

The Effects of Stress on Dating Relationships
Amy J. Wristen
University Undergraduate Fellow, 1993-1994
Texas A&M University
Department of Psychology

APPROVED

Fellows Advisor *Amy A. Sieg*
Honors Director *[Signature]*

Abstract

This study examined how adult attachment styles moderate the effect that stress has on dating relationships. One hundred twenty-three dating couples were videotaped for 7 minutes while they discussed either a major or a minor problem in their relationship. Results revealed that persons who scored higher on the anxious attachment index and who discussed a major (more stress-inducing) problem experienced decreases in perceived satisfaction and commitment in their relationship following the discussion. Findings are discussed in the context of theory and research on attachment.

The Effects of Stress on Dating Relationships

Research on attachment theory began in 1951 when John Bowlby started to examine how and why infants become emotionally attached to their primary caregivers. Bowlby noted that infants often display strong emotional distress when they are physically separated from their primary caregivers. He observed that three emotional reactions typically occur following separation: protest, despair, and detachment (Bowlby, 1969). On the basis of these observations, Bowlby developed a theory of attachment guided by evolutionary principles. The attachment system, according to Bowlby, is composed of specific behavioral and emotional reactions to separation. These tendencies are designed to keep infants in close physical proximity to their primary caregivers, and they should have been selected for during evolutionary history. Infants who stayed close to their caregivers because of these attachment characteristics should have been more likely to survive and ultimately reproduce (Bowlby, 1969).

Attachment Theory

Three main attachment styles were discovered after studying young children in the stressful Strange Situation (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978). The three primary styles are: anxious/ambivalent, avoidant, and secure. Anxious/ambivalent infants mix attachment behaviors with observable expressions of protest and anger toward their primary caregiver when they are distressed. Avoidant infants avoid their caregiver and exhibit signs of detachment when distressed. Secure infants successfully

use their caregivers as sources of comfort and support when they are distressed (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980).

Recently, these attachment styles have been studied in adults. During social development, people develop internal affective/cognitive "working models" of themselves and typical patterns of interaction with significant others (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1973; Main et al., 1985). These models are believed to organize the development of personality and social behavior. People who have a secure attachment style view themselves as friendly, good-natured, and likable. They view significant others as generally well-intentioned, reliable, and trustworthy. People with an anxious attachment style perceive themselves as misunderstood, unconfident, underappreciated, and they view significant others as unreliable and either unwilling or unable to commit themselves to permanent relationships. People with an avoidant attachment style see themselves as suspicious, aloof, and skeptical. They view significant others as unreliable or overly eager to commit to long-term relationships.

Bowlby (1969,1973) suggests that early relationship experiences should exert long-term influence on an individual's personality and his or her later relationships through these working models. Working models are internal structures that reflect an individual's experiences in important past relationships (Bretherton, 1988; Collins & Read, 1990). Working models contain episodic, semantic, and affective information about past relationships. They also include interpersonal

information such as: (1) rules concerning what types of emotions and cognitions one should have about relationship partners; (2) guidelines that dictate ways to construe and regulate emotions in relationships; (3) beliefs and values concerning relationships and relationship-based experiences; (4) expectations about future relationships and relationship experiences; and (5) memories and emotions associated with past relationships (see Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Mental models direct behavior and affective subsequent experiences in relationships. They also provide a cognitive/emotional context through which information about relationships is filtered and interpreted.

Attachment and Stress

Behavioral differences associated with the different attachment styles have only recently been studied in adults. Stress tends to elicit the prototypical behavioral and emotional features associated with the three attachment styles (Simpson, Rholes, and Nelligan, 1992). Bowlby (1969, 1988) has argued that the attachment system should be most strongly activated during times of pronounced stress (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). Securely attached persons tend to seek out and give support when distress arises (Ainsworth et al., 1978). These tendencies may produce stronger interdependence and positive affect in the close relationships of secure individuals (cf. Simpson, 1990). Persons with a more secure attachment style also behave differently than persons with a more avoidant style in terms of physical contact and efforts to both seek and provide emotional support (Simpson et al., 1992). Furthermore, secure people use "integrating"

strategies during conflict resolution with their romantic partners (Pistole, 1989). And securely attached husbands have wives who display less anger during stressful problem-solving discussions, whereas secure wives have husbands who display superior listening skills during confiding tasks (Kobak & Hazan, 1991).

A great deal of research outside of attachment theory has examined the association between stress and the forming of strong emotional bonds. For example, past research has examined the effects of chronic stress on friendships formed between soldiers during wartime (Elder & Clipp, 1988). In many ways combat partners must function like a securely attached dyad. They must offer and seek high levels of protection, support, and security, especially during stressful combat situations. Many combat soldiers display strong and unwavering care and support for one another during battle. As a result, they forged extremely close and trusting friendships that last a lifetime (see Milgram, 1986). Relationships that have been tested by fire and have survived may become stronger and more secure because any doubts about a partner's availability and supportiveness have been answered.

Research on women's friendships has also shown that strong emotional bonds tend to be created when friends must support each other during stressful life events (see Woolsey & McBain, 1987). By expressing mutual care, support, and concern during difficult times, friends learn that they can trust and depend on each other, even when they are very vulnerable. According to Woolsey

and McBain (1987), the depth of intimacy that friends exchange during the process of support giving and support receiving is the key to the strength and quality of their bonding. Friends who are accessible to each other in an emotional way and who show deep commitment and caring during times of crisis tend to form the strongest and most lasting bonds. By experiencing and successfully coping with severe hardship together, friends may actually increase the amount of security in their relationship.

Finally, research on children who have overcome severe trauma and hardship early in life also shows the same relationship strengthening processes. One of the key features that distinguishes resilient individuals from less resilient individuals is the presence of highly positive, nurturing, and supportive parental figures (or mentors) during times of hardship (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Masten & O'Connor, 1989). Resilient individuals felt that they could turn to parental figures for comfort and support during stressful times. As with combat soldiers, the bonds that resilient individuals developed with their parental figures or mentors in childhood often remain exceptionally strong throughout their lives.

It is conceivable that some degree of strong yet manageable stress may be necessary for strong bonds to form (Simpson & Rholes, 1994). Under chronic stress, relationship partners should have more opportunities to offer and receive the kind of support that is conducive to strengthening a relationship. However, this effect should be most apparent when at least one partner can function as a secure base and when only one partner

experiences stress at a given time, leaving the other partner free to provide support.

Unfortunately, chronic stress also may harm some relationships by making partners psychologically unable to meet each other's needs for proximity and security (see Main et al., 1985; Simpson & Rholes, 1994). Given their behavioral tendencies and the nature of their working models, securely attached persons should be able to cope with stress in a more constructive manner than insecurely attached persons. Conversely, considering their behavioral tendencies and working models, the relationships of anxiously and avoidantly attached persons may experience declines in perceived quality under higher levels of stress.

This raises the question of whether stress might strengthen and perhaps improve some relationships but weaken and attenuate other relationships. There has been no systematic research on this topic to date. It seems reasonable to predict that dyadic discussions that are more stressful will not cause securely attached persons to experience perceived decreases in satisfaction or love in their relationships. It also seems reasonable that avoidantly attached persons will perceive decreases in satisfaction or love in their relationship following a stressful dyadic discussion. According to Hazan (1993), anxiously attached individuals tend to experience larger vasillations in their relationships over time (i.e. they have more highs and lows in satisfaction and love). Moreover, anxious individuals may react more negatively to stress in, or threats to, their relationships (Simpson & Rholes, 1994). Thus, they may

perceive their relationships less favorably following highly stressful discussions with their dating partners.

Hypotheses

People with a secure attachment style tend to have higher levels of trust, interdependence, commitment, and better communication skills in their relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Simpson, 1990). Thus, a stressful discussion should not produce decreases in perceived satisfaction and commitment in their relationships. Because of their lower levels of trust, interdependence, commitment, and their poorer communication skills, individuals with avoidant or anxious attachment styles should experience temporary decreases in satisfaction and commitment following a stressful discussion with their partner.

Methods

Subjects

The subjects who participated in this study were 123 introductory psychology students at Texas A&M University and their dating partners. The partners had to have been dating each other for at least 6 months in order to participate. The mean length of relationship was 21 months, with the minimum being 6 months and the maximum being 5.5 years. Their ages ranged from 17 to 23, with the mean age being 19.56 for males and 18.93 for females.

Procedures

The experiment had two phases. All couples were run individually. During phase 1, each couple came to an

experimental room where they read and signed consent forms. They were then separated into different cubicles to complete a battery of questionnaires. Both male and female partners completed the same sets of questionnaires. The questionnaires included: a set of Venn diagrams (Aron et al., 1991), Goldberg's Big 5 questionnaire (Goldberg, 1991), a satisfaction scale developed by Hendrick (1987), the Rubin Liking and the Rubin Love scales (Rubin, 1970), a commitment scale (Rusbult, 1983), an investment scale (Rusbult, 1980), and a trust scale (Boon and Holmes, 1991).

Upon completing the questionnaires, the male and female partners were brought back together to schedule a time three to five days later to participate in the second phase of the study. Each couple was then dismissed until phase 2.

At the beginning of phase two, the partners were greeted and placed in separate cubicles. The partners who were randomly assigned to the high stress condition were given the following instructions:

"Hi. Thank you for returning. We are going to do a couple of things today. First, I would like you to think about the last major argument of disagreement you and your partner had. Not necessarily the last argument, but the last major argument. Most couples have disagreements from time to time, and this is not necessarily bad. Sometimes disagreements can be good for a relationship. We would like you to identify the last time you had a major disagreement with your partner. Then think about two things: Why you were

upset with your partner?; and, what it was about your partner's attitudes, habits, or behaviors that bothered you? Do you have any questions? I'll give you a minute or so to think about this."

Couples in the high stress condition were then given the following instructions:

"In this study, we are investigating how dating couples discuss problems and points of contention in their relationship. To conduct the study, we are going to videotape the two of you discussing a problem in your relationship. No one will be watching you during your interaction. Your tape will be coded at a later point in time by trained observers. Thus, it is important that you talk loud enough so that your voice can be picked up on the videotape.

Okay, each of you have identified what you feel is the last major argument or disagreement in your relationship. Are you both thinking of the same episode or underlying issue?"

The experimenter then stepped back and looked away while the couple decided if they were thinking about the same argument. If the couple was not thinking of the same episode, they were instructed to decide which one was "more of a major argument". The experimenter then concluded the instructions by stating the following:

"Again, we would like you to think about your last major argument or disagreement. Remember what you were

arguing about and why you were upset with your partner. Remember what you were thinking about and how you felt during the argument. After remembering these things, we would like you to discuss this issue with each other. Specifically, we'd like each of you to tell the other what it is about his or her attitudes, habits, or behaviors that bothers you. Please discuss the issue in detail. So for example, you will be saying to her something like, 'I feel this way about X, Y, and Z.' Then you would say back to him something like, 'Well, I feel this way about what you are saying', or 'I feel this way about X, Y, and Z.' The point is that you speak to each other and not to the camera. Please forget about being recorded and have a typical interaction like you would have in private. It is crucial to the success of our study for you to feel comfortable and to interact naturally, like you do everyday. If you understand everything, I will get started."

The subjects who were randomly assigned to the low stress condition were given the following instructions:

"Hi. Thank you for returning. We are going to do a couple of things today. First, I would like you to think about the last minor disagreement you and your partner had. Most couples have disagreements from time to time, and this is not necessarily bad. Sometimes disagreements can be good for a relationship. We would

like you to identify the last time you had a very minor disagreement with your partner. Do you have any questions? I'll give you a minute or so to think about it."

Subjects in the low stress condition were given the following instructions:

"In this study, we are investigating how dating couples interact during discussions. To conduct the study, we are going to videotape the two of you discussing a minor disagreement. No one will be watching you during your interaction. Your tape will be coded at a later point in time by trained observers. Thus, it is important that you talk loud enough so that your voice can be picked up on the videotape. Okay, each of you have identified what you feel is the last minor disagreement in your relationship. Are you both thinking of the same episode or underlying issue? If not, decide which one was more of a minor disagreement. Please discuss the issue in detail. So, for example, you will be saying to her something like, 'I feel this way about X, Y, and Z.' And then you would say back to him something like, 'Well, I feel this way about what you are saying', or 'I feel this way about X, Y, and Z.'. The point is that you speak to each other and not to the camera. Please forget about being recorded and have a typical interaction like you would have in private. It is crucial to the success of our study for

you to feel comfortable and to interact naturally, like you do everyday. If you understand everything, I will get started."

After seven minutes of discussion, the partners were separated and given a battery of questionnaires to complete. A stress manipulation check was also administered at this time. This manipulation check consisted of the 3 questions listed in Appendix C. The stress manipulation check scale was constructed by aggregating the three items listed in Appendix C after they had been keyed in the same direction (with higher scores indicating more stress). The questionnaires administered in phase 2 measured the same constructs as in phase 1 along with some new items. Specifically, Satisfaction (Hendrick, 1987), Liking and Love (Rubin, 1970), Commitment (Rusbult, 1983), Investment (Rusbult, 1980), and Trust (Boon & Holmes, 1991) were reassessed at phase 2. Also, perceived differences in the relationship were assessed after the discussion using a 32-item questionnaire developed by the experimenters (see Appendix B). Finally, the Aron Venn Diagrams were assessed after the discussion (Aron et al., 1991).

Results

Construction of Indexes

Seventeen attachment items were used to assess attachment styles in both the men and women who participated in this study. These items were based on the three attachment vignettes originally created by Hazan and Shaver (1987), which were subsequently broken into individual sentences by Simpson et al.,

1992. All sentences were rated on seven-point, Likert-type scales. In accord with past research (Simpson et al., 1992), a factor analysis confirmed a two-dimensional factor structure underlying the 17 items: an avoidant/secure dimension and an anxious/nonanxious dimension.

After keying items in the proper direction, the avoidant/secure attachment index was constructed by aggregating items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 (see Appendix A). Higher scores indicated greater avoidance, whereas lower scores reflected greater security. After proper keying, the anxious/ambivalent attachment index was created by aggregating items 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 (see Appendix A). Higher scores reflected greater anxiousness.

Principle axis factor analyses were performed on the 32 perceived change items (see Appendix B). The perceived change items asked about changes in perceptions of the relationship following the discussion. More specifically, these items assessed perceived changes in: commitment, security, understanding, confidence, passion, support, guilt, vulnerability, love, anger, satisfaction, emotional dependence, resentment, communication, betrayal, investment, level of hurt, hostility, retaliation, level of emotional display, respect, and bonding (see Appendix B). Both partners completed the same questionnaire, but factor analyses were performed separately on men and women. If an item had a factor loading of .50 within each sex, it was included on that scale for each sex.

Based on these factor analyses, five scales were constructed for men. The first was a love/commitment scale. This scale was formed by aggregating items 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, and 31 (see Appendix B). The second scale was a satisfaction/bonding scale. It was formed by aggregating items 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 24 (see Appendix B). An anger/hostility scale was formed by aggregating items 2, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27, and 32 (see Appendix B). A guilt/frustration scale was created by aggregating items 7, 14, and 15 (see Appendix B). Finally, a vulnerability/dependent scale was formed by summarizing items 10 and 20 (see Appendix B).

Four scales were constructed for women. The first scale was an anger/emotional hurt scale. Items 2, 13, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 30, and 32 (see Appendix B) were aggregated to form this scale. Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 18, 23, and 31 (see Appendix B) were aggregated to form a satisfaction/emotional bonding scale. The third scale was love/commitment, created by aggregating items 14, 16, 28, and 29 (see Appendix B). The last scale was a guilt/insecurity scale, formed by aggregating items 7, 10, 17, and 19 (see Appendix B). These factor-analytically derived scales (5 for men and 4 for women) served as the primary dependent variables.

Manipulation Checks

The level of stress experienced by subjects in each experimental condition was assessed using t-tests. The number of male subjects in the low stress group was 61. Their mean on the 3-item stress index was 9.5082, and their standard deviation was

4.995. The high stress group consisted of 62 males, who reported a mean of 11.6774 on the stress index and a standard deviation of 6.235. The t-test comparing males in the high and low stress conditions was -2.14 with 121 degrees of freedom. The p-value for the males was .035. According to this t-test, then, the stress manipulation was effective as evidenced by the fact that the high stress group reported feeling significantly more stress than did the low stress group.

A t-test was also performed for the females. The low stress group consisted of 61 females, who reported a mean of 9.4426 on the stress index and a standard deviation of 5.560. The high stress group had 62 females, who reported a mean of 12.9516 and a standard deviation of 6.042. The t-value for the females was -3.35 with 121 degrees of freedom and a p-value $>.001$. This indicates that the stress manipulation also worked for the females.

Analyses of Perceived Change Scales

We correlated both the secure/avoidant and the anxious attachment style indexes with the perceived change scales that were created for each sex. Correlations were calculated for males and females for both the low stress and the high stress conditions. Correlations were significant (two-tailed) if they had a value of .25 or greater. These correlations are presented in Table 1.

The significant correlations for males in the high stress condition were between the anxious attachment index and the perceived change scales of love/commitment (-.2914),

satisfaction/bonding (-.2588), and guilt/frustration (.4085). Specifically, more anxiously attached men experienced perceived decreases in love/commitment and satisfaction/bonding following the discussion. Anxiously attached men experienced an increase in guilt/frustration following the discussion. There were no significant correlations for males in the low stress condition for either attachment style index. There was only one significant correlation for females. Specifically, the satisfaction/emotional bonding scale was negatively correlated with the anxious attachment index in the high stress condition (-.3201). This indicates that anxiously attached females reported a decrease in satisfaction/emotional bonding following the discussion.

Next, we determined whether the effects reported above were significantly different for the attachment styles in each condition. To accomplish this, a series of regression analyses was performed. More specifically, we ran 9 regression analyses in which each of the 9 perceived difference scales was treated as a criterion measure. For each analysis, the following predictors were entered in the following order: 1) the condition each subject was randomly assigned to (high stress or low stress), 2) each person's score on the avoidant/secure index, 3) the score on the anxious/ambivalent index, 4) the interaction between condition and the avoidant/secure index, and 5) the interaction between condition and the anxious/ambivalent index.

A significant interaction indicates that subjects responded differently depending on the condition to which they were

assigned. We found three significant interactions. Two significant interactions were found for men, and one significant interaction was found for women. The first effect found for men was on the love/commitment scale. The t-value was -2.48 with 108 degrees of freedom for the condition by male anxious attachment interaction. The p-value for this interaction was less than .02. Specifically, in the high stress condition, anxious men reported less love/commitment, whereas in the low stress condition, they reported more love/commitment. The second effect found for men was a condition by male anxious attachment interaction on the satisfaction/bonding scale. The t-value was -1.79 with 110 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than .08. In the high stress condition, anxious men reported less satisfaction, whereas in the low stress condition, they reported slightly more satisfaction. The lone significant effect for women was a condition by anxious attachment interaction on the satisfaction/emotional bonding scale. The t-value was -3.35 with 112 degrees of freedom and a p-value of less than .01. In the high stress condition, anxious women reported less satisfaction, whereas in the low stress condition, they reported more satisfaction.

Discriminant Validation Analyses

It is possible that the results for the regression effects reported above might be attributable to variance that the attachment styles share with the Big 5 trait measures. To test whether any of the Big 5 trait scales might have accounted for the effects reported above, we partialled out effects of the Big

5 traits. For all of the regression analyses reported above, none of the effects for the attachment styles attenuated when the Big 5 traits were partialled out. All of the p-values remained less than .05.

The results of the regression effects for the attachment styles also might be attributed to differences in relationship variables such as commitment, length of the relationship, amount of love for the partner, and satisfaction. To test whether these relationship variables accounted for the regression effects, we partialled out the effects of each relationship measure. In all of the analyses, the p-values were less than .05. In other words, none of the effects for the attachment styles decreased once both the trait and the relationship measures were partialled out.

Discussion

This investigation tested several hypotheses concerning how a stressful discussion would affect people with different attachment styles. Three predicted interactions emerged for anxiously attached individuals (two for men and one for women), whereas none were found for secure or avoidant individuals. Specifically, anxious men reported less love/commitment and less satisfaction in the high stress condition, whereas they reported greater love/commitment and satisfaction in the low stress condition. No significant interactions emerged for the secure/avoidant dimension. There were no sex differences in any of the analyses.

These results raise questions about why anxious/ambivalent men appear to experience improved relationships following a low stress discussion. People with anxious/ambivalent attachment styles lack conflict management skills in highly stressful situations compared to avoidant and securely attached people. In this experiment, the low stress discussion might have allowed anxiously attached people to talk about an issue in their relationship without making them feel overly distressed and taxed. Anxiously attached persons have a strong need to merge with their partners. The low stress condition may have allowed anxiously attached persons to achieve this goal. If their need to feel more connected with their partners may have been met, anxiously attached persons should have perceived greater increases in love/commitment and satisfaction compared to their securely and avoidantly attached counterparts.

Interactions emerged between anxious attachment and both satisfaction and love/commitment for men, and between anxious attachment and satisfaction/emotional bonding for women. The satisfaction measures included perceived change items dealing with communication, satisfaction, and bonding for both men and women. In the low stress condition, anxiously attached persons could have fulfilled their stronger need for these aspects of their relationships without their poorer conflict management skills adversely affecting the outcome of their discussion. A significant interaction between anxious attachment and love/commitment did not emerge for women, perhaps because many of the items that formed the love/commitment scale for men were

found on the satisfaction/emotional bonding scale for women. Such important items as closeness, wanting to be with your partner, comfortableness confiding, passion, amount of support, and amount of respect also appeared on the males' love/commitment scale. However, these items were found on the satisfaction/emotional bonding scale for women. Anxiously attached women in the low stress condition also reported perceived increases on these items, although they did not load on the love/commitment scale for women.

Anxiously attached individuals experience greater vacillations in relationship satisfaction over time than do securely attached people (Hazan, 1993). Anxiously attached individuals also have a stronger need for proximity than do securely and avoidantly attached people (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). This strong desire for proximity stems from a history of their needs having not been met coupled with anger toward--and uncertainty about--their attachment figures (see Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Furthermore, anxiously attached persons have a lower threshold for the activation of their attachment system due to their higher baseline levels of felt insecurity (Simpson & Rholes, 1994). It follows, then, that the anxiously attached people should be more responsive and reactive to different levels of stress.

As expected, anxious/ambivalently attached persons experienced decreases in perceived satisfaction and love when discussions were more stressful. We also expected that avoidantly attached subjects would experience similar perceived

decrements in their relationships due to their tendency to reject attachment figures, especially in stressful situations (Simpson et al., 1992). One reason why this effect might not have been found for avoidantly attached individuals could be that they did not experience enough stress in the high stress condition to fully engage their working models. Due to their lower activation threshold, the high stress condition should have been strong enough to produce perceived decrements in the relationships of anxious/ambivalent people.

This study included alternate measures to show that the effects that emerged were not due to either individual differences in the personalities of the subjects or differences in their dating relationships. The Big 5 personality measures and relationships variables such as commitment, relationship length, amount of love, and satisfaction were partialled out to see if the attachment effects persisted. All effects remained significant. These findings are important because they indicate that decreases in love and satisfaction are the result of the working models that the anxiously attached persons use when confronted with stressful situations.

All interactions that were found in this study involved anxious/ambivalently attached persons. All of these interactions reflected decrements in the high stress condition (i.e., decrements in satisfaction for men and women, and decrements in love for men). These results lead one to wonder what partners actually discussed to generate these perceived decreases. This study did not focus on the contents of the high stress

discussions versus the contents of the low stress discussions. We did, however, videotape the discussions in both conditions. In a future study, the contents of the discussions will be analyzed. This future study will focus on what anxiously attached subjects said during their discussions that might have led to the interactions that were found in the present study. Future research also should examine what avoidantly attached subjects said that might have prevented decrements in love and satisfaction. Furthermore, a comparison between anxiously attached people in the low stress and high stress conditions should be conducted to discover what it was about the high stress discussions that produced decreases in love and satisfaction. Women and men may adopt different styles of interacting and trying to resolve problems that might differ depending on their attachment styles.

References

- Ainsworth, M., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of attachment. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). Attachment and loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and anger. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). Attachment and Loss: Vol. 3. Loss: Sadness and depression. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). A secure base. New York: Basic Books.
- Bretherton, I. (1988). Open communication and internal working models: Their role in the development of attachment relationships. In R. A. Thompson (ed.), Nebraska symposium on motivation, 1988, (pp. 57-113), Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58, 644-663.
- Elder, G. H., & Clipp, E. C. (1988). Wartime losses and social bonding: Influences across 40 years in men's lives. Psychiatry, 51, 177-198.
- Garnezy, N., Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (1984). The study of stress and competence of children: A building block for developmental psychopathology. Child Development, 55, 97-111.

- Hazan, C. (1993). Personal communication. Cornell University.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52, 511-524.
- Kobak, R. R., & Hazan, C. (1991). Attachment in marriage: Effects of security and accuracy of working models. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60, 861- 869.
- Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. In I. Bretherton & E. Waters (Eds.), Growing points in attachment theory and research, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 50, 66-104.
- Masten, A. S., & O'Connor, M. J. (1989). Vulnerability, stress, and resilience in the early development of a high risk child. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 28, 274-278.
- Milgram, N. A. (Ed.) (1986). Stress and coping in time of war: Generalizations from the Israeli experience. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Pistole, C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6, 505-510.
- Rholes W. S., Simpson, J. A., & Blakely (1994). Adult attachment styles and parents' relationships with their young children. Unpublished paper Texas A&M University.

- Rubin, Z. (1970). Measurement of romantic love. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 16, 265-273.
- Simpson, J. A. (1987). The dissolution of romantic relationships: Factors involved in relationship stability and emotional distress. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53, 683-692.
- Simpson, J. A. (1990). Influence of attachment styles on romantic relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59, 971-980.
- Simpson, J. A., Rholes, W. S., & Nelligan, J. S. (1992). Support seeking and support giving within couples in an anxiety-provoking situation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62, 434-446.
- Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. (1994). Stress and secure base relationships in adulthood. In K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman (Eds.) Advances in Personal Relationships, 5, 181-204.
London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Woolsey, L. K., & McBain, L. (1987). Women's networks: Strengthening the bonds of friendships between women. In K. Storrie (Ed.), Women: Isolation and bonding (pp. 59-76). Toronto: Methuen.

Table 1

Perceived Change Scales

Males: High Stress Condition

	<u>Secure/Avoidant</u>	<u>Anxious/Ambivalent</u>
Love/Commitment	-.1332	-.2914
Satisfaction/Bonding	-.1237	-.2588
Anger/Hostility	.1299	.1943
Guilt/Frustration	.2066	.4085
Vulnerability/Dependency	.1937	.0119

Males: Low Stress Condition

	<u>Secure/Avoidant</u>	<u>Anxious/Ambivalent</u>
Love/Commitment	-.0176	.2071
Satisfaction/Bonding	-.0047	.0793
Anger/Hostility	.0358	-.0709
Guilt/Frustration	.0417	.1467
Vulnerability/Dependent	.0153	.0561

Females: High Stress Condition

	<u>Secure/Avoidant</u>	<u>Anxious/Ambivalent</u>
Anger/Emotional Hurt	.2019	.1094
Satisfaction/Emotional Bonding	-.1332	-.3201
Love/Commitment	-.1278	-.0289
Guilt/Insecurity	.1691	.1798

Females: Low Stress Condition

	<u>Secure/Avoidant</u>	<u>Anxious/Ambivalent</u>
Anger/Emotional Hurt	.0782	-.0057
Satisfaction/Emotional Bonding	-.0996	.2148
Love/Commitment	-.0937	.1017
Guilt/Insecurity	.0094	-.0123

APPENDIX A

Attachment Items

Please indicate how you typically feel toward romantic (dating) partners in general. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. Use the 7-point scale provided below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
I strongly agree							I strongly disagree

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to others.
2. I'm not very comfortable having to depend on other people.
3. I'm comfortable having others depend on me.
4. I rarely worry about being abandoned by others.
5. I don't like people getting too close to me.
6. I'm somewhat uncomfortable being too close to others.
7. I find it difficult to trust others completely.
8. I'm nervous whenever anyone gets too close to me.
9. Others often want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.
10. Others often are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
11. I often worry that my partner(s) don't really love me.
12. I rarely worry about my partner(s) leaving me.
13. I often want to merge completely with others, and this desire sometimes scares them away.
14. I'm confident others would never hurt me by suddenly ending our relationship.

15. I usually want more closeness and intimacy than others do.
16. The thought of being left by others rarely enters my mind.
17. I'm confident that my partner(s) love for me just as much as I love them

APPENDIX B

Perceived Difference Items

Think about how you felt about your dating partner and your relationship just before the discussion you and your partner just had compared to how you feel now. Using the scale provided below, indicate the extent to which your perceptions changed from before to after the discussion.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

much less

no change

much more

1. After the discussion, how much did you trust your partner?
2. After the discussion, how much anger did you feel toward your partner?
3. After the discussion, how satisfied were you with your partner?
4. After the discussion, how much open communication existed between you and your partner?
5. After the discussion, how much did you want to be around your partner?
6. After the discussion, how bonded did you feel with your partner?
7. After the discussion, how guilty did you feel?
8. After the discussion, how understood did you feel by your partner?
9. After the discussion, how comfortable did you feel confiding in your partner?

10. After the discussion, how vulnerable did you feel with respect to your partner?
11. After the discussion, how passionate did you feel toward your partner?
12. After the discussion, how fearful of a confrontation with your partner were you?
13. After the discussion, how disgusted did you feel toward your partner?
14. After the discussion, how invested did you feel in your partner?
15. After the discussion, how frustrated were you with your partner?
16. After the discussion, how committed did you feel toward your partner?
17. After the discussion, how emotionally confused did you feel toward your partner?
18. After the discussion, how supported did you feel by your partner?
19. After the discussion, how insecure did you feel about your relationship with your partner?
20. After the discussion, how emotionally dependent did you feel on your partner?
21. After the discussion, how much resentment did you feel toward your partner?
22. After the discussion, how betrayed did you feel by your partner?

23. After the discussion, how close did you feel to your partner?
24. After the discussion, how hurt did you feel by your partner?
25. After the discussion, how hostile did you feel toward your partner?
26. After the discussion, how much respect did you have for your partner?
27. After the discussion, how much did you want to retaliate against your partner?
28. After the discussion, how much did you feel like you cannot display your emotions with your partner?
29. After the discussion, how much did you love your partner?
30. After the discussion, how distressed did you feel in regard to your partner?
31. After the discussion, how respected did you feel by your partner?
32. After the discussion, how unwanted or uncared for did you feel by your partner?

APPENDIX C

Manipulation Check Items

Please answer the following questions. Use the following scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

not at all somewhat extremely

1. How stressful was the discussion you just had with your dating partner?
2. How upset did you feel during the discussion?
3. To what extent was the topic you discussed a major problem in your relationship?