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The Impact of Attachment Style on Joint Identity

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THE IMPACT OF ATTACHMENT STYLE ON JOINT IDENTITY

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

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Abstract

Attachment theory begins with the assumption that adults enter relationships with well-developed mental representations of self and others that regulate cognitive, affective, and behavioral response patterns in close relationships. It has been studied extensively in the past, and it addresses an impressive array of research questions concerning the functions, emotional dynamics, evolutionary origins, and developmental pathways of human affectional bonds. Joint identity has been studied in terms of its involvement and impact on the process of being “in love”, relational satisfaction, and interpersonal closeness. Joint identity is the extent to which one self-identifies as an autonomous individual, or connected as part of a couple, which involves one’s personal definition and presentation of self.

Given that previous research has established certain personality traits and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses that are commonly associated with each attachment style it is hypothesized that one’s attachment style has an impact on one’s tendency towards joint identity. Given the personality traits and characteristics embodied by each attachment style, it is also hypothesized that individuals will be more likely to form joint identities with a partner of a certain attachment style over another.

Results indicated that attachment style similarity between partners is not indicative of a higher level of joint identity reported. A negative correlation exists between the anxiety scale of attachment style and joint identity. Joint identity as a dependant variable can be treated as a personal perception rather than a relational construct. Limitations, implications and directions for future research are discussed.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my incomparable parents, Norm and Jan Tardif, without whom this experience would have been impossible. Thank you for believing in me, instilling in me a love of learning, and supporting me in every way imaginable. I couldn't be more grateful to have such a generous and loving family.

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Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Attachment styles are thought to be core features of personality that play an important role in guiding how individuals interact with others and perceive the social world. Attachment theory begins with the assumption that adults enter relationships with well-developed mental representations of self and others that regulate cognitive, affective, and behavioral response patterns in close relationships. It has been studied extensively in the past, and it addresses an impressive array of research questions concerning the functions, emotional dynamics, evolutionary origins, and developmental pathways of human affectional bonds.

Joint identity has been studied in terms of its involvement and impact on the process of being “in love”, relational satisfaction, and interpersonal closeness. Fitzpatrick’s use of relational typology as it applies to marriage types demonstrates the ways that attachment styles (marital types) can have an impact on joint identity (interdependence) between a couple. Based on this precedent, the author argues that a valuable topic of research would be to compare the dependent variables of one’s attachment style and its impact on the use of joint identity in an interpersonal romantic relationship.

The impact of attachment on joint identity has never been explored. Further research is certainly merited and should be conducted to illuminate the relationship between attachment theory and joint identity, specifically the impact of one’s attachment style on their tendency to experience joint identity.

Review of the Literature

Attachment Theory is defined as mode of social interaction that is based on the cognitive representations (or "mental models") people have of themselves and others (Bartholomew, 1990; Bowlby, 1969). It is a theory seeking to explain human behavior as far as intimate relationships are formed and enacted. Attachment theory begins with the assumption that adults enter relationships with well-developed mental representations of self and others that regulate cognitive, affective, and behavioral response patterns in close relationships (Collins & Read, 1994). These cognitive-affective representations are referred to as internal working models of attachment, and they are thought to be rooted in the quality of one's early relationships with caretakers and other important attachment figures (Bowlby, 1973).

Hazan and Shaver (1994) used the work of Ainsworth et al. (1978) to describe the three major patterns of attachment style. Attachment categories include Secure, Anxious-Ambivalent, and Anxious-Avoidant. Those with a Secure attachment style display "normative" behaviors to engage in felt security, or have a confidence and trust in the responsiveness of others. The two anxious categories display insecurity, and do not trust that others whom they have close interpersonal relationships with will be able or willing to meet their needs, and as such negotiate getting security through less positive behaviors.

Once formed, these representations are assumed to operate automatically and unconsciously, making them resistant to change. Thus, working models of attachment, or attachment styles, are thought to be core features of personality that play an important role in guiding how individuals interact with others and perceive the social

world (Kane, Jaremka, Guichard, Ford, Collins, & Feeney, 2007). Hazan and Shaver (1994) have argued that attachment style can be a grand theory of interpersonal relationships, addressing all of the major questions such as what makes a potential partner appealing, how is a relationship formed and how does it develop, how are relationships maintained, and what makes them satisfying or enduring? Attachment theory can be seen as an organizing framework of understanding human relationships.

Attachment Theory addresses an impressive array of research questions concerning the functions, emotional dynamics, evolutionary origins, and developmental pathways of human affectional bonds (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). This theory had its inception in 1950, when John Bowlby was invited by the World Health Organization (WHO) to report on the mental health of London's many homeless children. This led to his publication (Bowlby, 1944) of an article "Forty-four juvenile thieves: Their characters and home life." This article outlined the connection between maternal bonds and separation and delinquency among boys.

In theory, children could direct their attachment behaviors to any given individual that is available. Schaffer and Emerson (1964) found that in actuality, all normal infants will selectively direct these behaviors to just one individual by their sixth or seventh month. They seek proximity with this person and object to being separated. According to Bowlby there are three defining features of attachment that are also the functions of an attachment relationship. The first is *proximity maintenance*, which includes proximity seeking and separation protest, secondly *safe haven*, and lastly *secure base*. The end point of the attachment process is referred to as *goal-corrected partnership*, where proximity maintenance is adjusted to a child's ability to delay gratification (proximity

with the attachment figure) and to mentally represent their caretaker's availability (Bowlby, 1979).

The attachment system is an “organism-level system that is organized and regulated by social input, specifically by primary caregiver responsiveness to distress signals” (Hazan & Shaver, 1994, p. 5). After multiple interactions with their attachment figure, infants know what to expect from them, and adjust their own behaviors accordingly. These expectations are what Bowlby referred to as *internal working models*, or mental representations, that are used to predict how a caregiver will respond and what their availability is. These internal working models have direct ramifications on the infant's self-concept. Bowlby's 1973 book *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and Anger* states, “the model of the attachment figure and the model of the self are likely to develop so as to be complementary and mutually confirming” (p. 238). Attachment theory implies that one's self concept, particularly one's self-esteem and social value, is shaped by the responsiveness of your caregiver to your own needs for comfort and security (Cassidy, 1988).

A caregiver will have three patterns of responsiveness to the needs of the infant: consistently responsive, consistently unresponsive, and inconsistent. These three types of caregiver responsiveness were initially linked to three patterns of infant-caregiver attachment: Secure, Anxious-Ambivalent, and Anxious-Avoidant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & wall, 1978).

Bartholomew and Horowitz modified the attachment model to utilize four categories that are derived from combining the two levels of self-image and image of others: Secure, Preoccupied, Fearful-Avoidant, and Dismissive-Avoidant (Bartholomew

& Horowitz, 1991). These four prototypic attachment patterns are defined by using the combination a person's self-image (positive or negative) as well as a person's image of others (positive or negative). Guerrero's article "Attachment style differences in intimacy and involvement: A test of the four-category model" (1996) supported Bartholomew & Horowitz's model, however in self-report measures the division of the avoidant category can cause individuals to self-identify equally with multiple categories, causing a problem in data analysis. This study will not utilize Bartholomew & Shaver's four-category model, but since much research has been conducted that pertains to attachment style profiles, any relevant data will be canvassed in this section.

A Secure person indicates a sense of worthiness (lovability) plus an expectation that other people are generally accepting and responsive. The Secure prototype is characterized by a valuing of intimate friendships, the capacity to maintain close relationships without losing personal autonomy, and a coherence and thoughtfulness in discussing relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). This category corresponds with Bartholomew & Horowitz's "Securely attached" (1991). A Secure person scored high ratings on warmth, balance of control in friendships, and level of involvement in romantic relationships in Bartholomew & Horowitz's questionnaire in 1991.

An Anxious-Ambivalent person as defined by Hazan & Shaver corresponds conceptually with Bartholomew & Horowitz's Preoccupieds and Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy's enmeshed or preoccupied with attachment pattern (1985). A person demonstrating an Anxious-Ambivalent attachment style will devote immense mental energy and behavioral effort in order to keep their attachment figure close by and

engaged with them in an effort to obtain felt security. The Anxious-Ambivalent prototype is characterized by over involvement in close relationships, a dependence on other people's acceptance for a sense of personal well-being, a tendency to idealize other people, and incoherence and exaggerated emotionality in discussing relationships. In Bartholomew and Horowitz's 1991 research, "Preoccupieds" (Anxious-Ambivalent) scored "uniquely high on elaboration, self-disclosure (showing a tendency to disclose inappropriately), emotional expressiveness, frequency of crying, reliance on others as a secure base, crying in the presence of others, and caregiving. They also rated high on the level of romantic involvement and low on balance of control in friendships" (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 8).

In studies of adult attachment, the Anxious-Ambivalent style displays obsessive preoccupation with the responsiveness of their romantic partner, falling in love easily, extreme jealousy, and higher rates of relationship dissolution (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Anxious-Ambivalents also are subject to negative emotions such as fear, anxiety and loneliness, even when involved in a romantic relationship, and having low self-esteem (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeny & Noller, 1990). Those who fall into this category have a harder time than others making friends in new settings (Hazan & Hutt, 1991), perhaps because they engage in overly intimate and indiscriminant self-disclosure (Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991). They are also more likely to demonstrate procrastination, distraction, and poor performance in a work environment (Hazan & Shaver, 1990).

Hazan & Shaver's Anxious-Avoidant attachment style (1987) is believed to result from consistent unresponsiveness from their primary caregiver/mate. Research

on adult attachment indicates that avoidance is manifested in fear of intimacy and the tendency to maintain emotional distance in even close relationships, with a pessimistic attitude about relationships and a relatively high rate of relationship dissolution (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Such people protect themselves against disappointment by avoiding close relationships and maintaining a sense of independence and invulnerability. The ideal prototype here is characterized by a downplaying in the importance of close relationships, restricted emotionality, an emphasis on independence and self-reliance, and a lack of clarity or credibility in discussing relationships. The Anxious-Avoidant strategy for maintaining felt security involves avoidance of intimate social contact, especially in stressful or distressing circumstances. In order to compensate for this lack of social involvement, Anxious-Avoidants engage in nonsocial activities more frequently (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Some tend to use work to avoid social interaction and may be known as “workaholics” (Hazan & Shaver, 1990).

Although not explicitly stated, this style corresponds well with elements of the avoidant categories as outlined by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). “Fearful-Avoidant” attachment style is a negative self-concept and sense of unworthiness (unlovability) combined with the expectation that others will be negatively disposed (untrustworthy and rejecting). “Dismissive-Avoidant” attachment style’s ideal prototype is one who avoids close relationships because of a fear of rejection, a sense of personal insecurity, and a distrust of others. Research showed the “Dismissive-Avoidant” group to rate significantly lower than the Secure and “Preoccupied” (Anxious-Ambivalent) groups on self-disclosure, intimacy, level of romantic

involvement, reliance on others, and use of others as a secure base when upset. The “Fearful” group of Bartholomew and Horowitz’s research reported more problems reflecting the lack of assertiveness and social inhibition (or their own introversion) (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). By avoiding close involvement with others, this style enables people to protect themselves against anticipated rejection by others.

Anxious-Avoidants will avoid self-disclosure and experience discomfort with relationship partners who do self-disclose (Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991). They are judged by their peers to be hostile (Kobak & Sceery, 1988) and are prone to engaging in uncommitted sexual relations and using alcohol and other substances to reduce tensions (Brennan, Shaver, & Tobey, 1991).

The functions and dynamics of the attachment behavioral system are hypothesized to be consistent throughout a person’s entire life, or as Bowlby stated; attachment is an integral part of human behavior “from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1979). Adult attachment springs from infant attachment, and attachment styles maintain consistent as the attachment figure shifts from a caregiver (often a maternal figure) to an adult, typically a peer, usually a sexual partner. If adult peers begin to serve similar functions and satisfy the same needs for emotional support and security that parents (or the caregiver) have been fulfilling in infancy and childhood, the attachment will eventually be transferred from parents to peers.

Parents are never completely given up as attachment figures, but they cease to be the primary figure, replaced by peers once the child transitions from childhood to adulthood. This is natural and expected (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). A process model of this transference by Hazan, Hutt, Sturgeon, & Bricker (1991) is based on the

assumption that attachment functions shift one by one from parent to peers. Adult attachment relationships involve three behavioral systems: attachment, caregiving, and sexual mating (Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Weiss, 1982).

From an attachment perspective, human beings possess basic needs (the need for security being the most fundamental) that are fulfilled naturally by social relationships. Adult love can be conceptualized as a joint function of the attachment, caregiving, and sexual mating systems (Shaver et al., 1988). Therefore, attraction can result from the possibility of one person perceiving another person as able to meet their attachment, caregiving, and sexual needs. Each need is regulated by a distinct behavioral system designed to respond to social cues. It leads to the conclusion that we would be attracted to people who display these cues (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). For example, there is evidence that mates are selected for their ability to confirm attachment-related expectations, even if the expectations are negative (Swann, Hixon, & De La Ronde, 1992).

There are several weaknesses in Attachment Theory. Normative behavior (i.e. Secure attachment behavior) has not been clearly defined enough in the literature. There is also no consensus on the instrument of measurement for attachment style. Multiple methods can be used to assess attachment style. There is the option of measuring attachment in toddlers and children (Greenberg, Cicchetti, & Cummings, 1990) or in adults. For adults, there are interviews (Bartholomew, 1990; Main, 1991) and self-report measures (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Collins & Read, 1990). The development of interviews has been much less extensive than the development of self-report questionnaires (Bifulco, 2002). Most interviews have focused on recalling childhood

relationships such as the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1984), the Current Relationships Interview (Crowell, 1990) and the Family Attachment Interview (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Only one interview focuses on romantic relationships and friendships: the Peer Attachment Interview (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), but this was designed to study specifically adolescents. The interview scoring methods rely either on complex discourse analysis scored from a transcript (AAI and CRI) or on the simpler coding through predefined rating scales. All derive attachment style categories similar, if not identical, to those used in self-report measures (Bifulco, 2002). Guerrero (1996) created a 32-dimension scale to identify attachment style, while Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) created a four-paragraph questionnaire adapted from Hazan & Shaver's 1987 Relationship Questionnaire. Brennan, Fraley, and Waller created the Experiences In Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire. Validity and adequate reliability have been reported for this measurement. See Sibley, & Liu, 2004; Sibley, Fischer, & Liu, 2005; Fairchild, & Finney, 2006; Maunder, Lancee, Hunter, Greenberg, & Steinhart, 2006; Sloan, Maunder, Hunter, & Moldofsky, 2007; Vicary & Fraley, 2007; Younger, 2007; Tempelhof & Allen, 2008. This measurement is described further in the Methods section, and can be found in Appendix A.

Joint identity also has a long history, perhaps as long as the discussion on love has gone on, dating all the way back to the ancient Greeks. Plato recounted a speech of Aristophanes describing the birth of love. He said that love is a process where we each seek our missing half. Essentially, we are incomplete, and it is part of human nature to seek out our completion through joining with another person. In love, we want to be as united as possible with our "other half" (Plato, 1989).

A common claim about romantic love is that it entails developing a joint identity. This concept has been labeled many ways over the years by writer's, poets, psychologists and philosophers such as a "we", union, fusion, and shared identity (Merino, 2004). Solomon (2001) described the link between love and joint identity though dialectical tension when he explained; "Love is the dialectical tension between individual independence and autonomy on the one hand and the ideal of shared identity on the other." The negotiation of an appropriate degree of connectedness and autonomy is an ongoing dialectic in human relationships (Bochner, 1976, Hess & Handel, 1959).

Merino canvases three approaches to joint identity in her 2004 article "The problem with 'We': Rethinking joint identity in romantic love". The nature of joint identity is still somewhat controversial, as no concrete definition has been agreed upon by scholars. As such, Merino outlines three different views of joint identity. All three are plausible descriptions of the process of joint identity, however each contain logical flaws.

The first view is that joint identity can be thought of as an identity that replaces the individual identities of each of the people involved in the love relationship. Robert Nozick describes romantic love as a process where each person becomes a part of the other's identity. You retain your own identity, but that identity is bound up with the identity of the one you love, and as such the boundaries between the two are not as distinct as they once were (Nozick, 1989).

Merino refers to this as identity replacement. Since human beings will always retain a physical and mental separateness, a literal shared identity is impossible. Instead, the stand-out feature of joint identity is the sharing of identity through ends

and desires. Two people can share goals and desires if each takes on the ends of the other, so that goals come into line with one another. Shared ends are not so literal as to say that each person must take on the same ends as their own, otherwise all people in love would have identical lives as their loved one. Rather, sharing ends involves placing an equal priority on the goals and ends of you loved one as your own. In addition, once entered into a joint identity, some decisions about ends will be made mutually and not individually. A certain level of autonomy is compromised in order to accommodate the joint identity of yourself and your partner. There must however, be room to recognize that two individuals will have different ends, and at times these ends will conflict with the others. It is also stressed that entering into joint identity does not mean autonomy is sacrificed at the beginning and never returned to or desired again (Merino, 2004). Rather, joint identity will need to be negotiated for the duration of the love relationship.

The second perspective is that joint identity is a third entity that exists in addition to the individual identities of the two people involved in the love relationship. Merino describes the notion of retaining a level of individuality in addition to a joint identity with a lover as third-entity identity. Two individuals come together and form something new beyond what they themselves are alone. Here the work of Robert Solomon is cited. His account of a joint identity indicates that the desires of your lover not only take precedence for you, but that you actually adopt those desires as your own. Within the shared identity, desires of your own are not distinct from the desires of your beloveds and vice versa (Solomon, 2002).

The third perspective is that joint identity is actually a part of each individual that becomes fused to the other in the process of love, thereby each individual incorporates a part of their lover into themselves. Fisher continues on the same line as Nozick and Solomon to say that not only does one adopt their lovers desires as their own with their joint identity, but also a whole myriad of other mental states such as perceptions, feelings, and actions. The two individuals involved cannot distinguish which person these attributes originate from, and rather regard themselves as a single unit (Fisher, 1990).

Merino describes this retention of autonomous identities with the joint identity forming an important part of each of the individual identities as identity alteration. The well-being of the loved one is perceived as being directly connected with one's own well-being. This differs from the previous views of joint identity in that this considers the goals and end's of one lover as being equally vital to the happiness of the other, while recognizing that the goals and ends are different, rather than a pooling of identity. Through this study, the author hopes to further define the phenomenon of joint identity.

Significance of the Study

As one of the most heuristic interpersonal theories from the 1980's, Attachment Theory has been studied extensively. It is theoretically robust, with various studies connecting attachment style as an independent variable with dependent variables such as relationship satisfaction and maintenance, specific communication skills such as comforting messages and forgiveness, and interpersonal dynamics. See Guerrero, 1996; Le Poire, et al, 1997; Jones, 2005; Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2006; Lawler-

Row, Younger, Piferi, and Jones, 2006; Kane, Jaremka, Guichard, Ford, Collins, & Feeney, 2007.

Attachment Theory seeks to explain how and why close relationships “play a central and critical role in overall feeling about and adjustment to life” (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). The nature of these close relationships and how they are impacted by the entrance into joint identities would then have a major impact on these perspectives. Research on the way these two variables interface with each other could help to expand our understanding of human behaviors and their motivations. One way that this study expands and clarifies the literature is to give a better understanding of the way in which people perceive joint identity, as well as the interplay of attachment styles between partners. Specifically, this research illuminates the cognitive models of joint identity that exist and creates a more defined understanding of the nature of joint identity, as well as the impact of attachment style on the degree to which a person will have joint identity with a given partner. Several conceptualizations between the variables overlap, such as self-concept and relational satisfaction.

The work of Fitzpatrick and colleagues (Fitzpatrick, 1977, 1984; Fitzpatrick & Best, 1979; Fitzpatrick & Indvik, 1982) could be regarded as a precedent that implies validity for the current study. They developed a Relational Typology, a three dimension classification of marital relationships. Autonomy/interdependence is the first of three dimensions, which includes the perceived interdependence that exists within a relationship. The level of interdependence in a marriage is demonstrated by sharing and companionship, and organization of the couple’s time and household space. The more interdependent the couple is, the higher the level of companionship,

the more time spent together, and the more they organize their home to promote spending time together and closeness. This dimension resembles the dependent variable of joint identity being discussed in this study. The level of mutual involvement in this case is discussed through the perspective of marital interactions. However, Interdependence, or joint identity, is present to some extent in every love relationship. To exclude every non-marital relationship is a mistake. A more specific focus on joint identity would be valuable. Marital types are a perspective on the world, and one's relationships within that world, and it involves several factors that fit under the umbrella of your "marital type". A spotlight on joint identity as a *process* would broaden the understanding of how and why two people enter into a joint identity, unfettered by the myriad of elements involved in the structure of a marital type perspective.

The second dimension is ideology, including beliefs, standards, and values that the individuals hold concerning marriage, family, and life. The third and last dimension is conflict, and the individuals' approaches to the resolution of differences. When an empirical approach is adopted and married couples are sampled, three relational definitions emerge; traditional, independent, and separate. A fourth couple type emerges called mixed, when individuals within a couple don't hold the same perceptions of their relationship (Williamson & Fitzpatrick, 1985).

Fitzpatrick's marital typology has several resemblances to attachment theory. Traditionalists, marked in their reports high disclosure, person-centeredness, cohesion, expression of affection, and relational satisfaction echo the attachment style of Secure. Independents avoid conflict, yet can be passive aggressive in their delivery of vocal

cues during conflict avoidance, have less expression of affection, less self disclosure, and their use of mind-reading resemble the attachment style behaviors of Anxious-Avoidants. Separates report less disclosure to each other, they communicate less than other types, and predict each other more poorly. They avoid conflict through neutral tones. This mirrors the Anxious-Avoidant attachment style.

This relationship between the different attachment styles' proclivity to engage in the use of joint identity seems inherent in the nature of the variables and should be established statistically, since the correlation seems apparent.

Relationship between Specific Attachment Style and Joint Identity

Attachment theory is an organizing framework that describes how one's personal traits are established, manifested, and their subsequent impact of interpersonal connection. Using this perspective, it could be said that one's personality would lead the individual to enter into or avoid a joint identity with a partner. Attachment style could also then impact the partner's inclination to enter into a joint identity with them, since their personality traits would mark them as available for emotional intimacy and availability. Each of the three attachment styles would certainly have an impact on the formation of identity, and thus joint identity, as well as others forming a joint identity with them.

Many studies have examined the role of attachments styles and the cultivation of relationships, which as a by-product indicates the potential level of joint identity most likely experienced. One such study (Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2006) found that some individuals enter their relationships with personality characteristics

that facilitate effective care and support, whereas others have characteristics that interfere with effective care giving.

A person with Secure attachment create more positive relationship environments for themselves and their partners through social support and care giving processes (Kane et al., 2007). It was shown that people with Secure attachment are more forgiving than their counterparts, which carries implications of their toleration of negative effect in recognizing and experiencing pain, communication of emotional feelings, cognitive reframing of an offender, and regulation of one's own emotions while recalling the offense.

Forgiveness appears to be a behavioral response to conflict and interpersonal betrayal that Securely attached individuals use to "weather emotional storms" (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). Jones (2005) found that Secure people produce the most verbal person-centered messages, which involves legitimization and validation of feelings experienced by the emotionally upset person. According to Guerrero (1996), Secure people are generally more friendly and affiliative than any other attachment style. Le Poire, et al (1997) supported Guerrero's research when they found that Secures approach adult relationships in a fearless way yet are not overly demanding.

According to Kane, Jaremka, Guichard, Ford, Collins, & Feeney (2007), individuals are happier and more satisfied in their relationships when they and their partners are more Secure (lower in avoidance and anxiety). As an adult in a romantic interpersonal relationship, these traits would facilitate the development of joint identity with their partner.

Those who have an Anxious-Avoidant attachment style typically demonstrate personality traits less conducive to developing a joint identity. Anxious-Avoidants evade overly intense relationships, and their approach to relationships is marked by limited involvement, openness, expressiveness, and pleasantness (Le Poire et al., 1997). Jones (2005) found that Anxious-Avoidant people produce less person-centered messages, meaning they validate their partners' emotional experiences less. Guerrero (1996) found that both Anxious-Ambivalents and Secures were more affiliative with their partners than Anxious-Avoidants. This means that Anxious-Avoidants exhibit less nonverbal gaze, facial pleasantness, vocal pleasantness, general interest, and attentiveness than any other attachment style (Guerrero, 1996). These personality traits indicate that they would be less likely to enter into a joint identity with a partner, and vice versa.

The Anxious-Ambivalent attachment style is characterized by fewer person centered messages (Jones, 2005) as well. Anxious-Ambivalents approach adult relationships forcefully, with intense demonstrations and demands on their partner of involvement, expressiveness, and emotionality (Le Poire et al., 1997). This could lead to a more intense experience of or need for joint identity than Secures and Anxious-Ambivalents, since they demonstrate a strong desire for connection. Conversely, being of this attachment style could cause far lower levels of joint identity than the other attachment styles, since the individual's partner may be less likely to enter into a joint identity with them since demands for such connection may be unreasonably early or forceful. It seems clear that Anxious-Ambivalents are not predictable by attachment

style since their particular personality traits that lead to identity formation are less predictive in nature as to their partner's reaction.

Purposes and Objectives

This study utilized the independent variable of attachment style to investigate its impact on the dependent variable of joint identity. Given that previous research (as seen in the literature review) has established certain personality traits and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses that are commonly associated with each attachment style (for example: The Secure prototype is higher in openness, self-monitoring, and comforting messages), it was hypothesized that one's attachment style has an impact on one's experience of joint identity. Given the personality traits and characteristics embodied by each attachment style, it was also posed that attachment style may indicate that individuals will be more likely to form joint identities or experience a higher level of joint identity with a partner of a certain attachment style over another. Particularly, this study hypothesized that:

RQ1: Does attachment style similarity have an impact on joint identity?

H1: Attachment style has an impact on level of joint identity.

H2: Joint identity is highest when one's partner is Secure and lowest when one's partner is Anxious-Avoidant.

H3: Anxious-Ambivalents in intimate relationships are more likely to form Joint Identity in general, regardless of what their partner's attachment style is.

Methodology

Research Design

The research method used is survey research, utilizing the self-report technique of questionnaires to ascertain the characteristics of the respondents. The population of

this study was restricted only to the particular specification of being involved in a romantic and/or sexual relationship, and only those currently part of a “couple” were eligible. Any couple who have a sexual or romantic involvement with each other was eligible. This broad sampling was included in order to provide a clear representation of joint identity across relational stages.

No additional salient traits were required, since all people identify with an attachment style and all people will engage in the use of joint identity in a relationship to an extent, even if that extent is negligible. Therefore, survey research was the most appropriate method since the generalizability of the respondents would be good. The survey method provided the best opportunity to provide an overview on a vast territory. Regression, ANOVA and Pearson correlations were used to analyze the data since the questionnaires assessed the variables of interest (attachment style and joint identity) at one point in time.

Instruments

Operational definitions of dependent and independent variables.

Attachment style (independent variable) was defined operationally as how someone scored on the self-report Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire described below (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). Joint identity (dependent variable) was defined operationally as the extent to which one self-identified as an autonomous individual, or connected as part of a couple, which involves one’s personal definition and representation of self. In this definition, individual and joint identities are not mutually exclusive, so as a joint identity develops, the individual identity does not necessarily become diminished. An identity could rather become more

multifaceted with the addition of joint identity. The perception of the individual, as opposed to their behaviors or lifestyle, is what is being measured. What part of their identity- individual or joint, is focused on and considered central.

Attachment instrument.

The instrument for measuring attachment style is Fraley, Waller, & Brennan's (2000) self-report measure known as the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire. This is an adaptation of the attachment measure developed by Brennan, Clark, & Shaver (1998) known as the Experiences in Close Relationships inventory (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). This measure consists of 36 statements that concern how the respondent feels in emotionally intimate relationships generally. Each respondent is asked to make ratings on 7-point Likert scale of the degree to which they relate to each of the items, from "completely unlike me" to "completely like me". These ratings are referred to as the self-report ratings, and are nominal. See Appendix A for the 36 items that appear on the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire.

Joint identity instrument.

The joint identity measure was developed by Leatham and Dowd (private communication). In a study of dating couples, Leatham and Dowd verified adequate reliability in two different samples ($N=61$ Cronbach's Alpha = .703; $N = 60$ Cronbach's Alpha = .720) of the eleven item scale. See Appendix B for the 11 items that appear on the Leatham-Dowd Questionnaire. The subject population drew heavily on the university undergraduate population used in this study. Though there were community members included (age_{sample 1}: mean = 24.18, range 18 to 74; age_{sample 2}:

mean = 23.95, range 18 – 52) giving these samples more variability than a purely undergraduate sample.

In order to have a basis for claiming content validity, the items were developed using Merino's (2004) review of the conceptualizations of joint identity. Merino (2004) argued that there were three conceptualizations in the philosophical literature of the nature of joint identity: identity replacement, third entity identity and identity alteration. Though Merino was arguing that each of these three conceptualizations have flaws that keep them from being literally true, Leatham and Dowd used them as metaphorical representations of how joint identity could function to generate items for their joint identity scale. Items 3, 4, 5 and 6 reflect the identity replacement view, as Merino argues that the central feature of this view is "the sharing of ends and desires" (126). The third entity identity conceptualization focuses on the idea that joint identity changes the individuals. Items 2, 9 and 10 reflect this conceptualization. The identity alteration conceptualization hinges on the dialectic tension between one's own goals and one's partner's goals. This view informed items 1, 7, 8 and 11.

To further test the validity of the measure, the sample population also completed Rubin's (1970) love scale. Leatham and Dowd believed that a measure of joint identity should show a moderate correlation with the love scale. Sample 1 had a correlation between joint identity and love of .669 ($p < .01$). Sample 2 had a correlation between joint identity and love of .630 ($p < .01$). These correlations seem to be in the proper range for the theoretical overlap between joint identity and love. They are high enough that they show close relationship, but not so high as to be independent measures of the same phenomenon.

Participants and procedures

Selection of subjects.

The sampling procedure of this study utilized random sampling from a pool of undergraduate students at the University of Rhode Island and their social network. It could be considered a convenience sample rather than a random sample, since as an Instructor; the students of Com100 are readily available as participants at any given time that research must be conducted. Though there was a restricted age range, this sampling should still have been varied enough to generate an externally valid sample.

Material distribution.

The sample consisted of students enrolled in Communication 100: Fundamentals of Communication and members of the participant's social networks. Each participant was invited to return data from a couple. The participant and his/her romantic partner could have been one of the couples. The questionnaires were distributed during class time to all students in the class. This minimized any pressure to participate, since students did not have to raise their hands or sign-up in order to participate. Those who did not accept the invitation to participate could simply return an unanswered packet.

Participants were asked take the questionnaire home to fill out, as well as invite their partner to participate in the study. If both people in the couple wished to participate, they each took a questionnaire to a separate location to fill out and seal in an envelope. This ensured the participants privacy, as well as ensured that neither person was influenced by the other as they completed the survey. Questionnaires were anonymous, utilizing a coding system that kept couple-data grouped together. Each two-person packet shared one number, and each individual questionnaire was assigned either A or

B. This allowed for couple data to be processed without revealing identity. Once completed, each individual placed their own questionnaire in a sealed envelope to maintain their privacy.

This study included 264 individuals, and thus 132 sets of couple data. The youngest participant was 16 years old, with the oldest participant 63 years of age. The mean age was 20, with a standard deviation of 5. The sample consisted mainly of heterosexual couples, with only four exceptions. There were 136 females and 128 males that participated. Most participants self-identified as white/Caucasian with 84% of all participants. The next highest average were those who chose not to list their ethnic affiliation at 5.5%, followed by 4.9% Latin/Hispanic, 4.5% Asian, 1.5% Jewish, and 1.1% Black/African American in that order.

The average couple had known one another for 3 years and 4 months (40 months) with the longest relationship spanning 35 years and the shortest spanning one month. Relationship stage was determined by providing a continuous scale from “casual dating” to “married” with corresponding numbers. Most people, at 57% of the entire group, classified their relationship as “exclusive dating”. Of the rest, 30% of people categorized their relationship as infrequent to casual dating, and 13% categorized their relationship as engaged to married.

Data collection.

Once students received the research packets and they had been invited to participate in the study as well as invite their partner to participate, they could bring the packets away from class with them to complete. They were asked to bring the packets

back the following class session to ensure a maximum amount of return on the information.

In the event that a student did not wish to participate, but wanted to be involved in the research process, they were invited to pass a packet along to another couple who was not enrolled in Com100 in order to ensure that the data on the same person were not being collected twice. Students were not required or obligated in any way to invite another student to participate, and could simply return an unanswered packet instead. The data collection procedure was designed to maximize the response rate on the questionnaires. In order to maximize confidentiality for the students, they could return the packets to a drop-box that was located outside of their classroom. An additional drop-box was available in Davis Hall.

Data Analysis

Anxiety and avoidance scores for each individual were determined by summing items 1 to 18 and 19 to 36 on the ECR-R after reverse scoring the items as instructed by Fraley, Brennan, and Waller (2000), who also provided mean scores for the anxiety and avoidance subscales. Participants who scored below the means on both scales were categorized as *Secure*. Those who were above the mean on the anxiety subscale, but below the mean on the avoidance subscale were categorized as *Anxious-Ambivalent*. Those who scored above the mean on avoidance but below the mean on anxiety were categorized as *Anxious-Avoidant*. Those who scored above the mean on both subscales were categorized as *Fearful*. A joint identity score was computed for each participant by summing the joint identity items after reverse scoring item 8.

Results

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 addressed whether attachment style similarity between partners (for instance, a Secure person dating another Secure person versus a Secure person dating an Anxious-Ambivalent person) has an impact on the level of joint identity they share. In order to answer this question, it was necessary to first establish the nature of the variable of joint identity. If the phenomenon of joint identity were a relational construct that two people create and share together, then they should report roughly the same estimate of joint identity within their relationship. In essence, if joint identity is a relational variable, then you would have two different people reporting the measurement of the same thing. Using Cronbach's Alpha to treat the joint identity measurement data as two independent measures of a single construct yielded .584. Conventionally, an Alpha of .7 or higher indicates acceptable reliability in a measurement. This tells us that two people within the same relationship can report the level of joint identity experienced in very different ways from one another.

A correlation of .413 was computed, which shows that the degree of joint identity between two individuals in a relationship is related, but certainly not the same. In light of this data, joint identity should be approached as an individual subject variable, rather than a relational variable. A perception of the individual, rather than one shared construction.

Because the Cronbach's Alpha yielded results that do not indicate acceptable reliability in treating joint identity as a relational construct, this study did not treat the couple as one unit. Instead, individuals were used as the unit of analysis in this study in order to accommodate the fact that joint identity is perceived separately. The correlation

of .413 is high enough, however, to show that construals of joint identity are not completely separate, but rather related between two partners. Because there is a relationship between the joint identity of partners, but the perception is not identical, the data was run as a replication between Group A and Group B. In every case, both groups had the same results from the significance tests. What was significant for Group A would also be significant for Group B, and what was not significant for Group A would also fail to be significant for Group B. Because each group yielded the same results, it is a good sign that the best treatment was used to analyze the data.

Every person has their own attachment style, independent of a partner. Attachment style similarity is understood as two people in a relationship who are characterized by the same attachment style, for instance a Secure person dating another Secure person. Therefore attachment style similarity is a relationship construct between two people. Joint identity is a relational perception rather than a construct. Each person in the relationship will have their own view of the level of joint identity shared and experienced. These perceptions may closely resemble each other in some cases, or two people could have drastically different views of the joint identity between them. Due to the nature of joint identity as an individual's perception, the analysis of RQ1 indicates that attachment style similarity is not predictive of joint identity.

However, if attachment style similarity could indicate the level of perceived joint identity, it begs the question; *whose* perception? Since partners each have their own separate perception of joint identity, is attachment style similarity more predictive of joint identity for men or for women in relationships? It appears that it is not consistently

predictive of both people in a heterosexual relationship; however it could be more statistically significant for one gender over another.

To answer this, a regression equation was used to see if women's joint identity score (and therefore perception of joint identity within their relationship) is predicted by the attachment style similarity of their partner to themselves. The difference between the Ambivalence and Avoidance scores of partner's was used as the predictive variables (determining if their own attachment style was the same or different from their partner), and the woman's joint identity score was used as the outcome variable. The variables did not significantly predict the women's joint identity score. ($F_{2, 126}=2.778, p=.066$). While this doesn't meet the test of statistical significance, it does show an interesting trend. Women's beta weights indicated a negative correlation with both anxiety scales with a beta weight of $-.088$ for the avoidance scale and $-.174$ for the anxiety scale. The data indicates that if women and their partner's have a similar score of Ambivalence, that their report of perceived joint identity will likely be higher. This is shown by the significance tests for the Beta weights. The avoidance scale is clearly not significant ($t=-1.003, P=.318$), however the anxiety scale approached significance ($t=-1.974, P=.051$), where $P=.05$ as demonstrating significance.

A regression equation was also used to determine the same information about the men who participated in this study. Again, the difference between the Ambivalence and Avoidance scores of their partner's and themselves was used as the predictive variable, with the men's joint identity score used as the outcome variable. Variables for the men were just barely statistically significant, and thus attachment style similarity is more predictive for men of their experience of joint identity. ($F=3.073$ with 2,124 DF, $P=.050$).

The data indicates that if men and their partner's have a similar level of Avoidance, that their report of perceived joint identity will be higher. The beta weights for the male participants of this study were -.157 for the avoidance scale and -.130 for the anxiety scale, which measures one's Ambivalence. Men showed a similar connection with attachment scoring similarity and joint identity as women, however with men avoidance and anxiety correlation is opposite. While neither scale was significant, avoidance was far closer ($t = -1.767$, $P = .08$) than anxiety ($t = -1.464$, $P = .14$).

In analyzing the data to answer Research Question 1, whether attachment style similarity has an impact on the level of joint identity reported, it showed that similarity in the Avoidance scale would be more predictive of their level of joint identity reported by men. This means that if men and their partner share a similar level of Avoidance, their report of Joint Identity will be higher. For women, similarity in the Ambivalence scale was more predictive of a higher score of joint identity. Lack of similarity in all of them would indicate a lower level of joint identity reported, because all of the Beta's were negative. While the Beta's are not statistically significant, they do indicate through their negative numbers that there is something to the idea that having very different levels of either Ambivalence, Avoidance, or both from one's partner is indicative of a lower perceived level of joint identity in general.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 asks whether attachment style has an impact on joint identity between two people in a relationship. Using the mean's indicated by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan in the ECR-R (2000); the author divided the participants of this study into their attachment style profiles. This study included 111 Secure people, 3 Ambivalent people, 14

Avoidant people, and 4 Fearful people in Group A. In Group B, none of the participants were categorized as Fearful, with 112 Secure, 2 Ambivalent, and 18 Avoidant people.

Data was organized into two groups (A and B) because some questions needed to be answered on the individual level and others on the relational level. To run the data as a single large group would be to treat each person as an individual, unrelated to their romantic partner. This would be a violation of the statistical test of the assumption of independence because not all of the data points are independent from the others. Kenny and Kashy's 1991 article "Analyzing Interdependence in Dyads" outlines how interdependence in dyads complicates the analysis of data. Interdependence implies that what one person scores on a given variable is correlated with the score that their partner receives on the same variable. If the statistical analysis is conducted using each person as a separate unit and interdependence is ignored, then the independence assumption is probably going to be violated. Because most commonly used inferential statistical techniques require the independence of observations, interdependence creates a statistical issue (Kenny & Kashy, 1991). By merely being a part a romantic relationship, certain individual data are impacted. To take this into account, we chose to run ANOVAS on both Group A and B, analyzing them as two parallel groups of 132 rather than one larger group of 264. This treatment allowed for the exploration of the impact partners have on each other. Categorization of participants into Group A or B was not systematic.

Attachment style is a categorical variable, so an analysis of variance was used to determine if it has an impact on the variable of joint identity. Analysis of Group A yielded results that are significant at the .000 level. ($F=14.172$ with 3,127 DF). The mean for joint identity in Secure people was 40.56, and the mean of joint identity for Anxious-

Ambivalent people was 42.67. The mean of joint identity for Anxious-Avoidant people however was only 29.2143. Group B also demonstrated significant data ($F=14.069$ with 2,128 DF, $P=.000$). The mean of joint identity for Secure people in this group was 39.98 and 36.00 for Anxious-Ambivalent people. The mean for Avoidant people came in again as the lowest at 30.89. In Group B, the Secure people again have the highest level of joint identity clustered closely with Anxious-Ambivalent people. The separation between those two and Anxious-Avoidants is smaller than in Group A, however the trend still continues and both groups yielded statistically significant results.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 suggests that joint identity would be highest, or experienced to a higher degree, when one's partner is Secure, and experienced the least when one's partner is Anxious-Avoidant. While the results of the data analysis were indicative that Secures could foster a higher perception of joint identity in one's partner, and Avoidance could suppress perceived joint identity in one's partner, the numbers were not statistically significant. For Group A, the mean of joint identity for Secure people was 39.70, for Ambivalent people it was 39.00, and for Avoidant people it was 35.61. Group A did not include anyone who had a Fearful partner. People with Secure partners did have the most perceived joint identity, and people with Avoidant partner's did have the lowest levels of reported joint identity, however the numbers aren't statistically significant ($F=2.344$ with 2,128 DF and $P=.100$). The same was true of Group B ($F=2.023$ with 3,127 DF and $P=.114$). The mean for people with Secure partners was 39.23, Ambivalent partners 41.00, Avoidant partners 34.85, and Fearful partners 34.00. Even with a good sample size and

two different tests (one from each person in the relationship) of perceived joint identity, the data is simply not conclusive enough to support this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 posits that Anxious-Ambivalent people will be more likely to perceive a high level of joint identity in general, regardless of what attachment style their partner is. Out of 262 participants in this study, only 5 were categorized as Anxious-Ambivalent. Unfortunately, with such a small sample, the data simply can't sufficiently answer this question. For Group A, the relationship between the Anxiety scale and joint identity was $-.275$, and for Group B it was $-.273$. The data analysis does indicate that the correlation between joint identity and anxiety is negative, at $-.27$. As one's anxiety score goes up, their joint identity score goes down. The Beta weights also show the same kind of thing as the correlation. The trend shows that because anxiety levels and joint identity are negatively related, the likelihood of Anxious-Ambivalent people reporting higher joint identity is not good. Since both Anxious-Avoidants and Anxious-Ambivalents score higher on anxiety measurements, and Anxious-Avoidants score lower than Secure in reporting joint identity, logic would indicate that Anxious-Ambivalents would also report lower levels of joint identity than Secure people. But given the small number of people categorized as Anxious-Ambivalent in this study, this train of thought can be taken with a grain of salt as well. Nothing conclusive can be established.

Discussion

An extensive body of work exists using attachment theory, exploring attachment style and its impact on a vast array of communicative and interpersonal areas. The conceptualization of joint identity, however, is still being formed. This study sought to

refine the understanding and precise definition of joint identity through a communicative lens, analyzing whether attachment style has an impact on joint identity, and if so in what ways. A discussion of the results and implications of this study, as well as limitations and directions for future research follows.

This study collected data from couples, or people currently sexually and/or romantically involved with each other. The research method used was survey research, utilizing the self-report technique of questionnaires to ascertain the characteristics of the respondents. Regression, ANOVA and Pearson correlations were used to analyze the data since the questionnaires assessed the variables of interest (attachment style and joint identity) at one point in time. More detailed discussion of the study sample can be found in the Methods and Limitations section.

The results indicated an interesting relationship between attachment style and joint identity. While not all data came out as originally hypothesized, interesting trends and correlations were found. For instance, *RQ1* asked whether attachment style similarity has an impact on joint identity. The analysis of the data led to a far clearer understanding of the nature of joint identity as a variable. It should be treated as an independent perception, and not as a relational construct created and shared by two people. Thus, two people in a relationship may perceive the joint identity that exists between them in very different ways. Furthermore, beta weights indicated that lack of similarity between partner's levels of anxiety (Ambivalence or Avoidance) would lead to lower perceived joint identity. Having a similar score on the Avoidance scale would be more predictive of their level of joint identity reported by men. This means that if men and their partner share a similar

level of Avoidance, their report of joint identity will be higher. For women, similarity in the Ambivalence scale was more predictive of a higher score of joint identity.

Analysis of *Hypothesis 1* tried to answer whether attachment style has an impact on joint identity between two people in a relationship. Results indicated that attachment style does seem to have a correlation with the level of joint identity reported. The mean joint identity reported was highest in Secure people, followed by Anxious-Ambivalent people, and coming in at far lower numbers, Anxious-Avoidant people reported the least perceived joint identity.

The data analyzed for *Hypothesis 2* indicated that people with a Secure partner experience or perceive a higher level of joint identity, and people with an Anxious-Avoidant partner perceives or experiences lower levels of joint identity. The numbers did not determine statistical significance, and while the data did not contradict this hypothesis, it cannot be said conclusively that those whose partners are Secure will always perceive the highest joint identity and those who have Avoidant partners will always have the lowest. *Hypothesis 3*, that Anxious-Ambivalent people will be more likely to perceive a high level of joint identity regardless of what attachment style their partner is, could not be definitively answered by this study due to the reported attachment styles of the sample pool. Analysis of these hypotheses did have a positive impact in that through our query; interesting new directions for the research were introduced.

Limitations

When trying to study data from couples, the questions posed here would best be answered by a group consisting of diverse ages, relational stages, and ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. This study faced several limitations in that the population being

sampled from was comprised mostly of people 18-20 years of age, and very few reached into their social networks to include older individuals. In addition to the lack of information from a wide age range, there was an overall lack of diversity in the group. A vast majority of the group self-identified as white/Caucasian, exclusively dating, and heterosexual. Even the stage of relationship reported tended to be highly similar, with only a handful of married couples, engaged couples, or couples in initiation phases.

Due to the nature of the research, there was also a limited pool of Anxious-Avoidant and Anxious-Ambivalent people. If a person has an anxious attachment style, they are not as able to create and maintain a mutually satisfying relationship, and thus are less likely to have been eligible for this study in the first place.

The cut-off means of the ECR-R for who is Secure, Avoidant, or Ambivalent may be skewed due to the nature of the participants in the original study. Fraley, Brennan, and Waller recruited participants via an online survey that the participant would have had to seek out on their own and voluntarily and anonymously participate in. It could be argued that a Secure person is less likely than an Anxious person to seek out an online quiz about their relationship. If the participants in Fraley, Brennan, and Waller's study may have been more likely to be Anxious, the participants in this study may be more likely to be Secure. This is because Secure people are more likely to foster healthy and mutually satisfying relationships in general, and thus asking for people who are currently engaged in a relationship could very likely yield a high population of Secures.

Those who are higher in levels of anxiety, either Anxious-Ambivalents or Anxious-Avoidants, would be less likely to be in a relationship in general. Or, were they in a relationship, they may be less likely to be in a relationship serious enough that they

feel comfortable asking their partner to participate in a relationship study. This request in itself indicates a certain level of comfort with their partner that Anxious-Avoidants may not have. It is also typical for Anxious-Avoidants and Anxious-Ambivalents to have more short term relationships due to their relational characteristics and tendencies.

Social desirability could also have an impact on how an individual reports their perceptions of Joint Identity, however if social desirability were to have an impact on this variable it would very likely have an impact on all conditions, thus making it hard to gauge what impact it has, if any at all.

Directions for Future Research

In the future there are several areas that could benefit from further investigations. In order to accommodate for the small sample pool of Anxious-Ambivalent and Anxious-Avoidant people, the same research design could be used, accepting all people to participate regardless of relationship status. If currently involved with a romantic partner, participants should answer questions based on their present relationship, and this could comprise a data set of couples modeled after the present study. If a person is unattached presently, they could answer the questions based on their most recent relationship or involvement, and a second data set of unattached people could be incorporated. This would allow those people who were excluded in this round of research- namely those who are uninvolved with a partner. By including these people, there would probably be a larger pool of Anxious-Avoidant and Anxious-Ambivalent people. This second data set would also require a more streamlined collection process, and thus a far larger participant pool could easily be created.

In addition, the data that indicates a higher score on the anxiety scale has a negative correlation with joint identity should be observed more closely. While results weren't statistically significant in this round of research, there was a strong trend demonstrated. Furthermore, the data indicated that women had a stronger negative correlation on the ambivalence scale, whereas men have a stronger negative correlation with the anxiety scale and joint identity. The impact that this trend has on homosexual couples has not been clearly defined, and it may implicate that homosexual couples face different challenges than their heterosexual counterparts. Further research aimed at the gay community could certainly be beneficial in illuminating the relational dynamics between all people, both gay and straight.

Conclusion

This study sought to advance the literature on attachment style by examining the concept of commitment and closeness through an attachment perspective, as well as contribute to theory and practical application. As an interesting result of this study, the variable of joint identity has become more defined. This research confirms that rather than a relational construct, it is indeed a personal perception determined by an individual. Furthermore, this study demonstrates a very real relationship between one's attachment style and the perceptions of joint identity in a relationship.

This study collected matching data for each person in a couple, determining what each person's attachment style is as well as their individual perceptions of the joint identity that existed between them. It was determined that attachment style similarity between partners is not indicative of a higher level of joint identity. Results also indicated that the attachment style of one individual does have an impact on the perception of joint

identity of their partner. Secure people tended to have partners who perceived the highest level of joint identity, followed by Anxious-Ambivalent people. Anxious-Avoidant people's partners reported far lower levels of joint identity. Additionally, it was established that women have a negative correlation on the ambivalent scale with joint identity, whereas men have a negative correlation with the anxiety scale and joint identity. In a practical light, this research could allow professionals to have deeper insight into the factors that create cohesion and closeness between couples, which will allow for more detailed and effective advice about relationships.

Appendix A

Measurement for Attachment Style

Attachment Style Measurement: Experiences In Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R)

Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000)

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate 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 circling a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

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

- 30. I tell my partner just about everything.
- 31. I talk things over with my partner.
- 32. I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.
- 33. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
- 34. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
- 35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
- 36. My partner really understands me and my needs.

Appendix B

Measurement for Joint Identity

Joint Identity Measurement: Leatham Dowd Questionnaire

Leatham and Dowd (2008)

INSTRUCTIONS: First, tell us about yourself. This survey assesses people who are currently involved in a romantic relationship.

Age: _____ Sex: Male Female [circle one]

Ethnic Affiliation:

How long have you *known* your romantic partner? months OR years

How long have you been *romantically or sexually* involved with your partner? _____
months OR _____ years.

Circle the term that best describes the current state of the relationship with your romantic partner. The scale below represents stages of relationships from the most informal to the most formal. Place an X anywhere from 1 to 9 that best represents where you see your relationship. It does not have to be directly over one of the numbers, though it can be. The terms listed below the scale are an aid to help you assess how formal the stage of your relationship is.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9
“occasional dating” “regular dating” “exclusive dating” “engaged”
 “married”

Now that we have your story telling how you met your romantic partner, we would like to ask you a few questions about your attitudes and beliefs about your relationship. Please circle only *one* response on each item below

1. If my partner needs something, I cannot relax until that need is met.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

2. I felt like my partner is my “other half.”

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree

3. My partner adopts many of my beliefs and I adopt many of my partner's beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

4. I want my partner to achieve his/her life goals as much as she/he does.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

5. My partner helps me on the way to achieving my life goals.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

6. My partner's goals and desires are as important to me as my own goals and desires are.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

7. I consult my partner whenever I have to make a decision that might affect time with my partner.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

8. It is none of my partner's business what I do with my free time when we are apart.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

9. I become a different person when I am with my partner.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

10. Being in this relationship changed who I am.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly		Neutral		Strongly
Disagree				Agree

11. I cannot be truly happy if I know that my partner is unhappy.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2

3
Neutral

4

5
Strongly
Agree

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