

ATTACHMENT STYLE PREDICTS ANXIETY IN UNDERGRADUATES' ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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Originally conceived by psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1969), attachment theory suggests that young children's interactions with their caregivers influence the way the children relate to other people throughout their lives. Bowlby argued that it is "essential for mental health...that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother...in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" (Bowlby, 1951, p. 11). He would later come to define such a parental bond as "secure attachment" (Bowlby 1969). But not all parent-child relationships are of such a "secure" nature, and various distortions within this relationship, such as deprivation, rejection, and neediness on the part of the parent, can lead to disturbances in the child's attachment and future social interactions (Bowlby, 1951, p. 12). Expansions of the theory have addressed this, proposing the additional style of "insecure attachment," characterized by avoidance or anxiety around social relationships (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Previous research (Shi, 2003) has indicated that attachment styles are most likely to be activated in conflict interactions with a romantic partner, as these situations accentuate the need to give and receive psychological support.

Attachment theory is central to much research surrounding romantic relationships; research examining attachment in adult romantic relationships indicates that securely and insecurely attached individuals behave in systematically different ways. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), securely attached adults do not have difficulty being intimate with others, do not worry about others abandoning them, and find it easy to depend on others and have others depend on them. There are two types of insecurely attached individuals: insecure-

avoidantly attached and insecure-anxious/ ambivalently attached. Insecure-avoidantly attached adults are uncomfortable with intimacy and have difficulty trusting or depending on people; an avoidant individual may feel as though others want to be closer to her than she wants to be to them. Insecure-anxious/ ambivalently attached adults, on the other hand, desire intimate relationships and in fact often want to be closer to others than others want to be to them, but they are afraid of rejection; they may be preoccupied with fears of abandonment, and their neediness may actually increase the chance that they will encounter rejection. Other research has further reported that securely attached individuals tend to have constructive conflict resolution styles, whereas insecurely attached individuals are more likely to engage in avoidant, dominating or obliging behavior in response to relationship conflict (Shi, 2001). The current study uses an undergraduate sample to examine the impact of attachment style on anxious responding to a variety of stressful romantic situations.

We hypothesized that insecurely attached individuals would respond with greater anxiety than securely attached individuals overall. This hypothesis is supported by previous research (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) that suggests securely attached adults are confident and happier in their relationships than insecure-anxious/ambivalently attached adults, who are preoccupied with interpersonal relationships and show greater symptoms of anxiety. We were particularly interested in seeing which types of situations mediated the difference in anxiety between securely and insecurely attached individuals. We examined low-, moderate-, and high-anxiety situations, and we predicted that significant differences in anxiety between the two at-

tachment styles would be revealed almost exclusively by the moderate-anxiety situations (e.g., “Your partner says, ‘We need to talk later’”) because the greater ambiguity would give the participant more room to interpret the gravity of the situation in a way that was consistent with his or her attachment style. This hypothesis is supported by previous work that showed that insecurely attached adolescents focused more on negative emotions and situational cues than securely attached adolescents (Fraley & Shaver, 1997). Additionally, research has found that anxious individuals tend to show a “negative interpretation bias for ambiguous social events” (Amir, Beard, & Bower, 2005, p. 434). We predicted fewer differences in responding to low-anxiety situations (e.g., “Your partner asks you how your day was”) and high-anxiety situations (e.g., “You find out that your partner has been cheating on you”) because the extremity of very banal or very distressing situations would lead to more uniform responding regardless of attachment style.

We also hypothesized that females would show greater overall levels of anxious responding across all situations, in light of our previous work on the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992), which demonstrated that females showed higher levels of neuroticism, of which anxiety is an important facet (Boettcher, Lieberman, McCarthy, Russell, & Mosbacher, 2010). This hypothesis is also supported by research that indicates that females show significantly higher rates of anxiety symptoms and anxiety disorders than do males (Lewinsohn, Gotlib, Lewinsohn, Seeley, & Allen, 1998).

Furthermore, we were interested in investigating the mediating roles of relationship longevity and satisfaction because both can be expected to increase anxiety in some cases (e.g., being cheated on) and decrease anxiety in others (e.g., your partner telling you s/he loves you). Specifically, we predicted that people in longer and more satisfying relationships would display lower anxiety in low- and moderate-anxiety situations but higher anxiety in high-anxiety situations because these situations are more directly contradictory to the overall quality of their relationships.

METHOD

Participants. Participants were Brown University undergraduates in heterosexual relationships of at least three months in duration. One hundred five students responded to the survey; however, 42 were excluded due to incomplete responses, for a total of 63 participants (37 females and 26 males, mean age 20.4 years)

Materials. We used an online survey to collect the data. Participants reported their gender, age, sexual orientation, length of current relationship, and level of satisfaction in their relationship on a five-point scale (1 = “very dissatisfied”; 5 = “very satisfied”). To assess attachment style, participants responded to an 18-item attachment style questionnaire developed by Collins and Read (1990), who built on the work of Hazan and Shaver (1987). The questionnaire had six items relevant to each of three attachment styles: secure, anxious, and avoidant. Items included statements such as “I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others” and were rated on a five-point scale (1 = “not at all characteristic of me”; 5 = “very characteristic of me”). We aggregated responses to anxious and avoidant items into a general scale of insecure attachment (lower scores on this scale represented more secure attachment).

Participants also rated their anxiety levels in 13 hypothetical interactions with their romantic partner (“situational items”) on a seven-point scale (1 = “not at all anxious”; 7 = “unbearably anxious”). There were four high-anxiety items (e.g., “You discover that your partner is cheating on you”), four moderate-anxiety items (e.g., “Your partner says to you, ‘We need to talk later’”), four low-anxiety items (e.g., “Your partner asks you how your day was”), and one “ambiguous” item (“Your partner tells you he or she loves you”).

Procedure. The survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey and publicized on the social networking site Facebook; subjects decided without the knowledge of the researchers whether or not to participate. Those who wanted to participate gave their informed consent electronically. There were two versions of the survey, which counterbalanced the order in which the set of attachment items and the set of situational items were administered. Participants were directed to one order or the other based on whether their birthdates were odd or

even. On all surveys, the order of both the attachment items and situational items was randomized.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses. Prior to analyzing our data, we computed a new variable that aggregated participants' responses on the attachment items by reverse-scoring the six "secure" attachment items to create a continuous measure for "insecurity." We ran exploratory tests to examine the distribution of participants' ratings on this scale. Responses were normally distributed ($M = 2.36$, $SD = .53$). A boxplot revealed a single high outlier of 3.72 that fell close to the third quartile and that thus likely did not have a large impact on the findings. Next, we performed a median split to divide respondents into secure or insecure attachment. Those scoring below the median of 2.28 were labeled as securely attached, and those scoring above the median were labeled as insecurely attached.

Next, we created a new variable that aggregated participants' anxiety over all of the interactions with their partner. We then ran exploratory data analyses to examine the distribution of this new variable. There was a single high outlier at 5.46; otherwise the variable was approximately normally distributed ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .09$).

In order to test our hypothesis that differences in anxiety between insecurely and securely attached individuals would be more salient in moderate-anxiety situations than in low- or high-anxiety situations, we created three new variables: the aggregation of responses to the four items in each of the low-, moderate-, and high-anxiety categories. We also isolated responses to the ambiguous item 13 ("Your partner tells you he or she loves you") as a separate variable to be used for later analyses. The mean of anxious responding was 1.46 in low-anxiety situations ($SD = .68$), 3.98 in moderate-anxiety situations ($SD = 1.19$), and 5.42 in high-anxiety situations ($SD = .96$).

Anxiety and Attachment Analyses. To explore the relationships between these new variables of anxiety in low-, moderate-, and high-anxiety situations and participants' levels of insecure attachment, we performed a series of Pearson's r correlations. The correlation between insecurity and overall anxious responding was $r(61) =$

$.40$, $p < .01$. Consistent with our original hypothesis, the correlation between insecurity and anxious responding was greatest in moderate-anxiety situations, $r(61) = .45$, $p < .001$. There was also a significant correlation between insecurity and anxious responding in low-anxiety situations, $r(61) = .33$, $p < .01$. As expected, there was a correlation between insecurity and overall anxious responding, $r(61) = .40$, $p < .01$. In support of our hypothesis, there was no significant correlation between insecurity and anxious responding in high-anxiety situations. There was also no significant correlation between insecurity and anxious responding to one's partner expressing love (i.e., "ambiguous" item 13).

Next, we performed a 3 (anxiety situation) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (security) mixed-model ANOVA, where the repeated measure was low-, moderate-, or high-anxiety situation and the between-subjects factors were security and gender. We found a main effect for situation, $F(2,118) = 413.24$, $p < .001$, indicating that our choices for low-, moderate- and high-anxiety items were appropriately reflective of the anxiety these situations evoked. These results can be seen in Figure 1. As expected, there was also a main effect for security, in which insecure individuals displayed significantly more anxiety than secure individuals across all situations, $F(1,59) = 5.88$, $p < .05$. In support of our original hypothesis, insecurely attached individuals responded with significantly more anxiety in moderate-anxiety situations, $t(61) = 2.60$, $p < .05$, but did not differ significantly from securely attached individuals in low- or high-anxiety situations. Differences in secure and insecure responding across situations can also be seen in Figure 1. There was a main effect for gender that approached significance, $F(1,59) = 3.56$, $p < .07$. We followed this with independent-samples t -tests comparing males' and females' responding in low-, moderate-, and high-anxiety situations. Anxious responding did not differ significantly between genders in low- and moderate-anxiety situations, but females reported significantly more anxiety than males in high-anxiety situations, $t(61) = 2.21$, $p < .05$. This was in line with our original hypothesis that females would exhibit more anxiety than males. To explore the more precise differences among anxious responding in specific situations, we followed this with three more ANOVAs. First, we

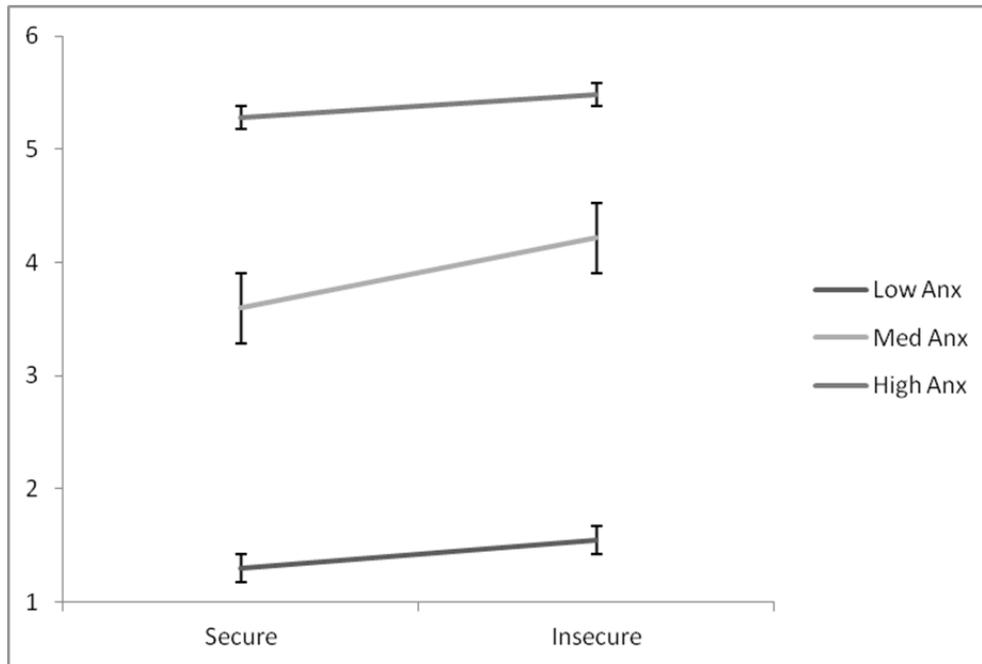


Figure 1. Mean anxious responding of secure and insecure individuals to low-, moderate-, and high-anxiety situations, aggregated over gender. Error bars = ± 1 SEM.

performed a 4 (low-anxiety item) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (security) mixed-model ANOVA, where the repeated measure was low-anxiety item and the between-subjects factors were security and gender. The only significant main effect was for situation, $F(3,177) = 4.34, p < .01$, indicating that there were significant differences in the amount of anxiety triggered by each of the four low-anxiety situations. In order to determine the nature of this effect, we ran paired samples t -tests for all pairs formed by the four situations. Situation 9 (“Your partner asks you how your day was”) evoked less anxiety than situation 10 (“Your partner asks if you want to have dinner together”), $t(62) = 2.26, p < .05$. Situation 9 also evoked less anxiety than situation 11 (“Your partner asks you to remind him or her to do something later that day”), $t(62) = 3.56, p < .01$, and situation 12 (“You are meeting up with your partner in half an hour”), $t(62) = 3.11, p < .05$. No other results were significant.

Our next analysis was a 4 (moderate-anxiety item) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (security) mixed-model ANOVA, where the repeated measure was moderate-anxiety item and the between-subjects factors were security and gender. The purpose was to examine inter-item differences in the moderate-anxiety situation. There was a main effect for se-

curity in responses to the moderate-anxiety situations, $F(1,177) = 6.84, p < .05$: consistent with our original hypothesis, insecurely attached individuals exhibited more anxiety over all moderate-anxiety situations than securely attached individuals, $t(61) = 2.60, p < .05$. There was also a significant main effect for moderate-anxiety item, $F(3,177) = 30.17, p < .001$, indicating that the four moderate-anxiety items produced different levels of anxiety. Paired samples t -tests revealed that situation 1 (“Your partner says to you, ‘We need to talk later’”) evoked more anxiety than situation 2 (“You see your partner laughing and talking with an attractive member of the opposite sex”), $t(62) = 7.71, p < .001$, and situation 4 (“Your partner continues to express concern that you are upset even though you have assured him or her that nothing is wrong”), $t(62) = 5.63, p < .001$. Situation 3 (“Your partner is acting distant—he or she seems less talkative and responds to your questions only briefly”) also evoked more anxiety than situation 2, $t(62) = 7.80, p < .001$. Situation 3 evoked more anxiety than situation 4, $t(62) = 6.63, p < .001$. To determine the nature of the marginally significant interaction effect for moderate-anxiety item and security, $F(3,177) = 2.01, p < .11$, we performed independent t -tests between secure and insecure

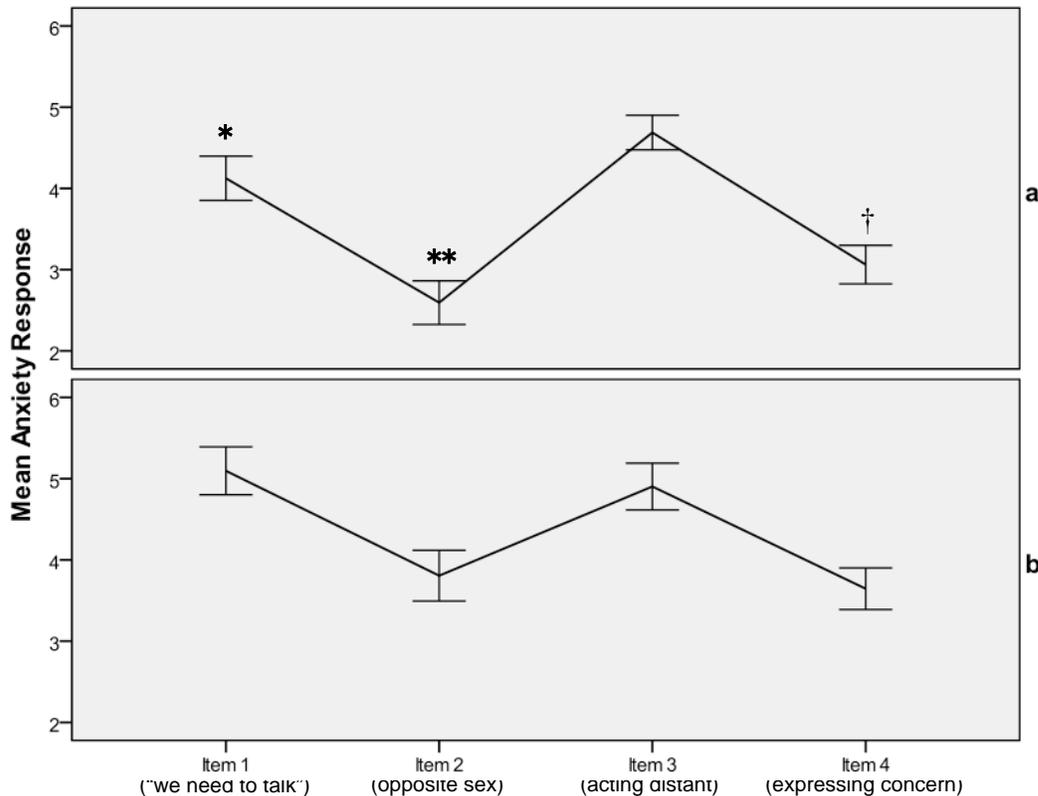


Figure 2a-b. 2a. Mean anxious responding of securely attached individuals, aggregated over gender, as a function of moderate-anxiety item. Asterisks indicate significant differences between secure (2a) and insecure (2b) subjects' responses, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, † $p < .11$. Error bars = ± 1 SEM. 2b. Mean anxious responding of insecurely attached individuals, aggregated over gender, as a function of moderate anxiety item. Error bars = ± 1 SEM.

subjects for each moderate-anxiety item (see Figure 2a-b for significance levels). No other significant effects were found.

Finally, we ran a 4 (high-anxiety item) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (security) mixed-model ANOVA, where the repeated measure was high-anxiety item and the between-subjects factors were security and gender. There was a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 59) = 4.92$, $p < .05$. A subsequent independent samples t -test revealed that females responded significantly more anxiously than did males to these high-anxiety items, $t(61) = 2.21$, $p < .05$. As with the two previous ANOVAs, there was also a significant main effect for high-anxiety item, $F(3, 177) = 22.07$, $p < .001$. Specifically, situation 5 ("You find out your partner has been cheating on you") evoked more anxiety than situation 6 ("You've just had a heated argument with your partner and he or she has left before it was resolved"), situation 7 ("Your partner insults you

in front of friends about something he or she knows you are sensitive about"), and situation 8 ("Your partner says he or she loves you so much that life isn't worth living without you"). Respectively, these values were $t(62) = 4.66$, $p < .001$; $t(62) = 6.11$, $p < .001$; and $t(62) = 7.18$, $p < .001$. Situation 6 evoked more anxiety than situation 8, $t(62) = 3.81$, $p < .001$. Situation 7 also evoked more anxiety than situation 8, $t(62) = 2.42$, $p < .05$.

For a concluding analysis, we wanted to investigate the effects of relationship duration and attachment style on relationship satisfaction. Respondents were grouped into three categories of relationship longevity based on how long they had been with their partner: 3-6 months, 6-12 months, and longer than one year. We ran a 3 (relationship duration) \times 2 (security) between-subjects ANOVA with satisfaction as the dependent variable. The only result that approached significance was a

main effect for security, $F(1, 57) = 3.43, p = .069$. We followed this with an independent samples t -test, which indicated that securely attached people were more satisfied than insecurely attached people, $t(61) = 2.02, p < .05$.

Finally, we examined respondents' anxiety in response to "ambiguous" item 13 ("Your partner tells you that he or she loves you"). We ran a 3 (relationship duration) \times 2 (security) \times 2 (gender) between-subjects ANOVA with anxious responding to item 13 as the dependent variable. We found an effect of relationship duration on anxiety that approached significance, $F(2, 51) = 2.75, p = .073$. We followed this with independent samples t -tests examining differences in situational anxiety as a function of relationship duration and found that people who had been with their partner for less than six months responded to this situation with

significantly more anxiety than those who had been with their partner for over a year, $t(46) = 3.87, p < .001$. We also found a significant interaction between security and gender on anxious responding in situation 13, $F(1,51) = 5.70, p < .05$. As shown in Figure 3a-b, insecurely attached men were significantly more anxious in situation 13 than securely attached men, but this was not the case for females. We followed this by dividing the participants into securely and insecurely attached individuals based on our previously computed variable measuring insecurity. When we examined only the insecurely attached individuals, males were significantly more anxious than females in situation 13, $t(29) = 2.98, p < .01$. Among securely attached individuals, there was no significant difference between genders.

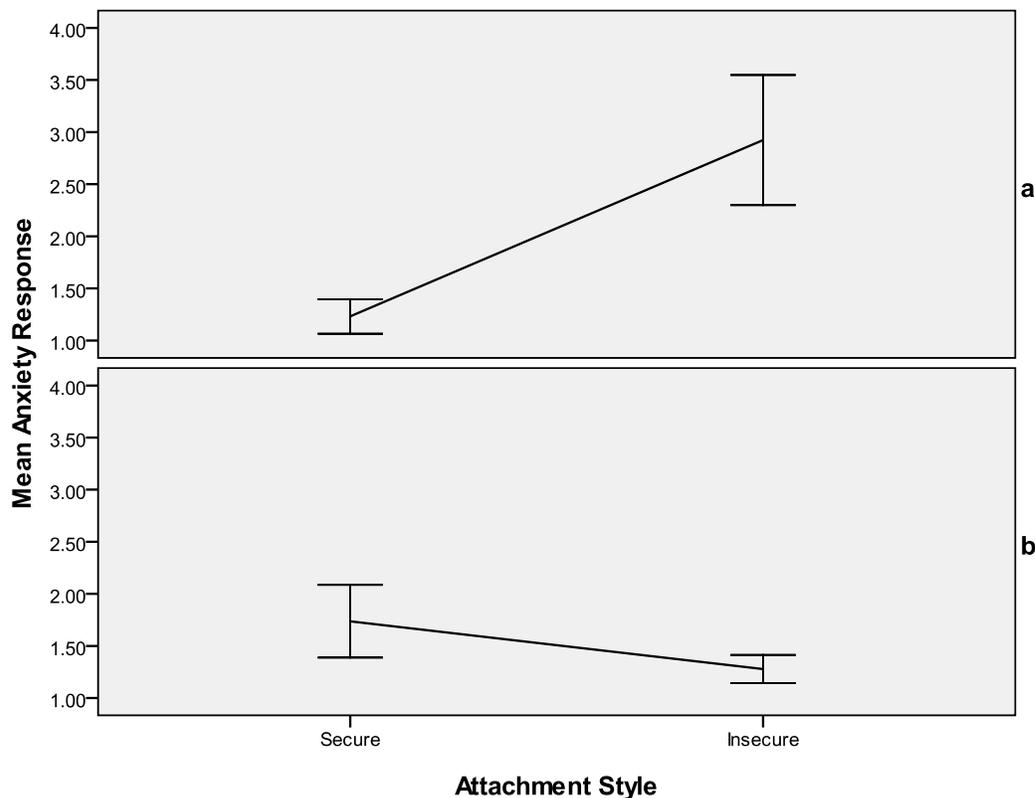


Figure 3a-b. 3a. Mean anxiety responses of male subjects to situation 13 ("Your partner tells you that he/she loves you" as a function of attachment style. Error bars = ± 1 SEM. 3b. Mean anxiety responses of female subjects to situation 13 ("Your partner tells you that he/she loves you" as a function of attachment style. Error bars = ± 1 SEM.

DISCUSSION

The data were largely consistent with our hypotheses and with past research. We found greater anxious responding among insecurely attached individuals than among securely attached individuals, particularly in moderate-anxiety situations. Females also tended to respond more anxiously than did males. Differences in responding across specific situations indicate that further research may be required to illuminate more precise determinants of relationship anxiety.

Our chief hypothesis, that moderate-anxiety situations would reveal the greatest differences in anxious responding between secure and insecure individuals, was supported. One possible explanation for this result can be drawn from past work (Erozkan, 2009; Amir et al., 2005). Erozkan (2009) demonstrated that social anxiety is highly positively correlated with insecure attachment styles. In turn, Amir et al. (2005) showed that social anxiety is characterized by an interpretation bias, whereby socially anxious people are more likely to interpret ambiguous stimuli as negative in social interactions. Because our insecure sample may have been more socially anxious than our secure sample, it is possible that they showed a greater interpretation bias. This would make them particularly susceptible to having negative appraisals of more ambiguous situations (moderate-anxiety situations, in this case), whereas low- and high-anxiety situations would be less affected by the interpretation bias and thus show fewer differences between secure and insecure subjects.

Our hypothesis that females would respond more anxiously than males in interactions with a romantic partner was modestly supported: although the difference in anxious responding was only approaching significance across all situations, women were significantly more anxious in the high-anxiety situations. Given our extremely homogenous sample of participants, claims of evolutionary motivation or causation cannot go far beyond speculation; with that caveat in mind, this difference may indeed be interpreted as linked to behavior that developed evolutionarily. Because in the past women have traditionally relied on males to support them and their children, women who cared about maintaining a relationship with a protector and benefactor were more likely to raise

viable offspring (Buss, 1995). Thus, signals of potential abandonment (e.g., “You find out your partner is cheating on you”) would lead to distress. In contrast, males’ evolutionary success was not dependent on remaining with one partner, so the desire to maintain a relationship would not be selected for as strongly. In slightly different terms, the items in the high-anxiety situation involve more elements of betrayal than the other situations, and past research (DePrince & Freyd, 2002; Gilligan, 1982) suggests that women may be more sensitized to betrayal than men due to the socialization of women to place more value on interpersonal relationships. It is also possible that women are particularly anxious in conflict interactions, as implied by our previous analysis of situational responding in undergraduates, which indicated that women displayed more anxiety than men in conflict interactions with friends (Boettcher, LaPlante, Lieberman, McCarthy, Mosbacher, & Russell, 2010).

Our analysis of the interaction of relationship satisfaction and attachment style is supported by past research that links greater relationship satisfaction with more secure attachment (Simpson, 2002; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). It is not clear, however, whether this correlation is causal, and if so, in which direction it runs. It is possible, for example, that securely attached people are better equipped to make a relationship work, but it is also possible that a more satisfying relationship causes a person to feel more secure. Alternatively, the correlation could be explained by a confounding variable, such as optimism, and further research would be required to resolve this ambiguity.

In our analysis of situation 13 (“Your partner tells you that he/she loves you”), we found that people who had been with their partner for less than six months responded more anxiously than did those who had been with their partner for more than a year. However, this finding may be confounded by attachment style in that securely attached people are more likely to be satisfied in their relationship and therefore stay in that relationship for a longer period of time; they are also likely to respond with less anxiety than insecurely attached people (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Moreover, for this item there was an unexpected interaction between gender and security: insecure men were more anxious than secure men, whereas insecure women were less anxious than secure women,

although not significantly. One explanation that would account for this is differences in anxious and avoidant attachment styles within the insecure group. Whereas anxiously attached individuals would appreciate the validation of being told they were loved, avoidant individuals might be bothered by it (Collins & Read, 1990). Thus, it is possible that females are more anxiously attached and males are more avoidantly attached within insecure attachment, but further research would be necessary to test this hypothesis.

There are several limitations to our work. Firstly, our sample was not representative of the larger population, or even of undergraduates in general, so our ability to extrapolate from our results is limited. Thirty-seven (59 percent) of the 63 participants were female, indicating that our results might be slightly more representative of females than of males. Furthermore, all participants were Brown students roughly between the ages of 18-22 years old who were at the time of taking the survey in a 3-month or longer heterosexual romantic relationship, and the sample was further narrowed in that participants were recruited via the social networking site Facebook; all participants were acquaintances of the researchers. Using all Brown University students could have skewed the results, especially since the competitiveness of the school may mean that its students are distinct from the general population in aspects that could affect attachment style or relationship interactions (e.g., intelligence, affluence). The authors' previous work examining self and observer ratings of Brown students on the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) also indicated that Brown students have above-average T-scores ($M = 58.1$, $SD = 11.6$) in the Neuroticism domain, of which anxiety is a significant facet (Boettcher, Lieberman, McCarthy, Mosbacher, & Russell, 2010). It is therefore plausible that Brown students are more anxious than the general population.

There were also several weaknesses with our assessment tool. Our measure of relationship longevity did not distinguish between relationships of a single year and much longer relationships, nor did we collect data on how long the couple had known each other prior to beginning a relationship, which could have impacted their attachment style and ways of interacting. Furthermore, a sizeable number of respondents (42 out of an original 105 respondents) failed to complete the survey.

These cases were discarded, meaning that our final respondent pool was affected by voluntary response bias.

It is also important to note that we generated the situations for low, moderate and high-anxiety interactions ourselves, and these situations were not tested for predictive validity for anxiety. Although we did find significant differences in the amount of anxiety evoked by the low-, moderate-, and high-anxiety situations, they are not necessarily representative of the interactions a couple has. We recommend more in-depth analysis of these and other situations to develop a set of situations whose potentials for causing anxiety in the general population are known, such that later use of the situations would allow for comparisons of a given attachment style to a large, representative norm group. Our results would also be informed by analyses of individual situations. For example, the finding that situation 9 ("Your partner asks you how your day was") was significantly more anxiety-producing than the other low-anxiety situations was unexpected and merits further attention.

Perhaps the greatest limitation of our work, necessary due to the small sample size, is that we did not distinguish between insecurely attached individuals who are avoidant and those who are anxious in forming our insecurity scale. Many accounts of attachment style divide attachment into secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment, including the inventory that we used (Collins & Read, 1990). Anxious and avoidant attachment styles manifest differently; avoidant individuals are less comfortable with closeness and commitment while anxious individuals are more likely to value closeness to such a degree that they are uncomfortable without it and as such tend to worry about acceptance and abandonment. This could have led to differential responding within our sample of insecurely attached subjects, and grouping them all together could have masked this effect. For example, the high-anxiety situation "Your partner says that he/she loves you so much that life is not worth living without you" would be very troublesome to an avoidant individual, while it could provide validation for an anxiously attached partner.

We recommend that future research involve sample sizes large enough to have a significant number of both avoidantly and anxiously attached individuals. Furthermore, insecure-avoidantly attached individuals may be by definition less likely

to be in romantic relationships in the first place; the sample we have may be skewed significantly toward anxious attachment, and subjects in future research who are avoidantly attached and in romantic relationships may still not be indicative of the true spectrum of avoidant attachment. Additionally, more recent research (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) has posited the further division of the adult insecure-avoidant attachment style into two subtypes, fearful and dismissing: the fearful type feels unlovable, and this is the basis for her avoidance of others; the dismissing type feels loveable but is dismissive and disparaging of others and so is not interested in their affections. There could be important systematic differences according to this subdivision that were also masked by this study's general grouping of subjects into "secure" or "insecure" attachment style.

Another limitation of this study was the method we used to divide subjects into a "secure" or "insecure" attachment type. The creation of a scale and splitting it at the median merely defines the *less-insecure* and *more-insecure* halves of our small sample—it is not necessarily an accurate determination of who is actually technically securely or insecurely attached. However, in a large enough sample of subjects that includes a full spectrum of attachment styles, this technique is likely to be highly accurate: Hazan and Shaver (1987) found 56 percent of participants in their study to be securely attached and 44 percent to be insecurely attached (25 percent avoidant, 19 percent anxious).

In addition, people might differ in their techniques of rating, erring on the side of large or small numbers or on the side of a small or large overall range of rating, in a way that is not necessarily reflective of their actual behavioral patterns. People also differ significantly in base rates of anxious responding; the trends we explored might have been blurred and weakened by this "noise," given our relatively small sample size. Also, length of relationship does not necessarily predict the seriousness and intimacy of subjects' relationships. It was, however, the best measure we had available to us.

In addition, we did not have enough homosexual respondents to analyze homosexual relationships separately; therefore, we included responses from only participants in heterosexual relationships. Future research might compare attachment

styles in heterosexual and homosexual relationships. A longitudinal study following the same participants over the course of a relationship would be informative as to how attachment and anxious responding change over time, and it would be helpful to collect data from both partners in a relationship to explore how attachment styles interact. Furthermore, we examined attachment within only romantic relationships: we could extend our research to see if participants' attachment styles mediated anxious responding to a friend or parent.

Our chief recommendation for further research is specialization with respect to a single aspect of attachment or relationship anxiety. Research should address the distinctions among the different subtypes of insecure attachment, as differently insecurely-attached people react and behave in systematically very different ways. In an attempt to take many factors into account, our work is a somewhat superficial appraisal of attachment style and anxious responding, and we lacked the depth to explore particularly nuanced interactions; for the most informative extension of this work, we suggest multiple projects focusing on individual aspects of attachment. An assessment tool to evaluate anxiety in hypothetical romantic situations, such as the tool used in this study, should also be experimentally developed and verified to avoid unintended variation in what the items are truly measuring and to ensure robust results. Nevertheless, this research serves as a useful initial survey of attachment style and anxious responding in a Brown University undergraduate sample, and we anticipate being able to build on these findings in future work.

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