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Running head: ATTACHMENT STYLES, RELATIONSHIP THREATS, AND DISTRESS

Predicting Distress and State Self-Esteem: Effects of  
Attachment Styles and Intensity of a Romantic Relationship Threat

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Honors Thesis

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### Abstract

Two hundred and three college-aged women participated in this study, which examined adult attachment styles as predictors of responses to a physical-attractiveness related threat.

Participants read a hypothetical scenario in which their partner chose to spend Saturday with a male friend, an average-looking female friend, or a highly attractive female friend. A picture of the friend was presented with the scenario. Participants then completed several questionnaires:

Responses Questionnaire (designed for this study), Polivy and Heatherton's (1991) State Self-Esteem scale, and Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) Experiences in Close Relationships

questionnaire. Results showed that participants in the high threat condition responded more negatively to threat than did those in the low threat condition, and anxiously attached participants responded more negatively to threat and reported lower state self-esteem than did the remaining participants. However, the hypothesized interactions between attachment style and threat intensity in the prediction of distress and state self-esteem were not observed.

Predicting Distress and State Self-Esteem: Effects of  
Attachment Styles and Romantic Relationship Threat

In a perfect world, everyone who so desired would find his or her ideal romantic partner without experiencing any threats to the relationship. In the “real world,” however, the stability of relationships is often challenged. Although these sorts of challenges to relationship stability are probably normative, people may respond to them in very different ways. Whereas some people might remain calm and collected, others might be overwhelmed by intense anxiety, anger, or depression when their partner threatens to leave the relationship. The nature and strength of such responses, in turn, might be influenced by pre-existing personality traits or by situational aspects of the relationship threat. The current study examines such differences in adult romantic attachment styles and the strength of a relationship threat as predictors of participants’ cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to a specific threatening situation involving physically attractive alternative partners.

Adult attachment styles are among the constructs that may influence people’s actions and feelings in the context of close relationships. Current research on the role that attachment styles play in adult relationships draws heavily on the work of John Bowlby, who developed an influential theory aimed at explaining individual differences in parent-infant attachment (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1988). According to Bowlby, infants are biologically predisposed to use their caregiver as a secure base when they are exposed to threat in the environment. Over time, the infant develops expectations, or “internal working models,” of likely caregiver responses to attachment behaviors exhibited in a threatening situation (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1988).

Following Bowlby’s theoretical work, Mary Ainsworth brought attachment theory into the laboratory (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1988). She is perhaps best known for her development of

the “strange situation test,” in which the caregiver leaves her infant alone in an unfamiliar environment and then returns so that the infant-caregiver “reunion” can be observed. After observing participants in the strange situation, Ainsworth was able to identify three attachment styles: “avoidant,” “resistant,” and “secure” (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1988). Upon reunion with the caregiver, infants involved in an avoidant attachment relationship showed no desire to make contact with the caregiver. Although those with a resistant attachment relationship clearly desired contact with the caregiver upon reunion, these infants tended to angrily resist that contact after it was offered. In contrast to those with an avoidant or a resistant attachment relationship, infants with a secure attachment relationship greeted their caregiver with a smile and proceeded to initiate interaction.

#### *Attachment Styles as Predictors of Functioning in Adult Relationships*

More recently, researchers (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) have applied the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth to the study of adult relationships, based on the assumption that infant-caregiver relationships serve as a working model for subsequent relationships throughout the lifespan (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Several questionnaires have been developed over the past 15 years to measure adult manifestations of the different attachment styles identified by Bowlby, Ainsworth, and others (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Most researchers in the area of adult attachment differentiate among (1) secure attachment (feeling comfortable with intimacy and confident that the partner will be available when needed), (2) anxious-preoccupied attachment (worrying about abandonment and desiring to maintain proximity with a partner), (3) avoidant attachment (feeling uncomfortable with intimacy and striving to maintain distance), and (4)

fearful attachment (feeling both uncomfortable with intimacy and at the same time worrying about abandonment) (cf. Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

As predicted by attachment theory, adult attachment styles relate to childhood experiences as well as to current interpersonal functioning. Collins and Read (1990) found that individuals with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style recall having cold and inconsistent parents. As adults they are able to fall in love quickly; however, their relationships tend to be punctuated by negative feelings about their partners' intentions and fears of being unloved or abandoned. Individuals with an avoidant attachment style recall their parents as being cold and rejecting and find it difficult to find people with whom to fall in love and doubt that "true love" really exists. Securely attached individuals recall having warm and accepting parents. They have an easier time being in relationships as adults, seeing romantic partners as similarly warm and accepting and their relationships as safe and stable.

Adult attachment styles are also relevant in predicting people's reactions when their relationship security is threatened. In a series of studies, Collins (1996) found that adults with different attachment styles explained "threatening" events in ways concordant with their particular models of themselves and of close relationships. Collins's (1996) study also suggests that individuals with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style react more negatively (i.e., reporting more emotional distress, nervousness, confusion and helplessness) to threat than do individuals with an avoidant or a secure attachment style. Furthermore, anxiously attached persons reported that they would act in punishing ways (i.e., ways that would induce hurt feelings or embarrassment) towards their partner. In contrast, securely attached participants provided explanations indicating both positive beliefs about their partners and security in their relationships. Upon interpreting a potentially negative relationship event, securely attached

individuals tended to minimize the negative impact of the event, as well as to limit its importance in terms of relationship stability. Participants with avoidant attachment appeared somewhat inconsistent in their reactions to threat: In one study, their reactions resembled those with anxious attachment, but in a second study, their reactions were similar to those with secure attachment.

Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick (1997) examined differences in romantic jealousy among participants with differing attachment styles. Several qualitative as well as quantitative differences in jealousy expression were observed among participants with different attachment styles. Participants with an anxious attachment style, for example, reported feeling intense anger during jealousy experiences but they also tended to suppress overt expressions of anger. Those who had an avoidant attachment style expressed feeling sadness more intensely during jealousy experiences than did those with a secure attachment style. Similar to those with an anxious attachment style, participants with a secure attachment style reported intense anger. The participants who had a secure attachment style, however, were more likely than participants with the two remaining attachment styles to express their anger, particularly toward their partner.

The studies conducted by Collins (1996) and Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick (1997) support the idea that the experience of jealousy activates the attachment system and that different attachment styles predict individual differences during this experience. However, several ambiguities remain. For example, it appears that anxious-preoccupied individuals are likely to experience distress, but it is less clear what the reactions of securely attached individuals will be. Whereas Collins's (1996) findings suggest that, when the relationship is threatened, securely attached individuals will not experience distress and remain confident about their relationship, Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick's (1997) findings suggest that securely attached individuals will experience and express anger in such a situation. One purpose of this study was to clarify the

nature of distress reactions among people with different attachment styles in a situation involving relationship threat.

### *Variations in Threat Strength as a Predictor of Jealous Responses*

Whereas some researchers focused on adult attachment styles as predictors of responses to an interpersonal threat (Collins, 1996), others focused on variation in the threat level itself as a predictor of such behaviors. For example, Bush and Bush (1988) presented participants with one of three levels of jealousy threat—high jealousy-provoking, mild jealousy-provoking, and not jealousy-provoking—and found remarkable and consistent changes in both their relationship perceptions and emotions. Higher levels of induced jealousy were significant for perceptions of reduced security, increased jealousy, and reduced relationship self-esteem (e.g., the degree to which participants felt they were acceptable and attractive to their partner). Furthermore, increased levels of induced jealousy produced an increase in the participants' negative emotions and a decrease in their positive emotions. Although Bush and Bush (1988) showed that higher levels of interpersonal threat relate to more problematic behavioral and emotional responses, it is not yet clear whether the nature or strength of such responses to threat depends upon a person's attachment style. That is, variations in threat level and attachment style have not yet been combined as potential predictors of reactions to a relationship threat.

### *Measurement of Adult Attachment Styles*

In an attempt to create the most accurate attachment style assessment tool, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) reviewed existing self-report attachment measures and devised one comprehensive questionnaire that included the best items from previous measures. The resulting questionnaire, termed the *Experiences in Close Relationships* (ECR), was based on a two-dimensional structure of two separate factors that, in combination, define the traditional



attachment-style space. That is, depending on a person's score on both dimensions—anxiety and avoidance—he or she can be categorized as one of four attachment types: secure, anxious-preoccupied, avoidant-dismissing, and fearful. Secure attachment is characterized by a low score on both the anxiety and the avoidance dimensions. A person can be characterized with preoccupied attachment based on a high score on anxiety and a low score on avoidance; Dismissing attachment is characterized by a low score on anxiety and a high score on avoidance; and fearful attachment is based on a high score on both the anxiety and avoidance dimensions.

### *Hypotheses Development*

Based on previous research, attachment styles (e.g., Collins, 1996; Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick, 1997) and more intense levels of threat (Bush & Bush, 1988) predict cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to a relationship threat. However, these predictors have not yet been studied simultaneously; that is, it would be interesting to examine whether different attachment styles influence the way individuals respond to different levels of an interpersonal threat, in terms of their cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions. In this study, I examined how women with different attachment styles reacted to the idea of their romantic partner choosing to spend time with another individual, particularly another woman. The participants in this study were told that their partner would be spending the day studying with a male friend (low threat), with a female friend of average attractiveness (medium threat), or with a highly attractive female friend (high threat).

Based on my knowledge of previous studies (e.g., Bush & Bush, 1988; Collins, 1996; Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick, 1997) and of adult attachment styles, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be a main effect of threat strength on distress, such that participants in the high threat condition will respond with more distress than those in the medium threat condition, who will in turn respond with more distress than those in the low threat condition.<sup>1</sup>
2. There will be a main effect of threat strength on total state self-esteem, such that participants in the high threat condition will score lower than those in the medium threat condition, who will in turn score lower than those in the low threat condition.
3. There will be a main effect of attachment style category on distress, such that the group means from most distressed to least distressed will be as follows: preoccupied, fearful, dismissing, and secure participants.
4. There will be a main effect of attachment category on total state self-esteem, such that the group means from greatest to least state self-esteem will be as follows: secure, dismissing, fearful, and preoccupied participants.
5. There will be an interaction between threat level and attachment style in the prediction of distress and state self-esteem. Specifically, the tendency to respond with greater distress (and low self-esteem) among those with preoccupied attachment will be magnified with higher levels of threat. In contrast, the tendency to respond with distress and low self-esteem among those with secure attachment will not depend on the intensity of threat.

## Method

### *Participants*

Two hundred and three female undergraduate students at Louisiana State University participated for extra credit in their psychology courses. Participants' mean age was 20.07 ( $SD = 2.47$ ); 59 (29%) identified themselves as Freshmen, 41 (20%) as Sophomores, 59 (29%) as

Juniors, and 42 (21%) as Seniors. The majority of participants endorsed White as their ethnicity ( $n = 174$ , 86%), 19 (9%) endorsed Black, 8 (4%) Asian, and 2 (1%) Hispanic. All participants were required to be in a current dating/steady relationship; the mean length of this relationship was reported to be 19.68 months ( $SD = 16.84$ ).

### *Procedure*

Data collection was anonymous; that is, no identifying information was asked of the participants. After reading and signing a consent form, which had been approved by the university's internal review board, participants provided demographic background information (see Appendix for demographic questionnaire).

Next, participants read instructions about a hypothetical relationship threat. That is, participants read that they were to imagine that their boyfriend cancelled their plans for Saturday in order to study with a friend, "Kate" or "Kevin." A photograph of "Kate" or "Kevin" was then presented via projection onto a large screen. Participants were to imagine that their boyfriend would spend the day and evening with this person. The experimental manipulation was that the picture showed a man ("Kevin"), a woman of average attractiveness ("Kate 1"), or a woman of above average attractiveness ("Kate 2"). Objective attractiveness and threat ratings of these pictures were obtained in a pilot project.<sup>2</sup> Participants were randomly assigned (in small groups) to one of the three threat conditions. After reading the scenario and viewing the pictures, participants completed several questionnaires (see appendix for all measures).

### *Measures*

*Manipulation check questions.* Participants were asked to rate the attractiveness of the individual in the picture on a 7-point scale anchored by the terms *Not at all attractive* (1), and *Extremely attractive* (7). They were also asked to rate the degree to which they felt the scenario

would be a threat to their relationship on a 7-point scale anchored by the terms *Not at all a threat* (1), and *Very much a threat* (7).

*Responses Questionnaire (RQ).* The RQ, a 25-item questionnaire, was rationally derived for this study in order to assess participants' negative versus positive responses to the hypothetical relationship threat. Each item is rated on a 7-point scale anchored by the terms *Not at all what I would do* (1), and *Very much what I would do* (7). Four subscale scores were constructed, based on the theoretical assumption that these facets of negative and positive responding could be meaningfully distinguished: 1) confident trust; 2) anxious despondency; 3) defensive distancing; and 4) angry retaliation. Sample items from the four RQ subscales include: "I'd feel okay and wouldn't be upset" (confident trust), "I'd think that my boyfriend doesn't like me anymore" (anxious despondency), "I wouldn't answer the phone when my boyfriend calls me" (defensive distancing), "I'd yell at my boyfriend for canceling our Saturday plans" (angry retaliation).

RQ items were derived from the theoretical and empirical literature on infant attachment styles, adult attachment styles, responses to relationship threats, cognitive and behavioral facets of jealousy, correlates and effects of jealousy, and qualitative differences in experiences of jealousy. Items were written in order to tap three main components of the participants' reaction to the threat (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral); however, these three components were not equally distributed among the four subscales. Sources used to develop RQ item content included Ainsworth et al. (1979), Bowlby (1969, 1988), Bush and Bush (1988), Carson and Cupach (2000), Collins (1996; Study 1, Study 2), Collins and Read (1990), Hazan and Shaver (1987), and Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick (1997).

Initially, ten items were developed for each of the four theoretically derived subscales. Only items that contributed to a maximally high value of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) were then selected to be included in the final subscales. Based on these analyses, several items were eliminated from the initial 10-item scales. That is, three items were eliminated from the confident trust scale, four from anxious despondency, two from defensive distancing, and six from angry retaliation. A principal components analysis suggested that all 25 items formed a single factor, which accounted for 39.62% of the total variance. Given these results, a total RQ scale was also computed as the mean of all four subscales (items from the confident trust scale were reverse-scored for the computation of the Total RQ scale). Given their theoretical differences, the RQ subscales were also retained for the analyses described below. The 25 RQ items and item-total correlations are presented in Table 1.

*State Self-esteem Scale* (“*Current Thoughts and Feelings*” questionnaire or SSE). This 20-item questionnaire was designed to measure participant's current self-esteem; i.e., their sense of self-worth at the present moment. Participants rated these items on a 5-point scale anchored by the terms *Not at all* (1), and *Extremely* (5). This scale has been found to have a high degree of internal consistency (.92), and good average test-retest values (.71; .62). Sample item: “Right now I feel good about myself.” (Polivy & Heatherton, 1991)

*Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire* (ECR). This 36-item questionnaire is used to determine participants' romantic attachment category (e.g., secure, dismissing, fearful, or preoccupied attachment). The items were rated using a 7-point scale anchored by the terms *Disagree Strongly* (1), and *Agree Strongly* (7). Sample question: “I worry about being abandoned.”

In an initial validation study of the ECR, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver administered this questionnaire and several conceptually related measures to 1,086 college students. As theoretically expected, the anxiety and avoidance scales were nearly uncorrelated ( $r = .11$ ). Cluster analysis revealed “four distinct groups whose patterns of scores on the avoidance and anxiety factors clearly resembled ... the secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing categories” (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; p. 59). The anxiety and avoidant attachment scales correlated in expected directions with fourteen other measures of attachment-related constructs, which demonstrates adequate convergent and discriminant validity of the ECR. Both the anxiety and avoidance scales also demonstrated good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .91$  and  $.94$ , respectively).

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses*

Descriptive statistics of all study variables are presented in Table 2. Internal consistency was adequate, with Cronbach's alpha exceeding  $.79$  for all scales (see Table 2). Participants endorsed higher levels of anxious than avoidant attachment, paired- $t$  (202) =  $-10.90$ ,  $p < .001$ . On the RQ, a series of paired- $t$  tests revealed that, across threat conditions, participants scored higher on confident trust than on any of the other RQ subscales,  $t$ s (202)  $> 13.94$ ,  $p < .001$ . Additionally, participants scored higher on anxious despondency than on defensive distancing,  $t$  (202) =  $3.35$ ,  $p < .001$ , and higher on angry retaliation than on defensive distancing,  $t$  (202) =  $-4.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . Minor differences were observed in levels of state self-esteem; however, these differences were not the primary focus of the current investigation and are therefore not reported in detail.

### *Bivariate Correlations*

Bivariate correlation coefficients among all variables are presented in Table 3. These correlations were computed in the combined dataset, collapsed across the three threat conditions

( $N = 203$ ). Consistent with Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) findings, the ECR Anxiety and Avoidance attachment scales correlated only very weakly with one another. Across all threat conditions, anxious attachment correlated relatively strongly with each of the RQ subscales; that is, more anxiously attached respondents reported less confident, more anxious, more defensive, and more angry responses to the threat scenario. Correlations between avoidant attachment and RQ subscales were weaker, compared to those involving anxious attachment. Of the four RQ subscales, only defensive distancing correlated with avoidant attachment. The magnitude of the correlation between avoidant attachment and defensive distancing was roughly half of that between anxious attachment and defensive distancing. Both anxious and avoidant attachment were inversely correlated with all state self-esteem subscales. Again, the correlations involving anxious attachment consistently exceeded those involving avoidant attachment.

As expected, all RQ subscales correlated very strongly ( $r_s > .81$ ) with the RQ total scale, and all four subscales were relatively strongly intercorrelated in expected directions ( $r_s > .55$ ). RQ scales also correlated at moderate levels with state self-esteem. That is, negative responses were more likely to be endorsed by participants with low state self-esteem. Finally, Table 3 shows that the Total State Self-Esteem scale correlated very strongly with its component subscales ( $r_s > .80$ ), and the subscales, in turn, were substantially intercorrelated ( $r_s > .51$ ).

#### *Manipulation Check*

To examine whether the manipulation of interpersonal threat was effective, participants were asked about the attractiveness and perceived threat of each photograph. As expected, attractiveness ratings differed among the three conditions, as determined by a one-way ANOVA,  $F(2, 200) = 69.46, p < .001$ . A Tukey HSD post-hoc test revealed that all three photographs differed significantly from one another in their attractiveness ratings, in expected directions.

Similarly, perceived threat ratings differed among the three conditions,  $F(2, 200) = 24.29, p < .001$ . Again, a Tukey HSD test showed that all photographs differed significantly from one another in threat ratings, in expected directions.

#### *Main Effects of Threat Manipulation*

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for the RQ and SSE in the three threat conditions: low, medium, and high. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences among the three conditions in overall distress, or total RQ scores (see Table 4). A Tukey HSD test showed only one specific difference: Participants in the high threat condition endorsed more distress than those in the low threat condition. Analyses of the RQ subscales revealed additional group differences. A Tukey HSD test revealed significant differences in anxious despondency among all three groups: Those in the high threat condition reported scored higher than those in the medium or low threat condition, and those in the medium threat condition scored higher than those in the low threat condition. Additionally, a Tukey HSD test showed that respondents in the low threat condition scored higher on confident trust than those in the high threat condition. No other effects of threat level on RQ subscales or on SSE scales were observed (see Table 4).

#### *Attachment Style Classification*

According to Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998), scores on the ECR anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions can be used to classify respondents as predominantly secure, preoccupied, fearful, or dismissing in their attachment style. Thus, the dimensional ECR scores can be used to produce a categorical attachment classification. Using the classification algorithm provided by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998), 87 (43%) participants were classified as secure, 67 (33%) as preoccupied, 29 (14%) as fearful, and 20 (10%) as dismissing. This attachment



classification is illustrated in Figure 1. For subsequent analyses, the attachment classification was used as a categorical predictor variable.

#### *Main Effects of Attachment Classification*

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for the RQ and SSE among participants with secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing attachment. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences among the four attachment categories in total RQ scores (see Table 5). A Tukey HSD test showed that there was no difference in total RQ scores between the secure and dismissing groups and that there was no difference between the fearful and preoccupied groups. The secure and dismissing groups did, however, score lower on RQ total than the fearful and preoccupied groups. Analyses of the RQ subscales revealed additional group differences. A Tukey HSD test revealed that the secure and dismissing groups scored higher on confident trust and lower on anxious dependency than the fearful and preoccupied groups. Additionally, a Tukey HSD test showed that the secure participants generally scored lower on defensive distancing than the remaining participants, whereas the preoccupied participants scored higher on angry retaliation than the remaining participants.

A one-way ANOVA also revealed significant differences among the four attachment categories in overall state self-esteem, or total SSE scores (see Table 5). A Tukey HSD test showed that the secure and dismissing groups scored higher on total SSE than the fearful and preoccupied groups. Analyses of the SSE subscales revealed additional group differences. In terms of performance SSE scores, fearful participants scored lower than the secure and dismissing participants, and the secure participants scored higher than the preoccupied participants. Additionally, the secure and dismissing groups scored higher on social SSE than the fearful and preoccupied groups. Finally, a Tukey HSD test revealed that fearful participants

scored lower on appearance SSE than preoccupied participants and that both fearful and preoccupied groups scored lower on appearance SSE than the secure and dismissing groups (see Table 5).

*Interactive Effects: Threat Level  $\times$  Attachment Category*

I hypothesized the presence of interactive effects between attachment classification and threat level in the prediction of RQ and SSE responses. However, a series of factorial ANOVAs showed that attachment category and threat level did not interact in the prediction of any RQ or SSE scales, all  $ps > .20$ . Thus, hypotheses concerning interactive effects were not supported.

To further explore the associations between attachment, distress, and state self-esteem in the three different threat conditions, correlation coefficients in the three conditions were inspected (see Table 6). The pattern of correlations showed that the strength of the association between anxious attachment and distress was roughly equal in all three threat conditions. This pattern of associations is graphically depicted in Figure 2. Table 6 also shows that the strength of the association between anxious attachment and self-esteem did not appear to differ substantially among the three conditions.

Differences in correlations between avoidant attachment and distress/self-esteem in the three conditions were somewhat more difficult to interpret. Avoidant attachment tended to relate to greater distress and lower self-esteem, but these associations appeared to be weaker or nonexistent in the medium threat condition (see Table 6). Overall, these subsidiary correlational analyses did not suggest the presence of the hypothesized interactive effect.

## Discussion

The purpose of this research was to test the hypothesis that attachment styles would interact with the strength of a relationship threat in predicting distress and state self-esteem, such

that anxiously attached women (preoccupied participants) would report high levels of distress and low self-esteem, particularly in the conditions involving higher levels of threat. In order to test this hypothesis, participants were presented with one of three threatening scenarios, and they rated their hypothetical distress and state self-esteem. In the prediction of distress, main effects were observed for attachment styles and threat strength, but the hypothesized interaction did not emerge. In the prediction of self-esteem, only a main effect for attachment style was observed.

#### *Main Effects of Threat Manipulation on Distress*

Consistent with the first hypothesis, participants in the high threat condition generally endorsed more distress than did those in the low threat condition. Specifically, greater threat strength related to lower confidence and higher anxious responses, but not to higher angry-retaliatory or defensive-distancing responses. Overall, these findings are consistent with those observed by Bush and Bush (1988), in that people who are exposed to a strong interpersonal threat experience less security in their relationships and react with more worry and distress than do those exposed to a weak interpersonal threat. Bush and Bush (1988) also found that people presented with a high or a medium threat reported more anger, disgust, and contempt than those presented with no interpersonal threat. In the current study, I developed the angry retaliation and defensive distancing subscales of the Responses Questionnaire in order to tap into these sorts of responses, and I hypothesized that greater threat strength would be associated with greater scores on these subscales. However, current results show that participants who are presented with a high or a medium threat do not report more angry-retaliatory or defensive-distancing than participants who are exposed to a low threat.

A potential explanation for this differential pattern of distress-responses can be derived from Bowlby's research on responses to separation from an attachment figure (i.e., caregiver).

According to Bowlby, these responses occur in distinct phases: protest, despair, and detachment. When the attachment first leaves, one experiences the protest phase. The despair phase then occurs when the reality of the loss is fully realized. Finally, when the impossibility of recovering the loss is fully realized, one experiences the detachment phase. In the present study, the threat manipulation was relatively mild—participants were led to think that their partner might or might not have left their relationship. Conceivably, such a potential threat is only strong enough to elicit anxiety—which likely occurs before the protest phase described by Bowlby—but not anger (i.e., protest) or distancing (i.e., detachment).

In order to elicit anger or distancing responses, then, one might test stronger threat manipulations, such that participants are led to believe that their partner has indeed left their relationship. For instance, if participants had been presented with the scenario: “Your boyfriend has fallen in love with another woman and tells you that they are engaged to get married,” this threat might have been strong enough to elicit substantial anger responses, during the protest phase, or distancing responses, during the detachment phase. In the present study, however, the threat was much weaker—participants were not directly asked to imagine that their boyfriend had left the relationship, but merely asked to imagine that their boyfriend chose to spend Saturday with another person, to whom he might or might not have been attracted. The weak threat manipulation used in the present study may explain the differential pattern of distress-responses. Future research should investigate this pattern of responses among participants presented with varying threat strengths.

#### *Effects of Threat Manipulation on Self-Esteem*

Inconsistent with the second hypothesis, there was no distinction among the three threat groups on state self-esteem scores. Conceivably, self-esteem constitutes a more stable, less

volatile aspect of personality that is not easily affected by the kind of mild, hypothetical threat presented in the current study. According to Leary's (1999) sociometer theory, self-esteem functions as a gauge that measures the quality of close interpersonal relationships—as long as relationships are intact, self-esteem remains high. Based on this theory, then, one might expect that self-esteem decreases only after a loss of an important relationship, but not when the stability of the relationship has merely been threatened.

Another possibility is that only a small subset of people—too small to be detected here—might experience low self-esteem following a relationship threat. For instance, evidence suggests that depression-prone people have unstable, easily affected self-esteem (de Man, Gutierrez, Becerril, & Sterk, 2001). Follow-up studies, then, might consider depression vulnerability as a moderator of the relationship between threat strength and self-esteem. Unfortunately, however, there has been relatively little research to date specifically relating relationship threats to self-esteem, which makes it difficult to place the observed null findings into a larger theoretical context.

#### *Effects of Attachment Style on Distress and Self-Esteem*

Results were not entirely consistent with the third hypothesis, according to which each of the four attachment types would differ from the other types in their distress responses. Several group differences were observed, however, and the pattern of these was broadly consistent with predictions. That is, securely attached individuals tended to report the least distress and greatest confidence/trust, whereas the opposite pattern characterized the insecure attachment groups, especially the preoccupied and fearful groups.

This pattern of results becomes more easily interpretable when considering the attachment dimensions—anxiety and avoidance—that underlie the four-group classification

scheme. That is, compared to those scoring lower on anxious attachment, participants who scored high on the anxiety dimension responded with more distress, lower confident trust, and lower state self-esteem. The associations between anxious attachment and problematic responses were obtained for all subscales on the RQ and SSE. In contrast, the relations between the avoidant attachment dimension and distress were substantially weaker and less consistent.

These findings dovetail with several previous studies. The correlational analyses, in which attachment was measured on a continuum of severity, revealed that people higher on anxious attachment responded to threat with distress, including a low sense of trust and confidence, intense worries, intense angry feelings, and a tendency to distance themselves from their partner. This is consistent with findings by Collins (e.g., Collins and Read, 1990; Collins, 1996), who found that anxiously attached individuals tended to worry about their partner's feelings toward them, and to question the stability of their relationship.

Collins (1996) also found that anxiously attached people were more likely to become angered and to behave in punishing ways towards their partner. In the present study, a similar finding was observed both when anxious attachment was measured on a continuum and when differences among attachment types (categories) were analyzed. Those with anxious-preoccupied attachment did differ from others in the degree of angry retaliation they endorsed and higher levels of anxious attachment related to higher scores on angry retaliation. Sharpsteen and Kirkpatrick (1997) also found that anxiously attached people endorsed feelings of anger during jealousy experiences, which is consistent with the present findings.

Collins (e.g., Collins and Read, 1990; Collins, 1996) also reported that securely attached individuals were less likely than others to distance themselves from their partner. The results of the present study also showed that those classified as securely attached differed from others in the

tendency to defensively distance themselves. Also, when the dimensional attachment scales (rather than categories) were analyzed, relationships between defensive distancing and attachment were observed. That is, both avoidant attachment and anxious attachment related to defensive distancing, and this correlation was particularly strong for anxious attachment.

Results provided partial support for the fourth hypothesis, which stated—broadly speaking—that insecurely attached individuals would endorse lower state self-esteem than securely attached people. The correlation analyses painted a consistent picture: Those with anxious as well as avoidant attachment reported lower self-esteem, and the magnitude of these associations was stronger for the anxious compared to the avoidant attachment dimension. These findings support Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) two-dimensional attachment model, according to which people with anxious attachment have a negative "internal working model" of the self. One aspect of the negative self-representation, of course, is low self-esteem. The empirical demonstration of this expected association appears to lend further support to the construct validity of the ECR.

#### *Interactive Effects: Threat Level x Attachment Category*

Results showed no support for the fifth hypothesis. This hypothesis predicted that women with a preoccupied attachment style category would report the highest level of negative cognitions, emotions, and behaviors and would report having the lowest state self-esteem, especially when presented with stronger relationship threats (i.e., the medium and highly attractive pictures). Instead of the hypothesized interaction, support emerged primarily for main effects of anxious attachment and threat strength: Greater relationship threat related to more distress, and anxiously attached women were more distressed, but there was no synergistic effect between these variables.

It appears, then, that anxiously attached individuals are quite sensitive to potential relationship threats regardless of the actual strength of the threat. Conceivably, what characterizes anxiously attached women is that they misinterpret even innocuous interpersonal situations as constituting a potential threat to their relationship security, which then would explain their distress in such situations. This explanation is consistent with previous research that showed that even when anxiously attached individuals are in relationships they consider to be good, they interpret relatively benign partner behaviors as threatening (Collins, 1996).

There are also other reasons that might have prevented the detection of an interaction in this study. For example, it is possible that anxiously attached individuals “overreact” substantially stronger when the threat they face is more severe. Thus, follow-up studies could be conducted in which participants are to imagine that their partner has in fact abandoned them—a manipulation that would be stronger than the merely “potential threat” used in this study.

#### *General Limitations of the Study*

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the relatively small sample size of 203 participants resulted in a small number of respondents for several of the threat-level x attachment type combinations. For example, only 6 respondents in the “medium threat” condition were classified as “dismissing attachment.” To increase statistical power and thereby maximize the chances of detecting the hypothesized interactive effect, future studies in this area should use larger sample sizes.

Second, it is important to acknowledge that only women were included in this study, and it is not clear whether the effects would replicate among men. Several previous studies in this area included both sexes (e.g., Bush & Bush, 1988; Collins, 1996), but feasibility constraints led to the decision to include only women here. For example, if both men and women had been



included, different picture stimuli for the threat levels would have become necessary, which would have complicated the design and would have required a much larger sample size.

A third limitation concerns the use of the “Responses Questionnaire,” an unvalidated instrument with largely unknown psychometric properties. The RQ was theoretically derived, based on attachment theoretical predictions of different potential responses to a relationship threat. Several other sources that are unrelated to attachment theory were also considered in scale development (e.g., Carson & Cupach, 2000). Fortunately, the RQ appears to have promising characteristics. For example, internal consistency of all subscales was excellent, and the scales related to threat levels and attachment styles in clearly interpretable ways.

A fourth limitation concerns the measurement of attachment styles in this study. The ECR is a recently developed questionnaire for the measurement of attachment styles, and its items are culled from many previously developed measures. However, the measurement of attachment styles still remains debated among researchers. Some have argued that attachment styles are best measured by structured interviews in which the coherence of individuals’ narratives is analyzed, as they speak about emotional and relationship topics (cf. Hesse, 1999). A fifth and final limitation of this study is the use of a convenience sample of college undergraduate students in this study. Most studies in this area employ similar samples, but it will be important to determine whether these findings generalize to other populations.

### *Conclusions*

The current study aimed to illuminate factors that influence distress and self-esteem when the security of romantic relationships is threatened. The findings suggested that both individual differences and situational factors are important to consider in this context. People who are anxiously attached—presumably because of underlying “internal working models” and

previous experiences with caregivers—can be expected to respond with greater distress than others in a threatening situation. The severity of the relationship threat is also an important predictor of distress: Individuals reacted with more negative emotion and less confidence when they imagined that their partner would spend time with another person who is highly attractive rather than of average attractiveness. Despite the importance of documenting these main effects, it will also be important in the future to further investigate how various predictors of distress influence each other and work together. For example, future studies could consider stronger and more naturalistic relationship threats; it would be interesting to examine whether attachment styles predict differential response to such threats.

The promise of research in this area is to further explain how developmental experiences with caregivers result in stable intrapersonal structures (i.e., attachment styles) that determine emotional and behavioral responses to relationship instability. Unfortunately, few studies have been conducted that simultaneously examine intrapersonal and situational variables. Even though the current study did not uncover the hypothesized interactive effects, much work remains to be done to achieve a deeper understanding of the interplay between personality and context variables in the prediction of distress when relationship stability is threatened.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The expression “distress” refers here to negative cognitive, emotional, and behavioral response tendencies. That is, I hypothesize that stronger relationship threats will have multifaceted psychological and motivational effects: When relationship security is threatened, people may *think* negatively about themselves and their partner, *feel* distressed, anxious, angry, or sad, and *be compelled to act* in a distancing, aggressive, or passive manner. The multifaceted nature of jealousy-related responses was recently discussed by Shackelford, LeBlanc, and Drass (2000). The specific measurement of such negative cognitive-emotional-behavioral responses is discussed in more detail in the methods section (see “Responses Questionnaire” section).

<sup>2</sup> In the pilot project, 17 undergraduate students (mean age = 21,  $SD = 5$ ) rated a total of 12 pictures of women and 1 picture of a man. Students were asked to rate the attractiveness of each picture, and they were asked to indicate “how threatening” it would be if their boyfriend would spend a Saturday with the person shown on the picture. The picture of the man and two pictures of women who differed significantly in attractiveness and perceived threat ( $ts > 4.00$ ,  $ps < .01$ ) were selected. Even though the two women differed in attractiveness and perceived threat, they did not differ in hair-color (both blond) or other obvious features (e.g., age).

Table 1

*Responses Questionnaire (RQ) Items and Item-Total Correlations*

Scale Items	Item-Total Correlation
<i>Confident trust</i>	
1. I'd trust that my boyfriend must have a good reason to have cancelled our plans.	-.48
2. I'd feel okay and wouldn't be upset.	-.80
3. I'd think, "The fact that he cancelled our plans has nothing to do with our relationship."	-.51
4. I might be a little upset but not too much because I trust my boyfriend.	-.45
5. I'd feel happy and content.	-.66
6. I'd feel just fine, without any worries.	-.71
7. I'd feel confident that my relationship with my boyfriend won't change because of this.	-.54
<i>Anxious despondency</i>	
1. I'd worry that my boyfriend will compare me to Kate.	.61
2. I'd feel lonely, discouraged, or unworthy.	.70
3. I'd worry that my boyfriend will have more fun with Kate than he does with me.	.70
4. I'd think that my boyfriend doesn't like me anymore.	.66
5. I'd feel anxious, nervous, or panicky.	.66
6. I'd worry that my boyfriend finds his friend more attractive than me.	.57
<i>Defensive distancing</i>	
1. I'd feel cold towards my boyfriend and avoid contact with him.	.62
2. I'd think, "If my boyfriend doesn't care about me, why should I care about him?"	.52
3. I'd tell my boyfriend sarcastically that I am not upset with him.	.62
4. I'd think, "Maybe it's time to move on and find another boyfriend."	.48
5. I'd tell my boyfriend that I don't think our relationship is working.	.50
6. I'd feel distant from my boyfriend.	.64
7. I wouldn't answer the phone when my boyfriend calls me.	.54
8. I'd pull away when my boyfriend tries to hug me.	.67
<i>Angry retaliation</i>	
1. I'd yell at my boyfriend for canceling our Saturday plans.	.67
2. I'd feel deceived, resentful, or bitter.	.77
3. I'd feel angry, annoyed, or spiteful.	.78
4. I'd raise my voice and start an argument.	.63

$p < .01$  for all item-total correlations.  $N = 202-203$  because of missing data for some respondents.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics in the Combined Sample (N = 203)*

Variables	Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's alpha
Attachment Scales					
Anxious	18	3.50	1.18	1.22 – 6.44	.91
Avoidant	18	2.40	1.02	1.00 – 5.61	.92
Responses Questionnaire					
Total Scale	25	2.45	1.01	1.00 – 5.08	.93
Confident Trust	7	4.70	1.30	1.57 – 7.00	.82
Anxious Despondency	6	2.21	1.24	1.00 – 5.67	.87
Defensive Distancing	8	1.96	0.97	1.00-5.25	.83
Angry Retaliation	4	2.31	1.42	1.00-7.00	.87
State Self-Esteem					
Total Scale	20	3.70	.63	1.65 – 5.00	.91
Performance	7	3.96	.63	1.57 – 5.00	.80
Social	7	3.68	.82	1.57 – 5.00	.84
Appearance	6	3.44	.77	1.00 – 5.00	.83

Table 3

*Correlation Matrix*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Anxious Attachment	--									
2. Avoidant Attachment	.15	--								
3. RQ-Total	.48	.14	--							
4. Confident Trust	-.43	-.11	-.86	--						
5. Anxious Despondency	.38	.11	.82	-.60	--					
6. Defensive Distancing	.38	.20	.84	-.57	.56	--				
7. Angry Retaliation	.41	.02	.84	-.62	.58	.72	--			
8. Total Self-Esteem Scale	-.54	-.35	-.35	.30	-.34	-.27	-.24	--		
9. Performance	-.41	-.27	-.23	.23	-.23	-.15	-.13	.81	--	
10. Social	-.54	-.35	-.36	.27	-.35	-.30	-.27	.89	.59	--
11. Appearance	-.38	-.26	-.28	.27	-.26	-.21	-.19	.83	.52	.60

Correlation coefficients exceeding  $|.13|$  are significant at the .05 level (two-tailed); those exceeding  $|.18|$  are significant at the .01 level.



Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics: RQ and SSE by Threat Level*

	Low Threat ( <i>N</i> = 63)	Medium Threat ( <i>N</i> = 69)	High Threat ( <i>N</i> = 71)	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>F</i> (2, 200)
Responses				
Questionnaire				
Total Scale	2.11 (.84)	2.45 (1.00)	2.75 (1.06)	7.32**
Confident Trust	5.04 (1.23)	4.68 (1.24)	4.43 (1.37)	3.73*
Anxious Despondency	1.47 (.58)	2.27 (1.19)	2.81 (1.39)	23.88**
Defensive Distancing	1.84 (.94)	1.88 (.96)	2.14 (1.00)	1.85
Angry Retaliation	2.08 (1.35)	2.33 (1.41)	2.48 (1.47)	1.30
State Self-Esteem				
Total Scale	3.74 (.62)	3.70 (.62)	3.68 (.65)	.17
Performance	3.89 (.66)	4.04 (.53)	3.93 (.69)	1.07
Social	3.76 (.78)	3.59 (.88)	3.70 (.81)	.67
Appearance	3.54 (.80)	3.42 (.80)	3.37 (.72)	.93

\*  $p < .05$       \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics: RQ and SSE by Attachment Category*

	Secure ( <i>N</i> = 87)	Dismissing ( <i>N</i> = 20)	Preoccupied ( <i>N</i> = 67)	Fearful ( <i>N</i> = 29)	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>F</i> (3, 199)
Responses					
Questionnaire					
Total Scale	2.03 (.82)	2.22 (.87)	2.91 (1.00)	2.80 (1.08)	13.31**
Confident Trust	5.19 (1.18)	4.98 (1.21)	4.19 (1.26)	4.25 (1.24)	10.35**
Anxious Despondency	1.84 (.99)	1.85 (1.07)	2.64 (1.34)	2.59 (1.42)	7.36**
Defensive Distancing	1.59 (.76)	1.94 (.94)	2.30 (.96)	2.29 (1.21)	9.04**
Angry Retaliation	1.83 (1.02)	1.93 (1.31)	2.96 (1.59)	2.48 (1.53)	9.77**
State Self-Esteem					
Total Scale	4.03 (.44)	3.87 (.64)	3.47 (.55)	3.16 (.66)	26.00**
Performance	4.21 (.50)	4.04 (.83)	3.80 (.55)	3.50 (.67)	13.04**
Social	4.14 (.57)	3.75 (.80)	3.32 (.75)	3.10 (.90)	24.68**
Appearance	3.70 (.65)	3.82 (.71)	3.25 (.74)	2.83 (.75)	15.01**

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 6

*Bivariate Correlation Coefficients: Attachment Style Scales, Distress, and State Self-Esteem in Low, Medium, and High Threat Conditions*

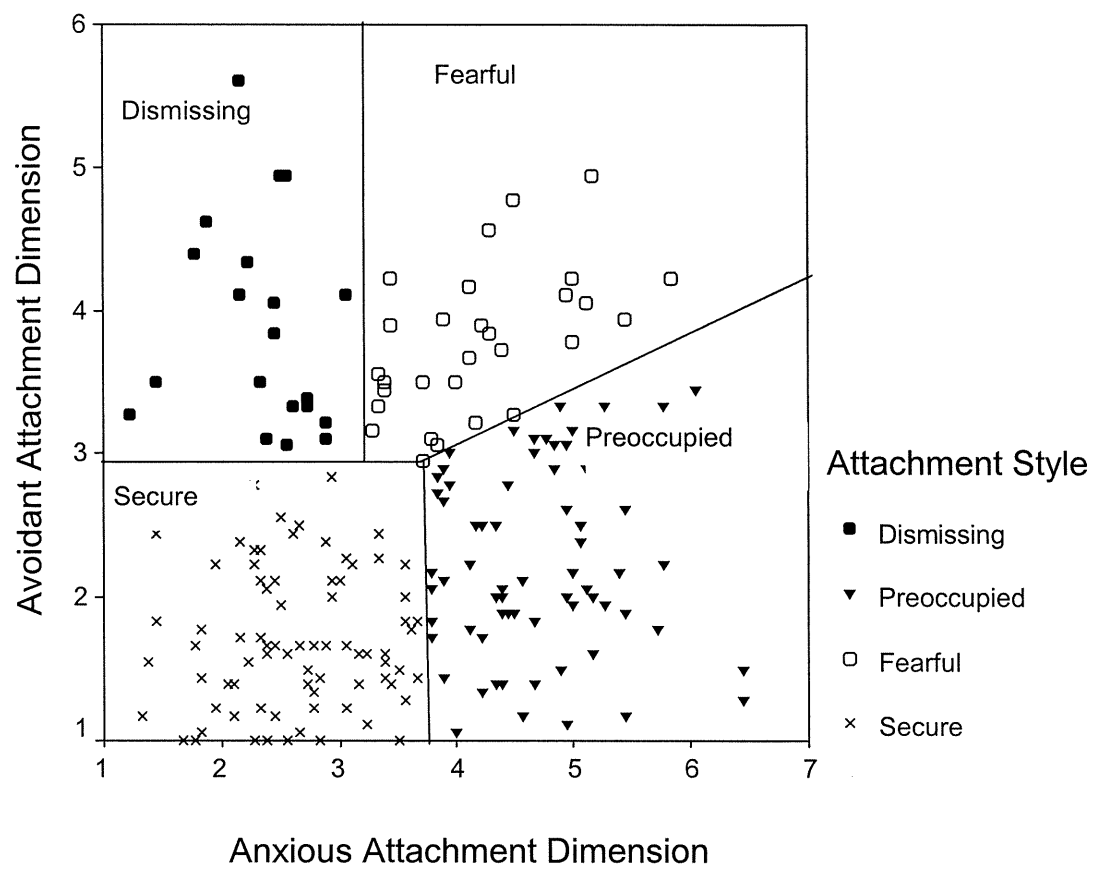
	ECR Attachment Scales	
	Anxious	Avoidant
Low Threat ( $N = 63$ )		
RQ Total	.49**	.23
SSE Total	-.52**	-.56**
Medium Threat ( $N = 69$ )		
RQ Total	.51**	-.09
SSE Total	-.48**	-.15
High Threat ( $N = 71$ )		
RQ Total	.56**	.25*
SSE Total	-.61**	-.35**

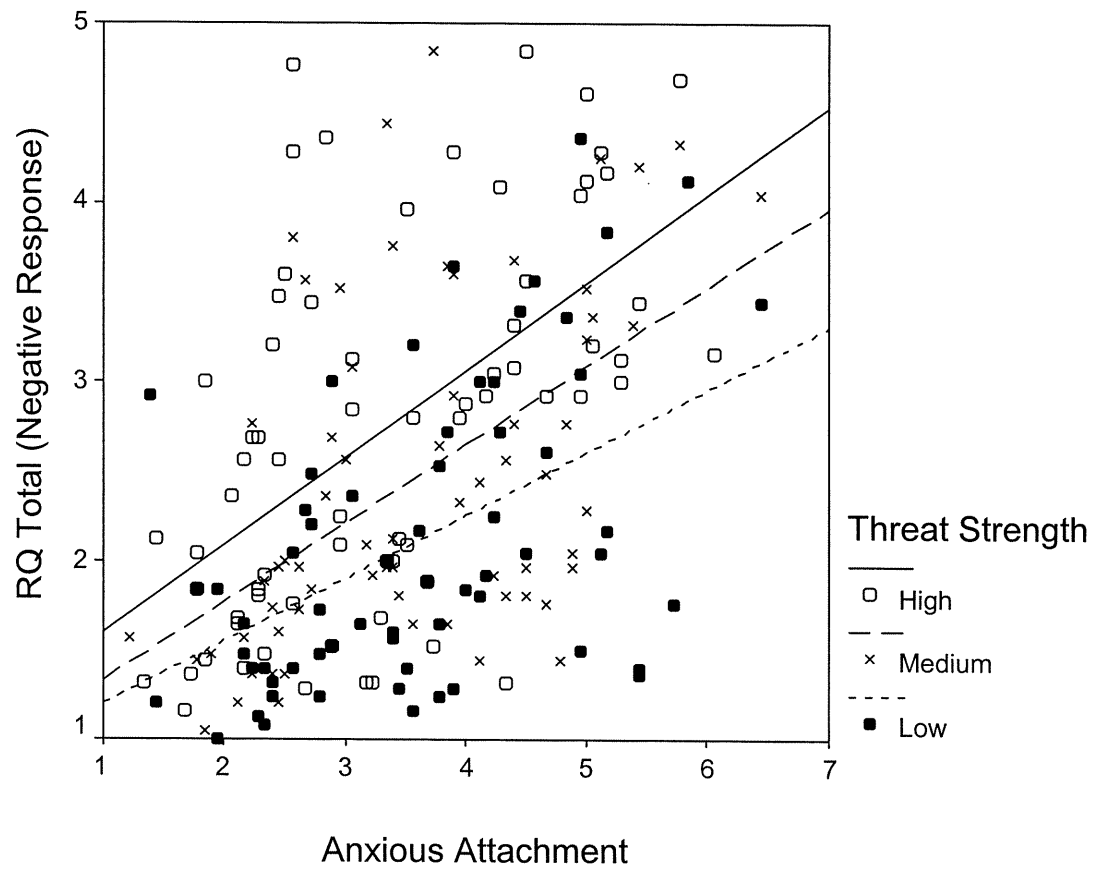
\*  $p < .05$       \*\*  $p < .01$

Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Attachment Classification.

*Figure 2.* Associations between Anxious Attachment and Distress (RQ Total) in the three Threat Conditions





## Appendix

**Demographic Questionnaire**

Please provide us with the following information about yourself.

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Year in School (circle one)

Freshman  
Sophomore  
Junior  
Senior

3. Ethnic Background: (circle one)

White / Caucasian  
Black / African-American  
Asian  
Hispanic / Latino  
Native American  
Other: (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you currently have a steady boyfriend? \_\_\_\_\_

5. For how long have you been in your current relationship with your boyfriend? \_\_\_\_\_

### A Change of Plans: Saturday with Kate

*Imagine the following scenario:*

*You and your boyfriend have both been very busy lately and have barely had time to see each other. A few days ago, you planned to spend this Saturday afternoon together. You decided to go and see an afternoon movie and then grab some dinner. Last night, your boyfriend calls and tells you that he'll have to cancel the plans-he forgot that he has a test on Monday. He tells you that he is going to study with his classmate, Kate, and that they plan to study all afternoon and evening on Saturday.*

Now take a look at a picture of Kate (the experimenter will provide the picture).

Take a good look at the picture and imagine that your boyfriend will spend Saturday with her instead of with you. He cancelled his plans with you and instead arranged to spend the day (and evening) with Kate.

Imagine what you would think in this situation. How would you feel? What would you do? Take a few minutes to imagine this situation as realistically as you can. Look at the picture of Kate and imagine your boyfriend and her together on Saturday. Visualize what it would be like.

1. How attractive do you find Kate? (circle one number)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7  
**Not at all** **Extremely**  
**attractive** **attractive**

2. Would you feel that this is a threat to your relationship with your boyfriend?  
 (circle one number)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7  
**Not at all** **Very much**  
**a threat** **a threat**



### Responses Questionnaire

Now please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which it describes the way you would behave in reaction to this situation. Please think about your boyfriend (and Kate) and tell us how you would think and feel, and what you would do, in response to this situation. Please use the scale below by placing a number between 1 and 7 in the space provided to the left of each statement.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>Not at all</b> <b>what I</b> <b>would do</b></p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: right;"> <p><b>Very much</b> <b>what I</b> <b>would do</b></p> </div> </div>

*My boyfriend told me that he's going to spend Saturday with Kate instead of with me. After letting this sink in for a while, this is what I would do:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I'd worry that my boyfriend will compare me to Kate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I'd feel lonely, discouraged, or unworthy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I'd feel cold towards my boyfriend and avoid contact with him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I'd think, "If my boyfriend doesn't care about me, why should I care about him?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I'd trust that my boyfriend must have a good reason to have cancelled our plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I'd worry that my boyfriend will have more fun with Kate than he does with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I'd feel okay and wouldn't be upset.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I'd tell my boyfriend sarcastically that I am not upset with him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I'd yell at my boyfriend for canceling our Saturday plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I'd feel deceived, resentful, or bitter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I'd think, "Maybe it's time to move on and find another boyfriend."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I'd think, "The fact that he cancelled our plans has nothing to do with our relationship."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I'd feel angry, annoyed, or spiteful.

Continue using this response scale:

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7  
**Not at all** **Very much**  
**what I** **what I**  
**would do** **would do**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I'd think that my boyfriend doesn't like me anymore.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I'd tell my boyfriend that I don't think our relationship is working.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I'd feel anxious, nervous, or panicky.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I'd feel happy and content.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I wouldn't answer the phone when my boyfriend calls me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I might be a little upset but not too much because I trust my boyfriend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I'd pull away when my boyfriend tries to hug me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I'd worry that my boyfriend finds his friend more attractive than me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I'd raise my voice and start an argument.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I'd feel just fine, without any worries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I'd feel confident that my relationship with my boyfriend won't change because of this.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I'd feel distant from my boyfriend.

...Thank you for completing this questionnaire...

**Picture Stimuli**

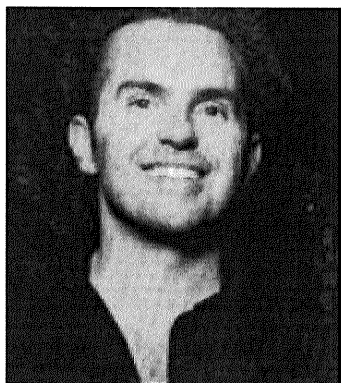
A. High Threat:



B. Medium Threat:



C. Low Threat:



### Current Thoughts and Feelings

*Instructions:*

This is a questionnaire designed to measure what you are thinking and feeling at this moment. There is, of course, no right answer for any statement. The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself at this moment. Be sure to answer all of the items, even if you are not certain of the best answer. Again, answer these questions as they are true for you RIGHT NOW. Respond to each statement by indicating to what degree the statement reflects your current thoughts and feelings. Write the number in the space provided, using the following rating scale.

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5  
*Not at all      A little bit      Somewhat      Very much      Extremely*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I feel confident about my abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel that others respect and admire me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I am dissatisfied with my weight.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I feel self-conscious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I feel as smart as others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I feel displeased with myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I feel good about myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I am worried about what other people think of me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I feel confident that I understand things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I feel unattractive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I feel like I'm not doing well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I am worried about looking foolish.

### Experiences in Close Relationships

*Instructions:*

The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Write the number in the space provided, using the following rating scale:

	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5.....	6.....	7.....
	<b>Disagree</b>			<b>Neutral/ Mixed</b>			<b>Agree</b>
	<b>Strongly</b>						<b>Strongly</b>

_____	1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
_____	2. I worry about being abandoned.
_____	3. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
_____	4. I worry a lot about my relationships.
_____	5. Just when my partner starts to get close to me I find myself pulling away.
_____	6. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
_____	7. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
_____	8. I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.
_____	9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
_____	10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.
_____	11. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
_____	12. I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes scares them away.
_____	13. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
_____	14. I worry about being alone.
_____	15. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
_____	16. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

... please continue on next page ...

... continue using this scale:

1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5.....	6.....	7.....
<b>Disagree Strongly</b>			<b>Neutral/ Mixed</b>			<b>Agree Strongly</b>

_____	17. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
_____	18. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
_____	19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
_____	20. Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.
_____	21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
_____	22. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
_____	23. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
_____	24. If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.
_____	25. I tell my partner just about anything.
_____	26. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close to me as I would like.
_____	27. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
_____	28. When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.
_____	29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
_____	30. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
_____	31. I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.
_____	32. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.
_____	33. It helps to turn to my romantic partners in times of need.
_____	34. When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.
_____	35. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
_____	36. I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.

... Thank you for completing this questionnaire ...