



Life outcomes and relationship dispositions: The unique role of Emophilia



Daniel N. Jones*

The University of Texas at El Paso, United States

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ABSTRACT

Emophilia (EP) predicts forming indiscriminate romantic bonds, and is associated with falling in love faster and with more people. Retrospective data examined life outcomes and relationship orientations in a large adult sample. Among both men and women, results indicated that both sociosexuality and EP were unique predictors of number of previous romantic relationships. However, among both men and women, EP was the only unique predictor of number of times being engaged to be married. Further, among women, EP was a unique predictor of younger age of first marriage engagement. Finally, high levels of both EP and unrestricted sociosexuality were associated with more pregnancies by different men. In sum, sociosexuality, anxious attachment, and EP all uniquely associated different relationship life outcomes, especially among women. Overall, the findings support and extend previous research showing that Emophilia is a critical variable in the realm of relationships.

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1. Introduction

Emophilia (or EP),¹ is defined by a tendency to fall in love fast, easily and often (Jones, 2011b). Individuals high in EP form romantic connections rapidly and with many different partners. In addition, EP is conceptualized as a stable individual difference predicting rapid emotional bonding. Like sociosexuality (Schmitt, 2005), EP is hypothesized to be relatively free of psychopathology, similar to a personality dimension (Jones, 2011a). The purpose of the present manuscript is to explore the potential contributions that EP may have in predicting different life outcomes.

Although they share a moderate positive correlation, EP is not redundant with anxious attachment (Jones & Paulhus, 2012). Individuals high in anxious attachment report a “need” for romantic partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), fear abandonment, and will engage in behaviors that prevent losing attachment figures (Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002). This psychological need for attachment security is a characteristic of anxious attachment

(e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In contrast, EP is thought of as a “want” process (Jones & Paulhus, 2012) when it comes to romantic partners, meaning that they seek to engage in rapid romantic connections out of a desire for the novel experience (Jones, 2011b). EP is designed to capture one's tendency to approach new opportunities for relationships or emotional connections with others. In addition, EP is designed to capture a tendency to engage in these new opportunities quicker. For example, individuals high in EP are theorized to fall in love with multiple people at once and are comfortable forming quick romantic bonds (Jones, 2011b). Perhaps the best explanation of the conceptualization of EP comes from its sexual parallel: *Sociosexuality* (Gangestad & Simpson, 1990). Individuals unrestricted (vs. restricted) in sociosexuality are thought of as being more willing to have uncommitted and unrestricted sexual relations (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Gangestad and Simpson (1990) discuss the idea of unrestricted sociosexuality representing a lower threshold that needs to be met for such individuals to have sexual contact with someone else. By analogy, and from the standpoint of emotional bonding and romantic connections, individuals high (vs. low) in EP would have a lower threshold that needs to be met in order to feel comfortable and willing to emotionally bond with another person (Jones, 2011b; Jones & Paulhus, 2012).

Preliminary research on EP indicates that high levels of EP contribute to high rates of unprotected sex. Specifically, individuals high in both unrestricted sociosexuality and EP are at highest risk for accumulating more unprotected sexual partners (Jones &

* Address: The University of Texas at El Paso, Department of Psychology, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968, United States. Tel.: +1 915 747 6076; fax: +1 915 747 6553.

E-mail addresses: dnjones3@utep.edu, jonesdn@gmail.com
URL: <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=72785>

¹ This construct was originally named emotional promiscuity but after careful consideration of language and feedback from others, the term *Emotional Promiscuity* was deemed pejorative in nature. Although this was never my intention, a colleague, Dana Weiser, suggested renaming the construct *Emophilia*.

Paulhus, 2012). Importantly, this outcome could not be explained through anxious attachment, nor did anxious attachment interact with sociosexuality in the same way. Thus, EP may be relevant to life outcomes pertaining to romantic relationships. It is important to note that EP is correlated much higher with anxious attachment in men than it is in women (Jones & Paulhus, 2012). It is unclear if this difference represents a different process among men and women with respect to EP. For example, unpublished dissertation data shows that EP is correlated with neuroticism in men, but not in women (Jones, 2011a). Further, there may be gender-role differences, such that men are socialized to seek sexual relationships, whereas women are socialized to seek emotional ones (e.g., Wood, Koch, & Mansfield, 2006). Thus, EP should be examined separately for men and women.

The present research was conducted to further examine the idea that EP is a potentially important construct to be explored in relationship research. I examined the correlations between popular individual differences in relationship research (EP, sociosexuality, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, romantic beliefs, and Long-Term Mating Orientation), and relationship-relevant life outcomes such as previous relationships, marriage engagements, divorces, marriages, number of children, number of different partners with which one got pregnant (or made pregnant), and age of first engagement, first pregnancy, and first marriage.

EP differs from anxious attachment in that it is an approach-based concept, where high EP individuals seek out romantic connections and emotionally bond with others in a rapid fashion. Thus, I predict that EP, but not anxious attachment, should be associated with more previous relationships and especially serious relationships (i.e., marital engagements). Sociosexuality is similar to EP in that it is an approach-based idea (with respect to sexual contact), I also predict sociosexuality should predict more previous relationships, but not necessarily serious ones (e.g., marital engagements). Further, EP may predict additional relationship outcomes in women that it would not in men, because of the increased association with anxious attachment and neuroticism among men.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 1121 participants volunteered on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Given this research required individuals with life experience and relationship histories, MTurk was ideal as participants tend to be older than typical university samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). In order to ensure that all participants were paying attention to the questionnaires, two screening items were included, these questions were, "I breathe oxygen every day," and "I have won the world record in the 100 meter dash," asked on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) Likert Scale. Individuals who failed to indicate a 4 or 5 for the first question, and a 1 or 2 for the second question, were removed² before analyses began. Thus, the final sample consisted of 822 adults (385 men, 437 women; 56% Whites/Caucasian, 23% South Asian, 13% East Asian, 18% other mixed ethnicities) with a mean age of 31.75 (range: 18–71). Participants were given a link to a survey and were paid \$0.25 for participation. All questionnaires were filled out online, and the order of questionnaires was consistent across all participants.

² Including these attention checks improved internal consistencies and effect sizes. However, the overall pattern of results did not change. The data were simply stronger by eliminating participants based on these attention checks.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Emophilia

To measure EP, the 10-item *EP Scale* was used (Jones, 2011a, 2011b; Jones & Paulhus, 2012). The EP Scale consists of Likert style items (e.g., "I fall in love easily," "I tend to jump into relationships") assessing how easily and often individuals report experiencing romantic connections. The EP Scale had acceptable internal consistency for both men ($\alpha = .84$) and women ($\alpha = .82$).

2.2.2. Anxious and avoidant attachment style

In order to assess attachment styles the *Experiences in Close Relationships* (ECR) short form (or ECR-SF) was used (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). The ECR-SF is a shortened (12-item) scale derived from the original items found in the 36-item ECR scale (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Like the ECR, the ECR-SF breaks into two factors: anxious (men $\alpha = .76$; women $\alpha = .70$) and avoidant (men $\alpha = .71$; women $\alpha = .78$) attachment styles.

2.2.3. Sociosexuality

Sociosexuality was assessed using the 7-item *Sociosexual Orientation Inventory* (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Although there is discussion over its scoring (see Penke & Asendorpf, 2008), the present study capped all ratio-level data at 11, standardizing all items, and creating a composite score. The SOI had acceptable internal consistency for both men ($\alpha = .82$) and women ($\alpha = .79$).

2.2.4. Romanticism

The *Romantic Beliefs Scale* (RBS; Sprecher & Metts, 1989) was used to measure Romanticism. This scale consists of 15 romantic notions taken from Western literature and films and breaks into three factors of: Love at first sight, one and only one love, and love can conquer all. The RBS had acceptable internal consistency for men ($\alpha = .83$) and women ($\alpha = .85$).

2.2.5. Long-Term Mating Orientation (LTMO)

In order to assess how much individuals want a long-term relationship, the *Long-Term Mating Orientation* (LTMO) subscale was used for Jackson and Kirkpatrick's Multidimensional Sociosexuality Orientation Inventory (MSOI; Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The internal consistency was acceptable in men ($\alpha = .88$) and women ($\alpha = .89$).

2.2.6. Life outcomes

In addition to the above measures, participants filled out a battery of questions about their relationship history. Specifically, participants were asked the following: *How many boyfriends/girlfriends have you had in your lifetime? How many times have you been engaged? How many times have you been married? How many children do you have? How many different partners have gotten you pregnant (or have you gotten pregnant)? How many times have you been divorced? At what age did you first get engaged? At what age did you first get married? At what age did you first get pregnant (or get someone pregnant)?*

3. Results

I first examined the distributions of the outcome variables (Table 1). The distributions (with the exception of ages and number of previous boyfriends/girlfriends) were heavily skewed and suffered from extreme kurtosis. Thus, these distributions were transformed in an ordinal fashion to correct for these distribution problems. From this point, all reported results were extracted from these transformed distributions.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and distribution of outcome variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Transformation	Transformed skewness	Transformed kurtosis
Boyfriends/girlfriends	5.85	3.63	0.53	−1.03	None	–	–
# of times engaged	0.90	1.14	3.12	16.42	0 = 0; 1 = 1; 2+ = 2	0.37	−0.90
# of marriages	0.67	0.92	4.32	33.52	0 = 0; 1 = 1; 2+ = 2	0.51	−0.64
# of children	0.82	1.28	2.72	13.14	0 = 0; 1 = 1; 2 = 2; 3 = 3; 4+ = 4	1.25	0.61
# of divorces	0.23	0.75	5.76	43.36	0 = 0; 1 = 1; 2+ = 2	2.61	6.06
# of partners pregnant	0.61	1.08	5.19	41.50	0 = 0; 1 = 1; 2+ = 2	0.85	−0.38
Age first engaged	22.71	4.72	0.15	3.89	None	–	–
Age first married	22.33	7.98	−0.93	1.99	None	–	–
Age first pregnant	25.35	5.24	−0.60	2.10	None	–	–
EP Scale	2.88	0.71	0.40	−0.06	None	–	–
Sociosexuality	0.00	1.00	1.06	1.07	None	–	–
Anxious attach	2.87	0.72	0.22	0.05	None	–	–
Avoidant attach	2.22	0.65	.12	−0.40	None	–	–
Romantic beliefs	3.27	0.62	0.09	−0.13	None	–	–
Long-term mating	4.23	0.78	−1.16	1.49	None	–	–

All results were separated for men and women. Previous research has found that EP does not function the same for men and women. Further, anxious attachment and EP have a higher correlation in men and women, which may reflect different processes (Jones & Paulhus, 2012). Correlational results (see Table 2) replicate previous research, finding that anxious attachment and EP had a stronger correlation among men ($r = .45$) than among women ($r = .22$).

Next, the correlations between the relationship outcome variables and all individual difference variables with respect to relationship orientation were examined (see Table 3). As predicted, for both men and women, sociosexuality and EP were positively and significantly correlated with increased number of past relationships (i.e., number of boyfriends/girlfriends), and number of times being engaged to get married. EP was also associated with more marriages and divorces for women and number of divorces for men. Further, EP was the only significant correlate of lower age of first marriage engagement among women. However, among men, both EP and sociosexuality were associated with lower age of first marriage engagement and first marriage, whereas only EP was associated with younger age of first engagement among women. Finally, EP, sociosexuality, and anxious attachment were all significant negative correlates of age of first getting a woman pregnant among men.

It appears from the correlation table that romantic beliefs and long-term relationship orientation provided little in the way of variance in explaining these particular outcomes. Thus, they were dropped from regression analyses. In sum, more specific regression analyses focused on four key overlapping predictors: EP, sociosexuality, anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment. In addition, it is important to control for age and ethnicity³ given that age would be confounded with number of relationships, divorces, and so forth. Further, cultural and ethnic differences are also likely to exist in relationship-related variables.

First, in order to justify analyzing men and women separately, the data were combined, and interactions with gender were examined across the four key individual difference variables (EP, sociosexuality, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment). With respect to number of divorces, marriages, and children, there were significant interactions between gender and one or more individual difference relationship orientation variable. Thus, men and women were analyzed separately.

Ethnicity categories were dummy coded with Whites/Caucasians as the reference group. Thus, five regressions were set

Table 2
Inter-correlations among relationship dispositions and age.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Emophilia	–	.42	.22	−.10	−.02	.06	.01
Sociosexuality	.43	–	.13	.18	−.29	−.30	.08
Anxious attach	.45	.16	–	.19	.12	.06	−.15
Avoidant Attach	−.17	.07	.08	–	−.18	−.42	.01
Romanticism	.15	−.21	.19	−.24	–	.37	−.25
LT Mating	.03	−.26	.03	−.51	.33	–	−.15
Age	−.02	.07	−.23	−.14	−.22	−.01	–

Note: Significant findings are in bold. Men ($n = 383$) are below the diagonal, women ($n = 433$) are above. LT mating = long-term mating.

up to further probe significant correlations (see Table 4). Two of these regressions were ordinal, given the distribution of the outcomes (number of times engaged and number of divorces), the other three regressions were multiple linear regressions. Among the regression results for ethnicity, South Asian (e.g., India, Pakistan) and East Asian (e.g., Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan) women reported having fewer past relationships (i.e., boyfriends/girlfriends), as did East Asian men. In addition, East Asians reported having been engaged most often. Further, both South and East Asian women reported having more children, and South Asian women reported having more marriages. No other ethnicity effects emerged. Age was also positively associated with all outcomes except first time being pregnant.

With respect to the relationship variables (controlling for age and ethnicity), high levels of EP and unrestricted sociosexuality was uniquely associated with more past relationships (i.e., number of boyfriends/girlfriends) for both men and women. However, only high EP was associated with more marital engagements for both men and women. High levels of EP also was associated with younger age of first engagement, more divorces, more marriages, more pregnancies from different partners, and more children among women. Unrestricted sociosexuality was associated with more divorces and getting more partners pregnant among men. Finally, unrestricted sociosexuality was associated with more divorces among both men and women, and anxious attachment was associated with fewer divorces among women. Finally, a high level of anxious attachment was associated with younger age of getting a partner pregnant for men.

4. Relative importance

If EP is a critical variable in relationship research, the variance it accounts for in these life outcomes should be non-trivial. One method for parsing variance accounted for in regression analyses

³ An anonymous reviewer suggested that East and South Asians may differ on important life outcomes with respect to relationship variables. Thus, these two ethnic groups were compared to Whites/Caucasians on all outcome variables.

Table 3
Correlations between Relationship Dispositions and Life Outcomes.

	#bf/gf	#engage	#marry	#children	#preg	#divorce	Age engaged	Age married	Age preg
<i>Men (n = 383)</i>									
Emophilia	.40*	.13*	.04	.08	.18*	.13	-.20	-.17	-.29
Sociosex.	.48*	.11	.03	.15*	.20*	.27*	-.22	-.15	-.25
Ax. attach	.09	-.09	-.14*	-.06	-.03	.09	-.10	-.23	-.34
Av. attach	-.13	-.17*	-.11	-.18*	-.09	-.02	.14	-.06	-.02
Romantic	-.08	.02	-.05	-.08	-.09	-.11	-.24	-.08	-.22
LT mating	.02	.00	-.04	-.01	-.06	-.08	.02	-.03	.09
<i>Women (n = 433)</i>									
Emophilia	.42*	.24*	.13*	.07	.16*	.18*	-.23	.08	-.11
Sociosex.	.41*	.13*	.04	-.01	.15*	.20*	-.04	.03	-.01
Ax. attach	-.03	-.09	-.12*	-.10	-.10	-.08	.01	.01	-.12
Av. attach	-.07	-.12*	-.17*	-.03	-.01	.01	.04	-.07	.09
Romantic	-.17*	-.05	-.03	-.06	-.02	-.13*	-.05	-.05	-.17
LT mating	-.09	-.02	.00	.03	-.04	-.25*	-.06	.02	.08

Note: Correlations with $p < .05$ are in bold. #preg = number of pregnancies by a different partner (or number of different partners they got pregnant, in the case of men), ages reflect first occurrence. #bf/gf = number of boyfriends/girlfriends; #engage = number of times engaged to be married; #marry = number of times married; #preg = number of times getting a different partner pregnant or getting pregnant by a different partner. An anonymous reviewer insisted that Type I error be controlled for across correlations. Correcting for within outcome inflation rates, a $p < .02$ was required for statistical significance, which is marked with an *. Correlations are performed on transformed outcomes.

Table 4
Regression results for individual difference variables in relationship orientation predicting life outcomes.

	Emophilia B CI (95%)	Sociosexuality B CI (95%)	Anxious attach B CI (95%)	Avoidant attach B CI (95%)
<i>Men (n = 383)</i>				
#bfgfs	0.39 (0.22, 0.56)	0.32 (0.23, 0.41)	-0.05 (-0.20, 0.10)	-0.06 (-0.15, 0.03)
#engage	0.51 (0.08, 0.95)	0.04 (-0.19, 0.73)	-0.27 (-0.64, 0.11)	-0.22 (-0.45, 0.01)
#divorce	-0.10 (-0.95, 0.76)	0.69 (0.29, 1.09)	0.72 (-0.04, 1.48)	0.00 (-0.44, 0.45)
#children	0.21 (-0.26, 0.67)	0.14 (-0.10, 0.38)	0.01 (-0.39, 0.42)	-0.26 (-0.52, 0.00)
#diffpregs	0.52 (0.06, 0.98)	0.25 (0.02, 0.49)	-0.16 (-0.57, 0.24)	-0.05 (-0.31, 0.20)
#married	0.41 (-0.06, 0.88)	-0.12 (-0.37, 0.13)	-0.28 (-0.68, 0.13)	-0.13 (-0.39, 0.14)
Age engaged	-0.19 (-0.64, 0.26)	-0.11 (-0.31, 0.10)	-0.07 (-0.43, 0.28)	0.26 (0.03, 0.49)
Age pregnant	-0.10 (-0.57, 0.37)	-0.12 (-0.36, 0.12)	-0.45, (-0.86, -0.04)	0.02 (-0.22, 0.26)
Age married	-0.08 (-0.42, 0.26)	-0.11 (-0.30, 0.08)	-0.25 (-0.55, 0.06)	0.01 (-0.17, 0.19)
<i>Women (n = 433)</i>				
#bfgfs	0.46 (0.32, 0.60)	0.30 (0.20, 0.41)	-0.06 (-0.19, 0.06)	-0.05 (-0.13, 0.03)
#engage	0.91 (0.54, 1.29)	0.17 (-0.10, 0.44)	-0.28 (-0.49, -0.07)	-0.28 (-0.49, -0.07)
#divorce	1.02 (0.41, 1.63)	0.53 (0.13, 0.94)	-0.58 (-1.09, -0.07)	-0.21 (-0.55, 0.14)
#children	0.50 (0.13, 0.87)	-0.15 (-0.43, 0.12)	-0.05 (-0.37, 0.27)	-0.09 (-0.29, 0.11)
#diffpregs	0.58 (0.21, 0.96)	0.21 (-0.06, 0.48)	-0.31 (-0.64, 0.01)	-0.05 (-0.25, 0.15)
#married	0.63 (0.24, 1.03)	-0.02 (-0.30, 0.27)	-0.22 (-0.56, 0.12)	-0.49 (-0.70, -0.27)
Age engaged	-0.48 (-0.78, -0.17)	0.13 (-0.11, 0.38)	0.12 (-0.19, 0.42)	-0.04 (-0.19, 0.42)
Age pregnant	-0.13 (-0.51, 0.25)	0.05 (-0.21, 0.32)	-0.32 (-0.72, 0.08)	0.12 (-0.10, 0.33)
Age married	0.13 (-0.06, 0.32)	0.02 (-0.12, 0.17)	0.02 (-0.14, 0.18)	-0.10 (-0.21, 0.00)

Note: Significant findings are in bold. #bf/gf = number of boyfriends/girlfriends; #engage = number of times engaged to be married; #marry = number of times married; #preg = number of times getting a different partner pregnant or getting pregnant by a different partner. Regressions on number of times engaged and number of divorces are ordinal regressions. All other regressions are multiple linear regressions.

is the *Pratt Index* (Thomas, Hughes, & Zumbo, 1998). The Pratt Index is represented by the following equation: $D_j = B_j * r_j / R^2$. In this equation, D_j is the variance accounted for by a particular variable in a multiple regression, B_j is the regression coefficient between an outcome and a particular independent variable and r_j is the correlation between the outcome and the particular independent variable. Because the Pratt Index is restricted to linear regression, I computed the relative variance for number of boyfriends/girlfriends. Given that only sociosexuality and EP were significant predictors, they were entered alone into a regression. The R^2 for boyfriends/girlfriends was .27 for men and .24 for women. Thus, among men, the Pratt Index indicated that approximately 33% of the R^2 variance (which was 27% of the outcome) was accounted for by EP (which is approximately 9% of the total variance), whereas sociosexuality predicted 19%. For women, however, EP and sociosexuality both predicted about 12% of the total variance. In sum, it appears that EP is just as strong a predictor of past relationships as is sociosexuality among women. Further EP

accounts for almost 50% of the variance missed by sociosexuality among men.

5. Discussion

The present findings suggest that EP may contribute further to our understanding of individual differences in relationship orientation. EP was uniquely associated with more marriage engagements and more previous relationships among both men and women. Further, among women, EP was also associated with younger age of first marriage engagement, more marriages, more divorces, more partners resulting in pregnancy, and more children.

These findings make sense with respect to the conceptual definition of EP as compared with other critical variables in relationship research, specifically anxious attachment and sociosexuality. Interestingly, among men, sociosexuality was the only unique predictor of more divorces. However, both EP and sociosexuality were

uniquely associated with more divorces among women. These findings suggest that falling in love easily may be an additional risk factor for marriage dissolution among women, but not men. Future research should explore the possibility that high levels of EP place women at greater risk for engaging emotional infidelity and other behaviors that harm primary relationships.

All three traits (EP, sociosexuality, and anxious attachment) appear to contribute unique variance in predicting major life outcomes with respect to relationships. As predicted, much like sociosexuality, EP was related to outcomes that would be predictive of approach-related behaviors (e.g., more relationships, more marriage engagements, more marriages, and more pregnancies with different partners), whereas anxious attachment was related more to relationship maintenance-related outcomes (e.g., fewer divorces, age of first getting someone pregnant). Future research should further disentangle EP from sociosexuality with respect to the outcomes each predicts. Theoretically, EP should predict approach-related behaviors that are romantic or emotional in nature, whereas sociosexuality should predict approach-related behaviors that are sexual or physical in nature. Future research may wish to examine behavioral activation and inhibition processes with respect to EP, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality.

There are several limitations to the present research. First, the retrospective design may have led to memory issues surrounding past relationships. Future research should consider examining the impact of EP, sociosexuality, and anxious attachment on relationships in a longitudinal fashion. Second, the sample was one of convenience, larger community samples may be necessary to increase confidence in the present findings. Finally, because boyfriend/girlfriend was not defined for participants, it is entirely possible that high EP individuals reported more previous relationships because they misinterpreted having a relationship where none exists. Future research should examine the possible tendency among high EP individuals to misinterpret typical interactions as relationships or budding relationships.

Limitations notwithstanding, the present research suggests that EP is related to major life outcomes with respect to relationships. In total, EP, sociosexuality, and anxious attachment seem to be most predictive of major life outcomes such as marital engagements, previous relationships, divorce, first age of pregnancy, first age of marriage engagement, and number of pregnancies by different men. Thus, EP is a unique trait that belongs in a larger constellation of relationship orientation dispositions.

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