professional school (ex. medical school)
  - Completion of doctoral/ Ph.D.
13. If you have a step parent, what is your step parent's highest educational level? Please write on the line which step parent's educational level this is (ex. step mother, step father) \_\_\_\_\_
- Completion of high school
  - Completion of some college
  - Completion of some university/degree
  - Completion of post-university or graduate school
  - Completion of professional school (ex. medical school)
  - Completion of doctoral/ Ph.D.

## FAMILY COMPOSITION, ATTACHMENT, AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING

14. If you have a second step parent, what is your second step parent's highest educational level? Please write on the line which step parent's educational level this is (ex. step father, step mother)\_\_\_\_\_
- Completion of high school
  - Completion of some college
  - Completion of some university/degree
  - Completion of post-university or graduate school
  - Completion of professional school (ex. medical school)
  - Completion of doctoral/ Ph.D.
15. What is an estimation of the total income your recent/current family type (ex. single parent family, biological family, step family with biological mother, etc.) receives each year?
- 0 – 30 000
  - 31 000 – 50 000
  - 51 000 – 70 000
  - 71 000 – 79 000
  - 80 000 – 110 000
  - 111 000 – 150 000
  - 151 000 – 200 000
  - 201 000 + (201 000 or more)
  - Prefer not to answer
16. What is your religious preference?
- Muslim
  - Protestant
  - Roman Catholic
  - Seventh-Day Adventist
  - Mormon
  - Jewish
  - An Orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church
  - Christian
  - Other, please state your religious preference: \_\_\_\_\_
17. How many children are in your current/most recent family type?
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 + (five or more)
18. Do you have a physical illness that requires medication? If so, please state the illness:\_\_\_\_\_
19. Have you been diagnosed with a psychological disorder? If so, please state the disorder:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B: REB Approval**



**APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
 Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / Modifications to project / Time extension	
<b>Name of Principal Investigator and school/department</b>	Kristine Saft, supervisor, Elizabeth Levin, Psychology
<b>Title of Project</b>	Family Types, Psychological Well-Being and Attachment of Adults
<b>REB file number</b>	2015-10-28
<b>Date of original approval of project</b>	November 27, 2015
<b>Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)</b>	March 11, 2016
<b>Final/Interim report due on:</b> <i>(You may request an extension)</i>	December, 2016
<b>Conditions placed on project</b>	

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.

Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, Laurentian University Research Ethics Board

**Appendix C: Informed Consent Form**



**Laurentian University**  
**Université Laurentienne**

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR ADULT**

Kristine Saft, Dr. Elizabeth Levin  
Laurentian University, Psychology Department  
1-705-675-1151 ext. 4256

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am interested in participating in this study on family type, psychological well-being, attachment, life satisfaction, and family functioning conducted by **Kristine Saft**, second year Master of Arts student and supervised by Dr. Elizabeth Levin, Professor at the Psychology Department, Laurentian University. The purpose of the study is to better understand the influence of family type on an adult's well-being, family functioning, attachment, and overall life satisfaction.

**If I agree to participate**, my participation will consist essentially of attending one approximately 60 minute session during which I will fill out five questionnaires concerning my family type, psychological well-being, family functioning, attachment, and life satisfaction. **All questionnaires will be kept locked up in the researcher's lab and only the researchers will have access to them. The questionnaires will be destroyed at the end of the study.** No personal information will be disclosed.

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce **emotional reactions** which may, at times, be negative. If you feel sad or uncomfortable after the study, it may help to talk to someone from good2talk (a university student helpline). The number for good2talk is 1-866-925-5454. If you would prefer to talk to someone in person you can talk to a friend, parent, or the researcher of this study. **I have received assurance from the researchers that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences.**

My participation is **strictly voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the study at any moment or refuse to participate without any penalty.** Although it would be preferable that I answer all of the questions, if I am uncomfortable with any particular question, **I may refuse to answer.**

I have also received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. **There are two copies of this consent form, one which the researchers keep and one which I keep.**

If I have any questions or concerns, I may call Dr. Elizabeth Levin at 675-1151, extension 4242 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030.

If ethical issues arise or you have complaints regarding the current study, please feel free to contact the Laurentian University Research Ethics Officer, telephone: 705-675-1151 ext. 3213, 2436 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030 or email [ethics@laurentian.ca](mailto:ethics@laurentian.ca).

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to receive a summary of the results of this study which will be available on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, at the following email address: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

## FAMILY COMPOSITION, ATTACHMENT, AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING

### MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS FOR ADULTS IN SUDBURY, ONTARIO

Minimal harm is expected for this study. However, if psychological harm is experienced, below is a list of service providers/organizations for adults in the Sudbury, Ontario area.

Service	Phone Number	Website	Email	
Good2Talk	1-866-925-54545454	<a href="http://www.good2talk.ca/">http://www.good2talk.ca/</a>	N/A	
Ontario Mental Health Helpline	1-866-531-2600	<a href="http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/Home">http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/Home</a>	N/A	
Health Sciences North Mental Health and Addictions Program	1-877-841-1101	<a href="http://www.hsnsudbury.ca">www.hsnsudbury.ca</a>	N/A	
Canadian Mental Health Association	1-866-285-2642	<a href="http://sm.cmha.ca/about-us/contact-us/#.VtiIgpwrLIU">http://sm.cmha.ca/about-us/contact-us/#.VtiIgpwrLIU</a>	info@cmha-sm.on.ca	

**Appendix D: Debriefing Form**

Debriefing Form for Adults

Thank you for participating in this study. This study wanted to understand your family environment, relationships, well-being and happiness. This research will result in more information about adults when thinking about the family environment, relationships, well-being and happiness. It may also result in treatment and preventions created for problems related to the family environment, relationships, well-being and happiness.

I asked you to complete five forms about yourself, relationships, your family environment, well-being and happiness. The researchers of this study believe that an adult's well-being and family environment are related, that family environment and happiness are related, and that family environment and relationships are related.

The information that you have given to me will not be shared with anyone else. The answers that you have shared on the forms will not be shared with anybody else. If you are feeling sad or uncomfortable from the questions in this study, you may call the Good2Talk helpline for university students at 1-866-925-5454 or talk to a friend, parent or the researcher of this study.

If you have any concerns about your participation or the data you provided, please discuss this with us. We will be happy to provide any information we can to help answer questions you have about this study. If your concerns are such that you would now like to have your data withdrawn, and the data is identifiable, we will do so.

If you have any questions about your participation in this study, please contact me at [ke\\_saft@laurentian.ca](mailto:ke_saft@laurentian.ca) or 1-705-675-1151 ext. 4256. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Levin at 1-705-675-1151 ext. 4242 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030.

As provided in the informed consent form, you may contact mental health service providers if you feel in need of them, as a result of the study.

Please again accept our appreciation for your participation in this study

**Researchers Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_