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Effect of adult attachment style on perceptions of relationship conflict

Kristen Elizabeth Allison
University of Dayton

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Effect of Adult Attachment Style on Perceptions of Relationship Conflict

Thesis

Submitted to

The College of Arts and Sciences of the

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

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By

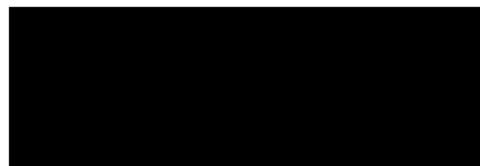
Kristen Elizabeth Allison

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Dayton, Ohio

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APPROVED BY:



Phelps, Carolyn
Thesis Chairperson



Kirschman, Keri
Committee member



Rye, Mark
Committee member



Biers, David
Chair, Department of Psychology

ABSTRACT

EFFECT OF ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLE ON PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT

Name: Kristen Elizabeth Allison

University of Dayton

Advisor: Dr. Carolyn Phelps

Current literature on adult attachment styles has demonstrated that insecurely attached adults, as initially defined by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) experience less satisfying and stable romantic relationship than their securely attached counterparts, and yet little research has been done in determining what aspects of adult attachment style work to create this difference. The present study assessed adult attachment styles using both a categorical and dimensional measure. During three university mass testing sessions, large groups of undergraduate students completed two attachment measures so that they might be categorized into one of the two attachment groups. Fifty-one securely attached and sixty-one insecurely attached adults voluntarily returned for participation in the second phase of the study. Participants were presented with either an attachment-focused or a neutral hypothetical conflict between a male and female character, and then completed measures assessing perceptions of the conflict. Results indicated no differences in the way in which insecurely attached and securely attached adults perceived the hypothetical conflicts. However, it was found that those insecurely attached adults reporting greater levels of relationship preoccupation also displayed significantly higher levels of negative affect than those who are not equally preoccupied. In addition, the romantic relationship was seen as more satisfying by all participants than was the working relationship.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The attachment theories of both Ainsworth (1978) and Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) have inspired much research since their initial introduction. While the attachment literature is prolific, until recently the focus has been limited to the primary relationship between caregiver and child, paying little attention to the more complex nature of adult attachment patterns. Despite the obvious limitations of the child-caregiver attachment literature in explaining adult attachment patterns, an analysis of this first, vital relationship provides a strong foundation on which adult attachment research can be based. In fact, much adult attachment research assumes a parallel between the different infant and adult attachment patterns as well as the common behavioral manifestations of each attachment style (Crowell, Fraley, Shaver 1999; Hazen & Shaver, 1987; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

Formation of Attachment Bonds

Following Bowlby's over-arching theory of attachment formation, both a normative component and an individual differences component are integrated into current adult attachment theories (Hazen & Shaver, 1994; Simpson & Rholes, 1998). The normative component includes the developmental stages through which all persons pass, as well as the species-typical patterns of attachment behavior. In contrast, a series of stable, systematic deviations from the normative attachment behavior patterns and

developmental stages also exist. Within these stable deviations resides the attachment style observed in each individual, or the individual differences component. More specifically, the normative component may be the expected attachment bond between child and caregiver, while the individual differences component can be seen in the variable ways in which this bond is expressed. Each of these components have also been applied to adult attachment literature in primarily the same manner, with the normative component representing a common attachment relationship between two adults and the individual differences expressed through attachment related beliefs and behaviors. The present study will examine in what ways the individual differences in adult attachment style influence perceptions of conflict in romantic relationships.

Bowlby (1969) originally argued that the attachment bond between child and caregiver was instinctively formed in order to provide safety, security, and ultimately survival for the infant. Primary to this attachment bond is a desire for proximity to the attachment figure during times of stress, an increased experience of comfort when in the attachment figure's presence, as well as an increase in discomfort when the attachment figure is no longer present. Often the goal of a behavioral exchange between the child and the caregiver is to command the attention and energy of the attachment figure under conditions of threat or stress. By doing so an enduring emotional bond between child and caregiver is formed, one that will provide support and safety during times of strain (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999).

When studying attachment in children the primary attachment relationship is easily identified as the parent-child dyad, with individual differences in attachment style identifiable within this dyad. Four categorical attachment styles, generally identified by

the Ainsworth Strange Situation methodology (1978), are widely accepted for the child-caregiver dynamic. During a stressful period, securely attached infants are easily calmed by the caregiver and will use the caregiver as a secure base for exploration, occasionally checking to verify the caregiver's presence and approval of behavior. Conversely, anxious/ambivalently attached children display a more push-pull dynamic with their caregivers, initially demonstrating clingy behavior in a new or stressful environment, but if the caregiver leaves for even a brief period the child pulls away, presumably as "punishment" for the abandonment. The avoidantly attached child appears uninterested in the caregiver, with little interaction exhibited between the two and the child rarely referencing the caregiver as a secure base during a novel or stressful period. Finally, a child with a disorganized attachment style displays a less easily classified series of behaviors (Berger, 2003). A child with disorganized attachment may fail to respond to the caregiver in a clear fashion (e.g. may cry for caregiver, but then hit) but also may not play freely in the environment. Insecure patterns of attachment, as represented by the anxious/ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized styles, are far less common than the secure attachment style, but all represent identifiable patterns of relationship behavior. It is theorized that the attachment styles seen in infants and children form the foundation of the emotional systems utilized in adult attachment relationships, resulting in conceptual and behavioral parallels between childhood and adult attachment.

Attachment in Adulthood

Despite similarities to childhood attachment, clearly defined attachment types have yet to be identified in the adult attachment literature. The lack of a comprehensive theory of attachment beyond childhood has impeded the construction of a cohesive,

integrated literature on the topic of adult attachment (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Despite this lack of a comprehensive theory, the presence of a general construct of adult attachment appears to be universally accepted, if not universally defined.

A general definition of adult attachment is provided by Berman and Sperling (1994) and will be used for the purpose of the present study:

“Adult Attachment is the stable tendency of an individual to make substantial efforts to seek and maintain proximity to and contact with one or a few specific individuals who provide the subjective potential for physical and/or psychological safety and security” (p. 8).

As implied by the above definition, adult attachment is also based upon the secure base behavior of seeking proximity to an attachment figure (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988; Weiss, 1991). The purpose of establishing an attachment relationship does not alter with age: to cement an enduring, supportive emotional bond between individuals (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999).

Building upon Bowlby's (1969) pioneering belief that child-caregiver attachment relationships are instinctive, protective tools is the idea that adult attachment serves the same instinctive function. As aforementioned, adult attachment cements an enduring emotional bond between individuals, but unlike the bond of childhood, adult attachment provides a reciprocal sense of safety and security (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). During a state of anxiety adults experience the same affective and physiological responses as children, triggering the similar secure base behavior of proximity seeking (Weiss, 1991). Not only are the behaviors performed analogous, but the motivation for these behaviors is as well. The objective remains to gain the attachment figure's attention and energy when one feels threatened or stressed.

Although both children and adults display observable proximity seeking behaviors in times of need, the core perceptions of the secure base differ greatly. In the parent-child dyad the attachment figure (parent) is seen as the unidirectional source of protection and comfort. Within adult attachment, this perception changes to a bidirectional relationship, where perception of the triggering threat differs as well. Children often feel that their safety is being breached by the presence of a stranger or the introduction of a novel environment and it is this threat which activates attachment behaviors. Adult attachment behaviors can also be triggered by the presence of potential danger to one's safety (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992), but may be triggered by a perceived threat to the attachment relationship as well (Weiss, 1991). In the study of child attachment a physical, concrete stimulus appears to be necessary to activate the attachment system, whereas in the study of adult attachment the presented threat may be of a more abstract, hypothetical nature.

Adult attachment systems are highly varied and complex, therefore identifying a single type of relationship as the prototype of adult attachment is increasingly difficult. Three general sources combine to form the basis of adult attachment: the parent-child relationship, the romantic relationship experiences of self and peers (including the marriage of the subject's parents), and any current adult attachment relationships (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). Although the relative importance of each of these sources continues to be debated and may be developmental in nature (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999), but the bond between sexual partners where security is mutually derived and provided is generally seen as the prototype for adult attachment. Research in the area of adult attachment has focused almost exclusively on parents or romantic partners as

attachment figures (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Both the parental and romantic relationships satisfy the criterion of a reciprocal, emotionally supportive relationship utilized as a source of strength in times of stress, making them excellent examples of adult attachment.

Romantic relationships alone do not automatically qualify as attachment bonds, however. Ainsworth (1991) stated that a romantic relationship is likely to contain multiple aspects, some of which may help in creating an affectional bond while others remain entirely irrelevant. Two important factors in the perception of an attachment bond are a relationship's length and its stage, with longer and more serious relationships representing clear attachment bonds while shorter, less serious relationships are much less likely to represent clear attachments (Weiss, 1988). Such a conceptualization coincides with Ainsworth's (1991) definition of an affectional bond as long-lasting, a characteristic which is not universally applicable to romantic relationships. In determining if a romantic relationship can be categorized as a classic attachment relationship one must ask if the attachment properties described above are present (Weiss, 1991). Also helpful when determining if attachment criteria are met is the examination of the attachment figure. Generally speaking, an attachment figure within an adult romantic relationship is a peer outside the family of origin, with whom a special relationship of six months or more has formed, usually also involving a sexual relationship (West & Sheldon, 1988). When attachment criteria are met, the pair-bond partners assume the status of the primary attachment figure, the role previously occupied by the primary caregiver. For the purpose of the present study, a hypothetical,

heterosexual romantic relationship of considerable length and level of seriousness will represent a stimulus adult attachment relationship.

Adult Attachment and Internal Working Models

The process of adult attachment does not stop simply at the creation of a supportive, secure base relationship. As defined by Bowlby (1973), all people form working models of the attachment figures in their world: who they are, their proximity, and the expected responses if sought out for support. More specifically, the internal working model is a representation of one's confidence that the attachment figure is generally, readily available. In addition to a working model of the attachment figure, a working model of self in an attachment relationship is also formed, how one behaves and responds within an attachment relationship. Collins and Read (1994) have expanded Bowlby's initial construct to include four interrelated, informational components that directly affect the creation of a person's internal working models: autobiographical memories of attachment experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of self and others in an attachment relationship, one's attachment-related goals and needs, as well as the strategies and plans for achieving these goals. So an attachment relationship is shaped not only by the view of the attachment and the self in relation to it, but one's past experiences, perceptions of what is needed from the relationship, and how one intends to get those needs met as well. The combination of all attachment related information is internalized and used to forecast how accessible and responsible an attachment figure will be in times of need. The internal working model becomes an integral cog in the working, behavioral aspects of attachment, guiding evaluations of experience and resultant

behaviors (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). It is the internal working models which will form the basis of each attachment pattern.

Once formed, the cognitive/affective schemata that are the internal working models of attachment most often operate automatically without conscious appraisal (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998; Bretherton, 1985; Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999; Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996). To clarify, it is not that one is wholly unaware of his own personal behavioral patterns in attachment relationships, but the underlying cognitive workings fueling such patterns are not within one's conscious awareness or control. Internal working models can be compared to other cognitive structures (i.e. schemas, scripts, prototypes) in that the models themselves are not directly observable but are actually theoretical constructs most often thought to be located in one's long term memory (Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996). Functionally similar to more general cognitive structures, internal working models provide a frame of reference for novel experiences and resultingly guide attachment related interactions. More complex than a cognitive schema, however, internal working models contain unconscious elements which prove difficult to verbalize. For example, a person may realize that she often avoids intimacy in relationships, but is most likely unable to verbalize the cognitive processes behind this avoidant behavior. Internal working models are so unique primarily because they not only represent the compilation of past attachment experiences but are also intermingled with one's attachment related wishes, goals, concerns, defenses, and behavioral tendencies.

In his introductory work, Bowlby (1969) acknowledged that a person may simultaneously possess several models of attachment figures and of the self. The model

formed from the parent-child relationship does not become paramount, but serves as a foundation for the many models formulated as life experience is collected. One model may be present for friendships while a second model may be activated for sexually intimate partnerships. Logically, the internal working model activated is that which is mostly closely aligned to the attachment situation at hand (Collins & Read, 1994). More specifically, internal working models are activated if the characteristics of the attachment partner are similar to those held within the model and if the nature of the relationship is similar to that in the activated model.

Generally speaking, those internal working models which are denser or stronger in formation are also more readily activated. A specific internal working model increases in density and strength in relation to the amount of experience had in relation to the model, the number of times the particular model has been applied, and the density of connections to other cognitive structures. Therefore, major attachment models, like those to parents or spouses, are more easily activated due to the high levels of relevant experience, application amount, and connection to fellow cognitive structures. Finally, a person's present mood state or current active goals also play a role in which internal working model is activated at a given moment. The activation of internal working models might be thought to function similarly to mood state-dependent learning, in that the learned information is most easily recalled when the situation or mood at hand is congruent with the situation or mood in which the initial learning occurred (Bower, 1981; Kenealy, 1997). The similarities between the current situation and the learning experience help one to summon up the memories or the learned material more easily. An attachment specific example might be that during a heated argument with her husband, a

wife may be experiencing emotions of anger and resentment similar to those felt toward her father in her childhood. At this point, the wife's internal working model based on her relationship with her father is triggered due to the emotional similarities of the situations (Collins & Read, 1994; Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996). Once activated, the internal working model influences the strategies and behaviors in attachment relevant situations. In addition to influencing behavioral strategies, the internal working model impacts a person's expectations, emotions, defenses, and relational behaviors in all close relationships (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998).

While the attachment style, and therefore the corresponding internal working model, has been shown to be relatively stable from childhood until approximately age nineteen, during adulthood the model is truly "working" in that it is open to revision as a function of significant attachment related experiences (Bretherton, 1985; Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999; Fraley, 2002). One's internal working model of self, others, and the environment is closely related to the individual differences seen in the functioning of the attachment system, leading to multiple attachment styles (Bretherton, 1985). For adults, each attachment style and individual, internal working model entertains different beliefs about the course of romantic love, availability and trustworthiness of attachment figures, and one's own love worthiness, resulting in a variety of attachment behaviors (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). Some have even gone so far to argue that adult attachment styles are in fact little more than particular types of internal working models that directly affect attachment relationships (Main et al., 1985).

Differing Types of Adult Attachment

Despite the agreed upon existence of adult attachment relationships, controversy over the definitions of more specific attachment patterns in adulthood remains pervasive in the literature. Hazen and Shaver (1987) were the first to apply the attachment labels of Ainsworth's strange situation to an adult population. Not only were similar frequencies of each style (i.e. secure, anxious/ambivalent, avoidant) found in the sample adult population, but Hazen and Shaver (1987) also discovered that these different attachment styles yielded differing beliefs about the course of romantic love, one's own worthiness of love, as well as the availability and trust of one's romantic partner. Therefore, attachment styles are not only present in adults, but also appear to mirror the idea of internal working models discussed previously. The single exception in this cross-over application of the attachment styles, is the disorganized attachment. This fourth characterization has yet to be studied in an adult population.

While Hazen and Shaver (1987) applied a three-pattern solution to adult attachment, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) later introduced a four-pattern solution. Arguing that internal working models of both self and others represent a positive-negative view dichotomy, a four-pattern solution emerges. More specifically, those with a positive view of self and others are labeled secure, and those with a negative view of self and others are labeled fearful. If a negative view of self but a positive view of others is held, one possesses a preoccupied style. And finally, if a negative view of others but positive view of self is present, the dismissing attachment style manifests (see Figure 1). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) found confirmation for their theory in the analysis of platonic, friend relationships as well as attachment styles within the family of origin.

Unlike previous studies, however, adult romantic relationships were not used to illustrate the four-pattern solution.

Despite the difference in number and title of these two approaches to adult attachment styles, similarities in behaviors and attitudes toward relationships emerge. In both systems, a secure attachment is characterized by confidence in oneself and others as well as healthy interpersonal relationships void of any attachment related problem patterns (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazen & Shaver, 1987). The person with a preoccupied attachment style parallels the ambivalent attachment style previously utilized, as both groups describe a person seeking self-acceptance in the acceptance of another. The final style in the three-pattern solution, avoidant attachment, is split into two more descriptive groupings in Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) solution. Those who avoid relationships out of fear of intimacy are labeled as fearful-avoidant and those avoiding due to a sense of detachment or a dismissing attitude fall into the dismissing-avoidant category. Regardless of this greater level of specificity, the underlying characteristic of avoiding attachment relationships remains present in both descriptions.

A final approach to adult attachment pattern identification attempts to bridge the gap between the forced choice and the two-dimensional approach. Recognizing the psychometric problem with assuming that adult attachment styles are not only mutually exclusive, but also accessible through a forced choice method of self-report, Feeny, Noller, and Hanrahan (1994) presented a more dimensional approach to adult attachment. A principle component analysis was conducted on an initially 65 item measure, and those with the lowest communalities were removed. A second principle component analysis was performed on the reduced item set and a five factor solution was found to be optimal.

The five-factor solution incorporates characteristic behaviors and cognitions of both the three-style and four-style descriptions of adult attachment. Ratings on the factors of confidence, discomfort with closeness, need for approval, preoccupation with relationships, and viewing relationships as secondary are provided and then scored to determine the level of security or insecurity in an adult's attachment style. This five-factor solution accurately identifies both the three-style patterns as well as the four-style patterns. By utilizing a dimensional approach Feeney, Noller, and Hanrahan, (1994) bridge the gap between the two approaches and emphasize the underlying similarities of the models rather than on the slight differences. Overall, however, the authors underscore that for all samples tested the primary distinction is between secure and insecure attachment. The more specific insecure patterns are simply finer classifications of a larger, more general category (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994).

Regardless of the division of attachment styles, all models agree that, like children, adults manifest both secure and insecure attachments. In terms of the internal working model, a securely attached person has internalized the confidence that the attachment figure will be available when necessary; an insecurely attached person lacks this confidence. The securely attached adult performs secure base behaviors and works to attain security and comfort in the relationship with the partner (Ainsworth, 1991; Hinde, 1982; Weiss, 1982). Generally speaking, an adult's attachment style may persistently impact his/her relationships because it illustrates overall views of the risks and benefits of interpersonal intimacy (Feeney & Noller, 1990). The role played by the internal working models may be positively related to the level of intimacy within a relationship, with more intimate relationships being more heavily affected by a person's

particular attachment style. When asked about relationships, securely attached subjects communicate stronger perceptions of relationship security, greater confidence in the partner's availability for support giving (Collins, 1996), and greater general relationship satisfaction (Pistole, 1989). While in a romantic relationship, securely attached persons display emotionally open and coherent communication not only within the relationship, but also about the relationship (Bretherton, 1990). Conversely, insecure attachment is associated with selectively ignoring a partner's communication signals, and displaying incoherence and dysfluency when discussing attachment relationships. A greater willingness to trust partners and share ideas and feelings with their partners in a flexible, considerate manner was also reported by securely attached people (Brennan & Shaver, 1995).

Related to experiences within a relationship and overall relationship quality is the way in which one appraises events occurring within the relationship. As seen in much social psychology research, existing goals, cognitive schemata, and expectations impact the way a person processes information (Collins & Read, 1994). As a person's internal working model of romantic attachment functions similarly to a cognitive schema, it too will influence which attachment relevant events are attended to and how they are perceived. For example, a person with an avoidant attachment style may appear hyper-vigilant for clues that his partner has begun encroaching on his independence, consistent with the expectations of his attachment style. Those events or bits of information which are consistent with existing beliefs and attitudes about self and others are more likely to be noticed. Therefore, internal working models may help people to craft a self-fulfilling

prophecy of sorts, only attending to that information which conforms to current relationship expectations.

Collins (1996) demonstrated that adults with differing attachment styles explained the same relationship event in different ways, showing that internal working models play a large role in the way people make sense of their relationships. When presented with the same hypothetical, attachment relevant event (i.e. your partner left you alone at a party, your partner didn't comfort you when you were feeling down) people possessing insecure attachment styles presented more negative views of their partner's behavior and the event itself, where securely attached people tended to downplay any potential negativity and presented more positive descriptions of their hypothetical partners and the event. In relation, insecurely attached persons were more likely to predict relationship conflict following the hypothetical event than were securely attached persons (Collins, 1996). Similarly, in the present study, securely attached persons were predicted to be more tolerant of stressful events and experience less intense negative emotions, as they have been shown to respond more adaptively to stress by allowing the experience of negative affect without becoming overwhelmed (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). More specifically, in response to stressful situations those with insecure attachment styles experienced an increase in distress and outlined more negative perceptions of their partners (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Behaviors performed in response to attachment related anxiety were attributable to differences in attachment style even when controlling for variables such as the level of love or closeness within the relationship.

Adult Attachment and Affect

Differences also manifest in the emotional experience of romantic relationships between securely and insecurely attached adults. Although the array of attachment related emotions is quite varied, themes of fears of abandonment, jealousy, reunion joy, emotional support during times of stress, anger at separation, and sadness or grief following a loss are some of the most common (Shave, Collins, & Clark, 1996). Following an attachment related event, such as a relationship conflict, the event is appraised and certain emotions are evoked. Emotional responses are a function of the appraisal of the event, with securely and insecurely attached persons appraising events in characteristic ways (Collins & Read, 1994). Attachment events are generally appraised based on the internal working model being activated; therefore differences between secure and insecure attachments should be evident through varying emotional responses. Secure persons will appraise an attachment event, such as a change in the current relationship as less threatening than will their insecurely attached counterparts. The emotional responses of securely attached people are generally more positive as well, based on their models of self as being likeable and others being trustworthy. Conversely, insecurely attached persons are more prone to negative appraisals based on their belief that they will inevitably be hurt or abandoned by a loved one (Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996).

Consistent with all other findings concerning attachment style and romantic relationship quality, Simpson (1990) found that secure persons reported less intense and milder negative emotions within a relationship, while also reporting greater levels of mild positive emotions. Insecurely attached persons reported greater levels of intense and

mild negative emotions, in addition to lower levels of intense and mild positive emotions. Again as demonstrated by Collins (1996), in response to hypothetical attachment relevant events, insecurely attached persons were more likely to respond with emotional distress and nervousness, where the securely attached group was much less likely to experience negative emotions. As shown by Collins' (1996) explanation of internal working models, the emotional responses to attachment events and the cognitive appraisals of these events possess a bidirectional relationship. Events will trigger differing attachment related emotional histories, with insecurely attached persons having a more negative emotional history, and these triggered histories will color the lens used to appraise events, pulling attention toward information that is consistent with past emotional experiences. In relation, internal working models influence the way in which events are appraised, resulting in different emotional reactions for different attachment styles (Collins & Read, 1994). Both the emotional responses and cognitive appraisals influence the observable behaviors in response to an attachment event, on which the attachment style distinctions are based.

During relationship conflict a securely attached person will use more integrating, mutually focused conflict strategies while insecure attachment is negatively associated with this type of conflict resolution (Pistole, 1989). In addition, securely attached persons generally see themselves as more likeable and lovable than do their insecurely attached counterparts; therefore relationship conflict is seen as less of a threat to the self and more of an approachable problem for securely attached adults (Pistole, 1989). Overall, secure attachment is also related to a greater level of optimism about the likelihood of marriage and future love relationships (Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992). As a result, Mikulincer

and Florian (1998) argue that a secure attachment style is an inner resource that may help an individual cope successfully with life's adversities, positively appraise stressful situations, constructively cope, and improve overall well-being and adjustment.

Conversely, an insecure attachment can be viewed as a risk factor that may detract from the individual's resilience in times of stress, leading to poorer coping and maladjustment.

Assessing Adult Attachment

Of course the efficacy of one's attachment style can only be measured when it is accessed. The events of the environment most certainly can and do influence the level to which the attachment system is triggered (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). In fact, the differences between attachment styles cannot be clearly described without referring to the situation in which the behaviors were observed (Feeney, 1998). Bowlby (1973, 1979) first stated that the attachment system should be most strongly activated under conditions of distress, such as illness fatigue, or fear. Feeney (1998) later found that, in agreement with Bowlby's characterization, attachment behaviors in adults are the most pronounced when the romantic, attachment relationship is threatened. Specifically, conflictive exchanges which underscore the need to maintain a cooperative partnership do, in fact, activate the attachment system in adults (Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998). Therefore, emotional stress is capable of activating the attachment system and corresponding internal working models in adults.

The internal working models and attachment styles are strongly connected to particular affective experiences, which are simultaneously triggered in conjunction with the models themselves (Collins, 1996). Therefore when one triggers an internal working model, one is also triggering an affective reaction in addition to the observable behavioral

responses. Because an emotional stressor, such as relationship conflict, can activate the attachment system a corresponding emotional response should be expected. However, the personal attachment style colors the particular emotional reaction experienced (Collins, 1996).

Generally speaking, greater anxiety is seen in insecurely attached adults during extremely stressful situations or when the existence of the relationship is threatened. Specifically, anxiously attached adults perceive their partners as unpredictable in their emotional availability and supportiveness, causing an increase in distress, anxiety, and anger when discussing relationship problems (Bowlby, 1980; Kobak & Duemmler, 1994; Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Main et al., 1985; Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998). On the other hand, avoidantly attached adults respond to attachment related distress by defensively suppressing the attachment system, but respond negatively nonetheless (Bowlby, 1980; Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Avoidant adults increase both the physical and psychological distance between themselves and their partners. As expected, securely attached adults respond the most adaptively to relationship stress by communicating openly and directly (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994; Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998).

While the response to relationship conflict has been reported, few studies have examined the cognitive processes fueling these behavioral and affective responses. True, relationship conflict triggers the attachment style which in turn influences how one responds to the conflict. In this chain of events a piece is missing, however. The attachment style must also affect how one perceives and processes the conflict at hand in order to influence the responses to it. While Bradbury and Fincham (1990) have begun to

connect cognitive processes to relationship satisfaction by demonstrating that attributions about attachment behavior in romantic relationships will causally influence one's judgments of relationship quality, the step of linking the cognitive procedures of perception and processing to conflict resolution in relationships remains absent.

The present study utilized Bradbury and Fincham's (1990) work on connecting cognitive processes to relationship satisfaction and functioning, while also considering the point that insecurely attached adults may display a myriad of dysfunctional behaviors contributing to reported relationship problems (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Thus far research has shown that those persons with insecure attachment styles are less fulfilled in romantic relationships and are less likely to resolve relationship conflicts than are their securely attached counterparts. The goal of the present study is to demonstrate that insecurely attached adults perceive relationship conflict as more intense than securely attached adults, resulting in a more negative affective response. If the conflict is perceived as more intense and arouses more negative affect in insecurely attached adults, it is likely to be seen as unsolvable and the relationship as unstable. Therefore, if a relationship is consistently seen as unstable and its problems as permanent, lower levels of relationship satisfaction would be expected. As conflict resolution, and assuaging the related stress and negative affect, is a key component of an attachment relationship, better understanding how insecurely attached adults perceive and process relationship conflict will shed light on why they are less likely to have their emotional needs met within an attachment dyad. By better understanding the mechanisms involved in the unsatisfactory relationships of insecurely attached adults, interventions aimed at counteracting these negative processes may help adults form more secure, gratifying bonds. Based on the

above review of literature, the following hypotheses have been generated for examination in the present study:

First, insecurely attached persons are expected to perceive the attachment focused conflict as having a higher level of intensity than will securely attached persons. Secondly, insecurely attached persons are expected to view the attachment focused hypothetical relationship as less stable than will the securely attached persons. Third, insecurely attached persons are expected to view the partners in the hypothetical, attachment focused relationship as less satisfied than those in the neutral relationship. Next, insecurely attached persons are expected to be less likely to predict a resolution for the attachment focused conflict than are securely attached persons. Finally, insecurely attached persons will experience higher levels of negative affect in response to attachment focused conflict than securely attached persons.

CHAPTER II

Method

Participants

Sixty –nine female and forty-three male undergraduate students voluntarily completed both phases of the current study in order to earn research credits required by introductory psychology courses. During three different sessions of mass testing at the University of Dayton 543 undergraduate students completed a battery of psychological assessments including two adult attachment measures. Following scoring of these attachment measures, all eligible participants were invited to return and complete the second phase of the study. Of those invited, fifty-one securely attached and sixty-one insecurely attached participants voluntarily returned and completed the study's second phase. Again, participants received research credits for this second round of participation in order to meet requirements for introductory psychology courses.

First year college students constituted 70.5% of the sample; the average age of the sample was 18.91 years old, ($SD = .139$). Of the research participants, 92.9% were Caucasian, 3.6% Hispanic, 1.8% Asian American, .9% were African-American, and .9% identified themselves as "Other." Female participants constituted a larger proportion of the total sample (61.6%) than did male (38.4%). All participants were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" of the American Psychological Association (2002).

Materials

Attachment Questionnaires

The Hazan and Shaver Attachment Questionnaire (HSAQ; 1987) was used to identify attachment styles and categorize participants as either securely or insecurely attached. The HSAQ utilizes Ainsworth's original descriptions of the three primary attachment types (secure, avoidant, anxious/ambivalent) and consists of one corresponding, descriptive paragraph for each attachment style (See Appendix A for complete questionnaire). The scale was developed as a forced choice measure in which participants choose the paragraph they found most personally applicable. The proportions of attachment styles found in the original adult population tested were similar to those found in infants and children (56% secure, 23% avoidant, 20% anxious/ambivalent), giving credence to the idea that adults can successfully identify their personal attachment styles. However, a forced-choice approach introduces multiple psychometric obstacles, and as a result the measure has been altered in a variety of ways.

Levy and Davis, (1988) attached a five-point Likert scale to Hazan and Shaver's original paragraphs and asked participants to rate the degree to which each expressed their feelings and experiences in relationships. Choices ranged from "not at all" to "completely or almost completely." A similar approach was used in the current study. Test-retest reliability information on the HSAQ is limited, but is reportedly between 0.598 at a one week interval (Pistole, 1989) and 0.711 over a period of eight months (Brennan & Shaver, 1995).

For the present study, a six-point Likert scale was attached to each of Hazan and Shaver's original paragraphs. A six-point Likert scale was chosen, as opposed to the

five-point scale generally used, for two primary reasons. First, the application of a six-point Likert scale, while preventing a forced choice, does force participants to at least identify a tendency toward a certain attachment style. A six-point Likert scale prevents participants from providing a neutral response to all three descriptive paragraphs, a potential psychometric problem not controlled for when using a five-point liker scale. Secondly, given that scores on the Hazan and Shaver paragraphs were to be aggregated with scores on the second attachment scale utilized in the study (discussed below), it was important to maintain consistent scoring between the two measures. Although employing a six-point Likert scale represents a mild digression from the current literature, the way in which the Hazan and Shaver paragraphs are employed is highly inconsistent. Some researchers continue to utilize the forced choice measure, some attach a Likert scale to each descriptive paragraph, while still others attach Likert scales to each sentence of the descriptive paragraphs. Therefore, even though a six-point scale is a slight divergence, there is not currently a strict empirical convention for the best way in which to use the Hazan and Shaver paragraphs.

The Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994) was used primarily to classify participants as either securely or insecurely attached. Given the structure of the measure, discussed below, five proposed factors of attachment were also measured. The ASQ is a 40-item self-report measure designed to assess adult attachment patterns (see Appendix B for complete questionnaire). The ASQ consists of five scales, corresponding to each of the five factors, and responses on each of these scales can be interpreted so that participants can be categorized as either securely or insecurely attached. Coefficient alphas for the Secure, Avoidant and

Anxious/Ambivalent attachment classifications are reported as .83, .83, and .85 respectively (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994).

A five factor model of attachment, including the factors of Confidence, Discomfort with Closeness, Need for Approval, Preoccupation with Relationships, and Relationship as Secondary, are measured by the ASQ. The Confidence factor measures one's confidence that he or she will be liked and accepted by others (e.g. "I feel confident that people will be there for me when I need them"). The Discomfort with Closeness factor measures how easily one trusts and depends on others (e.g. "I prefer to depend on myself rather than other people"). The Need for Approval factor measures how important pleasing others is to the participant (e.g. "It's important to me that others like me"). The Preoccupation with Relationships factor taps how often one thinks about his or her relationships and how necessary relationships are to the person (e.g. "I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like"). Finally, the Relationships as Secondary factor measures how likely one is to view other achievements or activities as more valuable than relationships (e.g. "Achieving things is more important than building relationships"). The coefficient alphas for the aforementioned five factors of attachment are .80, .84, .79, .76, and .76, respectively (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994). The ASQ has shown acceptable validity in that its attachment categorizations positively correlate with the classifications found using other attachment measures.

Affect Questionnaire

The Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988) was administered to measure affective reactions to the hypothetical conflicts presented during the experimental phase of the study (see Appendix C for complete

questionnaire). The PANAS is a self-report measure consisting of two 10-item mood scales (Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988). Each mood scale consists of ten words describing either positive or negative affect, and participants are to rate on a five-point Likert scale how strongly they feel each emotion at the present moment. The terms included in the positive affect scale are active, alert, attentive, determined, enthusiastic, excited, inspired, interested, proud, and strong, while the terms found on the negative affect scale are afraid, ashamed, distressed, guilty, hostile, irritable, jittery, nervous, scared, and upset.

The PANAS has demonstrated high internal consistency with Cronbach's coefficient alphas ranging from .86 to .90 for the positive affect scale and .84 to .87 for the negative affect scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988). The two scales of the PANAS have low levels of shared variance, ranging between 1% and 5%, suggesting that the two scales measure primarily independent constructs. The test-retest reliability of the PANAS has been shown to be strong over a number of time periods; however, the reliability coefficient for the moment-to-moment time frame is most applicable to the current study. Watson, Clark, and Tellegan (1988) reported the test-retest reliability coefficient for the moment-to-moment time interval to be .54 for the positive affect scale and .45 for the negative affect scale. While the reliability coefficients appear low, high test-retest reliability for a state affective scale would be undesirable.

Ratings on the 60 Zevon and Tellegan (1982) mood descriptors were subjected to a principle factor analysis in order to determine if the PANAS scales accurately captured the true mood factors of positive affect and negative affect. The PANAS scales demonstrated high levels of validity when compared to the Zevon and Tellegan (1982)

measure, with convergent correlations between the scales and regression-based factors ranging from .89 to .95, while discriminant correlations range from .00 to -.28. (Watson & Clark, 1997; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988). Each scale of the PANAS appears to represent a pure factor, accounting for 87.4% of the variance when measuring a current affective state (Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988). The PANAS also demonstrates strong external validity, correlating with related measures in predicted directions (i.e. strong positive correlations between the negative affect scale and the Beck Depression Inventory) (Watson & Clark, 1997; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988).

Experimenter Drafted Materials

Two different verbal conflicts were drafted and audio tapes of the conflicts were produced by the experimenter. The interactions were designed to simulate telephone calls between a man and a woman. The attachment-focused conflict presented a conversation between two people who were clearly in a dating relationship (see Appendix D for complete argument script). Following initial niceties, a disagreement of approximately 10 minutes in length followed, in which the two parties argue over time spent together. The themes of time spent together and the breaking of plans were chosen because, while remaining relatable to the undergraduate population studied, they often trigger the common attachment theme of abandonment.

The neutral conflict utilized the same male and female voices and presented a conversation between two platonic acquaintances involved in a school project together (see Appendix E for complete argument script). Again following initial niceties, a disagreement of approximately 10 minutes in length followed in which the two parties argue over equal division of work and the importance of the project grade. The

disagreement topic was chosen because it is also accessible to the undergraduate population but minimizes the amount of attachment related information.

A brief demographic questionnaire was developed to obtain descriptive information about the research sample. Participants were asked to identify their gender, ethnicity, age, and year in college. As the focus of the current study was perception of romantic relationships, brief information about the participants' relationship history was also gathered. Participants were asked if they were currently involved in a romantic relationship, and if so, how long they had been in that relationship. Participants were also asked if they had ever been involved in a romantic relationship, and if so, what was the length of their longest lasting romantic relationship (see Appendix I for full questionnaire).

Two experimenter-drafted measures were also utilized. The first, a Content Questionnaire, included several questions about important points of the hypothetical conflicts to verify that participants were attending to and processing the disagreement (see Appendix F for complete questionnaire). The purpose of this questionnaire was to assess the validity of the experimental manipulation. Participant data would not be used in the final analyses if the Content Questionnaire was not completed, or if the participant failed to understand that the conflict was between two characters who had some kind of relationship together and that the conflict was left unresolved.

The second experimenter-drafted measure, a Conflict Questionnaire, presented several questions focusing on the participants' perceptions of the conflict. Four primary points of interest were assessed by the questionnaire: how intense the conflict was perceived to be, how likely conflict resolution was believed to be, how stable the

presented relationship was perceived to be, and how satisfied the male and female characters were perceived to be with the current relationship. Three questions were asked in reference to each primary point, including several reversed scored items. For each question a six point Likert scale was provided, with six being the strongest response and one being the weakest response. Scores on the three questions for each primary point were then summed in order to create an overall rating with a range of 3 – 18 points.

At the questionnaire's conclusion, one question asked participants how realistic they believed the hypothetical conflict to be, while a second question asked participants how involved in the hypothetical conflict they felt themselves to be. The same six-point Likert scale previously described was utilized. The closing two questions aimed to assess the effectiveness of the conflict's content and presentation (see Appendix G for complete questionnaire).

Procedure

Following the initial screening utilizing two attachment measures, participants were classified as either securely or insecurely attached. A median-split approach was taken in order to classify participants into one of the attachment styles, and convergence between the two attachment measures was required for final classification. Table 1 presents the criteria required for participant classification as securely or insecurely attached on either the Hazan and Shaver Attachment Questionnaire (HSAQ) or the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ). In order to be ultimately categorized as either securely or insecurely attached, the two attachment measures must have shown agreement in their classification of the participant. More specifically, a participant must have been classified as securely attached by both the HSAQ and the ASQ in order to be

considered securely attached (See Figure 2). Those participants successfully placed into one of the two attachment styles were invited via email to participate in the second portion of the study.

Table 1

Required Criteria for Categorization into Either the Securely Attached or the Insecurely Attached Group

Attachment Style	Grouping Criteria
Securely Attached	<u>Hazan and Shaver Attachment Questionnaire</u>
	Rating of Secure Attachment descriptive paragraph was the best description of relationship style.
	Rating of the Secure Attachment descriptive paragraph was above the median.
	Rating of at least one of the two Insecure Attachment descriptive paragraphs was below the median.
Insecurely Attached	<u>Attachment Style Questionnaire</u>
	Score on the Confidence subscale was above the median.
	Score on at least two of the following subscales was below the median: Need, Relationships as Secondary, Discomfort with Closeness, and Preoccupation.
	<u>Hazan and Shaver Attachment Questionnaire</u>
	Rating of at least one of the two Insecure Attachment descriptive paragraphs was the best description of relationship style.
	Rating of at least one of the two Insecure Attachment descriptive paragraphs was above the median.
	Rating of the Secure Attachment descriptive paragraph was below the median.
	<u>Attachment Style Questionnaire</u>
	Score on at least two of the following subscales was above the median: Need, Relationships as Secondary, Discomfort with Closeness, and Preoccupation.
	Score on the Confidence subscale was below the median.

With attention paid to ensuring equal number of securely and insecurely attached adults within each condition, a modified random assignment procedure was used to place those participants voluntarily returning in either the experimental or control condition. Research sessions for each condition type were conducted individually in small research rooms. The participant was presented with the Informed Consent (Appendix H) and given the demographic form (Appendix I) and PANAS to complete. Upon the completion of this paperwork, participants were presented with a set of instructions explaining the kind of conversation they were about to hear, how the characters were related to one and other, and what the primary topic of conversation would be (Appendix J). Participants were also asked to “try to imagine [themselves] in the situation” and “how they might feel during this kind of conversation.” One of the two pre-recorded conflicts was then presented. Participants in the experimental condition were told the characters were in a dating relationship and listened to the attachment focused conflict, while participants in the control condition were told the characters were school acquaintances and listened to the neutral conflict.

Once the recorded conflict ceased, participants completed a counterbalanced packet of self-report measures, including the Content Questionnaire, the Conflict Questionnaire, and the PANAS. Following the completion of all measures, the participant was verbally debriefed by the experimenter utilizing a pre-prepared script to ensure that no negative effects resulted from exposure to the hypothetical conflict (Appendix K). Participants were also provided with a thorough written debriefing form (Appendix L).

CHAPTER III

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Data from participants who omitted one or more of the research scales (i.e. PANAS, Conflict Questionnaire, Content Questionnaire, or Demographic Form) were not included in the following analyses. For those participants who failed to respond to a single question, an individual mean for the scale in question was calculated and used to replace the missing data point. In addition, as a result of a validity check, no participant data was excluded; all participants understood the nature of the relationship between the hypothetical characters and that the stimulus conflict was left unresolved.

According to self report, 42% of the sample was involved in a romantic relationship at the time of their research participation, with a mean relationship length of 16.44 months ($SD = 1.93$). Also according to self-report, 83.9% of the sample had ever been in a romantic relationship, with the longest-lasting relationship averaging a length of 24.87 months ($SD = 1.83$).

A series of Chi-Square analyses utilizing dummy codes were conducted to test the distribution of gender, ethnicity, year in school, current relationship status, and whether or not the participant had ever been in a relationship across attachment style and experimental condition. No differences between these descriptive variables were found between those participants classified as securely or insecurely attached.

When comparing participants randomly assigned to either the attachment or neutral condition, no differences were found concerning the distribution of these same descriptive variables. However, the analysis testing the distribution of participants currently in a relationship did approach significance, $\chi^2(1, 112) = 3.79, p = .052$. A discrepancy between the number of participants who are currently in a relationship ($n = 18$) and those who are not ($n = 37$) was found in the attachment condition, but was not found in the neutral condition (currently in relationship: $n = 29$, currently not in relationship: $n = 28$).

A series of independent sample t -tests were conducted to test for significant differences between the attachment styles and the experimental conditions on participants' age, the length of each participant's longest relationship, and the length of each participant's current relationship. The attachment styles and the experimental conditions did not differ concerning these variables.

Participants' ratings of how realistic the conflict was perceived to be, and how involved in the conflict participants believed themselves to be, were also analyzed. Based on scores on a 5-point Likert scale, the conflict was seen as quite realistic ($M = 4.03, SD = 0.86$) and participants felt quite involved in the conflict ($M = 3.87, SD = 0.07$). There was not a significant difference in the ratings of conflict realism between the attachment styles, $t(110) = .341, p = ns$. or between the experimental conditions, $t(110) = 1.58, p = ns$. There was also not a difference between the attachment styles on how involved in the conflict participants felt, $t(110) = -.42, p = ns$., nor was there a difference between the experimental conditions, $t(110) = .90, p = ns$.

Relationship Between Attachment Measures

The relationship between the two attachment measures was examined to help determine if the ways in which secure and insecure attachment were operationalized and assessed by each measure independently were consistent within the study sample. Demonstrating a relationship between the two measures ensures that the same constructs are being assessed by both. The level of agreement in attachment style classification between the Hazan and Shaver Attachment Questionnaire (HSAQ; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994) was assessed utilizing three separate multiple linear regression techniques with block entry of all independent variables. Participant ratings on the five subscales of the ASQ (i.e. Need, Preoccupation, Relationships as Secondary, Discomfort, Confidence) were used to predict how well each of the three HSAQ descriptive paragraphs depicted a participant's relationship style.

Ratings of the Secure paragraph on the HSAQ were significantly predicted by the ASQ subscales, $F(5, 111) = 32.93, p < .001$. Specifically, the Confidence subscale was a significant predictor and also had the highest standardized beta weight value, $t(5, 111) = 3.17, p = .002, \beta = .353$; the relationship between the two measures was in the predicted direction. Participants with higher scores on the Confidence subscale also rated the Secure paragraph more highly. The Discomfort subscale was also a significant predictor, with lower scores on the subscale predicting higher scores on the Secure paragraph, $t(5, 111) = -3.11, p = .002, \beta = .002$.

When predicting the insecure attachment styles, relationships between the ASQ subscales and the HSAQ paragraphs displayed similarly appropriate relationships.

Concerning the Avoidant paragraph of the HSAQ, the regression model utilizing the ASQ subscales was significant, $F(5, 111) = 35.04, p < .001$. The Relationships as Secondary subscale was the most powerful predictor, $t(5, 111) = 4.11, p < .001, \beta = .07$, with the Discomfort subscale also being a significant predictor, $t(5, 111) = 3.24, p = .002, \beta = .05$. The relationship between the two subscales of the ASQ and the HSAQ was also in the predicted direction, as discomfort with closeness and believing relationships to be of secondary importance should be most strongly related to the avoidant attachment style.

Finally, the ASQ subscales significantly predicted scores on the Anxious/Ambivalent paragraph, $F(5, 111) = 15.86, p < .001$. The Preoccupation subscale was the strongest, and only significant predictor $t(5, 111) = 2.65, p = .01, \beta = .07$. Based on the design of the ASQ subscales, the Need scale should also be a powerful predictor, but it did not approach significance, $t(5, 111) = 1.31, p = ns., \beta = .04$. In addition, the relationship between the Anxious/Avoidant paragraph and the Confidence subscale displayed a negative relationship that approached significance, $t(5, 111) = -1.96, p = .053, \beta = -.06$. While this relationship was not predicted, it follows the logic of attachment styles. Individuals who display anxious/ambivalent attachment styles desire closeness but have little faith in their partners' ability or willingness to provide such closeness. Therefore individuals who are anxiously/ambivalently attached would have little confidence that their attachment needs would be met.

Consistency of Attachment Classification

The level of classification agreement between the two attachment measures was also assessed. In total, 543 students completed the two attachment questionnaires during

three different mass testing sessions. Utilizing the median split approach (detailed in the Methods section), the HSAQ classified 182 (33.5 %) of the sample as securely attached and 373 (68.7%) as insecurely attached. However, according to the ASQ, 202 (37.2 %) participants could be classified as securely attached and 196 (36.1 %) could be classified as insecurely attached. When the results of the two attachment measures were combined to make the final attachment classifications, 121 (22.3 %) participants were classified as securely attached by both the HSAQ and the ASQ, while 170 (31.3 %) were classified as insecurely attached by both measures (See Figure 2).

Following the aggregation of the two measures, the final number of participants classified as securely attached did not change substantially, but a strong change in the number of participants classified as insecurely attached was produced. When applying the median split criterion (detailed in Methods section) the ASQ appeared to be considerably more conservative when identifying participants as insecurely attached than was the HSAQ, drastically limiting the possible agreement between the two measures. In addition to this limitation, applying the median split criterion to the ASQ left 26.7% of the sample unclassified, not meeting criteria for secure or insecure attachment. Finally, when the two measures were aggregated, 46.4% of the total sample was left unclassified due to disagreements between the measures on which, if either, attachment style participants should be assigned too.

Analyses of Study Hypotheses

A series of analyses of variance (ANOVAS) were conducted to test the primary study hypotheses, as well as to identify any main effects of either attachment style or conflict type on both reported affective responses and conflict perceptions. In addition,

interaction effects between attachment style and conflict type (attachment-focused or neutral) were assessed. See Table 2 for descriptive statistics of all primary study variables.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Primary Study Measures: mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>
Conflict Intensity	9.97	1.45	.48
Relationship Stability	7.32	1.57	.51
Female Character Satisfaction	6.79	1.99	.76
Male Character Satisfaction	7.10	1.91	.75
Likelihood of Conflict Resolution	9.80	2.55	.87
Positive Affect	29.65	6.61	.86
Negative Affect	15.51	5.37	.83

Insecurely attached participants were expected to perceive attachment focused conflict as more intense than securely attached participants. This hypothesis was not supported, as an interaction effect between attachment style and experimental condition was not found on the summary measure of conflict intensity, $F(1, 108) = .69, p = ns$. Neither a significant main effect for attachment style, $F(1, 108) = .16, p = ns$, nor a significant main effect for experimental condition was found, $F(1, 108) = .89, p = ns$. The ratings of conflict intensity were approximately equivalent, regardless of attachment style or experimental condition (total sample: $M = 9.97, SD = 1.45$). The equivalent ratings of conflict intensity found between attachment styles and experimental conditions

may be due, at least in part, to the relatively low reliability of the measure itself, $\alpha = .48$ (See Table 2).

Secondly, insecurely attached participants were expected to view the attachment/dating relationship as less stable than securely attached participants. However, this hypothesis was also not supported. An interaction effect between attachment style and experimental condition was not found on the summary measure of perceived relationship stability, $F(1, 108) = .39, p = ns$. Neither a significant main effect for attachment style, $F(1, 108) = .91, p = ns$, nor a significant main effect for experimental condition was found, $F(1, 108) = 1.78, p = ns$. Participants, regardless of attachment style or experimental condition, provided approximately equivalent ratings of perceived relationship stability (total sample: $M = 7.32, SD = 1.57$). However, the measure of relationship stability displayed relatively low reliability, possibly making any group differences on the measure difficult to detect, $\alpha = .51$, (See Table 2).

Insecurely attached persons were expected to view the relationship partners in the attachment focused condition as more dissatisfied with the relationship than securely attached participants; the hypothesis was not supported. An interaction effect between attachment style and experimental condition was not found when participants rated the female character's level of relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 108) = .004, p = ns$. A significant main effect for attachment style was also not found, $F(1, 108) = .90, p = ns$. However, a significant main effect of experimental condition was found, $F(1, 108) = 21.94, p < .001$, with participants in the attachment focused condition perceiving the female character to be significantly more satisfied with her relationship ($M = 7.62, SD = 1.97$) than those in the neutral condition ($M = 6.00, SD = 1.67$).

Similar results were seen when participants rated the male character's level of relationship satisfaction, with no interaction effect between attachment style and experimental condition found, $F(1, 108) = .861, p = ns$. Again, a significant main effect for attachment style was not found, $F(1, 108) = .147, p = ns$. And again, a significant main effect of experimental condition was found, $F(1, 108) = 8.19, p = .005$, with participants in the attachment focused condition perceiving the male character to be significantly more satisfied ($M = 7.60, SD = 1.82$) than in the neutral condition ($M = 6.61, SD = 1.88$).

It was hypothesized that insecurely attached participants would perceive the attachment-focused conflict as less likely to be resolved than would the securely attached participants. This hypothesis was also not supported, as an interaction effect between attachment style and experimental condition was not found on the summary measure of the likelihood of conflict resolution, $F(1, 108) = .131, p = ns$. Neither a main effect of attachment style $F(1, 108) = 2.09, p = ns$, nor a main effect of experimental condition was found $F(1, 108) = .54, p = ns$. Overall, securely and insecurely attached participants perceived the conflict to be as likely to be resolved in both experimental conditions, (total sample: $M = 9.80, SD = 2.55$).

A final hypothesis predicted that insecurely attached participants would experience higher levels of negative affect in response to the attachment focused conflict than would securely attached participants. Repeated measures ANOVAs were performed on both the Negative Affect Subscale and the Positive Affect Subscale of the PANAS in order to assess the change in affect between baseline and post-conflict scores. The participants' attachment style and experimental condition were entered as the between

subjects variable, while the baseline and post-conflict affect scores were entered as the within subjects variable.

The hypotheses concerning the Negative Affect subscale was not supported, as an interaction between change in negative affect, attachment style, and experimental condition was not found, $F(1, 108) = .13, p = ns$. Additionally, neither an interaction effect between change in negative affect and attachment style, $F(1, 108) = 2.97, p = ns$, nor an interaction effect between change in negative affect and experimental condition was found $F(1, 108) = .01, p = ns$. A main effect of change in negative affect was also not found, $F(1, 108) = 3.29, p = ns$.

However, a significant interaction between attachment style and experimental condition was found, $F(1, 108) = 4.28, p = .04, \eta^2 = .04$. In order to further analyze the interaction, simple main effects were conducted, holding the experimental condition constant. Given that these comparisons were performed post-hoc, results were compared against the Scheffe criterion, $F_s = 3.93, p < .05$. Within the attachment condition, neither a significant simple main effect of negative affect, $F(1, 53) = 1.196, p = ns$, nor a significant simple main effect of attachment style was found, $F(1, 53) = 1.439, p = ns$. A significant simple interaction effect was also not found between negative affect and attachment style, $F(1, 25) = 8.33, p = ns$.

Within the neutral condition, a significant simple interaction effect was not found between negative affect and attachment style, $F(1, 55) = 2.72, p = ns$. A significant simple main effect of negative affect was also not found, $F(1, 55) = 2.31, p = ns$. However, a significant simple main effect of attachment style was present, $F(1, 55) = 15.59, p < .05$ (Scheffe criterion), $\eta^2 = .22$, with insecurely attached participants reporting

significantly higher levels of negative affect both pre-conflict ($M = 18.90$, $SD = 6.56$) and post-conflict ($M = 18.83$, $SD = 7.11$) than did their securely attached counterparts (pre-conflict: $M = 12.56$, $SD = 2.56$; post-conflict: $M = 14.19$, $SD = 4.64$).

No specific hypotheses were made concerning the Positive Affect Subscale. A significant main effect of positive affect was found, $F(1, 108) = 32.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$, with positive affect scores before exposure to the conflict ($M = 29.65$, $SD = 6.61$) being significantly higher than those following the conflict ($M = 27.13$, $SD = 6.62$).

Additionally, a significant main effect of attachment style was found, $F(1, 108) = 20.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$. Securely attached participants reported significantly higher levels of positive affect both pre-conflict ($M = 32.68$, $SD = 6.46$) and post-conflict ($M = 29.50$, $SD = 6.90$) than did their insecurely attached counterparts (pre-conflict: $M = 27.12$, $SD = 5.64$; post-conflict: $M = 25.15$, $SD = 6.68$). A main effect for experimental condition was not found, $F(1, 108) = .32$, $p = ns$.

Exploratory Analyses

Due to the unexpected results found concerning negative affect, exploratory analyses were conducted with the primary focus of identifying a meaningful way in which participants in the neutral condition differed from those in the attachment focused condition. When the two neutral and attachment focused conditions were compared, securely attached adults did not differ on either pre-conflict ratings of negative affect, $t(49) = 1.57$, $p = ns$, or on the post-conflict ratings of negative affect, $t(49) = .65$, $p = ns$. Similarly, insecurely attached adults in the two conditions also did not differ on either the pre-conflict, $t(59) = -1.89$, $p = ns$, or the post-conflict ratings of negative affect $t(59) = -1.61$, $p = ns$. Ratings on all three descriptive paragraphs of the HSAQ and on all five

subscales of the ASQ were compared for securely attached adults in the neutral condition and those in the attachment-focused condition; no significant differences were found.

When the same comparisons were conducted for insecurely attached adults, a significant difference was found concerning the Preoccupation subscale of the ASQ. Those insecurely attached participants in the neutral condition ($M = 34.13$, $SD = 5.33$) reported significantly higher Preoccupation subscale scores than did those in the attachment focused condition ($M = 31.26$, $SD = 3.72$), $t(59) = -2.45$, $p < .05$ (Scheffe criterion). However, insecurely attached adults' scores on the Preoccupation subscale did not correlate with either the pre-conflict, $r = .16$, $p = ns.$, or the post-conflict measures of negative affect, $r = .25$, $p = ns.$ Participants in the neutral condition did not differ from those in the attachment focused condition in any of the following ways: whether or not the participant was currently in a relationship, length of current relationship, if the participant had ever been in a relationship, or length of longest relationship.

Secondly, given that no study hypothesis was unequivocally supported by the results of the statistical analyses, a number of exploratory analyses were conducted. Scores on the ASQ subscales of Confidence, Relationships as Secondary, Need, Discomfort with Closeness, and Preoccupation were not correlated in any way with the study's primary dependent variables, (i.e. relationship stability, relationship satisfaction, likelihood of conflict resolution, conflict intensity) nor with the pre- or post-conflict affect measures. Similarly, neither the primary dependent variables nor the affect measures were correlated in any way with the age of the participants or the reported length of their current or longest lasting romantic relationships. When genders were

compared, there were no differences between male and female participants on their rating of the primary dependent variables or affect measures.

Finally, relationship status was utilized as a comparative variable. Those currently in a romantic relationship did not differ significantly from those not currently in a relationship on any of the primary dependent variable or affect measures. However, when participants having ever experienced a romantic relationship were compared to those who had not, a significant difference was found on the pre-conflict measure of positive affect. Those participants who had ever been involved in a romantic relationship ($M = 30.21$, $SD = 6.50$) reported significantly higher levels of positive affect than those participants who had never been involved in a romantic relationship ($M = 26.78$, $SD = 6.62$), $t(112) = 2.04$, $p < .05$ (Scheffe criterion). Although this difference was statistically significant at the Scheffe corrected $p = .05$ level, it must be noted that the number of participants who had never been involved in a relationship ($n = 18$) was drastically smaller than the number of participants who had ($n = 94$). These findings may not hold if groups of similar size were compared.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Primary Research Hypotheses

The current study assessed perceptions of relationship conflict for both securely and insecurely attached young adults. It was hypothesized that insecurely attached adults would display a more negative reaction to a hypothetical conflict in the context of a romantic relationship than would securely attached adults. More specifically, insecurely attached adults would view the conflict as more intense and less likely to be resolved. Such a perceptual discrepancy would potentially explain why insecurely and securely attached adults report differences in fulfillment and expectations within relationships. Insecurely attached adults generally report significantly less satisfying romantic relationships and are significantly less successful in them (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Simpson, 1990; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). If insecurely attached persons were to inflate the intensity of each conflict within a romantic relationship, while also viewing conflicts as less likely to be resolved, a romantic relationship could potentially be viewed as a minefield of insurmountable discord. Generally, securely attached persons report a stronger faith in the future of romantic relationships (Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Pistole, 1989), therefore, relationship conflict is perceived as an obstacle, rather than a direct threat to the relationship (Pistole, 1989).

Contrary to expectations, these hypotheses were not supported by the results of the current study. Insecurely and securely attached persons did not differ in their perceptions of conflict intensity, likelihood of conflict resolution, or relationship stability. Additionally, both the attachment focused (i.e. romantic relationship) and neutral (i.e. classmate) conflicts were perceived as equally intense, equally likely to be resolved, and the relationships were seen as equally stable by securely and insecurely attached adults.

The lack of a difference in how the hypothetical conflict was perceived by insecurely and securely attached adults, stands in stark contrast to the idea that the two attachment styles have notably different relationship experiences, as consistently reported in the literature. However, a vital methodological difference between the present and past studies may provide a viable explanation for the discrepancy, identifying a potentially productive area for future study. Previous studies utilized either a retrospective approach where participants thought back on past relationship experiences (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Pistole, 1989), a hypothetical approach where participants were to predict how they might respond if their romantic partner behaved in a certain manner (Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Collins, 1996), or were exclusively focused on relationships in which participants were currently involved (Bretherton, 1990; Simpson, 1990; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). All such approaches are based on a first person perspective. The current study, however, utilized a third person perspective. Because the primary study hypothesis was that insecurely attached persons would exaggerate the severity of relationship conflict, consistency of the conflict in question was experimentally necessary. If the experimental conflicts were not equivalent then group differences easily could have been attributed to differences between the conflicts

themselves, as opposed to differences in perceptions of the conflict. A third person, hypothetical conflict was one way in which the level of empirical control and internal validity necessary to test the hypothesis could be attained. Unfortunately, limiting the scope of the study to only a third person perspective may have failed to trigger participants' attachment styles and the related internal working models. However, this lack of results may provide useful information about how internal working models might be most effectively triggered. A first-person component may have more successfully triggered participants' attachment styles.

As discussed previously, Collins and Read (1994) have proposed four components impacting the creation of the internal working model, all of which are self-referent. More specifically, the autobiographical memories a participant has about attachment experiences fuel one's internal working model, as do the beliefs, attitudes, and relationship expectations for self and others held by the participant. As the internal working model is at its base a self-referent schema, failing to include a self-referential aspect to the study may have kept the internal working models for attachment relationships from being properly triggered. Perhaps the differences between the attachment styles seen in previous works are specific to perceptions of immediately personal relationships, and do not generalize to any and all relationships a person witnesses. For example, an insecurely attached person may errantly perceive his or her own relationship, but may not apply these same flawed perceptions when analyzing a friend's relationship. Therefore, the differences between securely and insecurely attached adults would be visible in a first person focused study, but likely not in a third person focused study. The vital importance of the self-referential piece when activating internal

working models may not have been revealed in previous studies, as the studies' methodologies ensured its inclusion. Future work on the effectiveness of third-person versus first-person research approaches in triggering attachment styles is necessary before this question can be definitively answered.

Past work has proposed that internal working models are most readily activated when the model itself is closely related to the attachment situation at hand (Collins & Read, 1994). The third person perspective may have caused the conflict to be seen as an "other person" experience rather than a personal one that can then be related to past relationship experiences. As a result, the experimental situation was not similar enough to the participants' working models of romantic relationships, and therefore did not activate these models. To return to the comparison of activating internal working models and mood state-dependent learning, it is possible that the third person perspective kept the hypothetical conflict from being truly congruent with the initial learning experience, and therefore those memories and learned information were not accessed (Bower, 1981; Kenealy, 1997). By failing to activate the internal working model, with which participants were to interpret their perceptions of the conflict, the basic difference between the two attachment groups was essentially eliminated, thus no differences between the two were found.

The current study's apparent inability to activate participants' internal working models of attachment may also explain why no difference was seen in the perception of conflict intensity, likelihood of resolution, or relationship stability between the neutral and attachment focused experimental conditions. If the presentation of the conflict as a third person experience prevented it from being perceived as a true attachment event, as

is being proposed, then no perceptual differences would be evident between the two conditions. Although participants were cognitively aware of the difference in the type of relationship between the two characters, it appears that two conflicts were perceived in the same manner. The research hypotheses predicting differing responses to the conflicts were based on the idea that the attachment focused conflict would be perceived as attachment event, while the neutral conflict would not. However, the results support the argument that internal working models were not activated, the attachment focused conflict was not perceived as an attachment event, and therefore no differences were found between participants' perception of the two conditions. In addition, if perhaps participants' attachment styles had been triggered, the low reliability of the measures assessing participants' perception of conflict intensity and relationship stability may have introduced an additional source of error making any group differences increasingly difficult to detect.

Interestingly, a difference was found between the neutral and attachment focused conflict on the perception of relationship satisfaction. Regardless of attachment style, both the male and female characters in the attachment focused condition were perceived to be significantly more satisfied in the relationship than were the characters in the neutral condition. Such results were in direct contrast with those predicted. Participant attachment style, as opposed to all other variables measured, was hypothesized to most strongly influence the perceived level of relationship satisfaction. However, current findings show that the type of relationship between the characters was actually the determining factor. Supporting this idea, is the fact that both the attachment focused and the neutral conflicts were perceived as equally intense, equally likely to be resolved,

equally realistic, and the participants reported feeling equally involved in both. As the perception of the two conflicts did not appear to vary in any other meaningful way, the hypothetical relationship likely played an important role in the perceived relationship satisfaction of the two characters. The greater level of relationship satisfaction perceived to exist in the attachment relationship may represent an overarching belief held by most adults, regardless of attachment style; a romantic relationship is inherently more satisfying than is a working relationship with an acquaintance. Again, the attachment literature may benefit from a closer examination of whether or not an adult's attachment style affects the level of assumed satisfaction in romantic relationships.

Affective Responses

The final study hypothesis addressed the affective responses of both the securely and insecurely attached participants. Concerning positive affect, securely attached persons reported significantly higher levels both prior to the conflict and following the conflict, suggesting that securely attached persons possess generally greater levels of positive affect than do insecurely attached persons. This stable difference in the level of positive affect between securely and insecurely attached persons has been consistently noted in the attachment literature (Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996; Simpson, 1990).

In addition, the conflict was successful in triggering an affective response from study participants, as a significant decrease in positive affect was seen following both the neutral and attachment-focused conflicts. Regardless of participants' attachment style a significant decline in positive affect was seen following exposure to either one of the hypothetical conflicts. Previous literature suggests that securely and insecurely attached persons should display a differing pattern of affective response to attachment related

conflict (Collins, 1996; Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996; Simpson, 1990), namely, that securely attached participants might display a smaller decrease in positive affect following an attachment event. Such a differing pattern was not seen in the current study; securely and insecurely attached persons displayed equivalent reductions in positive affect following the conflict, regardless of experimental condition. This finding further supports the theory that the study's experimental manipulation did not successfully trigger internal working models of attachment. As the attachment styles, and the corresponding internal working models, would fuel any differences in affective reactions to the conflict, a failure to trigger the attachment styles would also fail to trigger any differences in the reactions to the conflict. Therefore, the pattern of positive affect decrease was the same for both securely and insecurely attached adults.

Concerning negative affect, it was expected that a greater increase would be experienced by insecurely attached persons following the attachment-focused conflict than would be experienced by securely attached persons. Earlier studies have reported greater levels of general negative affect experienced by insecurely attached persons (Simpson, 1990), as well as a greater tendency to respond to attachment events with negative emotions (Collins, 1996). No difference in negative affect between securely and insecurely adults was expected following the neutral conflict, as it should not have been perceived as an attachment relevant event and therefore not trigger one's attachment style. However, an interaction between attachment style, type of conflict, and change in negative affect was not found. The single difference in negative affect found that only those insecurely attached adults in the neutral condition reported significantly higher

levels of negative affect overall than did their securely attached counterparts; a difference not found in the attachment-focused condition.

As no differences in negative affect between the attachment styles were found within the attachment focused condition, and that there was no interaction between a change in negative affect and any other variable, it would follow that the neutral condition participants must vary from those in the attachment focused condition in a meaningful way. No differences were found between securely attached participants in the two conditions on any of the attachment measures (e.g. HSAQ descriptive paragraphs, ASQ subscales). In addition, the pre-conflict and post-conflict levels of negative affect for securely attached participants did not differ between the two conditions. The securely attached persons in the attachment-focused condition appeared comparable to those in the neutral condition.

Similar results were seen when the levels of negative affect for insecurely attached adults were compared. Insecurely attached adults in the neutral condition did not report significantly different levels of either pre- or post-conflict negative affect than did those in the attachment-focused condition. However, the two groups of insecurely attached participants are not as directly comparable as are the securely attached participants. A significant difference in scores on the Preoccupation with Relationships subscale of the ASQ was found, with insecurely attached participants in the neutral condition possessing significantly higher scores on this single subscale than did those in the attachment-focused condition.

The Preoccupation with Relationships subscale measures how necessary relationships are to a person, as well as how often one thinks about his or her

relationships (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994). The Preoccupation subscale, along with the Need for Approval subscale, is most closely related to the anxious/ambivalent type of insecure attachment and specifically addresses the fulfilling of one's dependency needs by anxiously reaching out to an attachment figure. A closer examination of the items included in the Preoccupation subscale reveals that the majority of the questions target relationship-focused negative affect (i.e. "I worry a lot about my relationships," "I often feel left out or alone," "I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me"). Due to its negative affect undertones, the Preoccupation subscale itself may tap a construct related to the state negative affect measured by the PANAS. Although analyses did not reveal a direct relationship between scores on the Preoccupation subscale and state negative affect, a moderating or mediating relationship cannot be excluded. While one's preoccupation with relationships cannot be said to predict or directly relate to one's level of negative affect, it is possible that it can impact negative affect through a pathway not measured by the current study. Although exploration of such possible relationships was beyond the scope of the current study, it does introduce a potentially exciting new avenue for future attachment research. However, the impact of such a confound may explain the unanticipated difference in negative affect scores seen within the neutral condition.

Classification of Attachment Styles

The present study appears to have been limited by the psychometric weaknesses of the most commonly used measures of adult attachment. Such psychometric limitations may have led to an inappropriate classification of participants, preventing the research hypotheses from being supported. Often a forced-choice approach is utilized for adult

attachment classification, as with the original Hazan and Shaver Attachment Questionnaire (HSAQ; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Such a measurement design presents two primary assumptions: adult attachment styles are mutually exclusive and adults are aware of and can accurately identify their attachment styles. A solely forced-choice, attachment styles approach allows for clear classification, but limited participant variability. In an effort to eliminate the forced-choice approach, Likert scales have often been affixed to attachment style descriptions and participants rate how accurately each depicts their own attachment beliefs and behaviors. While such a solution does allow for increased participant variability, no consistent direction on how best to interpret Likert data has been given. Finally, factor rather than style approaches to adult attachment have also been presented, as in the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Feeney, Noller, and Hanrahan, 1994). The factor approach eliminates the assumptions of attachment style exclusivity and clear self-identification. However, factor measurements are limited by a lack of normative data directing the interpretation of scores on each factor. Unfortunately an adult attachment measure effectively addressing the aforementioned psychometric issues has not yet been introduced.

The primary indication that the measurement and classification of attachment styles was in some way erroneous is the unexpected proportions of the attachment styles within the sample. Previous research on adult attachment styles has consistently shown that between 55-58% of adults can be classified as securely attached, between 23-30% are classified as avoidantly attached and between 15-20% are considered anxiously/ambivalently attached (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Pistole, 1989). Therefore, one should expect that a little less than 60% of an adult sample should

be classified as securely attached, while the remaining 40% could be classified as insecurely attached. However, the proportions of attachment styles found in the current study were quite different.

Utilizing the median split approach detailed in the Methods section, the HSAQ appeared to be overly inclusive when classifying persons as insecurely attached (68.7% of sample), by more than doubling the number of participants classified as securely attached (33.5%). The proportions presented by the HSAQ are nearly opposite of those suggested by prior research. It is indicative of a problematic classification method that in a population of higher functioning college students, as opposed to a general community sample, nearly twice as many adults were classified as insecurely attached rather than securely attached; a greater number of securely attached adults would have been expected.

When the median split approach was again applied, the classification results of the ASQ were also cause for concern. Approximately equal numbers of participants were classified as securely (37.2%) or insecurely attached (36.1%), an improvement from the overly inclusive results of the HSAQ, but nonetheless an under estimation of truly securely attached adults. In addition, nearly 30% of the initial participant population did not meet criteria to be classified as either securely or insecurely attached, leaving them essentially without an attachment style. Given that all adults possess some pattern of attachment related behaviors, the fact that such a large percentage of the sample could not be identified as either securely or insecurely attached points to a serious weakness in the classification system utilized in the current study.

The lack of established norms for either measure may be partially culpable for the poor classification performance. Applying a Likert scale to the HSAQ, rather than the single forced-choice option, has become a common research convention. Unfortunately, the question of how best to interpret and utilize these Likert ratings is left unanswered due to the lack of normative data. By permitting participants to rate how much each attachment style describes them, a more accurate picture of one's true relationship behaviors is gathered, but attempting to use this information for classification purposes can become an unguided task. Similarly, the ASQ utilizes a five factor approach, eliminating the issue of forced-choice, but provides no assistance in how to convert the subscale scores into clear attachment categories. Therefore, researchers are left with a great deal of information on attachment relevant thoughts and behaviors, but no direction on how to relate the factor information gathered to the accepted attachment style constructs. In order to interpret the attachment information gathered for the current study, the median split approach was utilized, and while this approach provided a logical cut point for the Likert scale data collected, it may have resulted in less than ideal classifications of attachment styles.

It may be that the median split approach to classification did not allow for enough distinction between securely and insecurely attached adults. The median split approach did maximize the number of participants who could be categorized as either securely or insecurely attached when the two scales were aggregated, however, the chosen approach offered little delineation between those persons considered securely attached and those considered insecurely attached. Potentially a person could surpass the median score on the securely attached scales and be classified as securely attached, while a second person

with scores only a few points lower could have been classified as insecurely attached. Once the classification is done, these two participants are assumed to be quite different when, in reality, the participants' scores on the raw attachment measures may be relatively similar.

The issue of measurement aggregation may have also led to an incorrect identification of attachment styles. Despite the fact that both measures employ a Likert rating scale, the HSAQ is at its core a measure of attachment styles, while the ASQ is a measure of attachment factors. Some research has shown agreement between the two measures (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994), but they are essentially measure differing aspects of attachment. The HSAQ assumes that adults can be classified into mutually exclusive attachment styles; one cannot be insecurely and securely attached simultaneously. However, the ASQ assumes that the varying degrees to which an adult possesses the five factors of attachment provides information about one's basic attachment style; one can conceptually be high on a factor coinciding with secure attachment but may also be high on a factor related to insecure attachment. The current study chose to aggregate the two measures, requiring a participant be clearly classified as either securely or insecurely attached on both the HSAQ and the ASQ, before he/she could be enrolled.

The goal of the measurement aggregation was to counteract the psychometric limitation of each tool on its own. Unfortunately, the participant pool appeared to respond differently to each of the two attachment measures. As discussed previously, the HSAQ appeared to be overly inclusive when classifying participants as insecurely attached, while the ASQ may have been overly conservative with both attachment styles

when the median split classification technique was applied. Although statistical results generally supported the existence of expected relationships between the two measurements, the differing method to attachment measurement, when combined with the median split approach, created contrasting final classification results. Ultimately, more research is necessary before these two attachment measures can be successfully aggregated for the purposes of attachment classification. Attempting to combine the measures prior to the establishment of an empirically sound methodology may have been an unwarranted research assumption.

Finally, it must be considered that the construct of attachment is not dichotomous. Although an orderly division between securely and insecurely attached adults is a logical and supported research approach (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994), the separation may not be as clean as initially suggested. The subtypes of insecure attachment do appear to represent finer delineations of a larger construct, and perhaps these finer delineations are of crucial importance. It is possible that in the case of conflict perception the primary comparison is not between secure and insecure, but may be between secure and anxious/ambivalent, or between secure and avoidant. By dichotomizing the construct of attachment into either securely attached, or not, the subtle nuances of the differing insecure subtypes are lost. As a result of blending the various insecure subtypes into a single class, an extremely heterogeneous group was potentially created, making the true differences between securely attached and all types of insecurely attached adults impossible to detect.

Study Limitations

In addition to those study limitations previously addressed, a number of secondary concerns merit mentioning, as they too may have impacted the reported results. The conflict's intensity was purposefully moderate. As many of the primary study hypotheses focused on the exaggerated perception of the conflict by insecurely attached adults, the conflict was designed to allow for such an exaggeration. A moderate conflict, ideally, would allow for securely attached adults to report moderate perceptions of intensity and meaning, while insecurely attached adults would report more intense, severe perceptions of the conflict. A conflict of extremely high intensity would potentially create a ceiling effect, not allowing this difference to be seen. While a moderate conflict theoretically provides room for the exaggerations of the insecurely attached participants, it may have contributed to the apparent inability of the manipulation to trigger the attachment styles altogether.

Finally, the current study was limited by the participant pool itself. Although the total sample size was sufficiently large ($N = 112$), the size of each experimental group (i.e. insecurely attached/neutral condition, insecurely attached/attachment-focused condition) was below the target number of 30 participants per group. Although a greater number of participants within each experimental group would have increased the overall statistical power, the results would have likely been unchanged. The results of the primary study hypotheses did not approach statistical significance, nor did they display any type of trending in one particular direction, predicted or otherwise. Therefore, even with increased statistical power, it is unlikely that differences between the securely and insecurely attached participants would have been found.

In addition, the pool consisted of primarily female, Caucasian, first year college students, all of whom attended a small, private university. The limited demographic make-up of the study sample severely limits the generalizability of the study's results. In addition, the participant pool consisted solely of students enrolled in an introductory psychology course who chose to complete the course's research requirements by participating in a research study, which must be considered a self-selecting population. Aside from failing to generalize to the population as a whole, the sample cannot be assumed to generalize to a college population consisting of non-psychology students or those who choose not to participate in ongoing research.

Future Directions

Despite its failure to support any of the primary research hypotheses, the current study identified a potentially important deficiency in the adult attachment literature. The majority of the currently published studies utilize, intentionally or unintentionally, a first-person focused approach to the study of attachment relationships. Additionally, the majority of current works focus solely on romantic relationships. The literature would benefit from a more wide-ranging application of a second or third person perspective, as well as by considering other types of relationships. While the most commonly used, first-person approach allows researchers to better understand how securely and insecurely attached adults perceive aspects of their own personal romantic relationships, generalizations to how adults perceive relationships other than the ones in which they are directly involved cannot be accurately made. In addition, a more refined understanding of exactly how to trigger a person's attachment style and the related internal working

model could be gained if researchers widened their focus to include perspectives other than first person and relationships other than romantic ones.

A second fruitful area of study would be to explore how state negative affect scores are related to scores on the Preoccupation with Relationships subscale of the ASQ. Current findings illustrated that those adults with higher Preoccupation scores also reported higher levels of negative affect, but a direct relationship between the two was not found. However, it is possible that one's level of relationship preoccupation in some way impacts the moment-to-moment experience of negative affect. Unfortunately, detailed model testing to either confirm or refute such a possibility was beyond the scope of the current study. Both the attachment style and the attachment dimension theories have received empirical support, resulting in a greater likelihood that the two theories are linked than that one is superior to the other. By studying a potential association between one of the attachment dimensions (e.g. Preoccupation with Relationships) and a reliable characteristic of the different attachment styles (e.g. negative affect), a possible relationship between the two dominant theories of attachment might be found. It will be difficult to truly gauge the impact of a particular attachment style or dimension until the underlying structure of attachment processes themselves are more concretely established. Therefore, the connection between attachment dimensions and styles must be more clearly outlined.

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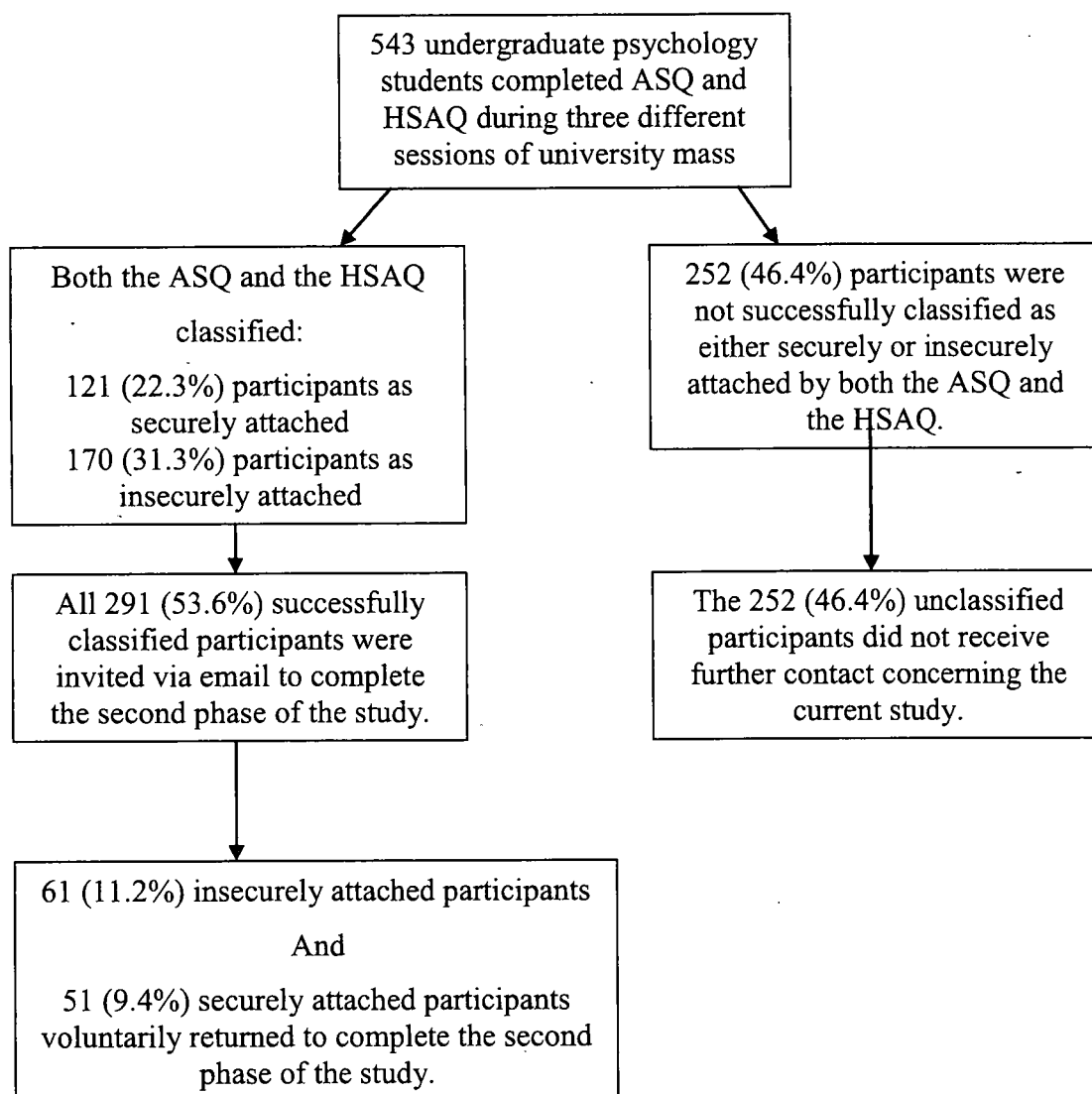
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Figure Caption

Figure 1. Barthomew and Horowitz's (1991) Four-Pattern Attachment Styles

		<i>View of Self</i>	
<i>View of Others</i>		Positive	Negative
	Positive	Secure Attachment	Preoccupied Attachment
	Negative	Dismissing Attachment	Fearful Attachment

Figure Caption

Figure 2. Process of study sample collection

APPENDIX A

Hazan and Shaver Adult Attachment Questionnaire

Read the paragraphs below and use the provided scale to indicate how much each one describes you.

- 1) I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all like me					Very much like me

- 2) I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely and difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all like me					Very much like me

- 3) I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all like me					Very much like me

APPENDIX B

Attachment Style Questionnaire

Show how much you agree with each of the following items by rating them on this scale:

1 = totally disagree; 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = slightly disagree
4 = slightly agree; 5 = strongly agree; 6 = totally agree

1. Overall, I am a worthwhile person.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am easier to get to know than most people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel confident that people will be there for me when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I prefer to depend on myself rather than other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I prefer to keep to myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. To ask for help is to admit that you're a failure.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. People's worth should be judged by what they achieve.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Achieving things is more important than building relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Doing your best is more important than getting on with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. If you've got a job to do, you should do it no matter who gets hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. It's important to me that others like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. It's important to me to avoid doing things that others won't like.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think.	1	2	3	4	5	6

1 = totally disagree; 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = slightly disagree
 4 = slightly agree; 5 = strongly agree; 6 = totally agree

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 14. My relationships with others are generally superficial. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 15. Sometimes I think I am no good at all. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 16. I find it hard to trust other people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 17. I find it difficult to depend on others. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 18. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 19. I find it relatively easy to get close to other people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 20. I find it easy to trust others. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 21. I feel comfortable depending on other people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 22. I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 23. I worry about people getting too close. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 24. I worry that I won't measure up to other people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 25. I have mixed feelings about being close to others. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 26. While I want to get close to others, I feel uneasy about it. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 27. I wonder why people would want to know me. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 28. It's very important to me to have a close relationship. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 29. I worry a lot about my relationships. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

1 = totally disagree; 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = slightly disagree
 4 = slightly agree; 5 = strongly agree; 6 = totally agree

30. I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. I feel confident about relating to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. I often feel left out or alone.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. I often worry that I do not really fit in with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. Other people have their own problems so I don't bother them with mine.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. When I talk over my problems with others I generally feel ashamed or foolish.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. I am too busy with other activities to put much time into relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. If something is bothering me, others are generally aware and concerned.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. I am confident that other people will like and respect me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. I get frustrated when others are not available when I need them	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. Other people often disappoint me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Construction of Factor Scales

Confidence Scale: Items 1, 2, 3, 19, 31, 37, 38, and 33 (reverse scored)

Discomfort with Closeness Scale: Items 4, 5, 16, 17, 20 (reverse scored), 21 (reverse scored), 23, 25, 26, and 34

Relationships as Secondary Scale: Items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, and 36

Need for Approval Scale: Items 11, 12, 13, 15, 24, 27, and 35

Preoccupation with Relationships Scale: 18, 22, 28, 29, 30, 32, 39, and 40

APPENDIX C

PANAS

Directions:

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then circle the appropriate answer next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way at this moment.

Use the following scale to record your answers.

(1) = Very slightly or not at all (2) = A little (3) = Moderately (4) = Quite a bit (5) = Extremely

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1. Interested	1	2	3	4	5
2. Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
3. Excited	1	2	3	4	5
4. Upset	1	2	3	4	5
5. Strong	1	2	3	4	5
6. Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
7. Scared	1	2	3	4	5
8. Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
9. Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
10. Proud	1	2	3	4	5
11. Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
12. Alert	1	2	3	4	5
13. Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
14. Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
15. Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
16. Determined	1	2	3	4	5
17. Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
18. Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
19. Active	1	2	3	4	5
20. Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX D

Attachment Stimulus Argument

Katie and Nick are both 21 years old and have been dating for approximately a year and a half. What follows is a phone exchange between the two of them about plans to spend time together.

Female: Hello?

Male: Hey, it's me.

Female: Oh, hey babe. What are you up to?

Male: Not much, I've been trying to call you since last night. Was your phone dead or something?

Female: No, I just went to a movie with Susan and then we went out for a few drinks. You know, just a little girl time.

Male: Well, that's cool, but I really wanted to talk to you last night. I was thinking we could hang out.

Female: That's sweet that you wanted to hang out with me. I'm sorry I didn't answer.

Male: Kat, you know how much it bugs me when you don't answer after I've called a million times. I've told you over and over that I hate that, and you always say you won't ignore my calls anymore, but... *(sounding irritated)*

Female: I know. I really am sorry, but Susan was talking to me about all this stuff she's going through with her new boyfriend, Steven. I told you about him. I didn't want to be rude and answer your calls when she was venting.

Male: Yeah, but you could've just answered really fast and told me that. I stayed in last night hoping you'd call back so you could come over or something.

Female: *(getting irritated)* I said I was sorry Nick, but you know how it is when somebody's in a new relationship. Things can get dramatic and Susan really wanted to talk about it with me.

Male: Ok. That's fine, let's just drop it. *(short pause)* So, Susan's got a new boyfriend? You didn't tell me about him.

Female: Yes I did! She met him at my cousin's wedding last month. The one she was my date for because *somebody* couldn't go.... *(said slightly sarcastic, slightly like she means it as insult.)*

Male: We are so not talking about that wedding again. I know I've explained a million times that I couldn't get out of the soccer game. The team really needed me. But anyway, who's this Steven guy?

Female: Nick, I know I've told you about him. He was the cousin of the groom. Seems like a nice guy.

Male: Well good for Suse, she needs a nice guy. But if he's so nice, what were they arguing about?

Female: Just silly stuff. He didn't call her back one night when he said he would, and then she got her feelings hurt. Everything's cool now though.

Male: That's good. Seems like a dumb thing to fight about for very long.

Female: That's what I said. I think you'll really like him.

Male: Yeah, we'll have to make plans to hang out with them some time.

Female: Haha. You're *(sarcastically)* soooooo funny.

Male: What?

Female: You're little joke. *(in a mock guy voice)* 'We'll have to make plans with them sometime.' Very funny.

Male: Why is that funny? We should make plans with them.

Female: *(exasperated)* Please tell me you're joking.

Male: I'm so lost.

Female: We have plans to go to dinner with them tonight. In like 2 hours.

Male: We do not! I'm goin the basketball game with the guy's tonight.

Female: *(controlling her irritation)* No, you're going to dinner with Susan and Steven. I asked you last week if you wanted to go out with them on Friday night and you said: 'Yeah, fine, whatever.'

Male: *(increasingly frustrated)* I had two midterms last week! I didn't know how to spell my name! I would've agreed to marry Susan and that Steven guy last week.

Female: What does two midterms have to do with dinner plans?! You still said yes, I even specifically said 'Dinner on Friday.' And you said yes!

Male: Well, you couldn't have said *this Friday*. Even as out of it as I was, I would've remembered that it was the Dayton-Xavier game. The guys and I already made our 'Beat Xaver' t-shirts. I have to go!

Female: (*raising voice*) Nick, I know what I said and I said this Friday! It's just a stupid basketball game, just blow it off!

Male: (*slightly raising voice*) No! (*short pause, then more restrained*) I don't want to blow it off. I want to go to the game and I'm going to the game.

Female: Quit being such a jerk. (*pause*) If this switched and it was something you really wanted me to do, I would do it for you without even thinking.

Male: (*raised voice, very annoyed*) Whatever Katey! You couldn't even answer your freaking phone! You couldn't put your girlie talk on hold for like 45 seconds for me!

Female: (*trying hard to maintain composure*) That is totally different. Susan was upset, she needed me. You just want to go to a stupid basketball game with your friends and were some stupid t-shirt.

Male: It is not different! I said you answering your phone was important to me and you STILL didn't do it! And now going to dinner is important to you, and I can't do it. There, we're even.

Female: That is such crap! You're just being selfish, like always! You want to go to the basketball game, no matter what anybody else wants to do. Or what you already promised you'd do!

Male: I'm not being selfish, I can't bail on my friends! And it's not my fault that you made these crazy plans on the same night as one of the biggest games of the year!

Female: (*bitingly sarcastic*) Oh, so now am I not only supposed to answer my phone whenever you call, no matter what I'M DOING, I'm also supposed to memorize the basketball schedule and plan our relationship around it. Yeah, that sounds totally reasonable.

Male: Whatever Katey. Quit being so dramatic.

(*long pause*)

Female: I'm not being dramatic. I mean, what am I supposed to tell Susan? She was so excited about us meeting Steven.

Male: I don't know, just tell her the truth. Tell there was a mix-up about the night and I'll meet him some other time.

Female: (*growing angry again*) No you won't Nick. You won't ever meet him. I should've learned by now that I can't depend on you to follow through with plans.

Male: (*mirroring her anger*) That is such crap. I hardly ever do this. Forget plans or whatever. I was barely functioning when you made these plans with me. How can you expect me to remember!?

Female: You weren't asleep when we made these plans! You weren't in a coma or heavily medicated! It's not such a crazy idea that you'd remember making plans with me!

(Pause)

Male: (*sarcastic, but still very angry*) Whatever. I should've remembered the plans. You're right, as always. But I've been looking forward to this game for weeks and it only happens once. I can meet this Steven guy whenever. So I'm going to the game! ..

Female: (*raising voice*) Be a jerk! I don't even care anymore! I just wanted to spend a little time with you! But obviously a BASKETBALL GAME is more important than me!

Male: (*also raising voice*) Basketball is NOT more important than you! I waited by the phone like a loser all night last night because I wanted to see you! But you can't expect me to bail on my friends and miss this game that I'm so pumped about just to keep plans I don't even remember making! What you're saying is that YOU getting what YOU WANT all the time is more important than ME getting what I WANT.

Female: Whatever Nick. I'm so done with this conversation.

Male: Fine, me too.

- end of conversation -

APPENDIX E

Neutral Stimulus Argument

Katey and Nick are both 21-years-old and have known each other for approximately a year and a half. What follows is a phone exchange about a history project they are working on together.

Female: Hello?

Male: Hi. What are you up to?

Female: Oh hey. Not much, just watching some TV before I get started on some more homework.

Male: Yeah, sounds exciting. What did you get into last night?

Female: Not much. Went to a movie with Susan and then out for a few drinks. Nothing too crazy, just a little girl time.

Male: Sounds good. I tried to call you a couple times last night, was your phone dead or something?

Female: No, just hanging out. It can get kinda loud in the bar. Plus Susan was venting to me about some problems she's having with her new boyfriend.

Male: Susan's got a new boyfriend?

Female: Yeah. I told you about him, Steven. She met him at my cousin's wedding last month. He seems like a nice guy.

Male: *(very mildly annoyed)* You didn't tell me about him.

Female: I did too! They've been dating about a month now and things had been going pretty well.

Male: But if he's such a nice guy and things are going well, then what were they fighting about?

Female: Just silly stuff. He didn't call her back one night when he said he would, and then she got her feelings hurt. Everything's cool now though.

Male: I'm glad everything's cool, but since it is I don't really understand why you didn't answer your phone.

Female: It just didn't seem like the thing to do. Did you really need me for something?

Male: I was just looking at our project and needed to ask you a few questions. (*slightly irritated*) I really wish you'd answered your phone.

Female: Thanks for working on that. I'm sorry I didn't answer the phone, but Susan was pretty upset and I didn't want to be rude and start talking on the phone when she was venting and everything.

Male: (*still slightly irritated*) I know what you mean, and I'm not saying that you should've dropped everything and had a long conversation with me about it. I would've understood if you'd just said you were with Susan and you couldn't really talk.

Female: (*beginning to get frustrated*) I said I was sorry Nick. What did you need? Was it really that big of a deal?

Male: I mean it's not like it was life or death or anything. But we had this conversation last semester when we did a project together. This presentation is in two days and I'm trying to work on it, and I can't get a hold of you to talk to you about it. I asked you to keep your phone on you and you said you would. I just don't understand Kat...

Female: (*attempting to maintain her frustration*) Ok, I'm sorry Nick, AGAIN. But I'm on the phone now. What was so important that you're still pissed off about it?

Male: I'm gonna ignore that comment.... (*pause*) I needed to know which chapters in the textbook you'd already made power-point slides for so I can make mine. I had wanted to get them done last night but...

Female: (*interrupting*) Wait, wait, wait. Nick you haven't even started your power-point slides yet! We were supposed to be combining those and then spending all night tomorrow practicing so we'd be ready by Monday! I can't believe you haven't even started!

Male: (*obviously annoyed*) What did I just say? I told you that I was planning on getting them done last night, but SOMEBODY didn't answer their phone so I couldn't.

Female: We divvied those chapters up last week. It's not my fault that you didn't write it down!

Male: I had two midterms last week! I didn't even know how to spell my own name last week! Of course I'm not gonna remember which chapters you're doing!

Female: It's not my responsibility to keep up with your stuff! I'm sorry that your week sucked last week but you still need to do your part of this presentation!

Male: I know I need to do this presentation! It's my grade that's on the line, you already know you've aced this class!. Why do you think I was so mad that I couldn't get a hold of you last night?!

(long pause)

Female: I know that your grade's on the line here. So let's just drop it and figure out what we're doing tonight.

Male: Tonight? What do you mean by tonight?

Female: Haha. Very funny.

Male: What? I'm so confused.

Female: *(exasperated)* Please tell me you're joking.

Male: Let's pretend I'm not...

Female: *(obviously annoyed)* Nick! Like I just said, we're supposed to be combining our power-point slides so we can spend all night tomorrow practicing. Liz is even coming over to help us since she got an A in the class last year!

Male: *(also annoyed)* You're supposed to combine the slides! I'm going to the basketball game with the guys tonight!

Female: Why do I have to combine the slides?! This is our project and you just finished telling me how important it is to your grade!

Male: I know that, but tonight's the biggest game of the year! I've been looking forward to it for weeks!

Female: It's just a stupid basketball game! You're gonna have to blow it off.

Male: It's the Dayton-Xavier game! The guys already made our 'Beat Xavier' t-shirts and everything. I don't want to blow off the game so I'm not gonna blow off the game!

Female: You don't have a choice! You just told me that your slides aren't even done yet! So you have to stay in tonight and do your work!

Male: Well they would have been done last night if YOU'D answered your freaking phone! That's why I wanted to get them done last night because I knew I was going to the game tonight. I tried to work ahead and I couldn't because you didn't answer your phone like you SAID you would!

Female: I told you I was sorry! But if you were really trying to work ahead then you would've finished your slides before last night! Just skip the game!

Male: I can't skip the game and bail on the guys! That's so dumb!

Female: Well what am I supposed to tell Liz? She figured out a way to leave work early for us and everything!

Male: Just tell her the truth, that we got confused. I'm sure she can help us tomorrow or something... it's really not that bit of a deal.

(Pause)

Female: *(quieter, but extremely tense)* Whatever, you're just being selfish and doing what you wanna do. You're not even thinking about anybody else. If you'd just kept track of your chapters this wouldn't even be an issue.

Male: *(raising voice)* I am not being selfish! I'm so sorry that I was crazy last week and that I forget to write down my chapters! *(short pause)* Fine, you're right, I'm wrong, whatever.

Female: Oh don't do that!

Male: Well what am I supposed to do?!

(Pause)

Female: Look just go to the stupid game. It's obvious that watching some basketball game is more important than your grade or, for that matter, my grade because you're totally screwing me by not doing your half of the work!

Male: Quit being so dramatic Kat! That's not what I'm saying, I'm just saying that I shouldn't have to back out on my plans and change my whole night, cancel on something I really want to do, when really, this mix-up isn't all my fault.

Female: Fine. Do what you want. I don't even care. But I'm not doing your work.

Male: I didn't ask you too!

Female: Well that's how it's gonna end up isn't it?

Male: No I'll do it! But right now, I'm so done with this conversation.

Female: Fine. Bye.

- end of conversation -

APPENDIX F

Content Questionnaire: Attachment-focused Conflict

- 1) What was the name of the female character?
 - a. Katey
 - b. Lisa
 - c. Amy
 - d. Krissy
- 2) What was the name of the male character?
 - a. James
 - b. Brian
 - c. Nathan
 - d. Nick
- 3) What kind of relationship did the characters have?
 - a. brother and sister
 - b. friends
 - c. dating relationship
 - d. dorm neighbors
- 4) What was the male character initially angry about?
 - a. that his favorite team had lost a basketball game
 - b. that the female character had failed to answer or return his phone calls
 - c. that the female character had forgotten his birthday
 - d. that his fraternity brothers had played a prank on him
- 5) What made the female character angry about the plans she and the male character had made?
 - a. he wanted to cancel plans at the last minute
 - b. he refused to pay for what they were planning on doing
 - c. he insisted that she had never told him they had plans
 - d. he said he'd rather hang out with the guys
- 6) What plans had the male character made?
 - a. to work on a school project
 - b. to go to work
 - c. to out to the bar
 - d. to watch a basketball game
- 7) How did the argument end?
 - a. the male character was the last to speak
 - b. the female character was the last to speak
 - c. the female character was crying
 - d. the characters resolved their issue

Content Questionnaire: Non-attachment Focused Conflict

- 1) What was the name of the female character?
 - a. Katey
 - b. Lisa
 - c. Amy
 - d. Krissy
- 2) What was the name of the male character?
 - a. James
 - b. Brian
 - c. Nathan
 - d. Nick
- 3) What kind of relationship did the characters have?
 - a. brother and sister
 - b. friends
 - c. dating relationship
 - d. dorm neighbors
- 3) What was the male character initially angry about?
 - a. that his favorite team had lost a basketball game
 - b. that the female character failed to answer or return his phone calls
 - c. that the female character had forgotten his birthday
 - d. that his fraternity brothers had played a prank on him
- 4) What made the female character angry about the project she and the male character were working on together?
 - a. he wanted to quit the project
 - b. he didn't care what grade he got on the project
 - c. he hadn't started his portion of the presentation
 - d. he said he'd rather hang out with the guys than work on the project
- 5) What plans had the male character made?
 - a. to visit his family
 - b. to go to work
 - c. to go out to the bar
 - d. to watch a basketball game
- 6) How did the argument end?
 - a. the male character was the last to speak
 - b. the female character was the last to speak
 - c. the female character was crying
 - d. the characters resolved their issue

APPENDIX G

Conflict Questionnaire

1) How intense do you believe the previous conflict was?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all intense		Moderately intense		Extremely intense

2) How likely is it that the conflict will be resolved?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all likely		Moderately likely		Extremely likely

3) How satisfied do you believe the female character is in her current relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all satisfied		Moderately satisfied		Extremely satisfied

4) How satisfied do you believe the male character is in his current relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all satisfied		Moderately satisfied		Extremely satisfied

5) How stable is the relationship between the male and female characters?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all stable		Moderately stable		Extremely stable

6) How displeased do you believe the male character is with the current relationship, overall?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all displeased		Moderately displeased		Extremely displeased

7) How displeased do you believe the female character is with the current relationship, overall?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all displeased		Moderately displeased		Extremely displeased

8) How upset do you believe the characters were during the previous conflict?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all upset		Moderately upset		Extremely upset

9) How secure is the relationship between the male and female characters?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all secure		Moderately secure		Extremely secure

10) How likely is it that the male and female characters will work through the conflict?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all likely		Moderately likely		Extremely likely

11) How erratic is the relationship between the male and female characters?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all erratic		Moderately erratic		Extremely erratic

12) How likely do you believe it is that the male and female characters will be able to settle the

Dispute you heard?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all likely		Moderately likely		Extremely likely

13) How restrained do you believe the previous conflict was?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all restrained		Moderately restrained		Extremely restrained

14) In general, how happy do you believe the female character is in the current relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all happy		Moderately happy		Extremely happy

15) In general, how happy do you believe the male character is in the current relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all happy		Moderately happy		Extremely happy

16) How realistic do you believe the hypothetical conflict was?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all realistic		Moderately realistic		Extremely realistic

17) How involved were you with the conflict as you were listening to it (i.e. put yourself in the characters' shoes, found yourself choosing sides)?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all involved		Moderately involved		Extremely involved

APPENDIX H

Informed consent to participate in a research project (Revised 2/12/02)

Project Title: Impact of Adult Attachment Style on Perception of Relationship Conflict

Investigator(s): Kristen Allison, B.S. & Dr. Carolyn Phelps, PhD

Description of Study: This study is designed to examine how adults with different attachment styles perceive and process relationship conflict. Specifically, this study focuses on how securely and insecurely attached adults differ in their perceptions of a conflict's intensity, as well as views on relationship stability and satisfaction. How securely and insecurely attached adults respond emotionally to relationship conflict is also a focus. All information gained during the study will be analyzed to see if attachment style impacts these various relationship perceptions.

Adverse Effects and Risks: No adverse effects are anticipated. However, some individuals may feel more uncomfortable than others while listening to the hypothetical conflict. If you feel uncomfortable at any time you may end your participation without penalty.

Duration of Study: The study is expected to take about 1 hour.

Confidentiality of Data: All responses will be kept confidential and will be only identified by a participant number in a data set. Informed consent forms and all data collected will be stored under lock and key.

Contact person: Participants may contact Kristen Allison at (502) 939-8925 or via email at allisoke@notes.udayton.edu or Dr. Carolyn Phelps at (937) 229-2618 or via email at Carolyn.roecker-phelps@notes.udayton.edu with any questions or if you experienced any problems during or following the study. Participants may also contact the chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Dr. Greg Elvers in St. Joe's 312, or at (937) 229-2171 or greg.elvers@notes.udayton.edu.

Consent to Participate: I have voluntarily decided to participate in this study. The investigator named above has adequately answered any and all questions I have about this study, the procedures involved, and my participation. I understand that the investigator named above will be available to answer any questions about research procedures throughout this study. I also understand that I may voluntarily terminate my participation in this study at any time and still receive full credit. I also understand that the investigator named above may terminate my participation in this study if s/he feels this to my in my best interest. In addition, I certify that I am 18 (eighteen) years of age or older.

Signature of Student Student's Name (printed) Date

Signature of Witness Date

**Research
Credit
Information**

PSY 101 Section _____ Instructor _____ Credits _____

Student ID# or Social Security Number _____

Credit for term _____

Researcher: Return this form to the Psychology Experiments Box in SJ 329

APPENDIX I

Demographic Information

**(The following information will be kept confidential.
Please do not put your name anywhere on this form)**

Gender: M F

Age: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Year in School: _____

Have you ever been in a romantic relationship? Yes No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, what is the length of your longest romantic relationship? _____

Are you currently in a romantic relationship? Yes No

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, how long have you been in this relationship? _____

APPENDIX J

Participant Instructions (Attachment-Focused Condition)

What you are about to hear is a phone exchange between a man and a woman. "Katey" and "Nick" are both 21 years old and have been dating for approximately a year and a half. Their phone conversation is about plans to spend time together. As you are listening, please try to imagine you are in the situation and how you might feel during this kind of conversation.

Participant Instructions (Neutral Condition)

What you are about to hear is a phone exchange between a man and a woman. "Katey" and "Nick" are both 21 years old and have been in several of the same classes. They have worked on a school project together in the past and share some of the same friends. Their phone conversation is about a current school project they are working on. As you are listening, please try to imagine you are in the situation and how you might feel during this kind of conversation.

APPENDIX K

Verbal Debriefing

Thank you again for your participation. The study you have participated in is focusing on adult attachment styles. An adult attachment is the emotional bond or connection between two people that provides each of them with a sense of safety and security. An adult can display many different attachment styles, but the basic distinction is between secure and insecure attachment. In romantic relationships, securely attached adults know that the relationships in his/her life will be there to provide support during stressful times and they tend to have healthier interpersonal relationships. Insecurely attached adults are not certain that they will receive support when needed, and have less healthy relationships with others. Specifically, this study focuses on how securely and insecurely attached adults differ in their perceptions of a conflict's intensity, as well as views on relationship stability and satisfaction. How securely and insecurely attached adults respond emotionally to relationship conflict is also a focus. All information gained during the study will be analyzed to see if attachment style impacts these various relationship perceptions.

Please remember that the conflict you heard was entirely hypothetical. It was written by the lead experimenter of this study and performed by University of Dayton students. Any similarities between the hypothetical conflict and any conflicts you have personally experienced were purely coincidental.

One of the questionnaires you completed asked you to rate how strongly you felt particular emotions. Some of these emotions are more negative in nature, such as feeling distressed, upset, or hostile. If you often experience these types of emotions, or have been experiencing them very strongly as of late, it is encouraged that you consider contacting the University of Dayton Counseling Center at (937) 229-3141.

Thank you again for your participation and your research credit will be awarded quickly.

APPENDIX L

Debriefing Form

Information about the study: This study is designed to examine how adults with different attachment styles perceive and process relationship conflict. Specifically, this study focuses on how securely and insecurely attached adults differ in their perceptions of a conflict's intensity, as well as views on relationship stability and satisfaction. How securely and insecurely attached adults respond emotionally to relationship conflict is also a focus. All information gained during the study will be analyzed to see if attachment style impacts these various relationship perceptions.

Adult attachment is the emotional bond or connection between two people that provides each of them with a sense of safety and security (Bowlby, 1973). An adult can display one of many attachment styles, with the basic distinction being between secure and insecure attachment. In the context of adult romantic relationships, a securely attached adult is generally confident that the attachment relationships in his/her life will be available to provide support during times of stress. Securely attached persons also tend to have healthier interpersonal relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Conversely, insecurely attached adults do not have confidence that they will receive support when needed, and often have less healthy relationships with others. Two of the questionnaires you completed during mass testing helped to identify you as either secure or insecure and provided information as to where you fell on certain aspects related to attachment style.

Although adults may be aware of how they act in a relationship, the actual attachment style is not usually conscious, and must be triggered by an event. The hypothetical argument you listened to was intended to trigger your particular attachment style. Once activated, attachment style has been found to not only impact overall relationship satisfaction and health, but perceptions of the relationship as well. Insecurely attached adults are more likely to predict conflict and have a negative view of their partner following stress (Collins, 1996), as well as experience more negative emotions (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). The conflict questionnaire you completed measured your responses to the hypothetical conflict and affect scale you completed measured your emotional responses.

Do not hesitate to ask any remaining questions you might have. Please refrain from sharing this debriefing information, or any information pertaining to the study, with any fellow students which may participate in the future. The references cited below are excellent sources for further reading on this psychological topic. A full list of references can be provided by the primary experimenter upon request.

References:

- Bartholomew, K. & Horowitz, L.M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(2), 226-244.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss vol. II*. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Collins, N.L. (1996). Working models of attachment: Implications for explanation, emotion, and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(4), 810-832.
- Simpson, J.A., Rholes, W.S., & Nelligan, J.S. (1992). Support seeking and support giving within couples in an anxiety-provoking situation: The role of attachment styles. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62(3), 434-446.

Assurance of Privacy: We are seeking only information about the psychological constructs described above and are not evaluating any other personal aspects. All responses will be kept confidential and will be only identified by a participant number in a data set. Informed consent forms and all data collected will be stored under lock and key.

Contact Information: Participants may contact Kristen Allison at (502) 939-8925 or via email at allisoake@notes.udayton.edu or Dr. Carolyn Phelps at (937) 229-2618 or via email at Carolyn.roecker-phelps@notes.udayton.edu with any questions or if you experienced any problems during or following the study. Participants may also contact the chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Dr. Greg Elvers in St. Joe's 312, or at (937) 229-2171 or greg.elvers@notes.udayton.edu. **Thank you for your participation and your research credit will be awarded quickly.**

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