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AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

2015 ANNUAL
CONVENTION

The Family Attachment Network: Risk & Resilience Processes

Resilience is a dynamic process involving *“the interplay of multiple risk and protective processes over time, including individual, family and larger sociocultural influences.”*

(Walsh, 2003, p. 400)

Intergenerational Influences

Robert Marvin & Robert Stewart

Joan Stevenson-Hinde

Patricia Minuchin

“A relationship system may be far more powerful than a single relationship in shaping development toward health *or* pathology.”
(Sroufe, 1988, p. 26)

“Parents are resilient. So many of them are able to overcome negative early experiences and provide good care for their children.” (Jacobvitz, 2008)

“Attachment relationships and family systems are fundamental contexts for risk and resilience processes.”
(Riggs & Riggs, 2011)



Alan Sroufe



Deborah Jacobvitz



Me!

Froma Walsh

John Byng-Hall

Cummings & Davies

Inge Bretherton

Kazlowska & Hanney

Hill, Fonagy, Safier, & Sargent

Family Systems & Attachment Theories: Complementary Differences?

(Marvin, 2003; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002)

ATTACHMENT THEORY

- Concerned with child development
- Individual & dyad
- Focus on dynamics of protection, care, felt security
- Early research primarily on normative development

FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

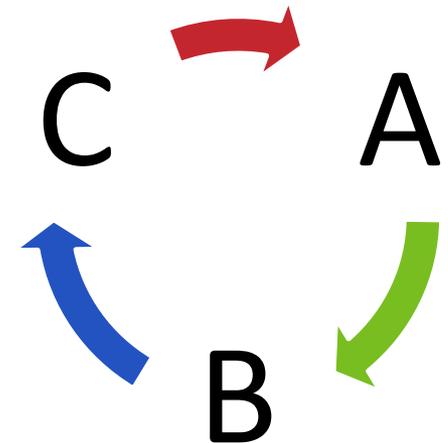
- Concerned with family interaction patterns
- Triad & larger system
- Focus on dynamics of communication, roles, boundaries, power
- Early research primarily clinical case studies

In recent years, both fields have acknowledged the importance of the other and have moved toward integration. This cross-fertilization has the potential to contribute significantly to our understanding of risk and resilience processes.

Family Systems & Attachment Theories: Common Principles

(Marvin & Stewart, 1990; P. Minuchin, 1985; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990)

- Focus on close [family] relationships
- A system is an organized whole > sum of parts.
 - Members of system are interdependent
- Complex systems composed of systems and subsystems
- Open systems evolve, balancing change and stability
- Systems are self-regulatory
- Behavior patterns are circular, not linear.
 - No one person orchestrates the interaction
 - No one person can be blamed for distress



Integration of Theories

- Early efforts noted similarity of patterns

ATTACHMENT PATTERNS		FAMILY STRUCTURES
Secure		Adaptive
Avoidant/Dismissing	↔	Disengaged
Ambivalent/Preoccupied		Enmeshed
Disorganized/Unresolved		Chaotic

- Problem:
 - Multiple attachments: Patterns may differ by dyad
 - Attachment dyads may differ within same family
- Possible Solutions?
 - Capra's (1997) **network paradigm** for living systems
 - Walsh's (2003) **developmental-systemic** perspective

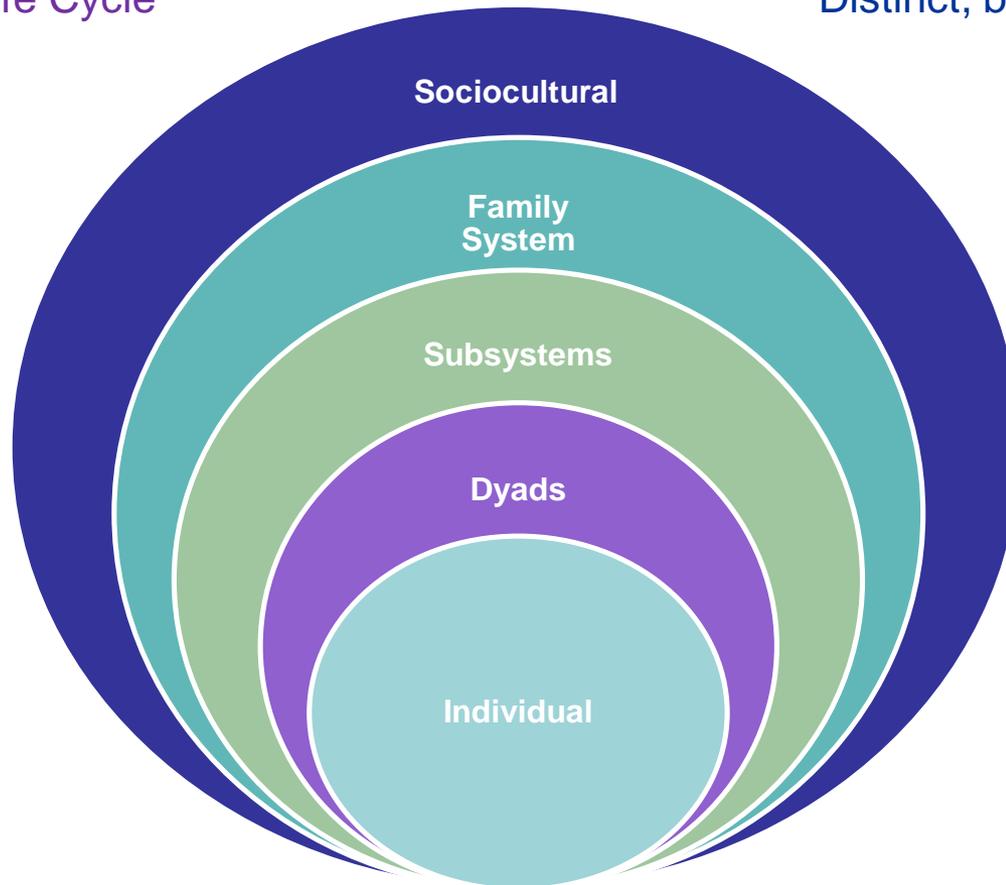
Integrative Framework

Developmental-Systemic Model

Biopsychosocial Systems
Life Cycle

Network Model

Multilevel systems within systems
Distinct, but interconnected



Family Attachment Network Model

Central Assumptions:

- Attachment and family processes function and interact simultaneously at multiple system levels
- Attachment relationships and family systems are fundamental contexts for risk & resilience.

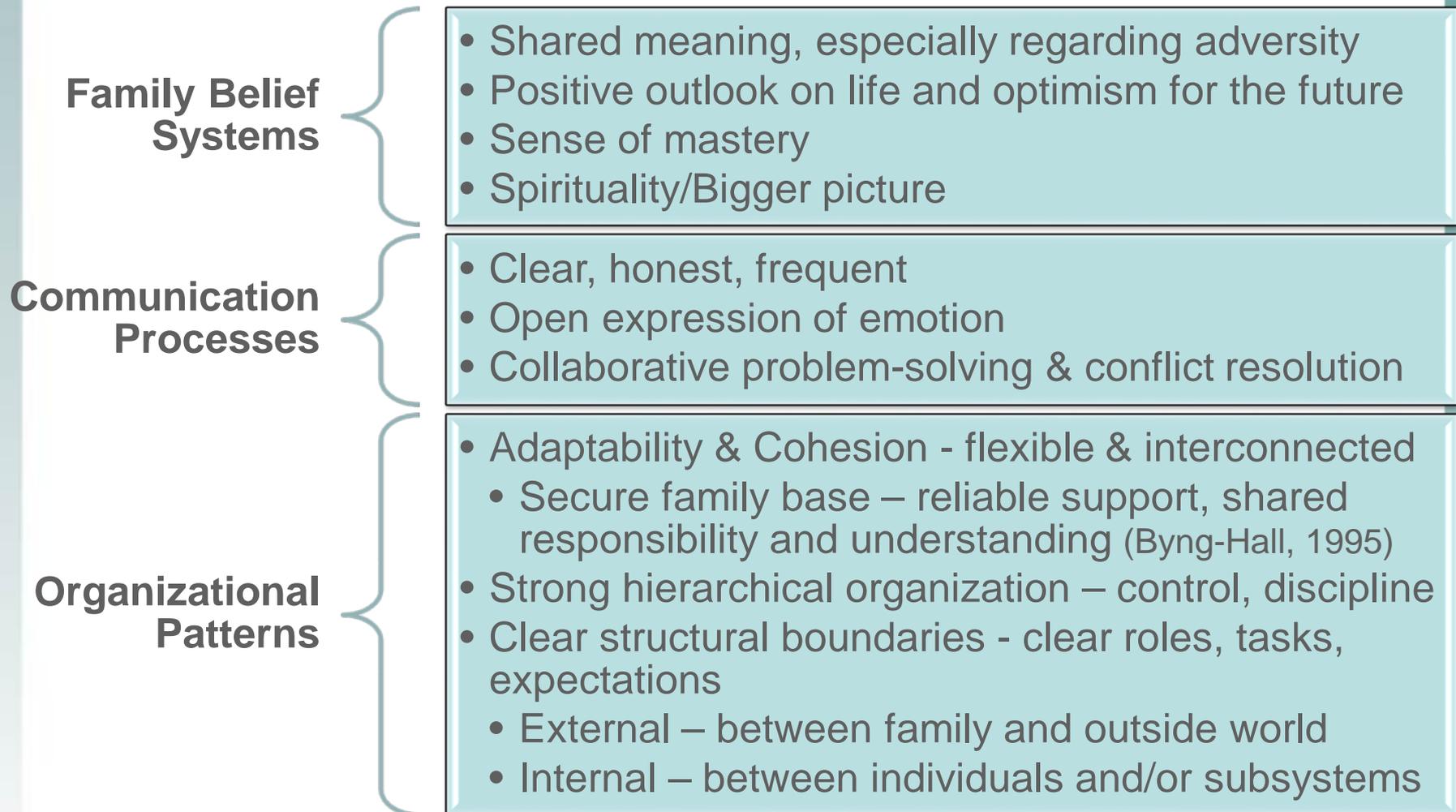


Attachment Patterns in Risk & Resilience

Features	Security	Insecurity
Internal Models of Self/Other	Positive models of self and other	Distorted, negative Avoidance: negative other Anxiety: negative self
Emotional Regulation	Good, flexible	Irregular, poor capacity Avoidance: min emotions Anxiety: max emotions
Coping Strategy	Adaptive	Maladaptive, rigid Avoidance: Deactivating Anxiety: Hyperactivating
Relational Strategy	Open, interdependent	Avoidance: Hi independence Anxiety: Clingy, needy
Outcomes	RESILIENCE Balance: autonomy & connection Mental health	AT RISK Imbalance: disengagement or dependency Vulnerability to psy distress

Family Resilience Processes

(Walsh, 2003, 2012)



Applications of the Family Attachment Network Model

- Theoretical
 - Child custody decisions: e.g., Riggs & Gottlieb, 2009
 - Military families: Riggs & Riggs, 2011
 - Child custody in military families: Riggs & Cusimano, 2014
- Research in the UNT Family Attachment Lab
 - Goal: Explore role of attachment, family processes, and trauma in relation to mental health
 - *Students – **AWESOME!!** 
 - Findings of a few selected studies
 - Independent Samples: Clinical & non-clinical
 - **Interdependent** Samples: Dyads & whole family systems

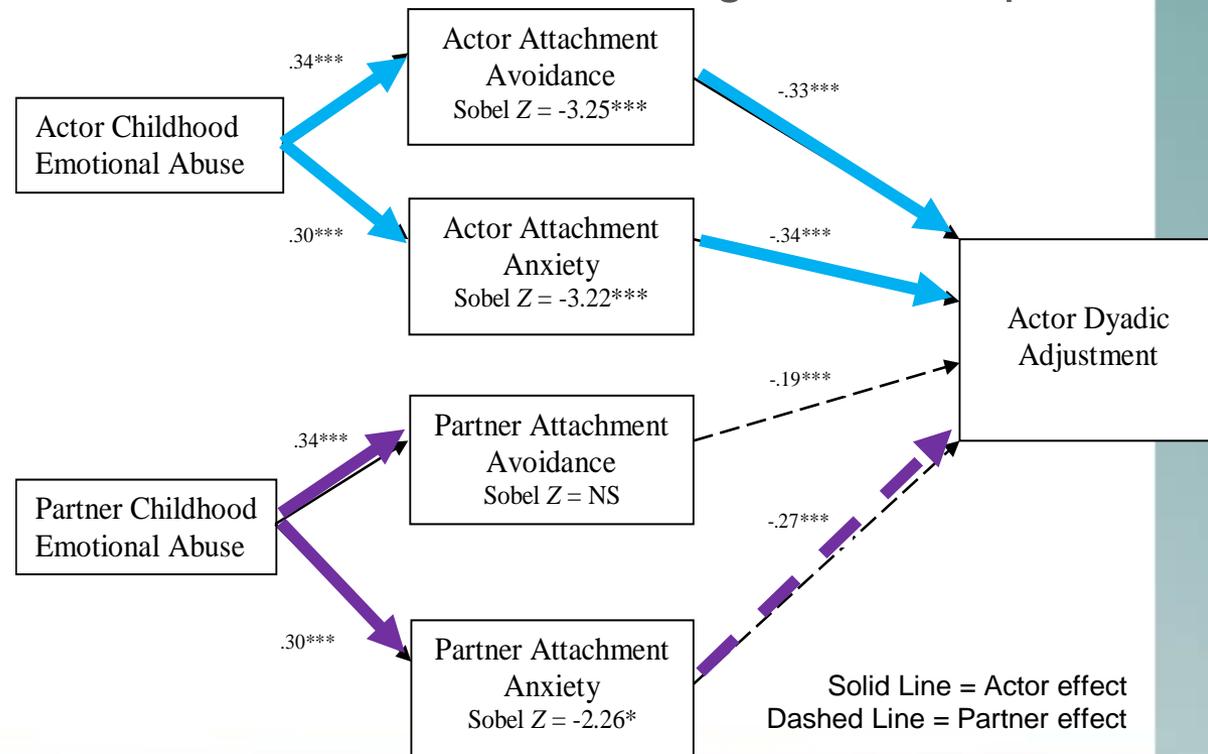


Dyadic Research

- Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy & Cook, 2007)
 - Accounts for *interdependence* within related dyads, e.g. spouses.
 - Can examine actor and partner effects using MLM
- Religious commitment moderates effect of attachment on marriage (Lopez, Riggs, Pollard & Hook, 2011)
- Childhood emotional abuse, adult attachment, dating relationships

MEDIATION FINDINGS

- Riggs, Cusimano, & Benson (2011)
- **Actor-Actor effects**
- **Actor-Partner effects:** Partner's history of emotional abuse also indirectly affected ratings of romantic relationship adjustment through the partner's attachment anxiety.



Family System Research

- Family & Kid Connection Project
 - 86 two-parent families in middle childhood (child aged 8-11 yrs)
 - Questionnaires with multiple informants (parents, child, sibling) re: attachment, dyadic/family processes, mental health
 - Videotaped and coded family interactions
 - Adult Attachment Interview
- Direct associations
 - Family processes associated with children's secure attachment
 - Family processes associated with adult attachment measured by self-report, but not AAI.
- Greater complexity in the family system requires examination of other influential variables

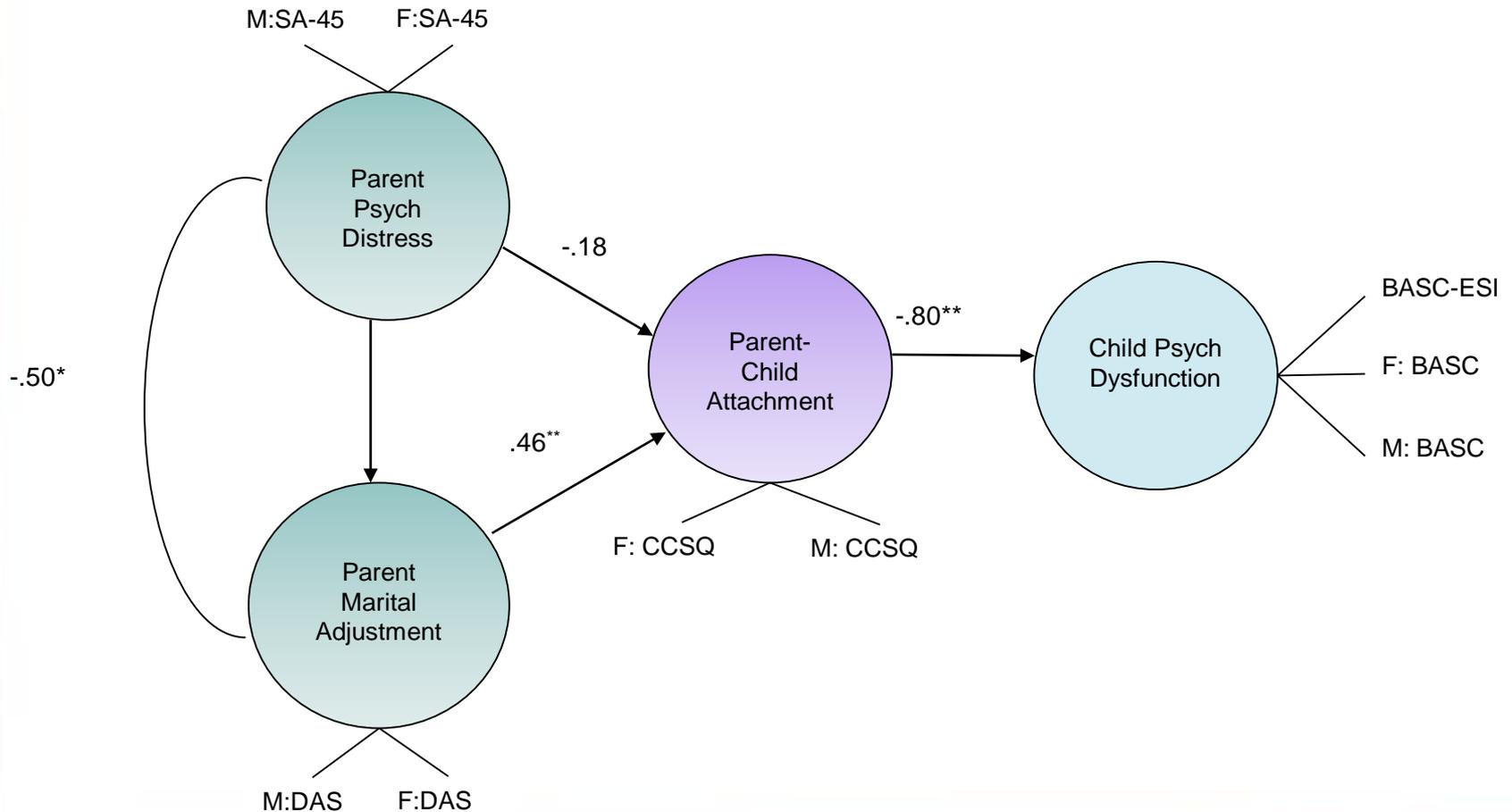




Jason and family

Contributions of executive and parent-child subsystems to children's psychological functioning

(*Hindman, Riggs, & Hook, 2013)

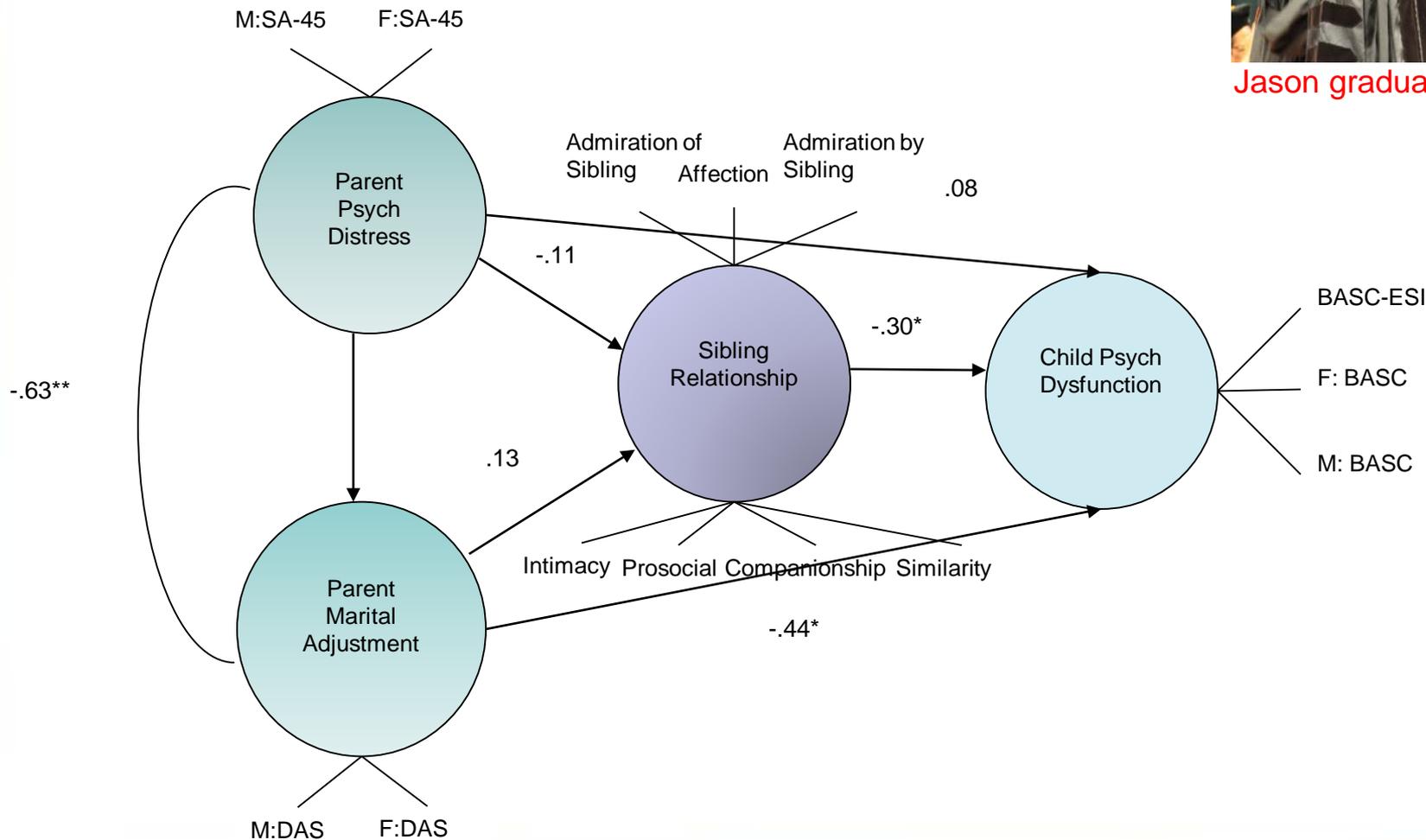


Contributions of executive and sibling subsystems to children's psychological functioning.

(*Hindman, Riggs, & Hook, 2013)



Jason graduates!



Children's Risk & Resilience

(*Demby, Riggs, & Kaminski, 2015)



- **Moderation of Risk:** Family Cohesiveness and Positive Affect buffered negative effect of insecure attachment to fathers, but not mother-child attachment which was strongly and directly associated with emotional symptoms.
- **Mediation of Adaptation:** Positive family functioning (Cohesiveness, Positive Affect, Low Conflict) mediated association of father-child attachment to child's adaptive skills, but not mother-child attachment, which was strongly and directly associated with child's adaptive skills.

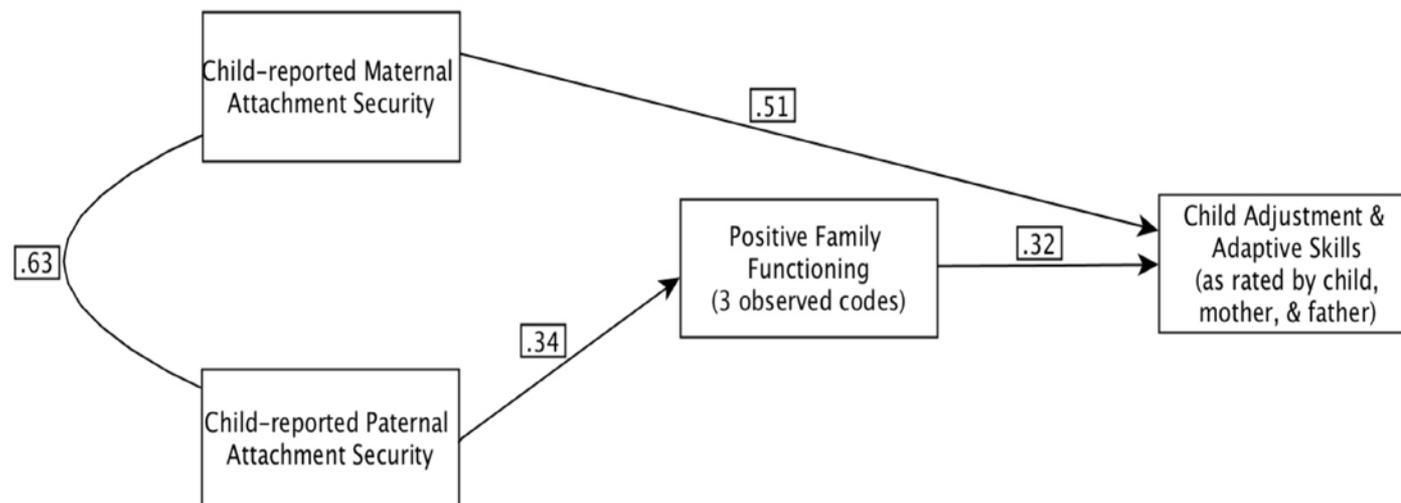


Fig 3. Family Functioning as a mediator of Parental Attachment Security and Child Adjustment & Adaptive Skills (Trimmed Model with only significant paths shown)



Family Attachment Network Conclusions



- Findings support Family Attachment Network Model
 - Each relationship/subsystem is unique, but interrelated
 - Psychological well-being is related to attachment and family processes, which
 - Independently and jointly contribute to risk and resilience
 - Together, this network of relationships can better explain outcomes than either alone.
- Future Directions
 - Continued integration of attachment and systemic principles in family research
 - Application to different populations
 - Longitudinal research
 - Social network analysis





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