

**UNDERSTANDING ATTACHMENT ANXIETY AND
PARADOXICAL REACTIONS TO CONFLICT WITH ROMANTIC
PARTNERS: THE MODERATING ROLE OF ATTACHMENT-
RELATED THREAT**

by

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Abstract

Prior research has shown that attachment anxiety is related to two contradictory conflict styles: submission and dominance. In a series of three studies, I clarified this research by introducing the role of attachment-related threat in moderating submissive versus dominant tendencies of highly anxious individuals in conflict with romantic partners. I propose that rejection-related threats activate the attachment system which motivates anxious individuals to engage in submission to restore psychological proximity to their partners. Alternatively, when threat levels are low, I propose that anxious individuals exhibit dominance towards their partners in attempt to seek validation. In Study One, I replicated and extended previous research by demonstrating the relationship between attachment anxiety and the submissive conflict style. The relationship between attachment anxiety and the dominant conflict style was moderated by gender such that this relationship was stronger for women than men. In Study Two, women read a vignette outlining a hypothetical scenario where their preferences and goals conflicted with those of their partner. This vignette contained a rejection component whereby their partner responded in either a rejecting or reassuring manner. Women high in anxiety reported being somewhat more likely to defer to the wishes of a rejecting versus non-rejecting romantic partner, relative to those low in attachment anxiety. Study Three was a daily diary study, examining the relationship between attachment anxiety and the nature of real life conflicts with romantic partners over 10 days. Individuals high in attachment anxiety reported lower quality interactions and more conflicts with their partners relative to low

anxiety individuals. When engaged in conflict, anxious individuals expressed greater levels of hostility towards their partners, and left their conflicts less resolved relative to low anxiety individuals. Further, partner anger moderated the relationship between attachment anxiety and submissive versus dominant tendencies. Individuals high in attachment anxiety and low in avoidance were somewhat more likely to submit to their partners when their partners expressed high levels of partner anger. On the other hand, when their partners displayed low levels of anger, individuals high in attachment anxiety reported doing somewhat more of the arguing relative to low anxiety individuals. Future directions and clinical implications are discussed.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1 General Introduction and Overview	1
Attachment Theory	1
Attachment and Conflict	3
Attachment and Threat	6
Overview of Current Research	8
Chapter 2 Study One	10
Method	11
<i>Participants</i>	11
<i>Materials</i>	11
Results	12
Discussion	17
Chapter 3 Study Two	20
Method	21
<i>Participants</i>	21
<i>Procedure</i>	21
<i>Dependent Measure</i>	22
<i>Manipulation Check</i>	23
Results	23
Discussion	25
Chapter 4 Study Three	27
Method	29
<i>Participants</i>	29
<i>Materials and Procedure</i>	30
Results	31
Discussion	41
Chapter 5 General Discussion and Conclusions	44
References	53

Appendix A: Experienced in Close Relationships – Revised	59
Appendix B: Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	60
Appendix C: Letter of Information (Study Two)	62
Appendix D: Consent Form (Study Two)	63
Appendix E: Debriefing Form (Study Two)	64
Appendix F: Letter of Information (Study Three)	65
Appendix G: Questionnaire (Study Three)	67
Appendix H: Debriefing (Study Three)	69

List of Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Attachment and Conflict Measures	12
Table 2: Correlations among Attachment Orientations and Conflict Styles	13
Table 3: Descriptives for Dependent Measures Averaged Across the 10 days	32

List of Figures

Figure 1: Interaction between attachment anxiety and gender on the conflict style dominance	14
Figure 2: Interaction between attachment avoidance and gender on the conflict style dominance	15
Figure 3: Interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on the conflict style submission	16
Figure 4: Interaction between attachment anxiety and gender on the conflict style submission	17
Figure 5: Interaction between attachment anxiety and rejection condition on the tendency to defer to a partner's wishes in an imagined scenario	25
Figure 6: Interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on submission to one's partner at low and high levels of partner anger	37
Figure 7: Interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on amount of arguing at low and high levels of partner anger	40

Chapter 1

General Introduction and Overview

Human beings are fundamentally motivated to form and maintain social bonds. Indeed, the “need to belong” has been posited as one of our most primitive needs, akin to needs for food and physical safety (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When asked to list factors that make life most meaningful, most individuals first mention satisfying close relationships, such as romantic relationships (Berscheid, 1985). Not only are these relationships important to us, romantic relationships have been shown to have a powerful impact on our emotional and even physical functioning. Specifically, individuals with more satisfying romantic relationships report higher levels of subjective well-being and happiness, while individuals with more negative relationship experiences report compromised emotional and physical well-being (Cohen, 2004; Myers, 1999). Therefore, it is important to study the functioning of intimate relationships as these relationships play such an important role in people’s lives.

Given that negative relationship experiences can jeopardize not only the stability and success of a relationship (Duck, 1988; Bray & Jouriles, 1995; Kayser, 1993), but also the mental and physical well being of both partners involved, it is important to develop a better understanding of the various factors involved in romantic partner conflicts. In particular, researchers are beginning to examine potential individual differences in predicting affective and behavioural reactions to conflict with romantic partners. Being able to predict and understand individual differences in reactions to conflict not only has theoretical implications, but also practical implications, benefitting clinicians and relationship counsellors seeking to identify individuals most at risk for ineffective conflict resolution strategies and guiding such distressed couples in developing healthy conflict resolution strategies. One major theoretical framework that has contributed a great deal to our understanding of individual and dyadic processes is attachment theory.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was originally developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973) to explain the affectional bonds that develop between infants and their primary caregivers. Bowlby believed that through early

interactions with their primary caregiver infants begin to generate expectations and beliefs regarding their caregiver's availability and responsiveness. Here, an infant begins to understand and internalize whether they can depend on their caregiver for physical and emotional security. Further, Bowlby explained that all individuals possess an attachment behavioural system which functions to regulate individuals' emotions and behaviour under conditions of threat. Specifically, infants instinctively seek proximity to caregivers under conditions of threat and are dependent on caregivers for emotion regulation, not yet possessing the understanding and cognitive capacity to cope with environmental threats. While some infants receive adequate emotional support, others do not and develop insecurities regarding the availability of attachment figures and display ineffective coping strategies.

Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) was the first to classify differences in infant-parent attachment behaviour using the Strange Situation Procedure which classifies infants according to their behavioural responses to a number of scenarios involving separations and reunions with the caregiver and encounters with a stranger. Secure infants become noticeably upset when separated from their caregivers, however greet them warmly and seek contact with them upon reunion. These infants tend to have caregivers who are more sensitive and responsive relative to caregivers of insecurely attached infants (De Wolff & Ijzendoorn, 1997). Anxious-resistant infants demonstrate strong separation protest following separation from a caregiver, and also show ambivalence in desiring proximity yet resisting contact with their caregivers upon reunion. These infants often have mothers who are inconsistent in their caregiving and who are often rejecting (De Wolff & Ijzendoorn, 1997; Isabella, 1993). Finally, avoidant infants show little separation protest, and often ignore their caregiver upon their return. Mothers of avoidant infants tend to be rejecting, insensitively under or over stimulating, and think negatively of their infants (Belsky, Rovine, & Taylor, 1984).

More recently, attachment theory has been applied to the understanding of adult romantic love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1994). Adult attachment theory is guided by the assumption that the motivational system that regulates emotional bonds between infants and their primary caregiver also regulates the bonds that develop between adult romantic partners. Specifically, early interactions with one's primary

caregiver lead to the development of expectations and beliefs regarding the responsiveness and availability of others which become internalized and shape later interactions with significant others such as romantic partners (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). In 1987 Hazan and Shaver developed a measure to assess attachment in adults which mapped onto the categories or types identified by Mary Ainsworth (secure, anxious-resistant, and avoidant). Other categorical measures followed from this (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). However, results from a major factor analysis conducted by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) using all known self-report measures of attachment as well as the researchers' own 36-item continuous measure uncovered two global factors which reflected anxiety and avoidance. For this reason, the fact that one loses precision when using typological measures, and the lack of strong evidence for a true typology of attachment, Fraley and others recommend using the two-dimension approach to assessing attachment; as such, adult attachment is now typically assessed along the two independent dimensions of avoidance and anxiety (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). Attachment avoidance reflects the extent to which individuals are uncomfortable with emotional closeness and intimacy, and prefer emotional independence in a relationship. Alternatively, attachment anxiety reflects the degree to which individuals fear and ruminate about rejection and abandonment by their partners. Anxiety also captures the extent to which an individual feels unworthy of love and seeks reassurance and validation from others. Attachment anxiety is the dimension of focus for my Master's research.

Attachment and Conflict

Given the importance of conflict management in predicting relationship satisfaction and stability (Duck, 1988; Bray & Jouriles, 1995; Kayser, 1993), prior research has assessed how attachment patterns, particularly anxiety, predict reactions to conflict with significant others. Interestingly, there appears to be a contradiction in the literature. On the one hand, a number of studies have demonstrated that in conflict attachment anxiety is associated with the display of negative emotions and behaviour. Specifically, individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to be more hostile and angry towards their romantic partners (Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996), are more critical of their partners (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005) and experience higher levels of emotional distress relative to those

lower in attachment anxiety (Campbell et al., 2005; Collins, 1996). However, while less pronounced in the literature, attachment anxiety is also related to greater obliging behaviour during conflict. For example, Pistole and Arricale (2003) found that highly anxious individuals were more likely show “concerns with closeness” during conflict, endorsing items such as “My most important goal is to stop the argument” and “It’s okay that my partner wins most arguments” relative to those low in attachment anxiety.

Although not pertaining to conflict specifically, other studies suggest that individuals high in attachment anxiety are more likely to oblige the wishes of their romantic partners relative to those lower in attachment anxiety. For example, Impett and Peplau (2002) examined the relationship between attachment style and women's willingness to consent to unwanted sex with a dating partner in a hypothetical scenario and examined their reasons for that decision. Results showed that anxiously attached women were indeed the most willing to consent to unwanted sex and this was mostly due to fears that their partner would lose interest in them if they did not do so.

These seemingly contradictory findings have been supported by four studies investigating the relationship between measures of attachment anxiety and conflict style. In all four studies, conflict style was measured according to the five subscales of the Rahim Conflict Inventory (Rahim, 1983) which include Integrating, Avoiding, Dominating, Obliging, and Compromising. Specifically, Levy and Davis (1988) used a categorical measure of attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and found that individuals classified as having an anxious/ambivalent attachment style endorsed a greater number of dominating items (e.g., “I use my influence to get my ideas accepted”), but not obliging items (e.g., “Sometimes I agree with my partner so the conflict will end”). In contrast, and using the same categorical attachment measure, Pistole (1989) found that individuals who had an anxious/ambivalent attachment style were more likely to endorse the obliging items relative to secure or avoidant individuals, but not dominating items. Using a continuous measure of attachment (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), Shi (2003) found that individuals with high levels of attachment anxiety endorsed a greater number of both dominating *and* obliging items (e.g., “I give in to the wishes of my partner”) relative to low anxiety individuals. Finally,

Cann, Norman, Welbourne, and Calhoun (2008) using the latest continuous measure of attachment (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) found attachment anxiety to be significantly related to the dominating conflict style with a correlation analysis, however when using a regression analysis attachment anxiety was only predictive of the obliging conflict style. While inconsistent in measurement and findings, taken together these studies seem to indicate a relationship between attachment anxiety and both dominating and obliging conflict styles with romantic partners.

Other researchers have documented the relationship between attachment anxiety and differential reactions to dissatisfaction in romantic relationships using a typology developed by Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982). These researchers identified four responses to dissatisfaction within a relationship that fall along two continuums: constructive-destructive, and active-passive. The first response is voice and reflects behaving in an active yet constructive manner by trying to improve the situation such as discussing matters with one's partner, making an effort to change one's behaviour, etc. Loyalty is a passive and constructive strategy whereby an individual remains passive and optimistic that conditions will improve and is loyal to the relationship such as engaging in submission to one's partner. The exit strategy is active and destructive, reflecting a tendency to engage in abusive acts such as yelling or hitting, threatening to leave, or in some cases actually ending the relationship. Lastly, the neglect response is passive and destructive, essentially standing aside and letting the situation deteriorate by avoiding discussion of the issue, or reducing interdependence with one's partner. Attachment anxiety has been linked to both the 'loyalty' and 'exit' responses to dissatisfaction which mirror the submission and dominance conflict styles respectively. In a series of four studies, Gaines and colleagues (1997) examined the relationship between attachment classifications and Rusbult's response styles to accommodative dilemmas – situations where a partner acts in a manner that is destructive to the relationship. Similar to findings on attachment anxiety and conflict styles, these authors found the anxious-ambivalent attachment style to sometimes only be related to either the exit or loyalty responses, and other times related to both exit *and* loyalty responses. Therefore, anxious-ambivalent individuals were sometimes likely to react to

negative partner interactions with hostility and defensiveness and other times with passivity and submission.

Similarly, Guerrero (1998) showed that in response to threats of romantic jealousy, individuals high in attachment anxiety not only displayed greater negative affect and surveillance behaviours (i.e. closely monitoring a partner's behaviour), they also showed greater compensatory restoration (i.e. increasing affection). Therefore, in response to conflict, attachment anxiety is associated with two seemingly contradictory behavioural styles- one that is obliging and compensatory and one that is emotionally reactive and dominant. The question then follows, under what conditions are individuals high in attachment anxiety more likely to respond to conflict with hostility and dominance and when are they likely to give in to their partners relative to low anxiety individuals? I propose that attachment-related threat may play an important role in determining when highly anxious individuals are more likely to give in to their partners, and when they are more likely to dominate their partners, in a conflict situation relative to less anxious individuals.

Attachment and Threat

According to Bowlby (1982), upon encountering physical or psychological threats the attachment system becomes activated whereby infants become motivated to maintain or restore proximity to their attachment figures. Mikulincer, Gillath, and Shaver (2002) demonstrated that similar processes occur in adulthood. In particular, the adult attachment system becomes activated under conditions of attachment-related threat (e.g., potential or experienced loss of an attachment figure) as well as general threat (e.g., stress or physical danger). Such conditions automatically activate thoughts of attachment figures which can motivate an individual to increase physical or psychological proximity to them.

By definition, attachment anxiety is associated with fears of rejection and abandonment from attachment figures (Fraley & Waller, 1998). Due to their constant insecurities and doubts, it is understood that highly anxious individuals experience a chronic hyperactivation of the attachment system (Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In this sense, anxious individuals are preoccupied with thoughts of potential rejection and therefore vigilantly monitor their environment for

signs or cues of disapproval or loss of interest, and experience heightened cognitive accessibility of attachment figures (Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002). Indeed, research has demonstrated that highly anxious individuals are hypervigilant in the detection and processing of rejection-related threat cues (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007), can quickly access words related to proximity and distance (e.g., acceptance and rejection; Mikulincer, Gillath & Shaver, 2002; Mikulincer, Birnbaum, Woddis, & Nachmias, 2000), experience difficulty in inhibiting expectations for rejection (Baldwin & Kay, 2003), as well as suppressing thoughts related to partner separation (Mikulincer, Dolev, & Shaver, 2004) relative to individuals low in anxiety.

Given that attachment anxiety is associated with enhanced detection and processing of rejection related stimuli, one might expect that highly anxious individuals would also be more reactive to actual experiences of rejection. Consistent with this idea, individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to become more upset and less accepting following a romantic breakup relative to those who are low in anxiety (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2003; Feeney & Noller, 1992). Further, anxious individuals experience intense negative reactions to long-term separations from their romantic partners (Fraley & Shaver, 1998). While research in the attachment literature has addressed affective reactivity to long term separations and relationship termination, one relatively unexplored area is affective reactions to negative partner behaviour. Understanding how affective reactions are influenced by the behaviour of others is particularly relevant to the study of conflict behaviour. Indeed, partner behaviour is an important situational factor in the study of conflict dynamics.

Because anxious individuals are sensitive to cues of rejection and are reactive to actual experiences of rejection, it follows that anxious individuals should experience greater reactivity to the negative behaviour of others, particularly attachment figures such as romantic partners. While previous research has focused on how anxious individuals respond to threats related to separation or general rejection, to date very little research has explored how anxious individuals respond to actual or perceived negative partner behaviour. In a diary study by Sadikaj, Moskowitz, and Zuroff (2011) individuals reported their perceptions of others' behaviour and their affective reactions during their interactions with

various others including romantic partners. Results revealed that, relative to individuals low on attachment anxiety, highly anxious individuals experienced a greater increase in negative affect when they perceived others' behaviour as cold and less agreeable, particularly when interacting with their romantic partners. While this study did not include objective measures of partner behaviour, this research does suggest that anxious individuals are more reactive to their partner's negative behaviour. Indeed, negative behaviour from a partner might act as a cue of rejection thereby threatening anxious individual's sense of security.

Consistent with this idea, I propose that anxious individuals might be particularly vigilant and sensitive to cues that would indicate a partner's disapproval such as expressions of anger, which is a behaviour highly relevant to the context of conflict within relationships. In terms of understanding conflict dynamics, one of the goals of my research is to study the role that a partner's behaviour might play in predicting the behavioural responses of anxious individuals.

Overview of the Current Research

As outlined above, highly anxious individuals are more likely to perceive rejection-related threats in their environment and are more reactive to signs of potential or actual rejection relative to low anxiety individuals. Therefore, highly anxious individuals may be more likely to engage their partners in conflict simply because they perceive more threats in the relationship. Also, highly anxious individuals experience greater distress in response to perceived threats. These heightened stress responses to threats might explain why highly anxious individuals react to conflict with increased dominance, hostility, and anger relative to low anxiety individuals. Further, highly anxious individuals are dependent on their partners for reassurance and validation (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Therefore, they may engage their partners in conflict to seek reassurance and may become reactive and dominant when they are not receiving the validation they so desperately desire.

On the other hand, research has shown that in response to threats highly anxious individuals use hyperactivating strategies aimed at restoring closeness and intimacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007). These strategies also involve reducing the stress that is being experienced. Therefore, I propose that in

order to reduce the stress and tension experienced and to restore their threatened sense of closeness and intimacy, highly anxious individuals may give in to their partners to resolve the issue. Further, I propose that this tendency of highly anxious individuals to defer to their partners is moderated by threat. In particular, I hypothesize that commitment-undermining feedback or expressed anger from a romantic partner will act as cues of rejection thereby activating the attachment system which will motivate anxious individuals to seek resolution by deferring to their partners in order to restore psychological proximity to them.

In summary, I will assess two major hypotheses in a series of three studies. First, I predict that, relative to individuals low in attachment anxiety, highly anxious individuals will demonstrate both dominance and submission in response to conflict with a romantic partner. Second, I predict that the tendency of highly anxious individuals to defer to a romantic partner in conflict will be exacerbated under conditions of threat, such as potential loss of a partner or expressed anger by a partner. Alternatively, I predict that highly anxious individuals will be less likely to display submission, and more likely to display dominance towards their partners under conditions of low threat, relative to low anxiety individuals.

The objective of Study One was to a) confirm previous findings that attachment anxiety is related to both dominant and submissive conflict styles and b) extend previous research by using measures that are currently viewed as the best for both attachment anxiety and conflict styles. In Study Two, I introduced the role of attachment-related threat (commitment-undermining feedback from a romantic partner) in determining the likelihood that highly anxious individuals would give in to their partners while resolving an issue of contention in the relationship in an imagined scenario. Finally, Study Three was a diary study that captured reports of real life conflicts between romantic partners over a 10-day period. In this study, I investigated the relationship between attachment anxiety and the nature of experienced conflicts with romantic partners, and also introduced the role of partner anger in moderating the relationship between attachment anxiety and dominating versus obliging reactions to conflict.

Chapter 2

Study One

In this study my goal was to clarify and extend prior research exploring the relationship between attachment anxiety and conflict styles using measures that are currently viewed as the best for both attachment anxiety and conflict styles. While inconsistent in the literature, attachment anxiety has been shown to be related to two seemingly contradictory conflict styles. Specifically, attachment anxiety is related to both the endorsement of dominating items (“I use my influence to get my ideas accepted”) as well as obliging items (e.g., “I give in to the wishes of my partner”). Therefore, my goal was to clarify previous research by replicating the observed relationship between attachment anxiety and dominating and obliging conflict styles.

This study extends prior research in two ways. First, I operationalized attachment using the current standard of continuous measures of anxiety and avoidance (as opposed to the typological measures utilized in past research). Second, while previous researchers have used a revised version of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II, Rahim, 1983) originally intended to assess conflict in the workplace, I utilized a new conflict inventory specific to romantic relationships: the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS; Zacchilli, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2009).

Consistent with prior research, I expected that anxiety would be positively correlated with both dominating and obliging subscales of the RPCS. The RPCS includes an additional ‘Interactional Reactivity’ sub-scale not captured by previous measures. Given that attachment anxiety is associated with increased emotional reactivity in conflict with romantic partners, I expected that attachment anxiety would also be positively correlated with interactional reactivity.

I was also interested in testing potential gender differences in the relationship between attachment orientations and conflict styles. There is a large literature documenting differences in the communication and conflict styles of men and women (White, 1989; Gayle, Preiss, & Allen, 2002; Brahnham et al., 2005; Woodin, 2011). Additionally, results from a recent meta-analysis (Del Giudice, 2011) involving over 100

studies indicated a gender difference in levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance. Therefore, while I did not make any specific predictions, I was interested in testing whether the relationship between attachment orientations and conflict styles varied as a function of gender.

Method

Participants

Introductory psychology students ($N = 870$: 198 men, 643 women, 29 gender not indicated) from Queen's University participated for course credit. The majority of participants identified themselves as Caucasian (78%) and were between 17-44 years of age ($M = 18.20$, $SD = 1.83$). Approximately 60% of participants were single, 30% were in a steady exclusive dating relationship, and 1% were engaged or married. Participants had completed both the ECR-R and RPCS in the pre-screening package distributed to introductory psychology students at the beginning of the first term.

Materials

Attachment Anxiety. The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale- Revised (ECR-R: Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) assesses an individual's level of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in close relationships (see Appendix A). This 36-item questionnaire includes 18 items which measure anxiety (e.g., "I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me") and 18 items which measure avoidance (e.g., "I prefer not to show my partner how I feel deep down"). Responses are indicated on a scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) and total scores for each dimension are calculated using the mean of the respective 18 items. Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire according to how they generally experience relationships, not necessarily what is occurring in a current relationship. In this sample, both anxiety (Cronbach's alpha = .92) and avoidance (Cronbach's alpha = .93) were found to be reliable and were correlated $r(870) = .43$, $p < .001$ ¹.

Conflict Style. The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2009) is a 39-item questionnaire designed to measure how individuals handle conflict with romantic partners

¹ While some researchers report orthogonality between anxiety and avoidance (Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer et al., 2002), others report correlations similar to those reported here ranging from .3-.45 (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Fraley, 2005).

according to six subscales (see Appendix B). These subscales include compromise (e.g., “We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us”), avoidance (e.g., “I avoid conflict with my partner”), interactional reactivity (e.g., “When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly”), separation (e.g., “When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later”), domination (e.g., “When we argue or fight, I try to win”), and submission (e.g., “I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue”). I added 2 items to the submission subscale (items 40 and 41). Responses are indicated on a scale from 1 (*Strongly agree*) to 7 (*Strongly disagree*) and total scores for each subscale are calculated using the mean of the respective items. Participants were informed that the questionnaire concerned conflict in the context of a close relationship, such as a romantic relationship. All 6 subscales demonstrated acceptable reliability (see Table 1).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Attachment and Conflict Measures

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α
Attachment Anxiety	3.44	1.11	.92
Attachment Avoidance	2.93	1.06	.93
Compromise	5.59	0.93	.95
Avoidance	4.93	1.42	.88
Reactivity	2.58	1.20	.86
Separation	3.80	1.40	.89
Dominance	3.57	1.47	.92
Submission	3.13	1.28	.93

Results

Bivariate Pearson correlations among the attachment orientations and the six conflict styles can be found in Table 2. Looking at these correlations, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were both negatively related to compromise, and positively related to interactional reactivity, separation, dominance, and submission.

In order to better understand the relationships between attachment orientations and conflict styles, multiple linear regressions were performed. Prior to conducting the regressions, the gender variable was

recoded such that women were assigned a value of 0 and men were assigned a value of 1. Following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991), anxiety and avoidance scores were mean centered in order to reduce multicollinearity. I then computed the avoidance x anxiety, avoidance x gender, and anxiety x gender two-way interaction terms, as well as the anxiety x avoidance x gender three-way interaction term. Any significant interactions were decomposed using simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991). In order to control for any effects of relationship status, this variable was also included in the regression models as a predictor.

Table 2

Correlations among Attachment Dimensions and Conflict Styles

	Compromise	Avoidance	Reactivity	Separation	Dominance	Submission
Attachment Anxiety	-.28*	.03	.37*	.21*	.20*	.31*
Attachment Avoidance	-.35*	.06	.17*	.18*	.12*	.15*
Compromise	-	.14*	-.39*	-.06	-.29*	-.18*
Avoidance		-	-.16*	.03	-.10*	.22*
Reactivity			-	.26*	.47*	.30*
Separation				-	.24*	.22*
Dominance					-	.17*

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two tailed).

N = 870

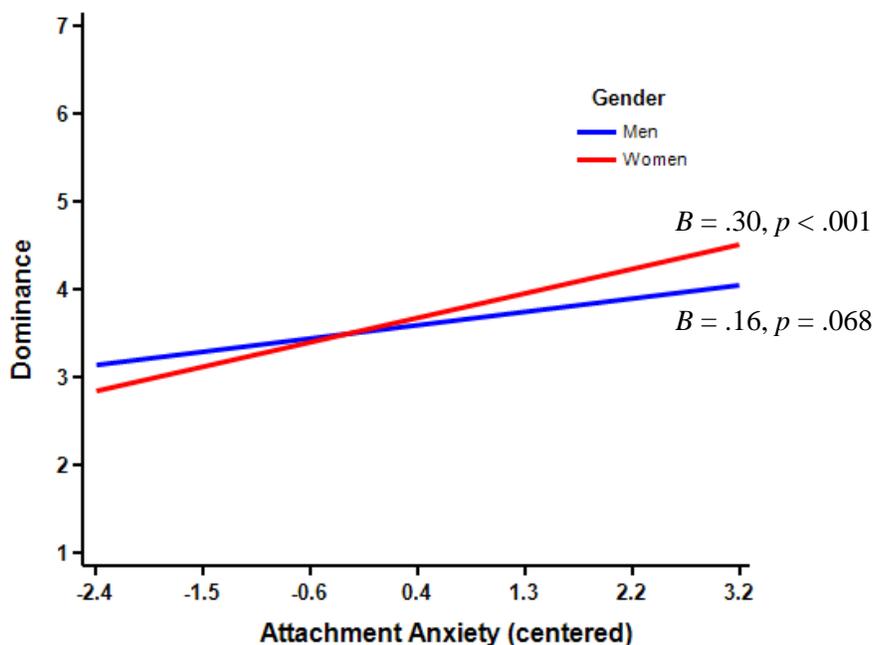
Results revealed a number of main effects for attachment anxiety. Consistent with my hypotheses, attachment anxiety was positively related to interactional reactivity, $B = .30$, $t(843) = 3.75$, $p < .001$, and submission, $B = .21$, $t(839) = 2.50$, $p = .013$, and was also positively related to the separation conflict style, $B = .18$, $t(841) = 1.95$, $p = .052$. However, the main effect of attachment anxiety on dominance was not significant, $B = .04$, $t(840) = .37$, $p = .715^2$.

² The main effect of attachment anxiety on dominance was significant without gender in the model, $B = .23$, $t(866) = 4.53$, $p < .001$.

There were also main effects of attachment avoidance. Attachment avoidance was negatively related to compromise, $B = -.41$, $t(844) = -6.60$, $p < .001$, and was positively related to dominance, $B = .34$, $t(840) = 3.20$, $p = .001$.

The main effects of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were qualified by a number of two-way interactions. Specifically, there was a gender x anxiety interaction on dominance, $B = .26$, $t(840) = 2.23$, $p = .026$. I decomposed this interaction using simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991), by examining the effects of gender on levels of dominance in conflict at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the group mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the group mean) levels of attachment anxiety. For women, attachment anxiety was significantly positively related to dominance, $B = .30$, $t(848) = 5.92$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 1). However, for men the same relationship was marginal, $B = .16$, $t(848) = 1.83$, $p = .068$. Therefore, it seems that the relationship between attachment anxiety and dominance is moderated by gender such that the relationship is stronger for women relative to men.

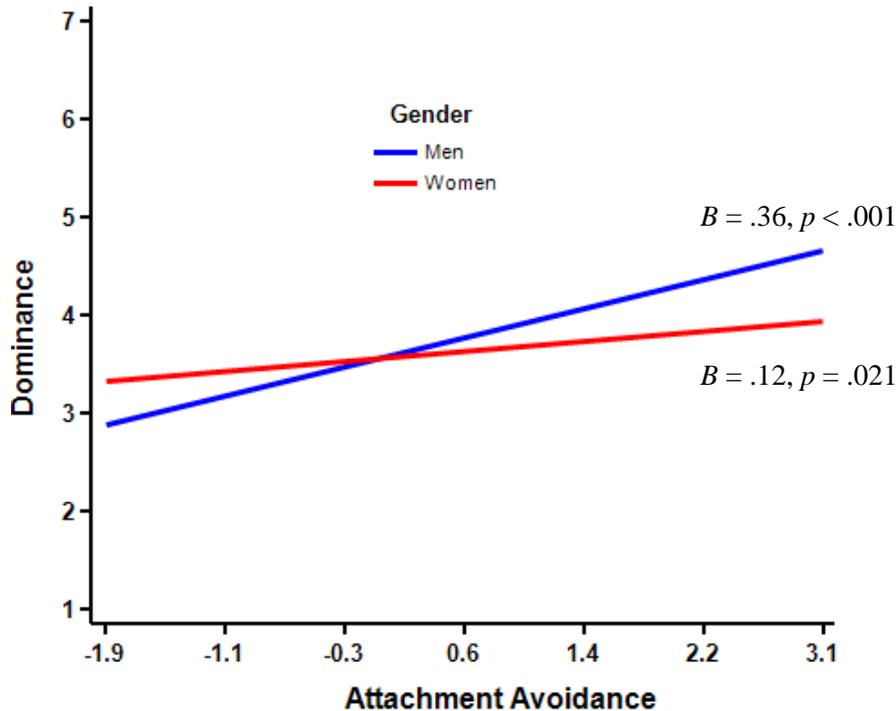
Figure 1. Interaction between attachment anxiety and gender on the conflict style dominance.



There was a significant two-way interaction between avoidance and gender on dominance, $B = -.38$, $t(851) = -3.17$, $p = .019$. Using simple slopes analyses, I examined the effects of gender on levels of

dominance in conflict at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the group mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the group mean) levels of attachment avoidance. The relationship between attachment avoidance and dominance was stronger for men, $B = .36$, $t(848) = 3.72$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2), relative to women, $B = .12$, $t(848) = 2.31$, $p = .021$.

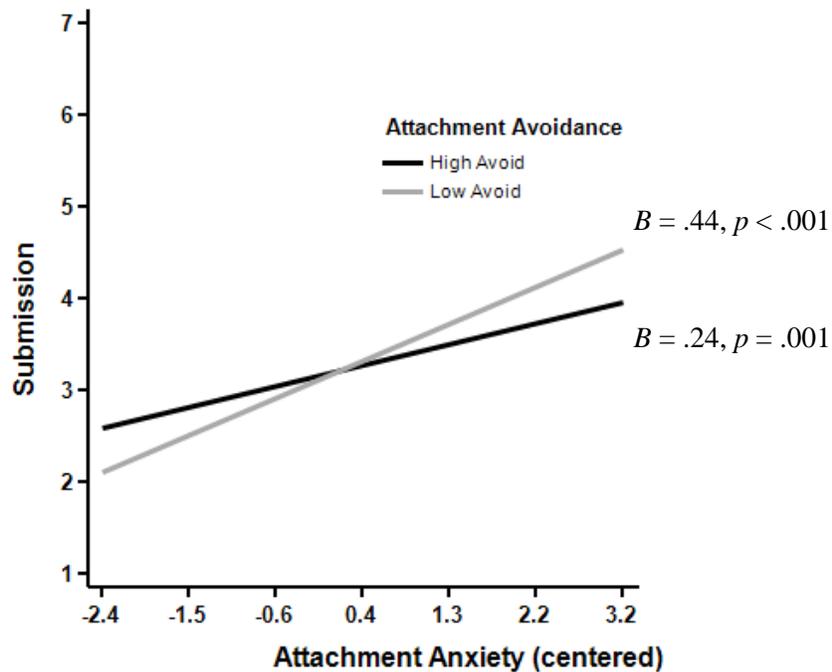
Figure 2. Interaction between attachment avoidance and gender on the conflict style dominance.



This indicates that the individuals most likely to display dominance in response to conflict with romantic partners are highly anxious women, and highly avoidant men.

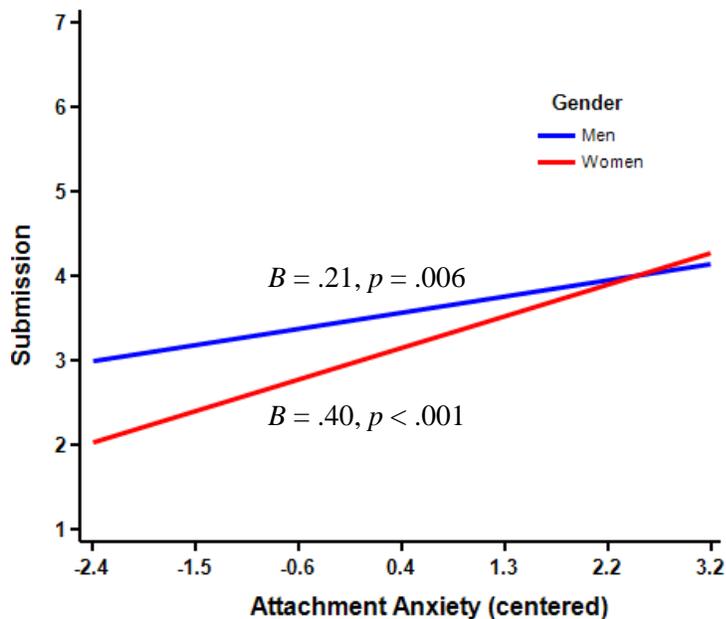
There was a significant two-way interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance on submission, $B = -.13$, $t(839) = -1.96$, $p = .050$. Using simple slopes analysis, I examined the effects of attachment anxiety on submission at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the group mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the group mean) levels of attachment avoidance. The relationship between attachment anxiety and submission was stronger for those low in attachment avoidance, $B = .44$, $t(862) = 8.42$, $p < .001$, relative to those higher in attachment avoidance, $B = .24$, $t(862) = 4.02$, $p = .001$ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on the conflict style submission.



In addition, the two-way interaction between attachment anxiety and gender on submission was marginal, $B = .17, t(839) = 1.79, p = .074$. As a post-hoc analysis, I used simple slopes analysis to examine the effects of gender on levels of submission in conflict at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the group mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the group mean) levels of attachment anxiety. The relationship between attachment anxiety and submission was stronger for women, $B = .40, t(847) = 9.56, p < .001$, than for men, $B = .21, t(847) = 2.74, p = .006$ (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Interaction between attachment anxiety and gender on the conflict style submission.



Discussion

Previous research on attachment and conflict styles had demonstrated that attachment anxiety is related to both submissive and dominant conflict styles. However, these studies were inconsistent both in findings and in measurement. In terms of findings, some studies reported a correlation solely between anxiety and submission (Pistole, 1989), anxiety and dominance (Levy & Davis, 1988), both anxiety and dominance (Shi, 2003), or one versus the other depending on statistical analysis (Cann et al., 2008). Further, there were a number of inconsistencies in the measurement of attachment style. In particular, some used categorical measures (Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989) while others used continuous measures (Shi, 2002). In fact, only one study used the ECR-R which is currently viewed as the best measure of attachment orientations (Cann et al., 2008). Further, all of these studies used a revised version of the ROCI to measure conflict styles, a measure originally designed to capture organizational conflict styles.

In this study, I was able to successfully demonstrate the relationship between attachment anxiety and the submissive conflict style. Interestingly, I also demonstrated that the relationship between attachment anxiety and dominance is moderated by gender. In fact, this study reported a number of

interactions among attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, and gender in moderating relationships with conflict styles. Specifically, the relationship between attachment anxiety and submission was moderated by both gender and by attachment avoidance. In particular, anxious women were more likely to demonstrate submission and dominance relative to anxious men. However, avoidance also interacted with gender to predict dominance such that the relationship between attachment avoidance was stronger for men than for women. In other words, the individuals most likely to display dominance were highly anxious women and highly avoidant men.

Further, the hypothesis that attachment anxiety would be positively related to the submissive conflict style was more pronounced for those low in attachment avoidance relative to those high in attachment avoidance. Individuals high in attachment anxiety and low in attachment avoidance are characterized by not only fears of rejection and abandonment, but also by a strong desire for closeness and intimacy with their partners. In this way, these individuals have a strong desire to be in relationships and also would be those most threatened by the potential or actual loss of an attachment figure. Therefore, it follows that individuals who are high in anxiety and low in avoidance would be most likely to demonstrate submission - the stakes are perceived to be especially high for them in conflict situations, given the potential for partner rejection and abandonment.

This research also extended previous research by demonstrating the relationship between attachment anxiety and the conflict style interactional reactivity. Reactivity captures the extent to which conflicts with one's partner are emotionally intense and emotionally and physically abusive. Past research has shown that highly anxious individuals experience increased anger and hostility (Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson et al., 1996), are more critical (Campbell et al., 2005), and experience greater distress in conflict with their partners (Collins, 1996) relative to those lower in anxiety. Therefore, this finding is consistent with previous research. These results also demonstrate the relationship between attachment anxiety and the separation conflict style which has not been previously documented.

In summary, while these findings confirm that attachment anxiety is related to both dominance (although this relationship was moderated by gender and attachment avoidance) and submission during

conflict with romantic partners, this presents a bit of a paradox. Specifically, how can highly anxious individuals react to conflict with both dominance and submission? I propose that attachment-related threat is one such condition that determines whether anxious individuals will submit to their partners during conflict. Specifically, threat should activate the attachment system and should motivate highly anxious individuals to engage in hyperactivating strategies aimed at restoring closeness and intimacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007). Specifically, I propose that when their sense of security is threatened, anxious individuals should be motivated to seek resolution by deferring to their partners in an attempt to restore feelings of closeness and security. In contrast, I predict that when their sense of security is not threatened (under conditions of low threat) highly anxious individuals will be more likely to display dominance towards their partners relative to low anxiety individuals.

Therefore, the purpose of Study Two is to introduce the role of threat in determining the likelihood that highly anxious individuals will defer to their partners in a situation where their preferences and goals conflict with those of their partner, relative to low anxiety individuals. Further, I propose that this may be especially true for those also low in attachment avoidance, consistent with the findings from Study One. Given that individuals high in anxiety and low in avoidance are characterized by both fears of rejection and abandonment as well as strong desires for emotional closeness and intimacy, these individuals may find rejecting feedback from a potential romantic partner to be especially threatening.

Chapter 3

Study Two

The purpose of Study Two was to introduce the role of threat in moderating the relationship between attachment anxiety and submission in conflict with a romantic partner. Instead of asking people to report their conflict styles, I provided participants with a vignette that describes a situation in which their interests and the interests of their partner are in conflict and then I asked how they would likely respond. While this scenario does not outline an argument per se, it does outline a situation of conflict in the relationship which could potentially lead to separation and even relationship termination. The participant must ultimately decide to pursue their wishes at the expense of the relationship, or to defer to their partner at the expense of personal gain. Further, this vignette contains a rejection component whereby the partner reacts in either a rejecting or non-rejecting manner. I did not predict a main effect of attachment anxiety, given that attachment anxiety is related to both dominance and submission. Therefore, without taking into account rejection, attachment anxiety should not be predictive of either submission or dominance. Specifically, I predicted that attachment anxiety would interact with threat, such that under conditions of high threat (i.e. when the partner is rejecting versus non-rejecting), individuals high in attachment anxiety would demonstrate submission and defer to the wishes of a romantic partner, relative to low anxiety individuals. I propose that when highly anxious participants do not receive the reassurance and validation that is desired, and face a partner who seems unclear about the future of the relationship, their sense of security will be threatened. In other words, rejecting feedback from a romantic partner should act as a psychological threat, activating the attachment system and making the tendency to defer to one's partner more likely, particularly for anxious individuals. Alternatively, I predict that under conditions of low threat (when the partner is reassuring) individuals high in attachment anxiety will be *less* likely to demonstrate submission relative to those low in attachment anxiety. Here, when individuals high in attachment anxiety perceive low levels of threat, they may be more likely to demonstrate dominance in asserting their positions and be motivated to pursue personal goals.

Method

Participants

This sample included 136 female heterosexual undergraduate students³ at Queen's University who were either enrolled in introductory psychology ($n = 129$) or who were enrolled in other courses and had agreed to be contacted for participation in psychological studies for monetary compensation ($n = 7$). In terms of their relationship status, 106 women were single, 29 were in exclusive dating relationships, and 2 participants were engaged or married. I selected participants based on their responses to a pre-screening package administered at the outset of the school year. Only those students who had completed the Experiences in Close Relationships- Revised scale (ECR-R: Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000; see Appendix A) were asked to participate. Consistent with Study One, in this sample both anxiety (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) and avoidance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$) were found to be reliable and were correlated, $r(136) = .40, p < .001$.

Procedure

Upon arrival to the lab, participants were informed that they would be reading a brief scenario in the context of a romantic relationship and would be asked to indicate how they would likely respond (see Appendix C). After informed consent was obtained (see Appendix D), individuals were randomly assigned to either the rejection or control condition. In both the non-rejection and rejection conditions, participants were asked to imagine the following scenario:

Imagine that you have been dating your partner for 18 months and that your relationship is going very well; you can easily imagine being with him long-term. Four months ago, you and your partner decided that you would both participate in an exchange program in England for two terms (one full year). You have been discussing and planning the details together for quite some time now and decided that after the school year in England you would continue your travels and discover parts of Europe together. You think that this will be a great opportunity for you and will

³Only female participants were recruited as Study One has indicated a stronger relationship between attachment anxiety and both submission and dominance during conflict with a significant other.

look great on your resume. You can't believe you'll be there in a couple of months. But one day your partner calls to say that he has something to tell you... He's thought about it, and decided that he should stay at Queen's instead, as he's discovered that a mandatory course for his program is only offered on main campus. Although he truly wishes he could go, he's going to cancel his application because he thinks that this is the best thing for his career. Now you don't know what to do. On one hand, you've been excited about going away with him to study and travel Europe for quite some time now, but you can't imagine being away from him for such a long time. You ask your partner what would happen to your relationship if you were to decide to go.

After reading this scenario, participants received one of two partner responses according to their assigned condition. Therefore, the rejection manipulation was the partner's response. Specifically, in the non-rejection condition the partner replies, "It's just one year, we'll make it work" thereby concluding with a reassuring response and nullifying fears of the relationship ending should the participant decide to go on exchange. Alternatively, in the rejection condition the partner replies, "Of course we'd try, but a year's a long time" making salient the possibility of the relationship not surviving should the participant choose to pursue personal goals.

Dependent Measure

The dependent measure was completed directly after reading the vignette. One item was used to assess the degree to which the participant deferred to the wishes of their partner which meant forgoing the exchange experience and staying at Queens University with their partner. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate how they would likely respond on a scale from 1 (*I would stay at Queen's with my partner*) to 10 (*I would go on exchange without my partner*). Responses were reversed scored such that higher numbers indicate greater levels of submission. In other words, higher scores indicate that participants would be more likely to decide to stay home with their partners at the expense of personal gain. After providing their responses, participants were debriefed and thanked for their time (see Appendix E).

Manipulation Check

To test the internal validity of the vignette, participants were also asked to indicate how serious, realistic, and stressful the scenario was, how upset they would be in this situation, and how difficult the decision was to make on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very*). I performed an exploratory factor analysis to examine the dimensionality of the items. Using principal axis factor analysis, the items serious, stressful, upset, and difficult loaded strongly on a single “stressful” factor (loadings between .51 - .90), whereas the item asking how realistic the scenario was loaded on a separate factor (loading of .46). Given these results, I combined the four stressful items into a mean aggregate stressful score which demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .79).

Results

Prior to testing my hypotheses, I first verified the rejection manipulation by conducting t-tests examining potential mean differences between the two conditions on the dependent measure stressful and realistic. There was no difference in the extent to which individuals found the scenario to be realistic between those in the rejection condition ($M = 5.83, SD = .99$) and those in the non-rejection condition ($M = 5.74, SD = 1.16$), $t(135) = -.52, p = .607$. However, individuals in the rejection condition found the scenario to be significantly more stressful ($M = 5.58, SD = 1.01$) relative to those in the non-rejection condition ($M = 5.05, SD = 1.10$), $t(72) = -2.95, p = .004$. Therefore, the rejection vignette was perceived to be more distressing relative to the non-rejection vignette.

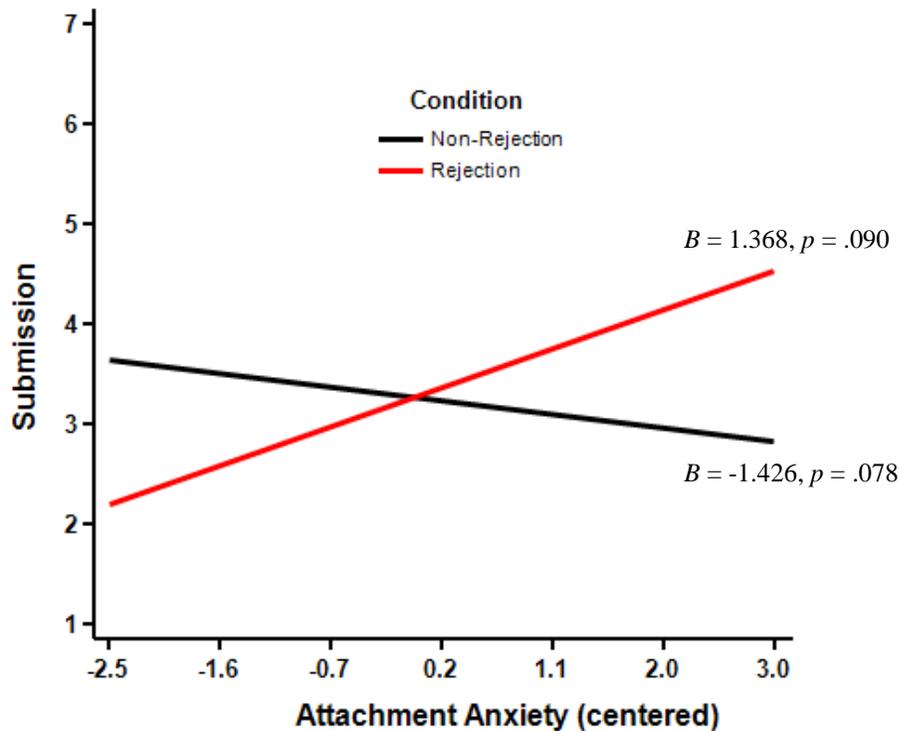
In order to rule out the possibility that individuals in exclusive committed relationships responded differently than individuals who were not in exclusive committed relationships, I conducted a t-test on the dependent measure submission between the two groups. There was no significant difference in submission scores between those in exclusive relationships ($M = 3.61, SD = 2.07$) and those who were single or not in exclusive relationships ($M = 2.19, SD = .39$), $t(135) = -1.06, p = .292$.

Next, I conducted a multiple regression to assess the interactive effects of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and condition on the dependent measure submission. First, the non-rejection condition was coded as 0 and rejection condition was coded as 1. Following the recommendations of

Aiken and West (1991), anxiety and avoidance scores were mean centered in order to reduce multicollinearity. I then computed the following two-way interaction terms using the mean centered anxiety and avoidance scores and the condition variable: anxiety x condition, avoidance x condition, and anxiety x avoidance. Lastly, I computed the three-way interaction term between anxiety, avoidance, and condition. Results from this analysis were not significant.

I then decided to run the regression without avoidance in the model given that my primary hypotheses pertained specifically to attachment anxiety. Therefore, condition, mean centered anxiety, and the condition x anxiety interaction term were entered into the regression as predictors on the dependent variable submission. There were no significant main effects. However, there was a marginally significant two-way interaction between attachment anxiety and condition, $B = -.65$, $t(136) = -1.95$, $p = .054$ (see Figure 5). Accordingly, this interaction was then decomposed using simple slopes analysis. In other words, the effects of condition on the tendency to defer to a partner's wishes at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the group mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the group mean) levels of attachment anxiety were assessed. Neither of the simple slopes were significant at one standard deviation above and below the mean of attachment anxiety, however there were weak trends consistent with my hypotheses. While one standard deviation is recommended by Aiken and West (1991) as a standard for which to examine simple slopes, in order to determine whether the simple slopes would be improved at other values of attachment anxiety, I decided to examine the simple slopes of both conditions at two standard deviations above and below the mean. At two standard deviations above and below the mean of attachment anxiety, the simple slopes for both conditions were improved and marginal. Specifically, when their partner was rejecting, women high in attachment anxiety (two standard deviations above the mean) were somewhat more likely to demonstrate submission relative to those low in attachment anxiety (two standard deviations below the mean), $B = 1.368$, $t(136) = 1.710$, $p = .090$ (see Figure 5). Alternatively, when their partner was reassuring, women high in attachment anxiety were somewhat *less* likely to demonstrate submission, relative to those low in anxiety, $B = -1.426$, $t(136) = -1.30$, $p = .078$.

Figure 5. Interaction between attachment anxiety and rejection condition on the tendency to defer to a partner's wishes in an imagined scenario.



Overall, these results provide qualified evidence to suggest that attachment-related threat plays a role in determining when highly anxious women are more or less likely to give in to their romantic partners in a hypothetical situation that involved working through an issue of contention in a relationship that could potentially lead to separation or relationship termination, relative to low anxiety women.

Discussion

I proposed that a rejecting response from a romantic partner activates the attachment system for highly anxious individuals and motivates them to engage in hyperactivating strategies aimed at restoring perceived closeness and intimacy with their romantic partners (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007), relative to individuals low in attachment anxiety. Although the simple slopes were not significant, the pattern of data showed evidence of trends suggesting that for highly anxious individuals, the potential for rejection and relationship termination might activate relationship-maintenance and partner-preservation goals relative to more self-enhancement goals. Indeed, this indicates that highly anxious individuals may

not be capitalizing on self interested goals even in hypothetical situations where it may be the more adaptive response (i.e. staying with a partner whose commitment is questionable). Therefore, this research provides some indication that upon imagining conflict situations where the potential for rejection or abandonment is likely, highly anxious individuals may engage in proximity seeking behaviour to restore a sense of security and to decrease experienced stress by giving in to their partners, even when it may be at their own expense. On the other hand, the pattern of means show evidence of a weak trend that individuals high in attachment anxiety demonstrate less submission in response to partner reassurance. Given that individuals high in attachment anxiety have a strong desire for reassurance, they might find such feedback especially comforting relative to those low in anxiety which might motivate them to engage in more self-enhancing goals which they might normally find to be quite challenging. To reiterate, although the pattern of the simple slopes were consistent with my hypotheses, they were not significant. Therefore, these results will need to be replicated before any conclusions can be made regarding the nature of the interaction between attachment anxiety and threat on submissive versus dominating tendencies in conflict with romantic partners.

While this research provides qualified support for my hypotheses, there are other forms of threat that are important to study in the context of more heated conflicts. Specifically, it is important to examine whether more intense negative partner reactions such as anger serve as an important type of threat cue that highly anxious individuals would respond to and is therefore worth investigation. Here, partner anger serves as a cue that the partner is disapproving and rejecting, which could lead to possible relationship termination. Further, while the vignette methodology affords a great degree of control and precision, there is more detail and ecological validity that can be gleaned from studying conflicts between partners as it naturally occurs. Therefore, the goal of Study Three was to assess the interaction between attachment anxiety, partner behaviour, and reactions to real life conflicts with romantic partners in a daily diary study. One limitation of Study Two is that I only recruited female participants; in Study Three my goal was to broaden this sample and include both genders.

Chapter 4

Study Three

The first goal of Study Three was to assess the relationship between attachment orientations and the nature of real life conflicts with romantic partners. In one prior diary study, Tidwell, Reis, and Shaver (1996) examined differences in the quality of social interactions with various others according to individuals' attachment categorizations (secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant) over the course of 7 days. Results indicated that avoidant individuals reported experiencing more negative emotions in interactions with romantic partners relative to secure or anxious-ambivalent individuals. Further, there were no differences between attachment styles in the experience of positive emotions, conflict, or the quality (pleasantness) of their interactions with romantic partners. This current study has a different focus, examining the relationship between attachment dimensions and reactions to conflict with romantic partners including negative partner behaviour in the form of anger.

As outlined previously, highly anxious individuals are more likely to perceive threats in their environment and are more reactive to signs of potential or actual rejection relative to low anxiety individuals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007). Indeed, highly anxious individuals may be more likely to engage their partners in conflict simply because they perceive more threats in the relationship. Therefore, I predicted that attachment anxiety would be predictive of overall lower quality interactions and a greater number of conflicts experienced with their partners over a 10 day period.

Previous research has shown that individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to be more hostile and angry towards their romantic partners (Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson et al., 1996), more critical of their partners (Campbell et al., 2005) and experience higher levels of emotional distress relative to those lower in attachment anxiety (Campbell et al., 2005; Collins, 1996). Therefore, I predicted that highly anxious individuals would experience greater distress, and would engage in more partner criticism and also swearing during their conflicts, relative to low anxiety individuals. Given that attachment anxiety is correlated with less effective conflict styles such as the ability to compromise in order to reach a solution

(Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989), I also predicted attachment anxiety to be predictive of leaving the argument with the issue being less resolved.

The second goal of Study Three was to replicate the interaction between attachment anxiety and threat on submission in Study Two and demonstrate that highly anxious individuals are more likely to defer to their partners under conditions of high threat, and are less likely to defer to their partners under conditions of low threat. However, I hoped to extend prior research by introducing the role of a specific type of rejection-related threat - partner anger - in moderating the relationship between attachment anxiety and submission to romantic partners in the context of real life conflicts. In such a situation, the level and intensity of the partner's anger may serve as a naturalistic and powerful threat cue which should activate the attachment system, given that expressed anger is an explicit indicator of a partner's disapproval. Indeed, it may be the case that when a partner becomes angry, the threat of rejection is particularly salient and anxious individuals may then switch from conflict engagement to conflict resolution strategies aimed at repairing the threatened bond.

Consistent with the findings of Study Two, I predict that in response to high levels of expressed anger from their partner highly anxious individuals will experience increased affective reactivity and will be more likely to give in to their romantic partners relative to those low in attachment anxiety. In contrast, low anxiety individuals may be reactive to partner anger in such a way that they are less likely to defer to their partners in response to high levels of anger, relative to a less heated response. This would be consistent with the findings from Study Two showing that individuals with low levels of attachment anxiety were somewhat less likely to defer to their partners under conditions of threat. As a secondary prediction, I expect that individuals high in attachment anxiety might be more likely to demonstrate dominance under conditions of low threat such as low partner anger relative to individuals low in attachment anxiety. Here, it may be the case that highly anxious individuals are focused on having their views validated by their partners. This is in line with research demonstrating that reassurance and validation seeking is more typical of individuals high in attachment anxiety, relative to those lower in attachment anxiety (Davila, 2001). When their partners are not reactive emotionally and therefore the

threat of potential rejection is low, individuals high in attachment anxiety might be focused on having their own needs met which include having their partners understand their perspectives and ultimately, give in. In other words, individuals high in attachment anxiety may be more likely to push their agendas and continue to engage the argument in attempt to seek validation and get their partners to submit in return.

In summary, the purpose of Study Three was fourfold: to a) assess the relationship between attachment orientations and the nature of real life conflicts with romantic partners, b) replicate the interaction between attachment anxiety and threat from Study Two and demonstrate that highly anxious individuals are more likely to defer to their partners under conditions of high threat, and less likely to defer to their partners under conditions of low threat, c) extend previous findings by demonstrating the role of partner anger in moderating the relationship between attachment anxiety and submissive versus dominant reactions to conflict, and d) increase this project's ecological validity by examining actual reactions to experienced conflicts with romantic partners relative to predicted reactions to imagined conflicts.

Method

Participants

A total of 150 introductory psychology students (127 women, 23 men, ages 17-24, $M_{\text{age}} = 18.30$)⁴ participated in this study for course credit. Participants were all in heterosexual dating relationships, with relationships between 1-73 months in duration ($M = 18.60$ months). Participants had all completed the ECR-R attachment measure (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) during pre-screening at the beginning of the term. Overall, response rates were high with participants completing an average of 9.46 diaries out of the 10 ($SD = 1.23$, range: 2-10). While 4 participants completed less than half of the responses, 146 participants completed 9 or more of the diaries.

⁴ Due to the relatively low number of male participants, gender was not included as a predictor in the regression models. Therefore all results for Study Three are presented using the entire sample.

Materials and Procedure

Participants had agreed to be contacted for participation in psychological studies and had provided their email in the pre-screening package. I contacted participants through email inviting them to take part in a study examining how individuals think and behave in daily interactions with their romantic partners. If interested, participants were asked to click the web link provided in the email where they were directed to read the letter of information (see Appendix F) and give their consent to participate by checking the appropriate box. Participants were informed that in order to participate they would need access to a computer and the internet for 10 consecutive days.

I sent participants an email every evening with a web link to the online survey (see Appendix G) and instructed participants to complete the online questionnaire by noon the following day. This questionnaire was administered via SurveyMonkey and asked about the quality of participants' daily interactions with their partner and the nature of any conflicts that arose that day. Specifically, participants were asked to report the overall quality of the interaction⁵ with their partner that day on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unpleasant*) to 7 (*very pleasant*). Participants also had the option of selecting the response "I did not interact with my partner today". If participants did not interact with their partner, they did not complete the rest of the survey and were directed to the end of the questionnaire. Participants who did interact with their partners were then asked whether or not they had experienced conflict with their partner. Again, if they answered "no" they did not complete the rest of the survey and were directed to the end of the questionnaire. If participants did experience conflict, they were asked to report characteristics of the *most serious* conflict experienced that day. Participants were asked to not only self report their affect and behaviour during the conflict, but also to report their perceptions of their partner's affect and behavior. Specifically, participants were asked to report in percentages (totalling 100: e.g., 50% me, 50% partner) the extent to which they and their partner were at fault, started the conflict, did the talking/arguing, ultimately gave in, and who "won" the argument. Participants were also asked the extent

⁵ Participants were informed that interacting included any communication medium including (but not limited to) texting, talking on the phone, video chatting (e.g. skype) and in-person interactions.

to which they and their partner were upset and angry on a scale from 1(*not at all*) to 7(*extremely*) and how much they and their partner swore and criticized the other on a scale from 1(*not at all*) to 7(*quite a lot*). Lastly, I asked participants to report the extent to which the issue was ultimately resolved on a scale from 1(*not at all*) to 7(*completely*). After the 10th day had passed, I emailed participants a copy of the debriefing form and thanked them for their participation (see Appendix H).

Results

I first performed multiple linear regressions to assess how attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance predicted overall patterns of conflict behaviour over the 10 day period. Specifically, I was interested in assessing whether attachment anxiety would be associated with lower quality interactions and a greater number of conflicts experienced. I also predicted that attachment anxiety would be related to starting more conflicts given that individuals high in attachment anxiety are hypervigilant to signs of potential threat and are highly reactive to experiences of rejection. Further, when engaged in conflict, I expected that attachment anxiety would be associated with being more upset and angry, engaging in more partner criticism and swearing, and with the conflict issue ultimately being less resolved. To test these predictions, I first computed the dependent measures by calculating mean aggregate scores across all 10 reports of the following measures: quality of interaction, total number of conflicts, self upset, partner upset, self angry, partner angry, self criticism, partner criticism, self swearing, partner swearing, fault, started conflict, gave in, won, and conflict resolved (see Table 3 for descriptives)⁶.

Prior to running any analyses, I ran an exploratory factor analysis to examine the dimensionality of all items in order to determine if any items could be combined into meaningful subscales. I ran one analysis on the self items and one analysis on the partner items. Using principal axis factoring, two meaningful factors were extracted for the self items. The first factor accounted for 27.87% of the total

⁶ It is important to note that the measures fault, started conflict, gave in, and won are relative meaning that they capture both self and partner behaviour. For example, a start conflict value of 60 implies that the fight was started 60% by the participant, and 40% by the partner. Because responses summed to 100, they provide redundant information, therefore only the self percentages were used.

variance and was comprised of strong loadings for the items self angry, self criticism, self upset, and self swearing (loadings of .75, .61, .47 and .48 respectively).

Table 3

Descriptives for Dependent Measures Averaged Across the 10 days

		Mean	SD
Original items	Interaction	5.71	0.82
	Total conflict	1.51	1.51
	Self upset	4.45	1.34
	Partner upset	4.15	1.52
	Self angry	3.51	1.53
	Partner angry	3.20	1.44
	Self criticism	2.66	1.58
	Partner criticism	2.69	1.48
	Self swearing	1.54	0.96
	Partner swearing	1.46	0.86
	Fault (self) %	45.64	22.67
	Started conflict (self) %	50.30	27.27
	Argue (self) %	54.56	14.82
	Gave in (self) %	51.78	22.50
	Won (self) %	52.55	22.96
Conflict resolved	4.56	1.54	
Aggregate measures	Self hostility	3.04	1.02
	Partner hostility	2.87	0.98
	Submission (self) %	49.28	19.66

I decided to combine all four items into a mean aggregated 'hostility' measure. There were two items that loaded strongly on the 2nd factor which accounted for an additional 17.84% of the total variance above and beyond the first factor. The two items were self gave in and self won (.54 and -.72 respectively). Given that the self won item had a negative loading, I used the partner won item (which is

the self won item reverse coded) and the self gave in item to create a mean aggregate 'submission' item. Therefore, a total of six items were meaningfully combined to form two aggregate items labelled hostility and submission (see Table 3 for descriptives).

I then performed a principal axis factoring analysis on the partner items. This analysis resulted in a one factor solution that mirrored the results of the self items. Specifically, the same four partner items loaded heavily on the first factor: partner angry, partner criticism, partner upset, and partner swearing (.63, .56, .53, and .50 respectively). Similar to the self results, I created a mean aggregate of these four items which comprised an overall partner hostility measure (see Table 3 for descriptives).

Following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991), attachment anxiety and avoidance scores were mean centered in order to reduce multicollinearity. While I did not make predictions regarding possible interactions between attachment anxiety and avoidance, I nonetheless computed the two-way interaction term and included the interaction term in all analyses alongside the centered attachment anxiety and avoidance as predictors. I then ran multiple regressions on all of the dependent measures using attachment anxiety, avoidance, and the anxiety x avoidance interaction term as predictors. Specifically, the dependent measures were: interaction, total conflict, self hostility, partner hostility, fault (self), started conflict (self), submission (self), and argue (self).

Results revealed a number of main effects for anxiety. Specifically, and in line with my hypotheses, attachment anxiety predicted overall lower quality interactions, $B = -.19$, $t(149) = -3.11$, $p = .002$, and a greater number of conflicts experienced, $B = .38$, $t(149) = 3.26$, $p = .001$ with one's romantic partner over the 10 day period. Further, attachment anxiety was associated with greater hostility towards one's partner, $B = .33$, $t(104) = 3.77$, $p < .001$. As previously outlined, hostility was an aggregate of the items upset, anger, partner criticism, and swearing. Also consistent with my hypotheses, attachment anxiety was related to the conflict being less productive with the issue ultimately being less resolved, $B = -.45$, $t(103) = -3.34$, $p = .001$. Interestingly, attachment anxiety was marginally associated with greater levels of submission across all conflicts, $B = 3.18$, $t(103) = 1.80$, $p = .075$. Therefore, my hypotheses were supported, in that attachment anxiety is related to more volatile and less effective conflict behaviour

including greater levels of expressed distress and hostility towards one's partner and less effectively resolution of the issue at hand. Further, there is some evidence that attachment anxiety is related to submission to one's partner averaged across all conflicts.

While not the focus of my hypotheses, attachment avoidance was also found to be associated with negative conflict behaviour. Similar to attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance was marginally associated with lower quality interactions over the 10-day period, $B = -.14$, $t(103) = -1.93$, $p = .056$, and was marginally associated with perceiving one's partner as being more hostile, $B = .18$, $t(103) = 1.71$, $p = .090$.

The regressions for fault and start the conflict were not significant. The finding that attachment anxiety was not predictive of starting the conflict was not in line with my hypotheses. However, upon further investigating the data by comparing open ended responses explaining the conflict issue and the "who started the conflict" responses, it seemed as though many participants had misinterpreted what was meant by "starting" the conflict. Some participants seemed to have interpreted starting the fight as who was originally at fault (e.g. my partner started the conflict because they did _ behaviour), while others interpreted starting the fight as who initiated the conversation/confrontation which was my intended meaning. In fact, when I ran a correlation between started conflict and fault, they were found to be significantly positively correlated, $r(102) = .31$, $p = .002$, meaning that participants were more likely to have started the fight if they were also at fault. This is not intuitive, given that the partner at fault should not typically be the partner confronting the more innocent partner about their behaviour. For this reason, this item seemed to lack construct validity and was not used in further analyses.

Originally, I predicted that submissive behaviour is context dependent, and should be enhanced in the presence of attachment-related threats. Not all conflicts necessarily contain high levels of threat; threat should vary depending on the issue at hand, the reactions of one's partner, etc. In particular, I expected that attachment anxiety would be related to submissive behaviour when one's partner displays high levels of anger, relative to times that a partner is less reactive. On the other hand, I predicted that in the presence

of low threat (low partner anger) highly anxious individuals would display *lower* levels of submission relative to low anxiety individuals.

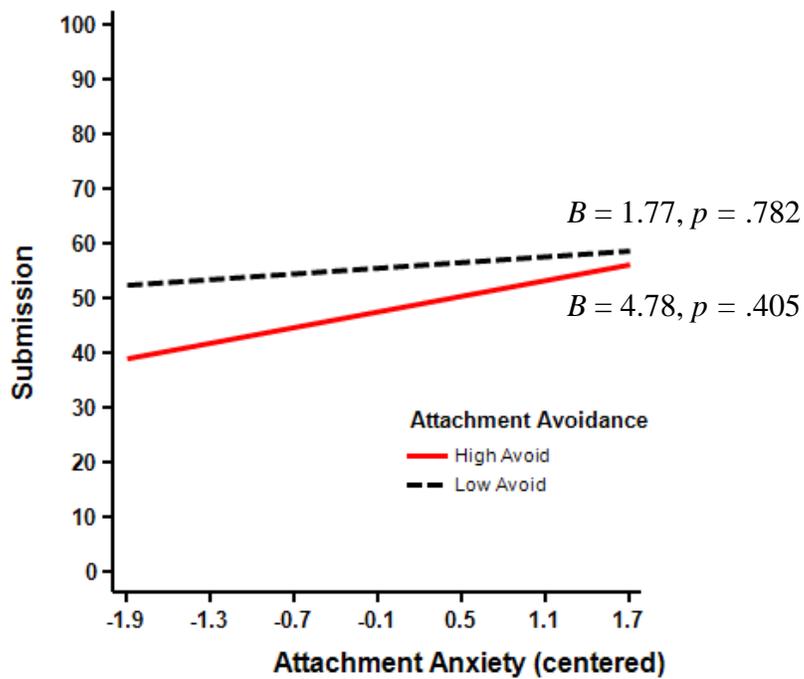
In order to test this prediction, I examined the first fight that participants reported. While I could not confirm the dimensionality of the first fight items due to a lack of power, I nonetheless decided to create a submission mean aggregate of the gave in and partner won items given that these items loaded strongly together on the same factor overall as demonstrated in the original factor analysis. Prior to introducing threat in the form of partner anger, I conducted a linear regression on submission with attachment anxiety, avoidance, and the attachment x avoidance interaction term as predictors. A total of 86 participants reported at least one conflict, so the following analyses were performed with a total N of 86 ($n_{\text{men}} = 14$, $n_{\text{women}} = 72$). Results revealed a main effect of attachment avoidance such that attachment avoidance was associated with lower levels of submission in this specific conflict, $B = -7.07$, $t(85) = -2.10$, $p = .039$. The main effect for attachment anxiety was not significant, $B = -3.00$, $t(81) = -.48$, $p = .649$. As previously mentioned, this is in line with my predictions that submission for highly anxious individuals would be context dependent, and detected under conditions of high threat relative to low threat.

I then introduced partner anger into the relationship between attachment anxiety and submission. Prior to conducting any analyses, similar to attachment anxiety and avoidance, partner anger scores were mean centered to reduce multicollinearity. I then ran a multiple linear regression using the centered attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and partner anger measures, as well as the interaction terms of anxiety x avoidance, anxiety x partner anger, avoidance x partner anger, and anxiety x avoidance x partner anger as predictors. There was a marginal three-way interaction among attachment anxiety, avoidance, and partner anger, $B = -4.33$, $t(81) = -1.75$, $p = .084$. Given that this result was marginal, any conclusions must be regarded with caution. As a post-hoc analysis, I decided to decompose the interaction using simple slopes analysis. First, I dichotomized the variable partner anger by performing a median split (low = below the median, high = above or equal to the median). I then performed two separate regressions for low and high levels of partner anger to examine the two-way interaction of attachment anxiety and

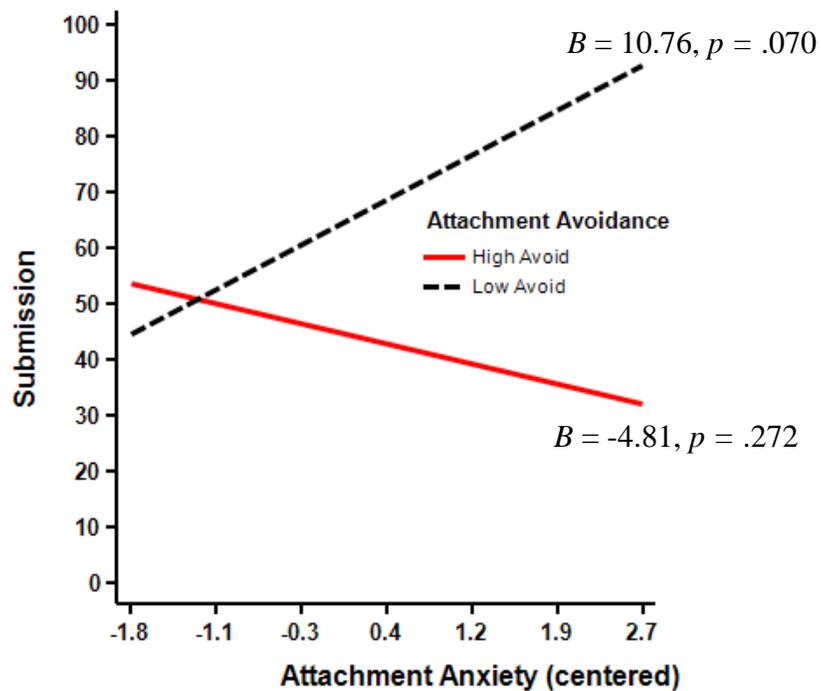
attachment avoidance on the extent to which the participant submitted to their partners. In other words, the effects of high versus low attachment avoidance (i.e. one standard deviation above and below the mean) across levels of attachment anxiety on the tendency to submit to one's partner in conflict were assessed at high versus low levels of partner anger. At low levels of partner anger, the interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance on submission was not significant, $B = 1.70$, $t(36) = .34$, $p = .735$. Therefore, when one's partner displayed low levels of anger there were no differences across levels of attachment anxiety or avoidance in the tendency to submit to one's partner. This was not in line with my predictions. In contrast, when a partner displayed high levels of anger, there was a significant two-way interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance on levels of submission, $B = -8.33$, $t(47) = -2.04$, $p = .047$. Specifically, at low levels of attachment avoidance (i.e. one standard deviation below the mean), attachment anxiety was marginally related to greater levels of submission, $B = 10.76$, $t(47) = 1.86$, $p = .070$ (see Figure 6). However, there were no differences across levels of attachment anxiety in the tendency to submit to one's partner at high levels of attachment avoidance (i.e. one standard deviation above the mean), $B = -4.81$, $t(36) = -1.11$, $p = .27$.

Figure 6. Interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on submission to one's partner at low and high levels of partner anger.

Low Partner Anger



High Partner Anger



Contrary to my predictions, attachment anxiety was not associated with lower levels of submission under low levels of partner anger. However, I had included another measure to capture dominant conflict behaviour by asking participants to report who did more (or less) of the arguing. Therefore, next I assessed whether attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and partner anger interacted to predict dominance or arguing more versus less. I expected that when a partner displays high levels of anger (high threat), attachment anxiety would be related to doing less of the arguing. Alternatively, I predicted that when a partner displays low levels of anger (low threat), attachment anxiety would be related to *more* dominant behaviour or doing more of the arguing relative to one's partner.

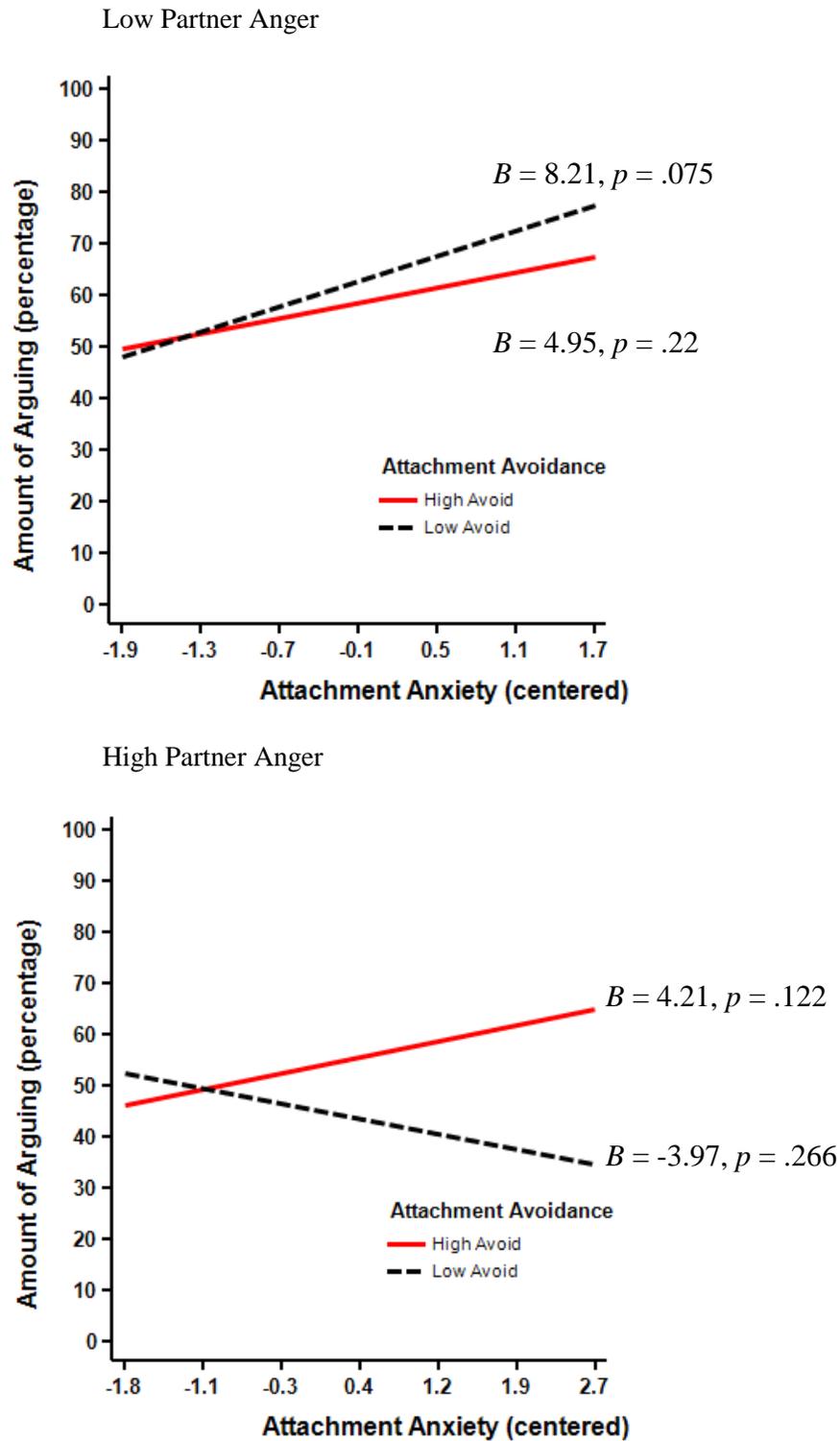
Consistent with the submission findings, there was a marginal three-way interaction between attachment anxiety, avoidance, and partner anger on the tendency to do more versus less of the arguing, $B = 3.31$, $t(87) = 1.98$, $p = .052$. Similar to the submission analyses, I dichotomized the variable partner anger by performing a median split (low = below the median, high = above or equal to the median). I then performed two separate regressions for low and high levels of partner anger to examine the two-way interaction of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on the extent to which the participant argued. In other words, the effects of high versus low attachment avoidance (i.e. one standard deviation above and below the mean) across levels of attachment anxiety on the tendency to do more versus less of the arguing during the conflict were assessed at high and low levels of partner anger separately.

At low levels of partner anger, there was a significant main effect of attachment anxiety such that at low levels of partner anger higher levels of attachment anxiety were related to doing more of the arguing relative to one's partner, $B = 6.73$, $t(36) = 2.30$, $p = .028$ (see Figure 7). The interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance on the extent to which participants did more or less of the arguing was not significant, $B = -1.85$, $t(36) = -0.53$, $p = .602$ (see Figure 7).

At high levels of partner anger, the interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance on the tendency to do more or less of the arguing was marginal, $B = 4.42$, $t(36) = 1.75$, $p = .087$ (see Figure 7). When one's partner displays high levels of anger, there were no differences in the extent to which participants did more or less of the arguing across levels of attachment anxiety for those low in avoidance,

$B = -3.97$, $t(45) = -1.12$, $p = .267$. At high levels of attachment avoidance, there was a weak trend indicating that attachment anxiety was related to doing somewhat more of the arguing relative to one's partner, $B = 2.67$, $t(45) = 1.57$, $p = .122$.

Figure 7. Interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance on amount of arguing at low and high levels of partner anger.



Discussion

In this study, I assessed the relationship between attachment orientations and the nature of real life conflicts with romantic partners. Consistent with research demonstrating that highly anxious individuals are more likely to perceive threats in their environment and are more reactive to signs of potential or actual rejection relative to low anxiety individuals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007), attachment anxiety predicted overall lower quality interactions and a greater number of conflicts experienced with romantic partners over a 10 day period.

This research also demonstrated that when engaged in conflicts with romantic partners, attachment anxiety was associated with greater hostility expressed towards one's partner. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to be more hostile and angry towards their romantic partners (Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson et al., 1996), more critical of their partners (Campbell et al., 2005) and experience higher levels of emotional distress relative to those lower in attachment anxiety (Campbell et al., 2005; Collins, 1996). Attachment anxiety was also marginally associated with greater levels of submission averaged across all conflicts. Extending previous research, I also demonstrated that individuals high in attachment anxiety left their arguments with the issue being less resolved relative to those low in attachment anxiety, presumably because they engage in less effective conflict management strategies.

While marginal, I also replicated the interaction from Study Two demonstrating the role of attachment-related threat in moderating the tendency of highly anxious individuals to demonstrate submission towards their partners relative to those low in attachment anxiety. Most importantly, I demonstrated the role of a specific form of attachment-related threat - partner anger - in moderating obliging versus dominant conflict behaviour. Consistent with Study One, this seemed to be exacerbated particularly for those also low in attachment avoidance. This is consistent with attachment theory, given that these individuals are not only fearful of rejection and abandonment, but also have strong desires to be in a relationship and to have high levels of closeness and intimacy with their partners. Given that submission is a proximity seeking strategy, it does make sense that individuals high in anxiety, but also

low in avoidance are those who are most motivated to restore closeness. Results suggested that in response to high levels of expressed anger from their partner, individuals high in attachment anxiety and low in avoidance were marginally more likely to demonstrate submission to one's partner relative to those low in anxiety and low in avoidance. In such a situation, the level and intensity of the partner's anger probably acts as a powerful threat cue activating the attachment system. Indeed, it may be the case that when a partner becomes angry, the threat of rejection is particularly salient and, when the attachment system is activated, anxious individuals may then switch from conflict engagement to conflict resolution strategies aimed at repairing the threatened bond. This is particularly true for those also low in avoidance given that the stakes are perceived to be even greater for them in conflict, with the potential for partner rejection especially salient.

Further, this study provides some evidence that attachment anxiety interacts with partner anger to predict differences in the extent to which individuals reported engaging in more versus less of the arguing. Consistent with my predictions, at low levels of partner anger, individuals high in attachment anxiety did more of the arguing during the conflict, relative to those low in attachment anxiety. Therefore, these findings suggest that when the threat of rejection is low such that one's partner displays low levels of anger, individuals high in attachment anxiety are more likely to continue to engage their partners and dominate the argument potentially in attempt to convince their partners of their perspective and seek validation, relative to low anxiety individuals. Interestingly, at high levels of partner anger, attachment anxiety interacted with attachment avoidance to predict the extent to which individuals' argued. In particular, there was a weak trend indicating that individuals high in attachment avoidance and high in anxiety did somewhat more of the arguing relative to those low in avoidance and high in anxiety.

One limitation of this study is that I only collected responses from one partner. Therefore, it is not clear to what extent these reports would be convergent with the other partner's reports. Indeed, these data are reflective of the participants' perceptions of their partners affect and behaviour therefore it is not clear to what extent participants' perceptions are accurate. Having reports from both partners would allow me to test the accuracy of participants' reports and would increase this research's internal validity that these

differences in submissive versus dominant reactions are based on actual and not perceived partner responses.

Overall, these findings provide some evidence to suggest that anger acts as a cue of rejection and likely activates the attachment system for individuals high in attachment anxiety and low in attachment avoidance, which then motivates them to engage in somewhat higher levels of submission as a strategy aimed at restoring their threatened emotional closeness and intimacy, relative to low anxiety individuals. However, this research also suggests that individuals high in anxiety are somewhat *less* likely to demonstrate submissive behaviour in the form of doing more of the arguing when their partner is less emotionally reactive relative to low anxiety individuals. I propose that it is under conditions of low threat such as low partner emotional reactivity that highly anxious individuals are likely to demonstrate dominance towards their partners as an attempt to seek approval and validation and protest the threatened emotional bond relative to low anxiety individuals.

Chapter 5

General Discussion and Conclusions

Effective conflict management is essential to healthy relationship functioning, stability, and longevity (Duck, 1988; Bray & Jouriles, 1995; Kayser, 1993). For this reason, it is important to study factors that are associated with ineffective conflict resolution strategies as this predictive ability has not only theoretical, but also clinical and practical implications. Attachment theory is one theoretical framework that has been demonstrated to be associated with conflict behaviour. In particular, attachment anxiety has been shown to be related to two seemingly contradictory conflict styles: dominance and submission (Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989; Shi, 2003, Cann, Norman, Welbourne, & Calhoun, 2008). While previous research has demonstrated the relationship between attachment anxiety and both dominating and obliging conflict styles, there were a number of inconsistencies in measurement and findings. Further, this research presents a bit of a paradox – how is it that individuals high in attachment anxiety are more likely to be emotionally reactive and dominant, but also obliging and submissive towards their partners? In a series of three studies I sought to not only integrate and clarify previous findings, but also extend this research by introducing the role of threat in predicting when anxious individuals are more likely to demonstrate submission relative to dominance in conflict with romantic partners.

In Study One, I was able to demonstrate that attachment anxiety is related to the submissive conflict style. Further, the relationship between attachment anxiety and the dominant conflict style was moderated by gender. In fact, a number of the relationships between attachment orientations and conflict styles were qualified by more complex interactions with attachment avoidance and gender. Therefore future research should continue to assess possible interactions between gender and attachment orientations in predicting conflict behaviour within romantic relationships.

Specifically, I found that attachment anxiety was a stronger predictor of both submissive and dominant conflict styles for women relative to men. Indeed, while submission to one's partner may be an

important strategy that both highly anxious men and women use to restore closeness with their romantic partners during conflict, this was more pronounced for women. It may be the case that men are more likely to use other proximity-seeking behaviours in response to conflict above and beyond submission that are not captured in these conflict style measures. It is also possible that highly anxious women assume a more active role in the desire to restore emotional intimacy whereas men assume less of an active role by demonstrating less submission. Further, the findings that anxious women display more dominance in response to conflict with partners relative to men is consistent with research documenting differences in the communication styles of men and women in relationships. Specifically, research consistently shows the wife-demand and husband-withdraw pattern. Here, the wife is typically the one in conflict demanding change and engaging in criticism and complaints, with the man typically retreating and becoming passive and defensive (Christensen, 1987, Christensen & Heavey, 1990). In this sense, dominance may fall under the demand domain, being not only more typical of women, but of highly anxious women in particular. Therefore, these findings indicate that anxious women may play more of an active role in conflict overall, being more likely to submit when threat levels are high, and being more likely to dominate when threat levels are low, with anxious men assuming a less active role. These issues are interesting avenues to explore in future research.

In Study Two, I manipulated relationship threat in a vignette, to assess whether this threat would moderate the relationship between anxiety and submission to a romantic partner. While this scenario did not describe an argument per se, it did describe a situation of conflict in the relationship which could potentially lead to separation and even relationship termination. Female participants had to decide whether to pursue their wishes at the expense of the relationship, or to defer to their partner at the expense of personal gain. There were weak trends consistent with my predictions. Specifically, highly anxious women were somewhat more likely to report submission to a romantic partner when their partner was rejecting compared to low anxiety individuals. I argue that rejecting feedback from a romantic partner acts as a cue of potential rejection and abandonment for highly anxious individuals which activates the attachment system. When highly anxious women perceive that their partner's commitment may be

lacking, and abandonment likely, highly anxious women submit to their partners in order to restore their threatened sense of relationship security relative to low anxiety women, even when it may be at their own expense. Alternatively, there was also a weak trend indicating that when their partner acted in a reassuring manner, individuals high in attachment anxiety were somewhat less likely to demonstrate submission and were somewhat more likely to pursue personal goals at the expense of the relationship. I argue that when threat levels are low and the attachment system is not activated, individuals high in attachment anxiety may be more likely to demonstrate dominance in asserting their positions and be motivated to pursue personal goals. Admittedly, I was not able to replicate the interaction between attachment anxiety and avoidance in Study Two that was documented in Study One and Study Three. While this is an inconsistency, I did not originally predict an interaction with avoidance given that my primary hypotheses concerned attachment anxiety.

In Study Three, I assessed the role of partner anger – a specific type of rejection threat – to determine whether it would moderate the relationship between attachment orientations and submissive versus dominant tendencies in real life conflicts with romantic partners. Over a 10-day period, male and female participants were asked to report about the quality of their interactions with their partners and details of experienced conflicts including levels of self and partner anger, criticism, dominant and submissive behaviour, and whether the issue was ultimately resolved.

In line with research demonstrating that highly anxious individuals are more likely to perceive threats in their environment and are more reactive to signs of potential or actual rejection relative to low anxiety individuals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007), attachment anxiety was related to overall lower quality interactions and a greater number of conflicts experienced with romantic partners over the 10 days. Further, when engaged in conflicts, highly anxious individuals expressed greater levels of hostility towards their partners, and left their arguments with the issue being less resolved relative to those low in attachment anxiety.

In addition, I was able to effectively demonstrate the role of partner anger in moderating the tendency of highly anxious individuals to demonstrate submissive versus dominant behaviour. Mirroring

the findings from Study One, this study consistently demonstrated interactions between attachment anxiety and avoidance in these predictions, which has not been previously documented in the attachment and conflict literature. For example, these results provide some evidence that in response to high levels of expressed anger from a romantic partner, individuals high in attachment anxiety and low in attachment avoidance were somewhat more likely to submit to their partners. This is consistent with attachment theory in that such individuals are not only plagued by chronic fears of rejection and abandonment, but they also have a strong desire for emotional intimacy and closeness with their partners and are those who have strong desires to be in relationships. I argue that expressed anger from a romantic partner acts as a signal of their disapproval and a cue of potential future abandonment which shakes anxious individual's sense of relationship security. In order to reduce the stress experienced and ensure their partner's security, individuals high in anxiety and low in avoidance will give in to their partners, and will concede to the argument even if this means that the conflict be left unresolved.

Importantly, when one's partner displayed low levels of anger, individuals high in anxiety reported that they did more of the arguing during the fight relative to those low in anxiety. Given that individuals high in anxiety have been shown to have greater needs for validation from others, and experience greater levels of distress in conflicts with their partners it is not surprising that dominance is a likely outcome for high anxiety individuals as a means to force their partners to understand their perspective. These findings are notable given that this is the first demonstration of the role of attachment-related threat in predicting the dominant reactions of those high in attachment anxiety.

Taken altogether, my research integrates and clarifies a paradox in the attachment and conflict literature. Specifically, I sought to explain attachment anxiety's relationship to two seemingly contradictory conflict styles: submission and dominance. In both an experimental paradigm and a field study involving real life conflicts with romantic partners, I tested whether rejection-related threat moderates submissive versus dominant reactions to conflict for highly anxious individuals. I argued that rejection related threats such as commitment- undermining feedback and expressed anger from a partner are highly threatening for highly anxious individuals which activates the attachment system and motivates

such individuals to engage in submission as a strategy aimed at restoring psychological proximity to their partners (Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002). However, when threat levels are low such that a partner is less emotionally reactive, highly anxious individuals are more likely to display dominance such as controlling the conversation and doing more of the arguing in attempt to force their partners to validate their perspectives. Although not all of the findings were statistically significant, the pattern of results across all three studies was consistent with my hypotheses. Generally, relative to those low in attachment anxiety, individuals high in anxiety were more likely demonstrate submissive conflict styles under high threat, and more likely to demonstrate dominant conflict styles under low threat. Sometimes, these findings were exacerbated for those low in attachment avoidance, as these individuals have the most “on the line” in conflict with a romantic partner, as relative to other attachment groups they desire closeness and intimacy, yet fear rejection.

These findings are notable given that to date very little research has explored how anxious individuals respond to perceived negative partner behaviour, particularly in the context of real life partner conflicts. Further, to date little research has shown more complex interactions among attachment anxiety, avoidance, and negative partner behaviour. This research demonstrates that highly anxious individuals, particularly those also low in attachment avoidance, are sensitive to their partner’s behaviour including expressed anger and cues of commitment. While research has previously demonstrated that anxious individuals struggle with experiencing high levels of distress, which becomes directed to their partners in the form of hostility and aggression, this research indicates that such behaviour may be most likely when one’s partner is within psychological proximity such as when they are in a more neutral or composed state. One might predict that conflict situations themselves are stressful enough to activate the attachment system for highly anxious individuals, leading them to engage in closeness enhancing behaviours. However, this research suggests that even in conflict situations, anxious individuals do not necessarily perceive high levels of threat. Indeed, anxious individuals monitor their partners’ behaviour and act accordingly. When a partners is less reactive (i.e. when rejection threat is low), anxious individuals will engage their partners in conflict and dominate the argument in attempt to convince their partners of their

position. In contrast, when a partner is more reactive by expressing high levels of anger or voicing their doubts of the relationship's future (i.e. when rejection threat is high) anxious individuals will submit to their partners in attempt to quickly resolve the argument and restore relationship security.

Altogether my research points to the importance of identifying contextual factors that mediate more general tendencies that are observed. While it is important to identify correlations between individual difference classifications and relative behavioural or attitudinal tendencies, it is just as important to be able to accurately predict the conditions under which these tendencies are likely. This approach can be powerful theoretically, allowing us to test the robustness of a theory's fundamental principles and guiding assumptions, and even aiding in a theory's expansion and development. Moreover, this approach is also valuable in a practical sense, allowing researchers, clinicians and counsellors to be able to more accurately predict behaviour within more specific contexts.

In addition, another strength of this program of research is that I utilized a number of different methodologies including questionnaire, vignette, and daily diaries which all converged to show a consistent pattern of results. Each of the methodologies is associated with its own strengths and weaknesses. In particular, the vignette or imagined scenario methodology employed in Study Two capitalizes on internal validity, allowing for a great degree of control over extraneous factors and error variance. A possible limitation of Study Two was that not all of the participants were in dating relationships, and that there might not be complete correspondence between imagined responses and actual behaviour. In other words, it is not clear to what extent imagined responses might be predictive of actual responses. However, this particular vignette might be easier for single participants to imagine given that their thoughts and responses would not be influenced by the idiosyncrasies of their own romantic relationships. For example, individuals in relationships might disengage or disassociate from the scenario if they can imagine their real partner acting in a different manner or this scenario being atypical in their current relationship. The daily diary method complements the vignette scenario as it capitalizes on ecological validity or more closely capturing spontaneous or naturally occurring behaviour with romantic partners. While this is a strength of the diary method, the associated limitation is that variability between

participants is increased given that there is a lack of experimental control over qualitative differences in conflicts between participants. Another potential limitation of this methodology is that the very act of having to report conflicts daily might be affecting participants' accounts. One way that I tried to mitigate this very issue was to examine the first fight reported for my major analyses such that the first reports should be less susceptible to such influences. Taken altogether, I believe that the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three methodologies, the vignette and diary in particular, complements one another and as a package is one of the major strengths of this research project.

In terms of future directions, I am interested in identifying other forms of attachment-related threats that may moderate the relationship between attachment anxiety and conflict behaviour. One such example is emotional unavailability. Indeed, lack of anger is not always an indication of partner approval or acceptance. It is possible that an aloof or emotionally disengaged partner is just as, if not more so, threatening than one that is angry and still engaged in the conflict. Individuals high in attachment anxiety are high in need for validation and acceptance, which is still possible while a partner is engaged in the conflict. However, self-focused goals for acceptance and validation may be replaced by relationship-maintenance goals once a romantic partner is unavailable or disengaged. Here, a partner's emotional (and even physical) unavailability may be interpreted as emotional indifference, making salient the possibility for relationship termination and partner abandonment.

Interestingly, findings from previous research suggest that men and women might experience differential reactions to a partner's emotional disengagement such as the withdraw-demand literature. Although I did not have enough men in Study Three to examine potential gender differences, findings from Study One indicate differences in the strength between attachment orientations and obliging versus dominant conflict behaviour. This does leave open the possibility for qualitative differences in the types of stimuli that men and women find to be threatening. In other words, while threat may still moderate the tendency of highly anxious individuals to submit to one's partner, regardless of gender, the types of stimuli that men and women find highly threatening may differ. For example, partner anger may be particularly threatening for female participants given its violation of the typical withdraw response pattern exhibited by

their male partners. Given that, overall, men experience female partners who criticize and demand more so than women, male participants may have more experience with visibly angry partners and may not perceive high levels of expressed partner anger as highly threatening. In fact, men might find the woman-withdraw pattern to be more threatening given its violation with typical communication styles. Discovering potential qualitative differences in attachment-related threats between genders is an interesting avenue for future research in this area. One limitation of my research is that I did not assess men in Study 2, and although I recruited both men and women in Study 3, I had relatively few men volunteer to participate in my study. In future research, it may be worthwhile to deliberately over-recruit men, so that gender differences can be adequately assessed.

This research suggests that those high in attachment anxiety (and also low in avoidance) are reacting to conflict in ways that could be potentially damaging to their relationships. Future research should continue to examine the interactions between attachment anxiety and attachment-related threats in predicting affective and behavioural response to conflict with romantic partners before clinical implications should be seriously considered and implemented. Indeed, being able to predict the conditions under which high anxiety individuals are likely to respond, and how they are likely to respond, could be of great benefit to clinicians and relationship counsellors seeking to identify individuals most at risk for ineffective conflict resolution strategies and help guide distressed couples in developing healthy conflict resolution strategies. While this research provides qualified support for the interaction between attachment anxiety and rejection-related threats on conflict behaviour, if future research corroborates these findings this research could have important clinical implications. Specifically, counsellors and clinicians could help highly anxious individuals to recognize and more effectively manage their dominant tendencies and engage in more effective conflict management strategies such as compromise and integration of viewpoints. While it may seem like an adaptive response, submission can be potentially self-harming especially when one decides to submit to a partner whose commitment is questionable. While submission may not be harmful in the short-term, consistent submission to one's partner may lead to the development of resentment over time. Further, submission may mean that one's position has not been

properly communicated to and validated by one's partner, leaving the underlying issue less resolved, and making its resurgence in the future more likely. Ironically, this may lead to the experience of more conflicts, putting the relationship's future at risk. Not only may the relationship be jeopardized, consistent submissive tendencies may take a toll on an individual's self perception such as self esteem. Therefore, clinicians and counsellors can help individuals high in anxiety (and also low in avoidance) understand and recognize the cues that they may be reactive to (e.g. partner anger, commitment-undermining responses), learn effective emotion-coping responses to such threats, and develop effective strategies in responding to partner behaviour which at times may mean less submission and learning to effectively communicate one's position. Indeed, individuals who are more secure in their relationships, in the form of low levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance, demonstrate less submission when a partner is rejecting or reactive and *more* submission when a partner is acting in a more reasonable manner which is indicative of compromising. Therefore, it seems that counsellors and clinicians could help highly anxious individuals learn when assertive and compromising reactions are most appropriate and most conducive to effective conflict resolution. Ironically, without such guidance, the ineffective conflict styles observed by highly anxious and less avoidant individuals may be promoting self-fulfilling prophecies by increasing the likelihood that their partners will actually do what they fear the most – reject or ultimately abandon them. However, with the help of counsellors and clinicians, it may be possible for individuals high in attachment anxiety and low in avoidance to develop healthy conflict management strategies which may not only lead to short term benefits such as the issue being effectively resolved and intimacy and emotional closeness restored, but could ultimately enhance the relationship's longevity, even survival.

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Appendix A

Experiences in Close Relationships - Revised

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly			Neutral/ Mixed			Agree Strongly

1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
3. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
4. I worry a lot about my relationships.
5. My partner really understands me and my needs.
6. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
7. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
8. I am afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.
11. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.
12. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.
13. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
14. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
15. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
16. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
17. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
18. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
20. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
22. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
23. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
24. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support that I need from my partner.
25. I tell my partner just about everything.
26. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
27. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
28. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.
29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
30. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.
31. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
32. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.
33. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
34. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.
35. I talk things over with my partner.
36. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might be interested in someone else.

Appendix B

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

Think about how you handle conflict with your romantic partner. Specifically, think about a **significant** conflict issue that you and your partner have disagreed about recently. Using the scale below, fill in which response is most like how you handled conflict. If you do not have a romantic partner, respond with your most current partner in mind. If you have never been in a romantic relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be. Please use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree			Neutral/			Agree
Strongly			Mixed			Strongly

1. We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.
2. We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.
3. Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.
4. When my partner and I disagree, we consider both sides of the argument.
5. In order to resolve conflicts, we try to reach a compromise.
6. Compromise is the best way to resolve conflict between my partner and me.
7. My partner and I negotiate to resolve our disagreements.
8. I try to meet my partner halfway to resolve a disagreement.
9. The best way to resolve conflict between me and my partner is to find a middle ground.
10. When we disagree, we try to find a solution that satisfies both of us.
11. When my partner and I have conflict, we collaborate so that we are both happy with our decision.
12. My partner and I collaborate to find a common ground to solve problems between us.
13. We collaborate to come up with the best solution for both of us when we have a problem.
14. We try to collaborate so that we can reach a joint solution to a conflict.
15. My partner and I try to avoid arguments.
16. I avoid disagreements with partner.
17. I avoid conflict with my partner.
18. When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.
19. Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.
20. My partner and I have frequent conflicts.
21. I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.
22. I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.
23. My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.
24. When we have conflict, we withdraw from each other for awhile for a "cooling off" period.
25. When we disagree, we try to separate for awhile so we can consider both sides of the argument.
26. When we experience conflict, we let each other cool off before discussing it further.
27. When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later.
28. Separation for a period of time can work well to let our conflicts cool down.
29. When we argue or fight, I try to win.
30. I try to take control when we argue.
31. I rarely let my partner win an argument.
32. When we disagree, my goal is to convince to my partner that I am right.
33. When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.
34. When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.
35. When we have conflict, I usually give in to my partner.

36. I give in to my partner's wishes to settle arguments on my partner's terms.
37. Sometimes I agree with my partner so the conflict will end.
38. When we argue, I usually try to satisfy my partner's needs rather than my own.
39. I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue.
40. In a conflict situation, I generally go along with the suggestions of my partner.
41. In a conflict, I often let my partner win.

Appendix C

Letter of Information

“Red”

This study is being conducted by Valerie Murphy, graduate student. She is working with Dr. Tara MacDonald, Associate Professor, of the Department of Psychology at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

The purpose of this study is to explore how individuals think and behave in romantic relationships. As part of the study, you will be asked to read a brief scenario in the context of a romantic relationship and will be asked a number of questions regarding how you would respond, your perceptions of the scenario, and some questionnaires concerning your self-perceptions. We estimate that it will take less than 30 minutes to complete this study.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies. It is important for you to know that, in this study, you will be asked questions of a sensitive and personal nature. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Although it would be greatly appreciated if you would answer all material as frankly as possible, you may decline to answer any questions. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

All of your responses will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a locked room until the raw data is no longer needed. Only experimenters in the Social Psychology Lab will have access to this area. To help us ensure confidentiality, please do not put your name on any of the answer sheets. The data may also be presented in professional psychological journals or at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

To compensate for your participation in this study, you will earn 0.5 credits toward your final Psychology 100 grade. However, if you are not enrolled in the Psychology 100 course or if you have already earned your maximum credits, we will compensate you with \$5.00 cash.

Any questions about your participation in this study may be directed to Valerie Murphy at 9vm11@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Again, thank you. Your interest in participating in this research study is greatly appreciated. Please keep a copy of this information form for your records.

Dr. T. MacDonald
Associate Professor

Valerie Murphy
Graduate Student

Appendix D

Consent Form “Red”

Name (please print clearly): _____

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I will be participating in a study called “Red”. I also understand that as part of the study, I will be asked to view a brief article and to answer a series of questionnaires concerning how I feel about this article as well as about myself. Knowing this, I agree to participate in this study.
3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty.
4. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. The data will be kept in a locked room that is accessible only by the researchers involved in the study. When assessing and compiling the data, all participants names will be converted to numbers and no individual data will be reported. The data collected for this study will not be used for any purpose outside of scientific research.
5. I am aware that if I have any questions about my participation in this study I can contact Valerie Murphy at 9vm11@queensu.ca, or Dr. Tara MacDonald at tmacdon@queensu.ca . Any ethical concerns I have about this study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participation in this research:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

Debriefing Form “Red”

Initially, we told you that the purpose of this study was to explore how individuals think and behave in romantic relationships. We only gave you a vague description of the study beforehand because we did not want to influence your responses in any way. Specifically, we are interested in determining how anxiety in relationships and partner anger determine the likelihood that individuals will submit to their partners in conflict situations.

This study was experimental in nature. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In each condition, participants read a scenario involving a hypothetical conflict scenario. However, half of the participants read a scenario where the partner was rejecting (experimental condition) whereas the other half of participants read a scenario where the partner was not rejecting (control condition). After reading the scenario, all participants answered a few questions regarding their perceptions of the scenario, how they would likely respond, and how they would feel.

Researchers have shown that anxiety in relationships is related to two contradictory conflict styles: submission and dominance (Pistole, 1989; Shi, 2003). We propose that conditions of threat (specifically, partner anger) may determine whether highly anxious individuals are likely to demonstrate submission to their partners. We predict that highly anxious individuals will be more likely to give in to their romantic partners in conflict, however this tendency will be exacerbated when interacting with a rejecting partner relative to a non-rejecting partner.

If you would be interested in obtaining a copy of the results of this study, you may contact the primary researcher, Valerie Murphy, at 9vm11@queensu.ca. If you have a more general interest in this area of research, you may wish to consult the following:

Pistole, M. C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 505-510.

Shi, L. (2003). The association between adult attachment styles and conflict resolution in romantic relationships. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 31, 143-157.

As stated earlier, your responses to the questionnaire items will be confidential. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies. If you feel upset as a result of your participation, you may wish to contact Queen's Counselling Services at 613-533-2893. If you have any comments or questions about your participation in this study please contact Valerie Murphy at 9vm11@queensu.ca. If you have any ethical concerns about this study you may contact the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Please do not tell other potential subjects about the purpose of this study.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix F

Letter of Information “Experiences”

This study is being conducted by Valerie Murphy, graduate student. She is working with Dr. Tara MacDonald, Associate Professor, of the Department of Psychology at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

What is this study about? In this diary study, we're interested in understanding how individuals think and behave in daily interactions with their romantic partners.

What is required of me in this study? In this study, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire online each evening for 10 consecutive days. The daily questionnaire should take less than 10 minutes to complete. It is very important that you complete all 10 dairies; therefore you will need to have access to a computer each night for 10 consecutive nights. You will be sent the emails every evening at 7pm, we would like you to complete the diary before you go to bed each night. It is important for the integrity of the study that you be consistent in the timing of your reports. If there is an emergency and you are not able to complete the report on time, please let me know and complete it no later than noon the next day. However, we strongly discourage delaying the reports until the next day. Please note that the reports will be time-stamped.

How will I be compensated? To compensate for your participation in this study, you will earn 1.0 credits toward your final Psychology 100 grade. However, if you are not enrolled in the Psychology 100 course or if you have already earned your maximum credits, we will compensate you with a \$10.00 Starbucks gift ecard or cash.

Will my responses be confidential? Yes, all of your responses will be kept confidential. The data will be stored online on a secured site until the raw data is no longer needed. Only experimenters in Dr. MacDonald’s Lab will have access to this website. To help us ensure confidentiality, please do not enter your name on any of the response boxes. The data may also be presented in professional psychological journals or at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies. It is important for you to know that, in this study, you will be asked questions of a sensitive and personal nature. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Although it would be greatly appreciated if you would answer all material as frankly as possible, you may decline to answer any questions. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Any questions about your participation in this study may be directed to Valerie Murphy at 9vm11@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Again, thank you. Your interest in participating in this research study is greatly appreciated. Please keep a copy of this information form for your records.

Dr. Tara MacDonald
Associate Professor

Valerie Murphy
Graduate Student

Appendix G

“Experiences” Questionnaire

How would you rate your interaction with your partner today overall?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Unpleasant			Neutral			Very Pleasant

Did you experience conflict with your partner today?

Y	N
---	---

If yes...

What was the main issue of conflict?

Regarding the issue, who was at fault? (Should add up to 100%)

____% partner ____% you

Who started the conflict?

____% partner ____% you

Who did the arguing/talking?

____ % partner ____% you

How angry were you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all angry			Moderately angry			Extremely angry

How angry was your partner?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all angry			Moderately angry			Extremely angry

How upset were you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all upset			Moderately upset			Extremely upset

How upset was your partner?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all upset			Moderately upset			Extremely upset

How much did you swear during the conflict?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			A fair amount			Quite a lot

Did your partner swear?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			A fair amount			Quite a lot

How much did you criticize your partner?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			A fair amount			Quite a lot

How much did your partner criticize you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			A fair amount			Quite a lot

Think a moment about how the fight ended...

Was the issue resolved?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			To some extent			Completely

Who ultimately gave in? (Should add up to 100%)

_____ % partner _____ % you

Who "won" the argument?

_____ % partner _____ % you

Appendix H

Debriefing Form “Experiences”

Initially, we told you that the purpose of this study was to explore how individuals think and behave in romantic relationships. We only gave you a vague description of the study beforehand because we did not want to influence your responses in any way. Specifically, we are interested in determining how individuals with attachment anxiety react to conflict with romantic partners in everyday life.

Attachment anxiety reflects the degree to which an individual fears rejection and feels unworthy of love. Researchers have shown that attachment anxiety is related to two contradictory conflict styles with romantic partners: submission and dominance (Pistole, 1989; Shi, 2003). We propose that conditions of threat (such as partner anger) may determine whether highly anxious individuals are likely to demonstrate submission to their partners. In line with previous research we predict that, in general, highly anxious individuals will be more likely to demonstrate hostility and dominance in conflict (Mikulincer, 1998). However, we also predict that highly anxious individuals will be more likely to give in to their romantic partners, and that this tendency will be exacerbated when one’s partner expresses anger during the conflict.

If you would be interested in obtaining a copy of the results of this study, you may contact the primary researcher, Valerie Murphy, at 9vm11@queensu.ca. If you have a more general interest in this area of research, you may wish to consult the following:

Pistole, M. C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 505-510.

Mikulincer, M. (1998). Adult attachment style and individual differences in functional versus dysfunctional experiences of anger. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 513-524.

Shi, L. (2003). The association between adult attachment styles and conflict resolution in romantic relationships. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 31, 143-157.

As stated earlier, your responses to the questionnaire items will be confidential. This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen’s policies.

If you feel upset as a result of your participation, you may wish to contact Queen’s Counselling Services at 613-533-2893. If you have any comments or questions about your participation in this study please contact Valerie Murphy at 9vm11@queensu.ca. If you have any ethical concerns about this study you may contact the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Please do not tell other potential subjects about the purpose of this study.

Thank you for your participation!