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Adult attachment communication and desire for intimacy in couple relationships

Molly C. Millwood

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Adult Attachment, Communication, and Desire for Intimacy in Couple Relationships

by

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This study examined the relationship between adult attachment styles in couples, desires for emotional intimacy, and a common problematic form of communication called the demand/withdraw pattern, in which the “demander” initiates discussions and requests change, while the “withdrawer” retreats, silently withdraws, and refuses discussion. A large body of research suggests that attachment styles are evident in adults and have various impacts on the manner in which people perceive themselves, their partners, and their relationships. However, attachment theory has not adequately specified implications for specific, discernible behaviors within the context of romantic relationships, and research has tended to focus on attachment styles at the individual level rather than the couple level (i.e. attachment style pairing). The current study sought to investigate this possible connection between particular attachment style combinations in couples and particular relationship behaviors (e.g. communication patterns). One hundred forty-seven couples completed self-report measures of attachment style, discrepancy in desired level of intimacy, and demand/withdraw communication. The results suggest that compared to securely attached couples, insecure and mixed couples (wherein at least one partner is insecure) exhibit (1) high discrepancies in desired level of intimacy and (2) high levels of demand/withdraw communication. Contrary to expectations, insecure and mixed couples did not significantly differ from each other on these dimensions. Implications for adult attachment theory, understanding demand/withdraw communication, and couple therapy are discussed.
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Adult Attachment, Communication, and Desire for Intimacy in Couple Relationships

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The development and maintenance of affectional bonds within close relationships is an integral component of human life. Not surprisingly, such bonds have been the target of widespread and in-depth investigation in psychological science. Psychologists have studied the nature of the bonds, or attachments, that are formed between mothers and infants (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969), and, more recently, the nature of the attachments formed between adult love partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). There is substantial evidence that adult attachment is a continuation of infant attachment, in that each involves the formation of emotional and affectional bonds with another person, and that each of us has a particular "style" of attaching that is relatively enduring (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Furthermore, there is evidence that attachment styles in adulthood have a significant effect on our functioning, both as individuals and as partners in a romantic relationship (Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the connection between attachment styles, desires for emotional intimacy, and communication behaviors in
relationships. Although the existing state of knowledge about the connection between adult attachment styles and perceptions of relationships is rather sophisticated, relatively little is known about the role that attachment styles play in relationship behaviors and couple functioning over time. In particular, the relationship between styles of attachment and potentially destructive communication patterns remains virtually unexplored. One such communication pattern is the "demand/withdraw" interaction, in which one partner pressures the other with complaints, criticisms, and requests for change, while the other withdraws from the confrontation and avoids conflict (Christensen, 1987, 1988). Although researchers studying the demand/withdraw pattern have demonstrated that a difference between partners in desired level of intimacy appears to be a factor in the development of such a pattern, they have tended to attribute this discrepancy primarily to gender-stereotyped roles and preferences (Christensen, 1987; Christensen & Heavey, 1990). The present project explored whether the construct of adult attachment captures and provides an alternate explanation for this discrepancy in desired level of intimacy, and is therefore relevant to the understanding of the demand/withdraw communication pattern.

An initial question was whether particular combinations of attachment styles are related to particular discrepancies in desired level of intimacy. It may be the case
that the constructs are virtually interchangeable, with discrepant attachment styles constituting discrepant desires for intimacy, and vice versa. Since attachment styles in adult relationships are characteristic ways of viewing intimacy, it follows that desire for intimacy (and individual differences therein) should emerge as a conflictual issue for couples with mismatched attachment styles. For instance, two securely attached partners can be conceptualized as having relatively high agreement about the desired level of intimacy in the relationship, compared to a couple in which one member is anxious-ambivalent and the other is avoidant. The latter couple would most likely disagree considerably about the level of relationship intimacy desired, with the avoidant partner preferring much less than the anxious-ambivalent partner. Again, since this discrepancy in desired level of intimacy has been demonstrated to be a risk factor for the emergence of destructive communication patterns, discrepant attachment styles may be a risk factor as well. Intimacy preferences, gender roles, and the demand/withdraw communication pattern have been empirically linked to one another; attachment styles, with beliefs about intimacy as their central constituent, are ostensibly another important link in that chain. Societally-driven gender roles, although undoubtedly a significant influence upon intimacy preferences within relationships, cannot completely explain the emergence of intimacy-related conflicts. All males and females in heterosexual relationships were presumably
exposed to society's expectations and standards regarding gender. However, not all heterosexual couples differ in their desired level of intimacy, and even those who do are not always prone to maladaptive conflict-resolution tactics. With this in mind, few would argue that intimacy struggles and related conflicts in romantic relationships are purely the result of gender differences. It would be more reasonable to conclude that additional variables, such as attachment styles, are involved in the development of communication problems and other intimacy-related relationship difficulties. Since investigation of the demand/withdraw pattern from the attachment perspective is lacking, and adult attachment theory has yet to be sufficiently enriched with information about specific relationship behaviors, the present study was designed to profit the current understanding of both.

ATTACHMENT

A prolific body of research spawned by Bowlby's seminal series *Attachment and Loss* (1969, 1973, 1980) indicates that through our early interactions with caregivers, we develop expectations and beliefs about the nature of close relationships. Though these expectations and beliefs have their roots in infancy as products of the bond we create with our primary caregivers, they are believed to
form "internal working models" that we carry with us on our interpersonal journeys. More specifically, such models contain not only beliefs about our own ability, propensity, and willingness to become attached to others, but also beliefs about others' ability, propensity, and willingness to become attached to us. Bowlby suggested, then, that from the moment we are born and placed in the care of another, we begin to formulate ideas about whether others are caring, responsive and attentive, and also whether we are worthy of care and attention (Collins & Read, 1990). Together, these two belief systems strongly influence the nature and quality of our various interpersonal relationships throughout the life span.

"Attachment theory," with Bowlby as its founder, emerged as an explanation for the behavior exhibited by both human and primate infants during separations from their caregivers (Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bowlby observed that when infants, whether human or primate, are separated from their mothers, their emotional reactions follow a predictable pattern from protest (crying and actively searching for the mother) to despair (passive resignation and sadness) to detachment (a presumably defensive disregard for the mother when she returns). Because this highly similar pattern of responses across all human and primate infants suggests an evolutionary significance, Bowlby called it the "attachment system" and speculated that it emerged as a means of protecting infants from danger by keeping
them in close proximity to their caregivers (Bowlby, 1969, 1973). Furthermore, when caregivers remain close and attentive, infants feel secure, unafraid, and eager to explore their surroundings and form bonds with others besides their primary caregivers. Infancy, therefore, is a sensitive period during which the availability and responsiveness of a caregiver affects the developing individual's degree of trust in the environment and in significant others, or "attachment figures" (Bowlby, 1973).

Taking into consideration the fact that not all caregivers are equally responsive and available, Ainsworth et al., (1978) extended Bowlby's attachment theory with their examination of individual differences in attachment relationships. Ainsworth introduced the term "attachment styles" and the notion that there is more than one pattern of attaching to caregivers. By observing the behavior of infants during a "strange situation," in which the mother leaves the infant alone with a stranger in an unfamiliar room, Ainsworth identified three distinct styles of attachment: secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant. Secure infants show mild protest and despair upon the mother's departure, but seem confident that she will return and, indeed, are responsive to her affection upon her arrival. Infants in the anxious-ambivalent category show more protest and despair than secure infants, do not seem to have confidence in the mother's availability, and, upon her return to the room, continue to show mixed signs of distress, fear, and anger. Finally, avoidant
infants exhibit lower-than-usual protest and despair when the mother leaves, and higher-than-usual defensive detachment and avoidance upon her return (Ainsworth et al., 1978). According to Ainsworth, each of these patterns of behavior constitutes a distinct attachment "style," such that infants in all three categories are attached to their caregivers not in varying degrees, but in qualitatively different ways.

ATTACHMENT IN ADULTHOOD

Both Bowlby and Ainsworth postulated that internal working models for attachment are relatively enduring and probably remain with us throughout the life span. Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy (1985) advanced this concept with their findings that adults do, in fact, possess beliefs about self and others that parallel Bowlby's notion of "internal working models" in infants and young children (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). With her Adult Attachment Interview, Main found not only that mothers' recollections of their own emotional attachments in childhood provided enough information to classify the mothers as one of the three attachment styles, but also that these styles were predictive of their own caregiving styles, and, therefore, the attachment styles of their children (Bringle & Bagby, 1992). However, the possibility that attachment styles are as central a component of adult interpersonal relationships as they are of infant-caregiver and childhood relationships remained
unexplored; it wasn't until Hazan and Shaver's provocative 1987 study that the empirical investigation of adult attachment styles was born. Their findings indicated that (1) adults can classify themselves as possessing one of Ainsworth's three attachment styles in the context of their relationships with significant others and (2) these attachment styles exist in the same proportions among adults as they do in infants and young children. Specifically, about 56% of adults classify themselves as secure (compared to about 62% of infants subjected to Ainsworth's strange situation), 25% fit into the avoidant category (compared to 23% in Ainsworth's studies), and about 19% are classified as anxious/ambivalent (compared to 15% of infants) (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). As with children, there appear to be no significant differences between genders in the prevalence of any of the three adult attachment styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Although longitudinal studies that track the stability of attachment styles from infancy to adulthood have yet to yield complete and conclusive results, Hazan and Shaver's landmark study certainly implicates an enduring quality in attachment styles. With approximately the same proportions of adult individuals falling into the attachment categories as infants, Hazan and Shaver conclude that people are most likely adhering to their early attachment styles. Subsequent studies (e.g. Collins & Read, 1990; Roberts, Gotlib, & Kassel, 1996) have substantiated these initial findings with highly similar proportions of
attachment styles among adults. In addition, Hazan and Shaver's (1987) findings demonstrate a connection between the adults subjects' attachment styles and their perceptions of their caregivers. Participants who recalled their caregivers as responsive and dependable tended to be classified as secure, those who described their caregivers as cold and rejecting tended to be classified as avoidant, and those who recalled unfairness, intrusiveness, or inconsistencies in their caregivers' warmth and availability tended to be classified as anxious-ambivalent. Attachment theory suggests that such parental behaviors and qualities influence the formation of early attachment styles, in the general manner demonstrated by Hazan and Shaver's findings (Ainsworth, et al. 1978). In other words, the participants' adult attachment styles matched the styles they most likely had as infants, based on their recollections of their caregivers' behavior toward them.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) propose that by conceptualizing romantic love as an attachment process, we can better understand the biosocial, evolutionary significance of "falling in love." Their idea is congruent with Bowlby's view that attachments between mother and infant emerged as a way to protect the infant and facilitate his or her exploration and understanding of the environment. They suggest that romantic love could feasibly be a "biological process designed by evolution to facilitate attachment between adult sexual partners who, at the time love evolved,
were likely to become parents of an infant who would need their reliable care" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 523). Their framework for adult attachment, then, is a natural extension of Bowlby's and Ainsworth's earlier work; it identifies a long-term purpose of our "internal working models" that we begin to devise in infancy. Whether they exist between an infant and a mother or between two adult romantic partners, attachment relationships are affectional bonds in which the individual strives to maintain closeness with an attachment figure, and believes that the attachment figure is not interchangeable with any other (Feeney & Noller, 1991).

**ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLES AND BELIEFS ABOUT SELF AND OTHERS**

Hazan and Shaver's success at translating childhood affectional bonds into terms appropriate for adult romantic love bolstered Bowlby's concept of inner working models. Their study suggests that continuity in relationship style may be largely due to the influence of these models that mold and shape our social experiences. Research indicates that people who have a secure attachment style tend to develop mental models of themselves as likeable and worthy of affection, and they tend to believe that others are generally well-intentioned, reliable, and trustworthy (Collins & Read, 1990). People who have an anxious-ambivalent style, on the other
hand, tend to think of themselves as underappreciated, misunderstood, needy, and lacking confidence, and they believe that others are generally unreliable and unwilling to provide devotion and attention (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Simpson, 1990). Those adults with an avoidant attachment style typically have mental models of themselves as highly independent and aloof, while thinking of others as either unreliable or overeager to commit in relationships (Collins & Read, 1990). Thus, it appears that although anxious-ambivalent and avoidant individuals differ dramatically in their self-image, both tend to view others as untrustworthy (Simpson, 1990). These findings provide evidence that each attachment style is relatively discrete and represents a distinct way of thinking about the emotional or affectional availability of oneself and others.

People with different attachment styles also endorse different attitudes about the nature and course of typical romantic love. For example, avoidant individuals are much more likely than either anxious-ambivalent or secure people to believe that intense romantic love rarely lasts forever and that it is rare to find someone with whom you can really fall in love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Anxious-ambivalent individuals are most likely to believe that there is "one true love" that is meant to be and that the kind of "head-over-heels" romantic love depicted in novels and movies actually does exist in real life (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).
Several studies have demonstrated that certain personality characteristics and tendencies are more prevalent in some attachment styles than others. Securely attached individuals tend to have high self-esteem and social self-confidence, while both types of insecurely attached individuals have lower self-esteem (Bringle & Bagby, 1992; Collins & Read, 1990). Furthermore, because low self-esteem plays a role in the development and maintenance of depression, a greater prevalence of depressive symptoms has been found among people with both types of insecure attachment (Roberts, Glotlib, & Kassel, 1996). Williams and Schill (1994) have linked insecure attachment styles to the so-called "self-defeating personality," suggesting that people who exhibit more characteristics of self-destructiveness, especially in the context of interpersonal relationships, tend to be people with an anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment style. Avoidant individuals, particularly men, are more likely to engage in heavy alcohol consumption, and both insecure styles are more likely to have eating disorders, symptoms of anxiety, and physical problems (Shaver & Hazan, 1993; Senchak & Leonard, 1992). Insecurely attached people have also been differentiated from secure people on the basis of the "Big Five" personality traits; for example, both types of insecure people are more neurotic and introverted than secure people, and secure individuals tend to be more agreeable than avoidant individuals (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). These findings suggest that in
addition to influencing the way that we relate to others throughout our lives, our
attachment styles may also shape many of the behaviors, tendencies, and qualities
that constitute our personalities and perhaps make us vulnerable to a range of
psychological and interpersonal disturbances. However, because these are
correlational data, it is important to note the possibility that "enduring" attachment
styles are actually an outcome, rather than an antecedent, of the characteristics and
tendencies discussed above. It could certainly be argued that such characteristics and
tendencies shape individuals' mental models, via their cumulative life experiences,
rather than vice versa. Again, more longitudinal research is needed in order to
elucidate the causal directions between attachment styles and individual and
interpersonal functioning.

In sum, research findings point to several meaningful differences among the
three styles of attachment with respect to beliefs about self and others (and related
dysfunction). While securely attached individuals seem to have mostly positive views
of themselves and others, resulting in high self-esteem and generally high levels of
functioning, their insecure counterparts are not so lucky. Anxious-ambivalent
individuals, with their poor self-image and their view of others as essential but
unreliable, appear to be more susceptible to a variety of problems, such as
depression, anxiety, self-destructive behaviors, and physical problems. Although
avoidant individuals appear to be aloof and independent and to view intimacy as overrated, their self-esteem is comparable to that of anxious-ambivalent individuals and they appear to be equally prone to the same sorts of dysfunction.

ATTACHMENT STYLES AND RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

If "falling in love" is an attachment process, and if people approach this process with one of three prototypical styles, it follows that our own attachment style should greatly influence the "personality" of each love relationship we enter. Indeed, a multitude of studies, launched by Hazan and Shaver's initial 1987 project, indicates that people's attachment styles are strong predictors of the way they perceive and describe their romantic relationships. In particular, relationship satisfaction is highly positively correlated with a secure attachment style, while insecure attachment is related to higher levels of relationship conflict and dissatisfaction (Feeney & Noller, 1991; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Levy & Davis, 1988). Secure individuals tend to have more trust in their partners and to describe higher levels of interdependence and commitment in their relationships, while both avoidant and anxious adults perceive low levels of each of these relationship components (Simpson, 1990). People in the anxious category tend to have relationships characterized by obsession, extreme jealousy and sexual attraction,
emotional highs and lows, and an insatiable desire for complete union with the love partner; avoidant individuals also report more emotional highs and lows and jealousy than secure individuals, but somewhat less so than their anxious-ambivalent counterparts (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Interestingly, avoidant individuals appear to be less accepting of their partners’ imperfections than are anxious-ambivalent and secure people, perhaps as a result of their unwillingness to get too close (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Securely attached people report more occurrences of positive emotion -- particularly happiness -- within the relationship, while those with an insecure style say their relationships are more often characterized by expressions of negative emotions (Simpson, 1990). During times of conflict, secure individuals report using more compromises and other problem-solving skills than do insecurely attached people, who appear to be more likely to use verbal aggression (Senchak & Leonard, 1992). Not surprisingly, people with secure attachment styles indicate having longer-lasting relationships, in general, than their insecure counterparts (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).
ATTACHMENT STYLE PAIRINGS: SECURE, INSECURE, AND MIXED COUPLES

The majority of adult attachment studies have assessed relationship functioning from one partner's point of view, or as a function of one partner's attachment style. Even when both partners in a relationship are subjects, the findings are usually presented in the context of single attachment styles and their correlation with the dependent variable(s). Given that it takes two people and two attachment styles to create a relationship, it is surprising that relatively few studies have explored the dynamics of the various attachment style combinations within couples. Those that have, however, raise a number of important questions. As might be expected, studies of both married and dating couples indicate that securely attached individuals prefer and tend to end up with partners who are also secure (Collins & Read, 1990; Senchak & Leonard, 1992).

Findings about insecure pairings, on the other hand, are intriguing and somewhat counterintuitive. For example, Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) reported that in a sample of 354 couples, no anxious-anxious or avoidant-avoidant pairings were found. It would be reasonable to assume that an avoidant individual might choose an avoidant partner in order to keep intimacy at bay, or that two anxiously attached individuals with extreme desires for closeness might be drawn to each other.
However, since each of these pairings appears to be extremely uncommon, it may be the case that individuals choose partners who confirm their attachment-related beliefs. In other words, an avoidant individual is likely to end up with an anxious partner whose dependence and demands for intimacy validate his or her belief that others will want "too much." An anxious individual is likely to pair with an avoidant partner whose rejection and emotional distance confirms his or her fear of abandonment (Senchak & Leonard, 1992). The relatively high prevalence of such avoidant-anxious partnerships, together with the much lower prevalence of avoidant-avoidant or anxious-anxious pairings, implies a self-perpetuating quality of attachment styles (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994). Securely attached individuals tend to pair with other secure individuals who confirm their beliefs about the general trustworthiness and availability of other people, and they are apparently less inclined to tolerate partners who either avoid or are preoccupied with intimacy. Anxious individuals, on the other hand, tend to be in relationships with avoidant partners who confirm their beliefs about the general untrustworthiness and unavailability of others, while anxious partners confirm the avoidant individuals' beliefs that others tend to demand more intimacy than they are willing to give. Hence, it seems that secure individuals tend to pair on the basis of similarity of attachment style, while insecure individuals pair on the basis of complementarity. Therefore, the stability of
attachment styles can perhaps be attributed to the endurance of the mental models that shape them, while the mental models are enduring because they act as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Senchak and Leonard (1992) examined newlywed couples and found sufficient numbers for analysis of four couple types: (1) insecure, in which both partners were insecure, (2) mixed, in which the wife was secure and the husband was insecure, (3) mixed, in which the husband was secure and the wife was insecure, and (4) secure, in which both partners were secure. Of these, secure couples perceived the most intimacy and evaluated each other more favorably than the other three couple types, and also reported less verbal aggression in the relationship than any of the other three types.

Interestingly, the samples obtained by both Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) and Senchak & Leonard (1992) represented proportions of subjects endorsing secure, anxious, or avoidant styles that differed from previously reported figures. Both studies had higher percentages of subjects in the secure category (around 75%) compared to around 60% in earlier studies in which being a member of a long-term relationship was not a criterion (e.g. Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Levy & Davis, 1988). This difference has been interpreted in two ways: secure individuals are more likely to end up in lasting relationships than insecure individuals, and/or individuals are
more likely to identify themselves as secure when they are in a committed relationship than when they are single, presumably because of the comfort and security that a partnership tends to provide (Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

CURRENT ISSUES IN ADULT ATTACHMENT THEORY: CRITIQUES AND MYSTERIES

Although a proliferation of studies has yielded consistent, pertinent information about self-image, personality, and relationship quality and their connection to attachment styles, only a few studies have attempted to assess more concrete, reportable behavioral manifestations of attachment styles that occur within the context of relationship. We know, for example, that secure and anxious people are more willing to self-disclose to their partners during normal conversation than are avoidant individuals (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan (1992) also found that when their partners were subjected to an anxiety-arousing event, avoidant men were much less likely to comfort their partners than were anxious and secure men, and Fraley & Shaver (1998) report that anxious women exhibit more distress upon temporary geographical separation from their romantic partners. However, little beyond this is known about the degree to which attachment styles are related to descriptive behaviors within relationships. A
criticism, in fact, of adult attachment theory is that attachment styles are merely a matter of self-conception or self-presentation, and there is little evidence to show that the three attachment groups differ behaviorally (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). In addition, research on adult attachment has been biased toward overemphasizing the extent to which attachment styles are traits rather than products of a unique, ongoing interaction between two individuals. Clearly, it is unwise to assume that the levels of intimacy, anxiety, fear, conflict and other attachment-related aspects of a romantic relationship are solely the consequence of attachment styles. On the other hand, there is evidence that although not impervious to change, an adult's attachment style tends to remain the same across different relationships (Shaver & Hazan, 1993); it is not, therefore, unreasonable to conceptualize attachment styles as somewhat inflexible approaches to "falling in love" that have a profound impact on the quality of our relationships (Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

Clearly, when assessing the potential determinants of relationship behaviors, one needs to consider what may be attributable to each partner's individual qualities and what may be attributable to the complex, unique interaction between the two individuals. A person's attachment style should be understood as only one of many individual qualities he or she brings to the relationship, and the specific pairing of attachment styles between the two partners should be understood as only one of
many components of their dynamic interaction. However, it is believed that this pairing is a crucial, rather than negligible, component of that interaction and, as previously discussed, is a subject that has received insufficient research attention thus far.

THE DEMAND/WITHDRAW COMMUNICATION PATTERN AND ATTACHMENT THEORY: RELEVANT CONNECTIONS

One of the hallmark features of a long-term romantic relationship is the emergence of consistent, predictable patterns in the interactions between partners. Most, if not all, couples have characteristic ways of communicating that become virtually automatic as the relationship progresses. Communication researchers have referred to both "symmetrical" patterns, in which both partners assume the same or similar roles, and "asymmetrical" patterns, in which partners take on different or opposite roles during interactions (Sullaway & Christensen, 1983). It has been hypothesized that the latter asymmetrical patterns reflect differential roles in the overall relationship, wherein the partners' needs are not mutual (Sullaway & Christensen, 1983). In some couples, the difference in roles may be complementary and the resulting asymmetrical interactions may be functional and satisfying, such as a marriage in which the wife's high need for decision-making power is met by the
indecisive husband's need for guidance, and vice versa. However, in many couples the difference in needs is more frustrating than it is gratifying, and the resulting asymmetrical pattern of communication leads to distress and polarization. These tend to be couples who, because they fail to meet each other's needs, resort to more coercive and aversive communication tactics such as nagging, blaming, threatening, or silently withdrawing (Sullaway & Christensen, 1983).

As previously noted, a common asymmetrical communication pattern in couples is the demand/withdraw interaction, in which one partner "pressures the other through emotional demands, criticism, and complaints, while the other retreats through withdrawal, defensiveness, and passive inaction" (Christensen & Heavey, 1990, p. 73). Over the past several decades, this process has been noted and variously referred to as the "intrusion-rejection" pattern (Napier, 1978), the "nag-withdraw" pattern (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967), and the "pursuer-distancer" pattern (Fogarty, 1976), but it has only been in recent years that Christensen and his colleagues (e.g. Christensen, 1987, 1988; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Christensen & Shenk, 1991) have launched an extensive investigation of the causes and consequences of demand/withdraw interactions in couples.

Numerous studies (e.g. Sullaway & Christensen, 1983; Heavey, Christensen,
& Malamuth, 1995; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989) have found the demand/withdraw pattern to have a high positive correlation with relationship dissatisfaction. Not surprisingly, couples who exhibit this pattern tend to grow more polarized over time (Levenson & Gottman, 1985). As a result, they are more likely to experience declines in satisfaction as the relationship progresses, and, in the long run, may be at increased risk for separation or divorce (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). Researchers and developers of couples therapy have substantiated these findings with their assertion that the demand/withdraw pattern is a central conflict for many couples seeking treatment, and one that is especially difficult to remedy (e.g. Jacobson & Margolin, 1979). The pattern has also been linked to relationship violence (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993), further suggesting that it is a significant feature of relationship distress, and one with serious ramifications.

Investigators studying the demand/withdraw communication pattern have identified a discrepancy between partners in the level of desired intimacy as a major factor in the emergence of the pattern. In particular, partners who differ in the amount of closeness they desire, with one person wanting more of an intimate union and the other wanting more autonomy, are more likely to display demand/withdraw communication (Christensen, 1987).
As noted earlier, this and other detrimental communication patterns tend to be found in couples whose non-mutual needs are not being met (Christensen, 1987, 1988). Intimacy is only one of many dimensions on which partners may differ in their needs, but it appears to be particularly influential in the development of the demand/withdraw pattern. It has been found that the partner who assumes the "demanding" role has a greater need for intimacy, while the "withdrawing" partner's greater need for autonomy precludes his or her succumbing to those demands for attention and closeness (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). The pressures and demands are therefore followed by retreat and withdrawal, which, in turn, leads to more pressures and demands. Although the exchange is aversive for both partners, its self-perpetuating properties result in long-term maintenance and use (Christensen, 1987).

It is important to note that intimacy per se is not necessarily the subject matter of the demanding and withdrawing. Rather, the demanding partner's nagging, criticizing, or requests for change are symbolic, in that they are attempts at greater agreement, synchrony, or intimacy, just as the withdrawing partner's indifference or sullen silences are attempts at detachment and greater independence (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Although a difference in desired intimacy is not directly expressed in the interaction, it is believed that it underlies the process
because "one partner (the demander) fears rejection and abandonment by the other, and the other partner (the withdrawer) fears intrusion and engulfment by the other (Christensen & Heavey, 1990, p. 74). In this way, the struggle over the degree of intimacy in the relationship is manifested in the demand/withdraw pattern.

Thus far, this discrepancy in desired level of intimacy has primarily been attributed to gender differences (Christensen, 1987; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Indeed, research on the demand/withdraw pattern clearly indicates that women tend to be the "demanders" and men tend to be the "withdrawers" (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). This finding is not surprising, given the well-known gender stereotype of women wanting more intimacy, sharing, and collaboration in relationships than men. It appears that this stereotype has empirical support; in general, women do seek more closeness in relationships while men seek more independence (Christensen, 1987). Several explanations for this disparity have been offered. From a socialization perspective, men in our society are encouraged to be achievement-oriented and to preserve their independence, while women in our society are encouraged to be relationship-oriented and to build interdependence with loved ones (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Furthermore, it has been suggested that because the structure of our society is such that men are generally in a greater position of power, they have an investment
in maintaining the status quo and very little interest in engaging in change-oriented
discussions; women, on the other hand, are generally more interested in
implementing change and confronting problems, in an attempt to overcome their
position of lesser power (Christensen, 1988; Jacobson, 1989). Interestingly,
Gottman and Levenson (1986) found that men tend to experience higher levels of
arousal during conflict-related discussions than women. It follows that men would
be more inclined to avoid discussions of problems than to embrace them, in order to
prevent unpleasant arousal states.

Each of these explanations for the gender differences that have been evidenced
in the demand/withdraw research is compelling. However, it would be unwise to
assume that gender differences, whether inherent or learned, are the key to
understanding why dysfunctional forms of communication emerge in couples. First,
the gender-stereotyped roles, in which the woman is the demander and the man is
the withdrawer, are not always in effect. The opposite is often true, wherein it is the
man who demands while the woman withdraws (Christensen, 1988). Although
numerous studies (e.g. Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen,
1993) have found a main effect for gender, with female-demand/male-withdraw
interactions being significantly more common than the reverse, other factors appear
to move partners away from these sex-stereotypes roles. For instance, these gender
differences disappear when the couple discusses a topic wherein it is the male, rather than the female, who wants change (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). In these situations, male-demand/female-withdraw patterns become just as frequent as the reverse.

Second, if gender differences were the major etiological factor in the demand/withdraw pattern, one would expect to find such an interaction pattern in nearly every heterosexual relationship. Since this has not proven to be the case, clearly there are other factors that may account for the emergence of demand/withdraw communication in a relationship, and the discrepancy in desired level of intimacy that lies beneath it.

Adult attachment theory, with its focus on beliefs and preferences regarding intimacy in relationships, has implications for our understanding of the demand/withdraw pattern in couples. If it is true that couples who exhibit this communication pattern tend to differ in their desired level of intimacy, then they may also differ in their attachment styles. For example, an anxiously attached partner and an avoidant partner are likely to have disparate preferences in the amount of intimacy desired in the relationship. The disparity between an anxious-ambivalent partner and a secure partner is presumably smaller, but is still likely to constitute the kind of difference in intimacy needs that has been linked to the demand/withdraw
pattern. In other words, couples in which one or both partners are insecurely attached exemplify the struggle between closeness and independence, because a central dimension on which their needs are mismatched is that of intimacy. Despite this relevance, to the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to investigate the connection between attachment styles and demand/withdraw communication.

As previously described, it has been suggested that demanding and withdrawing exchanges, as well as other asymmetrical forms of communication, are related to an imbalance of power in society and in relationships. Because insecure couples can be thought of as engaged in a perpetual power struggle, with one person desiring more closeness and the other desiring less, they may be more susceptible to the use of coercive, maladaptive communication patterns. Dutton et al. further suggest that "what is controlled in intimate relationships is that which is most feared: namely the degree of intimacy or emotional distance from the attachment-other" (1994, p. 1382). In other words, insecure attachment in one or both partners is likely to make the level of intimacy a central "control issue" in the relationship, thereby increasing the risk of coercive, dysfunctional forms of communication.

If the demand/withdraw pattern of communication can be linked to attachment styles, one might reasonably conclude that attachment style pairings play
some role in the development of this destructive communication pattern. That role most likely exists via a difference in desired level of intimacy; that is, mismatched attachment styles may be equated with the discrepancy in desired intimacy that is clearly connected to the demand/withdraw pattern. While gender roles are undoubtedly a factor in this equation, they may share their influence with attachment styles, especially when partners are disparate or dissimilar on this dimension.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The principal goal of this study was to investigate the possible connection between the presence of the demand/withdraw interaction pattern in relationships and the particular pairing of attachment styles in the couple. In other words, do "insecure" couples, in which both partners have an insecure attachment style, and "mixed" couples, in which only one partner is insecure, and "secure" couples, in which both partners are securely attached, differ in their susceptibility to this destructive communication pattern? A secondary question is whether or not these couple types differ from each other in amount of agreement about desired level of intimacy; i.e., are discrepant attachment styles in fact more correlated with discrepant desires for intimacy than matched attachment styles? It was predicted that:
(1) A discrepancy in desired level of intimacy would be associated with a discrepancy in attachment styles. Specifically,

(A) insecure couples, in which one partner is anxious-ambivalent and the other is avoidant, would exhibit the greatest discrepancy in desired level of relationship intimacy;

(B) mixed couples, in which one partner is securely attached and the other is insecure, would exhibit a greater discrepancy in desired level of intimacy than secure couples.

(2) Presence of the demand/withdraw communication pattern would be positively correlated with a discrepancy in desired level of intimacy (as with previous studies).

(3) Presence of the demand/withdraw communication pattern would be associated with discrepant attachment style pairings. Specifically,

(A) the demand/withdraw pattern would be most prevalent among couples in which both partners are insecurely attached;

(B) the demand/withdraw pattern would be somewhat less
prevalent in mixed couples than in insecure couples,

with secure couples least likely to exhibit the pattern.
CHAPTER 2: METHOD

Participants

Subjects were 147 couples (47% married, 37% living together, and 16% exclusively dating) who had been involved in a relationship for at least one year. Of these, 65 couples (44%) were secure (both partners securely attached), 50 (34%) were mixed (one partner insecure and the other secure), and 32 (22%) were insecure (both partners insecurely attached). The majority of the insecure couples (27 or 84%) were comprised of one avoidant partner and one anxious-ambivalent; the remaining five consisted of two avoidant partners. Of the mixed couples, avoidant was the more frequent attachment style of the insecure partner (34 or 68% of the insecure partners in mixed couples were avoidant), which is consistent with previous findings (e.g. Hazan and Shaver, 1987) indicating that anxious-ambivalent is the rarer of the two insecure styles. In addition, the insecure partner in mixed couples was slightly more likely to be the female (28 out of 50, or 56%). This gender difference was most apparent when the insecure partner was anxious-ambivalent; 10 out of 16 (63%) of the anxious partners in mixed couples were female, whereas the avoidant partners in mixed couples were about equally likely to be male or female (16 or 48% were male, and 18 or 52% were female).
The majority of participants (279 or 94.8%) were Caucasian, 7 (.02%) were Native American, 3 (.01%) were African American, 2 (.006%) were Asian, 1 (.003%) was Hispanic, and 2 (.006%) did not identify an ethnic origin.

Approximately half the subjects (142 or 48.2%) listed "student" as their primary occupation. Table 1 presents means and standard deviations on four demographic variables for the overall sample and for each couple type. Relationship status (i.e. married, living together, or exclusively dating) for the overall sample and for each couple type is presented in Table 2.

Of the 147 couples who participated, 112 were recruited through the introductory psychology subject pool at the University of Montana. In most cases, only one of the partners in each couple was enrolled in introductory psychology and received course credit for participation; a few couples were comprised of two
introductory psychology students who both received credit. The remaining 35 couples, derived from a collection of data obtained by a previous project in our research lab, were recruited from the community via advertisements and announcements requesting participants for a study of couples relationships. These couples received $10 for their participation. One-way ANOVAs indicated that the Psychology 100 and community samples did not differ with respect to their scores on the two major dependent variables, total demand/withdraw ($F(1, 292) = 3.17, p > .05$) and total difference in desired intimacy ($F(1, 292) = 1.80, p > .05$).

However, there were some differences between the community and Psychology 100 samples with respect to demographic variables. The mean age of community participants ($M = 30.7, \text{SD} = 10.1$) was significantly higher than that of Psychology 100 participants ($M = 25.9, \text{SD} = 8.1$), $t(292) = 4.07, p < .01$, and subjects in the community sample were also more educated (years of education $M = 14.61, \text{SD} = 1.9$) than Psychology 100 subjects ($M = 13.9, \text{SD} = 1.6$), $t(292) = 2.79, p < .01$.

In addition, a Chi-square examining the distribution of relationship status across the two samples was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 20.84, p < .001$. None of the community couples were dating, compared to 20% of the Psychology 100 couples, and more of the community couples (66%) than the college couples (41%) were married.
As can be gathered from Tables 1 and 2, the only demographic variable on which couple types (by attachment style pairing) differ significantly from each other is relationship status, \( \chi^2(4) = 13.15, p = .011 \). A greater proportion of secure couples were married (55%) and a smaller proportion were dating (9%), compared to mixed and insecure groups. To examine the possible effect of this higher incidence of marriage among secure couples on the major dependent measures, a one-way ANOVA, with relationship status as the grouping variable and D/W and DDI as the dependent variables, was performed. Married, cohabitating, and dating couples did not differ with respect to amount of demand/withdraw communication, \( F(2, 291) = 2.57, p>.05 \), or discrepancy in desired level of intimacy, \( F(2, 291) = 2.48, p>.05 \).

In short, the three couple types do not differ on any demographic variable except for relationship status, which does not appear to be related to demand/withdraw communication or difference in desired level of intimacy.

Materials

In order to identify the attachment styles of each partner in the relationship, subjects completed the 1993 revision of Hazan & Shaver's original Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). This questionnaire allows the subject to choose from the three descriptions of attachment styles, both selecting one
that best describes him/her, and identifying the extent to which each category is
descriptive of him/her (refer to Appendix D). Chronbach's alphas for the Adult
Attachment Questionnaire have ranged from .64 to .84 (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

To assess presence of the demand/withdraw communication pattern in the
relationship, we utilized the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)
(Christensen, 1987). The CPQ contains eight items assessing mutual approaches to
conflict, such as avoidance, discussion, and blame, and six pairs of items assessing
asymmetrical (non-mutual) and maladaptive approaches to conflict, such as "man
criticizes while woman defends herself." Each of these six pairs of items represents a
subscale, or particular asymmetrical communication sequence. For the present
study, only the total demand/withdraw, male demand/female withdraw, and female
demand/male withdraw subscales were used; these can be viewed in Appendix F.

Previous research utilizing the CPQ has evidenced satisfactory reliability and validity
for the various subscales, with Chronbach's alpha averaging at approximately .73
(e.g. Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Christensen, 1987, 1988).

Finally, the Relationship Issues Questionnaire (RIQ) (Christensen, 1987,
1988) was utilized to assess differences in desired level of intimacy. For purposes of
this study, only one subscale was used, the Discrepancy in Desired Closeness/
Independence scale, which contains three items assessing the extent to which the
male and female partners want different amounts of closeness and independence in the relationship (refer to Appendix E). Christensen & Shenk (1991) found Chronbach's alphas for this subscale of .79 for males and .86 for females, and other studies (e.g. Christensen, 1987, 1988) have produced similar figures.

Procedure

Participants from the Psychology 100 subject pool were scheduled by telephone and assessed in groups ranging between 2 and 8 couples per session. Upon their entry to the research setting, males and females were asked to be seated on opposite sides of the room. Subjects read and signed consent forms (refer to Appendix A), and, once all participants had arrived, they were informed of the importance of working independently, reminded of the confidentiality of their participation, and given verbal instructions for completing the measures (refer to Appendix B).

Each member of each couple then received his or her own questionnaire packet, which included a demographic form, the RRQ, the RIQ, and the CPQ, respectively (Appendices C, D, E, and F, respectively). All packets were compiled in this order. Most subjects completed the measures in approximately 20 minutes. Upon completion of the questionnaire packet, each participant was given a brief
debriefing form (Appendix G) that included a list of resources for assistance with relationship or individual concerns.
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for all major dependent measures, both for the full sample and for each couple type, are depicted in Table 3.

Insert Table 3

The results were analyzed primarily with the use of a one-way ANOVA design, with attachment style pairing (couple type) as the grouping variable. Because scores on the Relationship Issues Questionnaire (RIQ) and the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) were obtained from each partner in each couple, it was anticipated that findings could vary depending upon whose report (male’s or female’s) was utilized. Previous research has indicated that partner reports on these measures tend to be significantly and moderately correlated (Christensen & Shenk, 1991), such that collapsing the scores to achieve a single “couple” score on each dimension is a reasonable practice. Indeed, correlations between male and female partners’ scores on each of the dependent measures revealed significant positive relationships at the .01 level. These correlations are depicted in Table 4. Moreover, using partner scores separately within ANOVA
designs is problematic, because ANOVA assumes independent observations. Because partner reports are not independent of one another, they were averaged to produce a single couple score. Major comparisons among groups on all dimensions were performed using only the collapsed couple scores.

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Insert Table 4

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Discrepancy in Desired Level of Intimacy (Hypothesis 1)

A one-way ANOVA using couples’ combined scores on the DDI yielded a significant group effect of difference in desired intimacy, \( F(2, 144) = 13.70, \ p < .0001 \). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons indicated that both insecure and mixed couples had significantly higher levels of discrepancy in desired intimacy than secure couples (Scheffe, \( p < .05 \)), but insecure and mixed couples did not differ significantly from each other (Scheffe, \( p > .05 \)). Figure 1 provides a graphic portrayal of these effects.

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Insert Figure 1

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Relationship Between Demand/Withdraw and Difference in Desired Intimacy

(Hypothesis 2)

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive relationship, $r = .597, p < .01$, between couples’ scores on the RIQ and on the Total Demand/Withdraw subscale of the CPQ. Greater discrepancies in desired level of emotional intimacy were associated with greater amounts of demand/withdraw communication. This replicates previous findings (e.g. Christensen, 1987; Christensen & Heavey, 1990) that link high scores on the CPQ with high scores on the RIQ.

Presence of Demand/Withdraw Communication (Hypothesis 3)

A one-way ANOVA yielded the predicted significant group effect for total demand/withdraw communication, $F(2, 144) = 15.05, p < .0001$. Post-hoc comparisons revealed that both insecure and mixed groups had significantly higher levels of demand/withdraw communication than the secure group (Scheffe, $p < .05$). However, insecure couples did not have significantly higher levels of the demand/withdraw pattern than mixed couples (Scheffe, $p > .05$). These effects are illustrated graphically in Figure 2.
Gender Roles in the Demand/Withdraw Communication Pattern

Two subscales of the CPQ, Male Demand/Female Withdraw and Female Demand/Male Withdraw, were examined to determine gender differences in demandingness and withdrawingness. Consistent with previous research findings (e.g. Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993), comparisons of the levels of MD/FW and FD/MW in the overall sample revealed that the presence of female demand/male withdraw communication is significantly higher than the reverse ($t(293) = 5.76$, $p < .0001$). Means and standard deviations can be seen in Table 3, and Figure 3 illustrates this finding graphically.

One-way ANOVAs were utilized to examine the effect of couple type on levels of MD/FW and FD/MW communication, again using couples’ combined
scores on these measures. For the MD/FW subscale, a main effect of group (couple type) was evidenced, $F(2, 144) = 5.56$, $p = .0047$. Post-hoc comparisons indicated that male demand/female withdraw communication was significantly higher among insecure couples than among secure couples (Scheffe, $p < .05$). Although insecure couples demonstrated higher levels of MD/FW than mixed couples, and mixed couples had higher levels than secure couples, these differences failed to reach statistical significance (Scheffe, $p > .05$). Figure 4 provides a graphic portrayal of these findings. A main effect of couple type was also found for the FD/MW subscale, $F(2, 144) = 12.59$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that both insecure and mixed couple types demonstrate significantly higher levels of the female demand/male withdraw pattern than secure couples (Scheffe, $p < .05$). Mixed and insecure couples did not, however, differ from each other on this dimension (Scheffe, $p > .05$). These effects are depicted in Figure 5.
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationships among attachment style pairing within a couple, discrepancies in desired level of emotional intimacy, and a problematic dyadic interaction known as demand/withdraw communication. It was hypothesized that couples in which one or both partners are insecurely attached, compared to secure couples, would be more likely to be discrepant in their desired level of closeness, and at greater risk of utilizing the demand/withdraw communication pattern. The results of this study support these major hypotheses, and have numerous implications for the current understanding of attachment styles and their connection to intimacy struggles and dysfunctional forms of communication within relationships.

**Attachment Style Pairings and Discrepancy in Desired Level of Intimacy:** The finding that both insecure and mixed couples experience greater discrepancies in amount of desired intimacy than do secure couples supports the notion that mismatched attachment styles represent mismatched preferences for emotional intimacy within a relationship. Although the hypothesis that insecure couples would be significantly more disparate than mixed couples in their desire for closeness was not supported, the data clearly suggest that when one or both partners are insecurely
attached, a couple is more likely to experience discord with respect to intimacy needs. Specifically, it appears that in mixed and insecure couples, one partner is likely to want more time together, more sharing of feelings, and more attention or affection than the other is willing to give.

Among insecure couples, it is reasonable to assume that the anxious-ambivalent partner is the one who wants more closeness, and the avoidant partner is the one who prefers less. Apparently, these different desires result in a struggle, a struggle that is perceived and reported by both partners, for more or less intimacy in the relationship. Among mixed couples, however, the possible roles in this struggle are more various; the secure partner’s desire for intimacy relative to the insecure partner’s most likely varies as a function of which attachment style the insecure partner has. Presumably, if the insecure partner is avoidant, it is the secure partner whose desire for intimacy would be higher, while the opposite would be true when the insecure partner is anxious. One might imagine, for example, a secure person wanting more affection and attention from his or her avoidant partner, or a secure person desiring less exclusivity, time together, or sharing of feelings than his or her anxious mate.

Since avoidant, secure, and anxious attachment styles ostensibly represent low, medium, and high needs for closeness and union with a romantic partner,
respectively, it is not immediately clear why couples comprised of the two extremes do not experience significantly greater discrepancies in their intimacy needs than couples comprised of one extreme and one middle-of-the-road partner. It appears that the presence of one insecure partner is enough to tip the scale in favor of a perceivable difference in intimacy preferences, which indicates that insecure individuals are substantially different from their secure counterparts with respect to intimacy needs (rather than just being different from their opposite-insecure counterparts). These data suggest that while two secure people in a relationship with each other are likely to agree (or disagree very little) about the amount of emotional closeness they desire, a secure individual in a relationship with an insecure individual is likely to want more or less closeness than his or her mate. Stated differently, an insecure person is likely to consistently want more or less closeness than his or her partner, whether his or her partner is secure or opposite-insecure. It should be noted, however, that these interpretations are based on overall quantities of differences in desired intimacy, and that they do not take into account the influence of gender. It is possible that insecure and mixed couples do significantly differ on more subtle aspects of intimacy discrepancies, and that gender has the power to reverse the roles postulated above.
It could also be argued that what anxious individuals want from their partners is not more intimacy per se, but more reassurance and support. Because a fear of abandonment appears to be the fundamental component of the anxious attachment system, it may be the case that anxious people seek out attention, affection, sharing of feelings, exclusive time with their partner, and other forms of contact not for the intimacy itself, but for its reassuring properties. Indeed, a deficit in the operational definition of intimacy (for example, as it is measured on the Relationship Issues Questionnaire) is this ambiguity in the difference between contact for intimacy and contact for the sake of reassurance and anxiety relief. For instance, one person might desire a great deal of attention, physical affection, and exclusive time from his/her partner because s/he simply enjoys the intimacy derived from these things. A different person might desire the same high levels of attention, physical affection, and exclusive time from his/her partner because s/he feels more reassured and less anxious about abandonment during or immediately after these interactions.

Although the underlying motivations for contact are quite different, each person might score similarly on the following RIQ item:

"Partner A may want more attention, more time together, more joint activities, more sharing of feelings, and more expressions of affection and closeness; Partner B may want more time for independent activities, more
time alone, and more personal privacy. Does this difference characterize your relationship?"

Thus, items on the RIQ and other measures of intimacy often do not clarify the underlying motives or reasons for intimate contact with a partner; in particular, they fail to assess the important distinction between contact for intimacy and contact for reassurance. A measure capable of distinguishing between the two might yield a different, more discriminating pattern of results across attachment style pairings.

Nonetheless, these effects lend support to Shaver and Hazan's (1993) speculation that adult attachment styles are not merely beliefs or self-perceptions; rather, they represent real, perceptible needs that can and do become manifested in dyadic interactions. Mismatched attachment styles do appear to reflect actual discrepancies in desired intimacy, as measured by the RIQ, that have heretofore been understood primarily in terms of gender differences. This provides preliminary evidence for the notion that an individual's internal working model, containing beliefs about such attachment issues as appropriate or necessary levels of closeness or autonomy and the trustworthiness of others, translate into perceived dyadic struggles for more or less time together, more or less affection, more or less sharing of feelings, and so on. Moreover, these results identify one feasible reason for the demonstrated link between attachment style pairings and the demand/withdraw
pattern, in that a discrepancy in desired level of intimacy appears to be the common denominator.

*Attachment Style Pairings and Demand/Withdraw Communication:* The present findings support the hypothesis that the demand/withdraw communication pattern is related to an insecure attachment style in one or both partners. As predicted, insecure and mixed couples are both significantly more likely to exhibit high levels of this destructive pattern than couples in which both partners are securely attached. However, as was the case with discrepancy in desired level of intimacy, the hypothesis that insecure and mixed couples would also differ from each other was not supported. This finding can be partially explained by the demonstrated connection between discrepant desires for intimacy and demand/withdraw communication; perhaps insecure and mixed couples do not differ in amount of demand/withdraw because they do not differ in amount of discrepancy in desired intimacy. Thus, these data suggest that whether a couple’s mismatch of attachment styles is extreme (as in insecure couples with one avoidant and one anxious-ambivalent partner) or more subtle (as in mixed couples wherein one person is secure), the presence of such a mismatch is related to the presence of interactions in which one person initiates discussions and the other avoids them, or one person
nags and requests changes while the other refuses and retreats. Discrepant attachment styles, with their coexisting discrepant intimacy needs, may instigate these dysfunctional forms of communication when some problem in the relationship arises.

For example, an anxious-ambivalent individual may make attempts at active communication about a relationship problem in order to enhance collaboration and closeness, and to alleviate ongoing concerns about abandonment. Avoidant individuals, on the other hand, are more likely to utilize communication tactics in the opposite direction in order to reduce closeness and interdependence; they may make active attempts at non-communication or withdrawal in order to keep intimacy at bay and alleviate concerns about engulfment. Thus, an additional explanation for the lack of difference between mixed and insecure couples in levels of demand/withdraw communication is that the emergence of these attachment-related communication behaviors on the part of one insecure partner could elicit reciprocal behaviors in the other partner, even if he or she is securely attached.

Consider the case of an anxious-secure couple. Normal levels of discussion and engagement exhibited by the secure partner are unlikely to satisfy the anxious partner's needs. Simultaneously, high levels of discussion and engagement exhibited by the anxious partner are likely to be experienced as excessive by the secure partner.
The resulting interaction pattern is one in which the anxious partner continuously pursues more discussion while the secure partner retreats; in turn, the retreating of the secure partner provokes more pursuing in the anxious partner. As Christensen (1987) has noted, the self-perpetuating nature of these interactions results in their long-term maintenance. The presence of even one insecurely attached partner in a dyadic relationship appears to tip the scales in favor of such dysfunctional interactions, which then persist regardless of the other partner's attachment style.

The data regarding gender roles in demanding and withdrawing are congruent with previous research. The greater level of female demand/male withdraw compared to male demand/female withdraw interactions in the overall sample is consistent with past studies indicating that when the demand/withdraw pattern does occur, women are more likely to be in the role of the demander and men in the role of withdrawer (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Perhaps of more interest is the pattern that emerges upon examination of these differential gender roles across the three couple types. As might be expected from the higher incidence of total demand/withdraw among insecure and mixed couples compared to secure couples, both male demand/female withdraw and female demand/male withdraw interactions were highest among insecure couples. However, the one dimension on which mixed couples were not significantly different from secure
couples was that of male demand/female withdraw. In other words, while the presence of female demand/male withdraw varied according to couple type in the same pattern as total demand/withdraw, mixed couples seemed no more likely than secure couples to exhibit high levels of male demand/female withdraw. This effect might be best understood in terms of the relative ease with which gender-stereotyped patterns emerge, compared to the relative resistance with which counterstereotypical patterns develop. Given that the female demand/male withdraw pattern is congruent with stereotypical gender roles, and that consequently it occurs with greater frequency and to a greater extent than the reverse pattern, a minor disparity between partners in attachment styles and desired level of intimacy may be enough to make a couple more susceptible to these female demand/male withdraw interactions. Male demand/female withdraw communication, on the other hand, might emerge only with a more extreme disparity between partners in attachment styles and desired closeness. Since the disparity is presumably more extreme in insecure couples than in mixed couples, it follows that only insecure couples differ from secure couples in amount of male demand/ female withdraw communication.

An alternative explanation for these gender role effects involves the finding that among mixed pairings in which one person was anxious, the anxious partner
was more often female. Since anxious females are theoretically the most likely candidate for the demanding role, levels of female demand/male withdraw among mixed couples may have been increased by the contribution of such secure male-anxious female pairings, while levels of male demand/female withdraw among mixed couples were substantially decreased by the same couples.

It is also important to note the possibility that anxious attachment is shaped by and channeled through gender-role socialization, and consequently may be manifested differently in males and females. As stated earlier, most research suggests that there are no significant gender differences in the prevalence of the three attachment styles. However, avoidant attachment is more socially acceptable in males than it is in females, while anxious attachment is more stereotypically feminine. Thus, although approximately equal numbers of males and females appear to endorse the three attachment styles in the general population, the behavioral manifestations of attachment may vary as a function of gender. For instance, there is some evidence of a high incidence of anxious attachment among physically abusive male partners (Dutton, et al., 1994). Our results tentatively suggest that the demand/withdraw pattern may be invoked more by the presence of an anxious woman than an anxious man. Given that the fear of abandonment and strong desire for closeness in a person with an anxious working model is more socially acceptable
for women than it is for men, it may be reasonable to conclude that anxious women are more likely to rely on direct, overt tactics to meet these needs (i.e., assuming the demanding role in the demand/withdraw pattern). Anxious men, on the other hand, may behave differently (for example, in physically abusive ways) in an attempt to meet the same needs.

A Note About Attachment Style Pairings: It was expected that the majority, if not all, of the couples classified as insecure in this study would consist of one anxious-ambivalent partner and one avoidant partner. Avoidant-avoidant or anxious-anxious pairings were not expected to be found, given their nonexistence in Kirkpatrick and Davis's (1994) aforementioned large sample of 354 couples. Interestingly, however, five of the 32 insecure couples in our sample did consist of two avoidant partners, while there were no anxious-anxious couples. This may be the result of one criterion that differed in our study: our participants were only required to have been involved in a relationship for one year and were not required to be living together or married. It may be the case that some unlikely pairings (e.g. avoidant-avoidant) are found among young dating couples who have not yet committed to marriage or cohabitation.
In summary, the current findings lend support to three major notions about adult attachment and demand/withdraw communication, each of which is relevant to the empirical investigation and therapeutic treatment of relationship dysfunction. First, attachment styles do appear to have manifestations in discernible intimacy-related behaviors within relationships, such as communication tactics and discord about levels of sharing, exclusivity, and affection. Second, the particular pairing of attachment styles is important and does influence the extent to which these intimacy-related issues are a point of contention in the relationship; to study relationships with only the knowledge of one partner's attachment style is to ignore the important effects of the interaction of attachment styles. Third, one additional factor has been linked to the common, puzzling, and difficult-to-treat demand/withdraw communication pattern: attachment style pairings. Researchers studying demand/withdraw communication have grappled with the tasks of identifying why some couples exhibit the pattern and others do not, and identifying the specific mechanisms by which the pattern emerges in a relationship. The current results justify the incorporation of working models of attachment into this investigation, particularly in terms of etiology.

For example, demand/withdraw researchers have tended to view the pattern as the result of two generally "healthy" individuals, who happen to have slightly
different preferences for intimacy levels within the relationship, becoming more polarized over time (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). However, our results suggest the possibility of a different etiology for this destructive pattern; it may be the case that the emergence of the demand/withdraw pattern is largely influenced by one partner’s disordered attachment system. The present finding that attachment security in one partner alone does not substantially reduce levels of discrepancy in desired intimacy or the demand/withdraw pattern (e.g. mixed and insecure couples do not differ significantly on these dimensions) supports this view. In other words, an adult individual’s insecure attachment, with its roots in a neglectful or erratic upbringing, may be more responsible for the observed intimacy struggles leading to the development of a demand/withdraw pattern, which is then maintained or exacerbated by the presence of an attachment-dissimilar partner.

This prospect opens doors for clinical work with couples experiencing this destructive pattern, in that it points to the possible benefits of a more individualistic, family-of-origin approach to the problem. Couple therapists are typically faced with the task of maintaining an emphasis on the two partners’ shared contributions to relationship problems and the ways in which the couple can work collaboratively to overcome difficulties. However, inevitably there are circumstances in which one partner’s learning history, in this case attachment history, bears more impact than the
other's on a particular relationship issue. In such situations, improvement of couple functioning may be largely contingent upon addressing that partner's relevant early learning experiences (e.g. the origins of disordered attachment) and their influence on the current relationship. It may prove to be the case that treatment of demand/withdraw communication would benefit from such an approach.

In a more general sense, the current results warrant the application of what is known about disordered adult attachment to the treatment of relationship distress. For instance, couple therapists who regard a discrepancy in desired level of intimacy (and the many relationship difficulties like demand/withdraw communication that can be attributed to such a discrepancy) as the inevitable result of gender differences may be limiting their therapeutic options. However, if insecure attachment in one or both members of a couple is recognized as a factor associated with this discrepancy in desired intimacy and with the use of maladaptive forms of communication, then practitioners can incorporate the construct of attachment styles and working models, which are arguably more malleable than gender roles, into their interventions. Furthermore, relationship therapists whose working hypotheses and case formulations consider both partner's attachment styles are more likely to develop and utilize interventions that are tailored to the couple's unique, attachment-related interaction. Although these interventions are as yet hypothetical, the
demonstrated association between adult attachment systems and destructive relationship variables calls for the development of “attachment enhanced” couple therapy. Incidentally, it is worth noting that most prominent adult attachment theorists (e.g. Shaver & Hazan, 1993; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) assert that accurate assessment of adult attachment is a quick and simple process. We propose that it could easily be performed with any couple at the outset of treatment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research: Although these results are promising in terms of furthering the understanding of both adult attachment and demand/withdraw communication, at least four important limitations of the present study are worth noting. First, because the results were derived solely from self-report data, they reflect the participants’ own view of couple functioning and may not yield the accurate, objective ratings that behavioral observations by researchers in the laboratory would. However, the process of obtaining and combining both partners’ reports, which provided significantly similar pictures on all dependent measures, adds credence to the notion that these results accurately reflect the couples’ demand/withdraw interactions and perceived differences in desired intimacy.

Second, the relatively small number of insecure and mixed couple types (compared to secure couples) in our sample prevented a thorough investigation of
gender as a potentially influential factor. In other words, it was not possible to conduct an analysis of demand/withdraw communication and difference in desired intimacy as a function of the interaction between attachment style and gender, because some couple types (i.e. insecure with male anxious/ambivalent and female avoidant) were poorly represented in the sample. Beyond comparing males' and females' reports on the dependent measures and comparing general levels of male vs. female demandingness and withdrawingness, gender was largely excluded from the analytical picture.

Third, the dependent variables in this study consisted of fairly gross measures of constructs, such as overall amount of discrepancy in desired intimacy and overall amount of demand/withdraw communication in the relationship. The data were derived from simple, major subscales of each of the dependent measures, and do not include more subtle, detailed aspects of intimacy differences and communication patterns within couples. A more in-depth analysis that included various other subscales might reveal significant differences undetected in this study, particularly differences between mixed and insecure couple types.

Finally, because the sample in this study was largely comprised of young, caucasian, college couples who had been involved in a relationship for a relatively short period of time, generalization of the results to other populations should be
made with caution. It is possible that the findings would change for older couples with longer-lasting relationships, and also that ethnically diverse populations would yield different results.

Future research should be aimed at addressing each of the above issues that remain unclear because of the current study's limitations. In particular, as previously discussed, the interaction of gender and attachment style pairings in the development of demand/withdraw communication is a potentially rich area for exploration. It may be the case, for example, that typical gender differences in the demanding and withdrawing roles, with women tending to be the demanders, disappear with the presence of attachment styles that are incongruent with gender stereotypes, such as an avoidant female in a relationship with an anxious-ambivalent male. These analyses were beyond the scope of the present study, given the relatively small number of insecure couples, but are undeniably important for future research. Similarly important is the previously discussed possibility that some behavioral manifestations of insecure attachment vary as a function of gender.

Other questions in need of exploration include the degree to which, and the specific means by which, attachment styles influence the emergence of both functional and dysfunctional behaviors in intimate relationships, including but not limited to communication styles like the demand/withdraw pattern. Because the
present data are correlational, it is unclear whether asymmetrical communication patterns could be considered an attachment-related behavior that is directly evoked by particular attachment style pairings, or whether asymmetrical communication patterns activate and perpetuate one's working model of attachment, or both. Further studies that examine such questions will shed additional light on the possible mediating factors in attachment systems, discrepant desires for intimacy, and demand/withdraw communication.


Christensen, A. (1988). Dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Perspectives on marital interaction* (pp. 31-52).
Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1990). Gender and social structure in the
demand/withdraw pattern of marital conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social
Psychology, 59*(1), 73-81.

psychological distance in nondistressed, clinic, and divorcing couples. *Journal of

Collins, N. J., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and

Intimacy-anger and insecure attachment as precursors of abuse in intimate


paradoxes. New York: W. W. Norton.

Table 1

Demographic Variables on Overall Sample and Couple Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Full Sample (n = 294)</th>
<th>Insecure (n = 32)</th>
<th>Mixed (n = 50)</th>
<th>Secure (n = 65)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>27.0 ± 8.8</td>
<td>28.4 ± 9.8</td>
<td>26.0 ± 7.9</td>
<td>27.2 ± 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs of Educ.</td>
<td>14.1 ± 1.7</td>
<td>13.8 ± 1.9</td>
<td>14.1 ± 1.7</td>
<td>14.5 ± 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs in Relat.</td>
<td>5.01 ± 5.9</td>
<td>6.3 ± 6.4</td>
<td>4.6 ± 6.2</td>
<td>4.7 ± 5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Children</td>
<td>.51 ± .96</td>
<td>.68 ± 1.04</td>
<td>.44 ± .83</td>
<td>.49 ± .99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: No significant differences among couple types were found.
Table 2

**Relationship Status in Overall Sample and Couple Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Full Sample (n = 294)</th>
<th>Insecure (n = 32)</th>
<th>Mixed (n = 50)</th>
<th>Secure (n = 65)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>55% **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitating</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9% **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** indicates a Chi-square significant difference at the .01 level.
Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Full Sample (n = 294)</th>
<th>Insecure (n = 32)</th>
<th>Mixed (n = 50)</th>
<th>Secure (n = 65)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/W</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD/FW</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD/MW</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDI</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  
D/W = Total Demand/Withdraw  
MD/FW = Male Demand/Female Withdraw  
FD/MW = Female Demand/Male Withdraw  
DDI = Difference in Desired Intimacy

Note:  
a. Insecure and mixed couples both significantly higher than secure couples, but no difference between insecure and mixed.  
b. Insecure couples significantly higher than secure couples, but no difference between insecure and mixed or between mixed and secure.
Table 4

Correlations between Males' and Females' Scores on the Dependent Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Report</th>
<th>D/W</th>
<th>MD/FW</th>
<th>FD/MW</th>
<th>DDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D/W</td>
<td></td>
<td>.511**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD/FW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.545**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD/MW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.580**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.496**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** indicates a significant correlation at the .01 level.
Figure 1. Difference in Desired Intimacy by Couple Type.

Note: $F(2, 144) = 13.70, p<.0001$; Insecure and mixed both significantly higher than secure but not significantly different from each other.
Figure 2. Demand/Withdraw Communication by Couple Type.

Note: $F(2, 144) = 15.05, p < .0001$; insecure and mixed both significantly higher than secure but not significantly different from each other.
Figure 3. Female Demand/Male Withdraw Communication vs. Male Demand/
Female Withdraw Communication in the Overall Sample.

Note: $t(293) = 5.76, \ p < .0001$
Figure 4. Male Demand/Female Withdraw Communication by Couple Type.

Note: $F(2, 144) = 5.56, p = .0047$; insecure significantly higher than secure, but no significant differences between insecure and mixed or between mixed and secure.
Figure 5. Female Demand/Male Withdraw Communication by Couple Type.

Note: $F(2, 144) = 12.59, p < .0001$; insecure and mixed both significantly higher than secure, but not significantly different from each other.
Dear Participant,

Thank you for attending your research appointment. The purpose of this study is to gain information about intimacy and styles of communication in couples. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete four questionnaires, which will take approximately 20 minutes. You and your partner have each received identical questionnaire packets, but you will be filling them out privately and independently. The first questionnaire asks only for demographic information. The remaining three questionnaires request information about particular relationship issues, such as beliefs about intimacy and styles of communicating.

It is important for you to know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Signing this consent form does not force you to complete the study; you are free to discontinue your participation in the project at any time, and you may choose to skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

All the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The questionnaires will be coded by number rather than by name, and all materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet to be accessed only by researchers directly involved in the study.

Although we do not expect that you will be injured by participation in this study, we would like to inform you that in the event you are injured as a result of this research, you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University’s Claims Representative or University Legal Counsel.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the researcher(s) before, during, or after completion of the study. Questions can be directed toward the research coordinator, Molly Millwood, at 243-6514, or you may contact the faculty member overseeing the project, Dr. Jennifer Waltz, at 243-5750.

I have read the above information and understand the nature of my involvement in this study. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions, and I hereby consent to participate.

Print Name: __________________________
Signature: __________________________
APPENDIX B

VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS TO SUBJECTS

I have asked you to sit separately because it is important for you to work independently and not be influenced by your partner's responses to the questionnaires. I want to encourage you to answer the questions honestly, knowing that your responses will not be shared with your partner, and also that they are completely confidential. You will see that the packets are coded only by number and not by name. Also, because half of you are not enrolled in Psych 100 and are not receiving credit, I want to make sure that no one feels pressured to participate. I will give each of you a questionnaire packet, but anyone who does not want to fill it out does not have to. The first page in your packet is a demographic information form. The rest of the questionnaires have specific instructions that you should read carefully. Go ahead and begin when you receive yours, and let me know if you have questions as you are working. You can bring your packet up to me when you are done.
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

(1) Psychology 100 Student's: (skip if you aren't in Psych 100)
   Sex       ___M       ___F
   Age       ___
   Ethnicity _________________
   Year in School _______________
   Occupation ___________________

(2) Non-Psych 100 Partner's: (skip if you already answered #1)
   Sex       ___M       ___F
   Age       ___
   Ethnicity _________________
   Years Education _______________
   Occupation ___________________

(3) How long have you two been involved in an intimate relationship?
   __________________

(4) What is the current status of your relationship? Choose one:
   ___ Dating but not living together
   ___ Living together but not married
   ___ Married
      If married, for how long? _____

(5) Do you have children?
   ___ No
   ___ Yes
      If yes, how many? _____
APPENDIX D

Romantic Relationships Questionnaire

The following brief questionnaire is concerned with your experiences in romantic love relationships. Take a moment to think about all of the most important romantic relationships you've been involved in. For each relationship think about: How happy or unhappy you were, and how your moods fluctuated. How much you trusted or distrusted each other. Whether you felt you were too close emotionally or not close enough. The amount of jealousy you felt. How much time you spent thinking about your partner. How attracted you were to the person. How the relationship might have been better. How it ended. (Thinking about these good and bad memories of various relationships will help you answer the following questions accurately.)

Part I:

Read each of the three self-descriptions below (1, 2, and 3) and then rate how much you agree or disagree that each one describes the way you generally are in love relationships. Circle one of the numbers below each self description. (Note: The terms "close" and "intimate" refer to psychological or emotional closeness, not necessarily to sexual intimacy.)

1. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, 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. (Circle one number below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. 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 get very close to my partner, and this sometimes scares people away. (Circle one number below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me. (Circle one number below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part II:

Below, the three options from above are printed again. Please place a checkmark next to the single alternative that best describes how you feel in romantic love relationships.

1. ___ I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, 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.

2. ___ 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 get very close to my partner, and this sometimes scares people away.

3. ___ I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.
Part III.

This part and Part IV are similar to the questions on the first page, but there are 4 categories instead of 3. Read each of the four self-descriptions below (1, 2, 3, and 4) and then rate how much you agree or disagree. Circle one of the numbers below that each one describes the way you generally are in love relationships. Circle one of the numbers below that each one describes the way you generally are in love relationships. Circle one of the numbers below that each one describes the way you generally are in love relationships. Circle one of the numbers below that each one describes the way you generally are in love relationships. (Note: The terms "close" and "intimate" refer to psychological or emotional closeness, not necessarily to sexual intimacy.)

1. It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part IV.

Below, the four options from Part III are printed again. Please place a checkmark next to the single alternative that best describes how you feel in romantic love relationships.

1. ___ It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

2. ___ I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

3. ___ I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.

4. ___ I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
APPENDIX E

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please read each of the following items carefully, and answer the questions which follow each item by circling the number on the scales which best apply. Please answer each question.

1. Often one member (A) of a couple wants a closer relationship while the other member (B) wants more independence. For example, A may want more attention, more time together, more joint activities, more sharing of feelings, and more expressions of affection and closeness; B may want more time for independent activities, more time alone, and more personal privacy.

Does this difference characterize your relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man wants</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman wants</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Often one member (A) of a couple wants more contact with friends while the other member (B) wants a more exclusive relationship. For example, A may want to spend more time with friends, either alone or as a couple, while B prefers spending more time together, just A and B.

Does this difference characterize your relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man wants</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman wants</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Often one member (A) of a couple wants more privacy within a relationship while the other member (B) wants more openness and sharing with others. For example, A may like to be open with others and reveal personal information about A's and B's relationship to others. B may want more privacy and less personal disclosure to others.

Does this difference characterize your relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man wants</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman wants</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ID# __________________ F M
APPENDIX F

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: We are interested in how you and your partner typically deal with problems in your relationship. Please rate each item on a scale of 1 (= very unlikely) to 9 (= very likely).

A. WHEN SOME PROBLEM IN THE RELATIONSHIP ARISES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mutual Avoidance. Both members avoid discussing the problem.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mutual Discussion. Both members try to discuss the problem.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discussion/Avoidance. Man tries to start a discussion while Woman tries to avoid a discussion.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman tries to start a discussion while Man tries to avoid a discussion</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. DURING A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mutual Blame. Both members blame, accuse, and criticize each other.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mutual Expression. Both members express their feelings to each other.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mutual Threat. Both members threaten each other with negative consequences.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mutual Negotiation. Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Demand/Withdraw. Man nags and demands while Woman withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman nags and demands while Man withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Criticize/Defend. Man criticizes while Woman defends herself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman criticizes while Man defends himself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **Pressure/Resist.**
   - Man pressures Woman to take some action or stop some action, while Woman resists.
   - Woman pressures Man to take some action or stop some action, while Man resists.

8. **Emotional/Logical.**
   - Man expresses feelings while Woman offers reasons and solutions.
   - Woman expresses feelings while Man offers reasons and solutions.

9. **Threat/Back down.**
   - Man threatens negative consequences and Woman gives in or backs down.
   - Woman threatens negative consequences and Man gives in or backs down.

10. **Verbal Aggression.**
    - Man calls Woman names, swears at her, or attacks her character.
    - Woman calls Man names, swears at him, or attacks his character.

11. **Physical Aggression.**
    - Man pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks Woman.
    - Woman pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks Man.

C. **AFTER A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM,**

1. **Mutual Understanding.** Both feel each other has understood his/her position.
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. **Mutual Withdrawal.** Both withdraw from each other after the discussion.
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. **Mutual Resolution.** Both feel that the problem has been solved.
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. **Mutual Withholding.** Neither partner is giving to the other after the discussion.
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. **Mutual Reconciliation.** After the discussion, both try to be especially nice to each other.
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. **Guilt/Hurt.**
   Man feels guilty for what he said or did while Woman feels hurt.
   Woman feels guilty for what she said or did while Man feels hurt.

7. **Reconcile/Withdraw.**
   Man tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while Woman acts distant.
   Woman tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while Man acts distant.

8. **Pressure/Resist.**
   Man pressures Woman to apologize or promise to do better, while Woman resists.
   Woman pressures Man to apologize or promise to do better, while Man resists.

9. **Support Seeking.**
   Man seeks support from others (parent, friend, children)
   Woman seeks support from others (parent, friend, children)
Communication and Intimacy in Couples

The study in which you have participated is designed to assess beliefs and preferences about emotional intimacy and their relationship to particular patterns and styles of communication in couples. The questionnaires you completed provided information about not only your own views of emotional intimacy, but also your perception of your partner’s views of intimacy, as well as information about some of the ways in which you and your partner tend to discuss issues in your relationship. Your involvement will help to increase the current scientific understanding of connections between emotional intimacy and communication patterns in adult romantic relationships. Professionals working with couples can do so more effectively if more is known about intimacy and communication.

Some people participating in this study express an interest in seeking professional assistance, such as individual or couple therapy. If this is the case for you, there are several resources available. Please feel free to contact any of the on-campus agencies listed below.

**U of M CAPS:** 243-4711
*(free to all students on health plan)*

**U of M Clinical Psychology Center:** 243-4523
*(sliding fee scale)*

**U of M Counselor Ed:** 243-5252
*(sliding fee scale)*