THE ANXIETY OF NOT FINDING AND SECURING A LIFE PARTNER

By

JAMIE NORA OKO

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A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in

Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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Abstract

The necessity of a romantic or close relationship plays a very significant role in the lives and thought processes of young adults today (Robinson, & Wright, 2013). This study explored, whether college students have an anxiety about finding and securing a life partner. Participants were first presented with the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ), and Existential Isolation scale (EIS). Participants then received false personality feedback about the likelihood of finding and securing a life partner. Explicit anxiety was then measured with the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS – X), and implicitly with a lexical decision task. A between subjects factorial with repeated measures ANOVA, found no significant differences between anxiety and non – anxiety related words in the lexical decision task. PANAS – X scores remained non – significant, demonstrating no noteworthy increase in anxiety following receiving negative feedback. Several exploratory analyses and hypotheses for future research are included.

Keywords: relationship, existential isolation, positive and negative affect, anxiety

The Anxiety of Not Finding and Securing a Life Partner

This current study investigates whether or not young adults maintain an anxiety about finding and securing a life partner. This is investigated through experimental measures of a Lexical Decision Task (LDT) and a Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS – X). The participants completed various measures that assessed their personality and orientation towards close relationships. Then participants received randomized feedback on their personality based on their supposed responses. Nevertheless, they were randomly assigned to receive feedback stating whether they are either likely or unlikely to find a life partner.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate if personality feedback, particularly the pessimistic outcome about finding and securing a life partner, causes anxiety, and if this is prominent for participants with particular personalities and attitudes about relationships. The participants also completed the PANAS - X and a LDT. It was predicted, that participants who were given the pessimistic prognosis about finding a life partner, would score higher on the PANAS – X, and also show a faster recognition of anxiety related words in the LDT. Therefore, this study examines, if college aged young adults have an anxiety about finding and securing a life partner?

Literature Review

As young adults engage in the just beginning journey of their lives, they are entering the beginning stages of serious relationships. This particular unknown branch of the future, close and romantic relationships, is a relentless thought in the minds of young adults (Robinson, & Wright, 2013). Robinson and colleagues' research at the University of Greenwich, London, studies outcomes of crisis episodes in early adulthood. They found that "the most common crisis

content across… genders was divorce / relationship break – up" (Robinson, & Wright, 2013). It

is evident that romantic relationships play a significant role in the thinking process of young

adult's everyday lives. Since the topic of romantic relationships is a "common crisis" for young

adults, it begs the question, does this crisis cause anxiety about finding and securing a life

partner? This potential anxiety of finding a life partner, can be interpreted through the lens of

Terror Management Theory.

Terror Management Theory

Mortality concerns affect the daily lives of humans, and highlight the dramatic effects of

death awareness on a variety of behaviors, cognitions, and emotions (Florian, Mikulincer, &

Hirschberger, 2002). Terror Management Theory (TMT) describes the way in which human

beings create psychological strategies to remove thoughts of death from their conscious thought

processes, based on their feelings of "helplessness" in avoiding their inevitable death (Florian et

al., 2002). One strategy to remove thoughts of death, are engaging in thoughts about a loving

relationship, as research shows that securely attached people react to a mortality salience prime

or thoughts about their inevitable death, with a strong need for a romantic partner, or relationship

strivings (Florian et al., 2002). TMT is categorized into two primary parts, proximal and distal

defenses. Proximal defenses are ways to overpower thoughts about death, by pushing the

concern of death itself, into the future (Florian et al., 2002). Distal defenses address thoughts of

death symbolically, by altering how people perceive themselves and the world around them

(Florian et al., 2002). Therefore, distal defenses are the basis of how romantic relationships are

viewed, in terms of TMT. Two examples of distal defenses, are adherence to a cultural

worldview and self-esteem enhancement (Florian et al., 2002). Adherence to a cultural

worldview provides the world with meaning and order, provides an explanation to the basic

existential questions of life and death, and offers symbolic protection against the terror of death (Florian et al., 2002). Self-esteem enhancement, increases an individual's sense of meaning, value, and invulnerability. Thus, helping to deny their finitude (Florian et al., 2002). Close relationships are seen as a direct basis of self-esteem, as individuals monitor their worth by being accepted by a significant other (Florian et al., 2002). Using TMT as a framework, can help explain how young adults interpret their role in the present world, how they have the ability to contribute to it, and what they will get out of it. One way to create a shield against the thoughts of one's own eventual death, is by finding and securing and life partner, and with that partner creating offspring.

Terror Management Theory and Offspring. Death anxiety motivates people to obtain a symbolic immortality (symbols), or a literal immortality (immortal soul). One way to achieve symbolic immortality for example, is by passing one's genes on to the next generation. Therefore, actual and / or anticipated offspring act as a shield with regards to existential anxiety (Fritsche et al., 2007). This effect is more powerful for men more than women, as men appear to desire offspring to shield against the thoughts of their own eventual death, in regards to evolutionary ideals (Wisman & Goldenberg, 2005). Because of the desire to produce offspring with the support and dedication of a partner is a way to manage the terror of one's death, one could question how much anxiety would exist without the security of finding and securing a life partner in order to do so.

Commitment to a romantic relationship serves as a defense against the terror of one's eventual death (Florian et al., 2002). Close relationships are natural human virtues that are influenced by cultural norms and values, but are nevertheless universal in essence (Florian et al., 2002). They are universal in essence, because humans desire to be physically and emotionally

close to one another. Close relationships have an inoculating power against basic existential threats, allowing individuals to react by striving to have a healthy and successful relationship (Florian et al., 2002). The sense of relationship commitment is shaped not only by perceived relational investments, relational gains, and potential alternatives, but also by the existential need of denial of death. This information provides reasoning as to why someone would want and thereby need a life partner. Nevertheless, what this research fails to address, is what if the person is unable to find a life partner and how much anxiety exists about not finding this life partner. Further research focused on fears and anxieties associated with not finding a life partner, has the ability to provide significant information on TMT, by addressing how this anxiety is related to one's own thoughts on mortality.

Attachment Styles, Self-esteem, and Mortality Salience

The need for attachment to another human being continues throughout one's lifespan, and is found within the formation of a close relationship (Florian et al., 2002). The value that young adults place in a close relationship, can be based on attachment styles. Two attachment styles, anxious and avoidant, play into mortality salience and relationship security. Attachment anxiety describes individuals who are concerned with a longing for closeness, and their worth to their partner (Hart, Shaver, & Goldenberg, 2005). Anxiously attached individuals are more likely to utilize attachment hyperactivating, merging strategies, or seeking proximity to attachment figures and defending a collective worldview (Hart et al., 2005). Avoidant attachment refers to individuals who, on the contrary, display a discomfort with closeness to another (Hart et al., 2005). These individuals use attachment deactivating, emerging strategies (self-esteem defense) when security is threatened (Hart et al., 2005). Attachment variables are orthogonal, thus

individuals can be high or low in either dimension. Nevertheless, being low on the scale in both anxiety and avoidance, describes securely attached adults (Hart et al., 2005).

With a focus on a relatively anxious attachment style, self–esteem and its role on individual security is important in understanding the potential anxiety that may arise if the security of not finding and securing a life partner is threatened. Self–esteem is an important aspect in the defining of the value of one's life as well as the fear of their eventual death (Arndt, 2012). Consequently, high levels of self–esteem provide a shield against, and decrease the anxiety and anxiety related defensive behavior of thoughts of one's eventual death (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). Individuals who are more prone to anxious attachment styles, maintain low levels of self – esteem and thereby have a higher level of mortality salience (Hart et al., 2005).

On the contrary, those with higher levels of self–esteem, may not possess as strong of an anxiety about not finding and securing a life partner, thereby demonstrating the extremely important role that self–esteem has on the presence of anxiety. One explanation as to why individuals with higher self–esteem may display less anxiety, is due to the appeasement technique of risk taking. In studies conducted amongst the members of the Israeli Defense Force in regards to risky driving, results demonstrated that when soldiers were introduced to mortality salience primes, yet also had high levels of self–esteem relating to their driving abilities, they performed a greater amount of risky driving maneuvers (Ben – Ari, Florian, & Mikulincer, 1999). These results suggest that although individuals are aware of their own eventual death, higher levels of self–esteem in regards to particular qualities, have the ability to induce risk taking behaviors. This again demonstrates the important relationship that various levels of self-

esteem have on finding and securing a life partner, for example. These higher self–esteem levels can be applied when one is seeking a life partner.

Another line of research involves mortality salience in regards to aging. When young were reminded that they too are aging every day, individuals with higher levels of self–esteem displayed more risk taking behaviors (sexual behavior, alcohol use, cigarette use and drug use). Nevertheless, these risk taking behaviors were utilized as a defense against death anxiety (Popham, Kennison, & Bradley, 2011). Individuals with higher levels of self–esteem use risk taking behaviors to not only create a shield against death anxiety, but also to challenge life. This can have both positive and negative effects, depending on the source of the self–esteem and the reasons behind the risk taking behaviors.

Research has demonstrated the many positive outcomes of higher self–esteem with regards to defending against death anxiety. Low self–esteem however, contributes to an anxiety of not finding and securing a life partner, as they support the idea remaining alone (Hart et al., 2005). Risk-taking behaviors display several connections to the anxiety of finding and securing a life partner, in relation to self-esteem. Those with higher self-esteem will often take greater risks to find and secure a life partner, explaining that their anxiety in doing so, is minimalized.

Ostracism, Rejection, and Securing a Life Partner

Individuals with avoidant attachment styles, lower levels of self–esteem, and are more concerned with thoughts of death, can allow for the effects of ostracism to play a significant role in the anxiety of not finding and securing a life partner. Ostracism is defined as being ignored or excluded (Williams, 2007). Being ostracized not only harms one's self–esteem, but also affects how, what, and why, individuals make particular decisions (Williams, 2007). Ostracism in a

previous romantic relationship could inform one's attachment style and have an effect on finding and securing a life partner. One type of ostracism that can be directly related to this, is relational ostracism or the silent treatment, which occurs within close relationships (Williams, 2007). In a national poll, more than two – thirds of Americans said that they have engaged in relational ostracism or have given the silent treatment to a loved one, and three – fourths of Americans said that they have received it (Faulkner, Williams, Sherman, & Williams, E., 1997). Based on this form of ostracism, it has been found that being rejected by a loved one, can significantly reduce one's self–esteem. For individuals with pre-existing low levels of self–esteem, research has demonstrated that they were more likely to reciprocate these acts (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). Therefore, ostracism from a romantic partner can lower one's self–esteem and potentially increase their anxiety, due to a significant decrease in confidence. This is in regards to not only finding a life partner, but also securing one, based on previous relationship outcomes.

Positive self–worth is one of the main needs to achieve a life of meaning (Stillman et al., 2009). Constant rejection, especially as it relates to romantic relationships, can allow one to feel as though they offer undesirable traits (Stillman et al., 2009). This can increase an individual's level of rejection sensitivity, or the nature to anxiously suppose, notice, and respond to rejection (Downey, Mougios, Ayduk, London, & Shoda, 2004). Rejection sensitivity stems from the constant act of being rejected within one's life, specifically by loved ones. Such an extensive amount of rejection can lead to improper behavioral responses, thereby creating additional rejection (Downey et al., 2004). Research found that those with high levels of rejection sensitivity respond to rejection with hostility towards individuals who have rejected them, or more importantly those who they believe could reject them (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Those

who believe everyone will reject them, express an avoidant attachment style, have experienced ostracism, and display a sense of hostility within their personality. This thought process could increase the potential anxiety about finding, and more importantly securing a life partner, as patterns of rejection lead to expectations of future rejection.

Existential Isolation

An aspect that could bring awareness to the topic of one's anxiety about not finding and securing a life partner, are feelings of Existential Isolation (EI). Existential isolation is a feeling of separation that exists because one can never truly know another person's thoughts, and thereby who they are. In order to appease this sense of separation, people try and connect with one another through shared experience (Pinel et al., 2006). EI undermines two basic fulfillment: the need for belief validation, and the need to feel connected to others (Pinel et al., 2006). EI undermines these needs because it reminds humans that they are inherently separated from one another. Since they are separate and can never know with certainty how others think and feel, it inherently undermines our efforts to connect with and be validated by others (Pinel et al., 2006). While many people keep their EI at bay, others think about it all the time. For those who more regularly consider their isolation, it may influence their anxiety about finding and securing a life partner.

Present Research

The purpose this study is to address the unresolved questions concerning, if college aged adults have an anxiety about not finding and securing a life partner. Additionally, does this anxiety present itself in an explicit or implicit fashion? It is understood that individuals with high levels of emotional reliance, have especially high needs for closeness, given that they

endorse items such as, *I would be completely lost if I didn't have someone special and I have always had a terrible fear that I will lose the love and support of the people that I desperately need* (Pinel et al., 2006). Similar research has been performed in regards to social exclusion and rejection. Participants in one experiment who were told that they would likely end up without a life partner and that they would likely face rejection later on in life, lacked empathetic understanding as well as the desire to be helpful or cooperative to others (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007). The purpose of that study was to understand how rejection played a role in emotional responses (Twenge et al., 2007). These findings suggest that rejection and romantic exclusion has a negative effect on the emotional stability of young adults. This current research addresses previous gaps in the literature because it can help address how attachment styles and EI, contribute to a potential anxiety (explicitly or implicitly) about not finding and securing a life partner.

Methods

Participants

The population of the study included undergraduate students enrolled in Introductory Psychology 101 or 151 at the University of Arizona, and were in the Psychology Subject Pool. Subjects had an opportunity to participate in the study by responding to an announcement on the University of Arizona Psychology Subject Pool SONA website. Participants were at least eighteen years of age and spoke English. There were ninety-six participants in this study. Twenty-four participants were excluded from analysis because their scores were more than three standard deviations from the mean on our outcome measures, they did not follow instructions, or they commented that they did not believe the manipulation. The final sample included seventy-

two participants (n = 72), which included nineteen males (26.4%), and fifty-three females

(73.6%). The mean age of participants was 19.25 and the standard deviation was 1.96.

Study Design and Procedure

Participants arrived to room 510 of the Psychology building at the University of Arizona,

and were given the script, explaining to them, the purpose behind the study (Appendix A).

Participants were told that they were participating in a study investigating the link between

personality styles, language styles, and close relationships, as it relates to the mass survey.

During the initial script, participants were given a consent form to sign. Once they have

consented, participants completed the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) and Existential

Isolation Scale (EIS) (See Appendix B). Following the initial measures, the participants were

provided feedback, ostensibly based on their personality questionnaires, both from the

experiment and from the mass survey, indicating their personality style and relationship

orientation, as well as the likelihood that they will find a successful lifelong partner.

The ASQ is a forty-item questionnaire that instructs participants to rate themselves on a

Likert Scale, asking about implications related to relationships (e.g., I wonder how I would cope

without someone to love me) (Stein et al., 2002). Each statement is from, 1 = totally disagree, to

6 = totally agree (Freeney et al., 1994). This scale provides insight as to where the participant

falls in terms of attachment styles, and how that relates to thoughts on relationships. The

Existential Isolation Scale (Pinel, Crimin, Long & Quinlivan, 2010), can reach the un–conscious

thought processes of adults with questions such as "I usually feel like people share my outlook

on life" or "I want other people to feel the way I do" (Pinel et al., 2010).

The personality feedback appeared to be accurate, but was actually one of two generated

responses. Participants in the positive feedback condition were told that based on your

personality, "you have the potential for a satisfying social life and your profile suggests it is highly likely you will be able to establish a very successful relationship with a longterm life partner." Participants in the negative feedback condition were told that based on your personality, "although you have the potential for a satisfying social life, your profile suggests it is highly unlikely you will be able to establish a successful relationship with a longterm life partner" (See Appendix C). The purpose of doing this was to determine if receiving a pessimistic result, would make students feel anxious. Following the manipulation, participants took two measures of anxiety, one explicit and one implicit. The explicit measure, or the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule or PANAS-X (Appendix D), measured emotions through two broad factors that dominate the dimensions of emotional experiences: positive affect and negative affect (Watson, & Clark, 1991). Both of these factors have proven to be consistent within inter as well as intra - individual analyses and are also consistent across descriptor sets, time frames, response formats, languages, and cultures (Watson, & Clark, 1991). The PANAS-X is a direct way to measure explicit anxiety, because it investigates "introspectively accessible self – descriptions and evaluations" (Elgoff & Schmukle, 2004). In addition to general positive and negative affect, the PANAS-X included sub scales of Fear, Sadness, Guilt, and Anxiety.

The implicit measure was a Lexical Decision Task (LDT). The LDT involves participants determining if a word is an actual word or a non – word (Yaakobi, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2014). The speed in which the participants rate these words as being a word or a non – word, determines how accessible the thoughts pertaining to the specific topic and target words are (Yaakobi, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2014). The LDT is also an excellent way to measure implicit anxiety, because it reaches "introspectively inaccessible processes that operate outside of awareness" (Elgoff & Schmukle, 2004).

The words for the LDT were broken down into four categories, totaling forty-eight words. There were eight anxiety related words, (e.g., nervous, restless, upset) eight neutral words, (e.g., honest, polite, picture) eight non-anxiety negative words (e.g., rotten, revenge, hideous) and finally twenty-four non – words, (e.g., stenth, luicd, Fance) (Spielberger, 1968). These words were adapted from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) (Spielberger, 1968) and from pre – existing word tasks set up in our lab (See Appendix E for LDT word lists). After the experiment, the participants were fully debriefed (See Appendix F for debrief). During the debriefing participants were probed for suspicion and asked whether or not they believed in the accuracy of their personality feedback. If they expressed high levels of suspicion (e.g., said they did not believe feedback at all), their responses were noted and their data was eliminated from analysis.

Measures and Manipulations

All participants completed the experiment in private cubicles. All materials were presented to the participant on the computer. These materials presented through the survey software program of Qualtrics. These measures included, an attachment style questionnaire to determine if the participant had an anxious or avoidant personality, an existential isolation scale to determine their stance on EI, the PANAS-X which acts as a filler as well as dependent measure of mood. Included are both the likely to and unlikely to find a lifelong partner primes (Appendix C). Other materials also included the lexical decision task, performed and created through the software program of DMDX. This study also collected demographics such as gender, age, and the current relationship status of the participant.

Results

We predicted, that participants who were given the negative prognosis about finding a life partner, would recognize anxiety related words faster than non-anxiety related words in the LDT. We also predicted that the participants presented with the pessimistic feedback, would score higher on the PANAS-X moods of negative affect, fear, sadness, and guilt. To begin, the data, a between subjects design, was analyzed via a oneway ANOVA with the LDT and PANAS - X as the dependent variables. The data for the negative emotions in the explicit anxiety measure, PANAS – X, showed no significant difference between conditions for: general negative affect, $[F(1,70) = 0.198, p = 0.657]$, fear, $[F(1,70) = 0.038, p = 0.927]$, sadness, $[F(1,70) = 0.149, p = 0.700]$, and guilt $[F(1,70) = 0.733, p = 0.395]$. The means and standard deviations for these results are displayed within figure 1. Through these results, it is evident that there is no significant difference within negative emotions (negative affect, fear, sadness, and guilt), following receiving the negative condition.

Our implicit measure was also analyzed with a oneway ANOVA. The analysis of the LDT data began by first finding the mean value of each word within the specific four groups. Next, all the extreme values, or values more than three standard deviations from the mean were excluded by being marked as incorrect responses. Each value was then log transformed (the response time for each word and each participant) in order to normalize the data set, thus allowing the assumptions of parametric tests to be met. The mean value of all the log scores for a particular category was taken in order to create a composite log score. The composite log scores were then compared by condition after controlling for practice attempts, which were included as covariates. When analyzing the results, no significant differences emerged, $F(1,70) = 0.172, p = 0.680$. The mean and standard deviation values can be found within figure 1.

Based on the inconclusive outcome of these results, exploratory analyses were also conducted

from the data collected.

The first exploratory analysis for this study was in regards to the PANAS – X. We first

examined possible gender differences in regards to negative emotions (general negative affect,

fear, sadness, and guilt). The results for this analysis are included in figure 1. This analysis

yielded interesting results in regards to the direction of the means. Women displayed higher

means in the positive condition for the mood states of negative affect, fear, sadness, and guilt,

while men displayed higher means in the negative condition for the same mood states. However.

gender does not create a significant main effect because of the small sample size for males in the

negative condition ($n = 9$). Nevertheless, there is a significant interaction and affect between sex

and condition within the PANAS – X variable; general negative affect [$F(1,71) = 5.20, p =

0.026$], fear [$F(1,71) = 3.90, p = 0.053$], sadness [$F(1,71) = 0.340, p = 0.562$].

Another exploratory analysis that poses interesting trends, is using EI as the

dependent variable, controlling for gender, condition, and anxious and avoidant personality

types. Although neither anxious or avoidant personality types demonstrated significant main

effects or interactions by themselves, there was a significant interaction between females and

condition [$F(1,54) = 1.47, p = 0.028$]. However the means were in opposite than predicted

directions. These results demonstrate significant trends that should be investigated in future

research.

Figure 1

PANAS – X and Lexical Decision Task Means and (Standard Deviations)

	Negative Affect	Fear	Sadness	Guilt	Lexical Decision Task

Positive Condition	16.38 (6.28)	9.54 (3.76)	8.59 (3.73)	9.00 (4.71)	2.83 (0.07)
Men	14.33 (3.94)	8.67 (2.45)	7.78 (2.05)	7.22 (1.64)	2.83 (0.04)
Women	17.04 (6.80)	9.82 (4.09)	8.86 (4.13)	9.57 (5.23)	2.83 (0.08)
Negative Condition	15.77 (5.20)	9.37 (3.60)	8.97 (4.53)	8.20 (2.98)	2.85 (0.08)
Men	17.80 (6.57)	10.80 (4.61)	10.30 (5.12)	9.30 (3.95)	2.84 (0.07)
Women	14.96 (4.42)	8.80 (3.03)	8.44 (4.26)	7.76 (2.45)	2.85 (0.08)

Discussion

From this study, the data demonstrates that there are no significant differences between the positive and negative groups in regards to negative emotions in the PANAS-X. Also, there are no significant differences within the LDT, regarding the anxiety related words, in comparison to the other groups between conditions. Several ongoing exploratory analyses are being conducted examining possible gender differences and whether scores vary by attachment style of feelings of EI. Through the exploratory analyses, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between gender and condition. Within the PANAS – X test, the results demonstrate that females who were given the positive condition, responded with a greater amount of negative emotions, than if they were given the negative condition. Also, with regard to the ASQ, there was a greater trend of significance towards avoidance for females as well. These results demonstrate the potential relationship between gender, condition, and avoidance. Further studies will be necessary to better understand the depth of the relationship.

Conclusion

Within this study, there were several limitations that the study posed that may have contributed to null findings. To begin, the lexical decision task was short due to time constraints.

A typical LDT has the ability to have several levels and conditions within it, but as mentioned due to the time constraints, and number of estimated participants for the study, it was shorter. To improve this limitation, future studies should create a LDT that addresses a wider scope of implicit emotions, including those affects measured by the PANAS-X. Another limitation that this study had, is the sample size. After controlling for outliers, the sample size was $n = 72$. Furthermore, the sample size between men and women was not equivalent (men ($n = 19$), women ($n = 53$)). To overcome this limitation, future studies should obtain a larger sample size with equal gender differences, especially considering the significant relationship between gender and condition.

Another major limitation for this study, was that some participants did not believe the negative feedback when they received it. During the debriefing, many participants commented that a few personality questionnaires did not have the ability to determine if they would find and secure a life partner. To overcome this limitation, different measures should be taken to better convince the participants that based on their personality, they are unlikely to find and secure a life partner, potentially in a more implicit rather than explicit manner. This could overcome the possibility that participants could consciously argue with results.

Additionally, this study did not address other predicaments such as past relationship outcomes, or whether or not someone does not desire to be married. For example, there is an extensive amount of research on the topic of singlism, or the negative stigmatizing of adults who are not in relationships (DePaulo, Morris, 2006). DePaulo et al., 2006 found that single individuals are often seen as immature, maladjusted, and self – centered. In order to improve upon this limitation, one possibility would be to include this within the demographic questionnaire. Finally, another limitation of this study, is that it does not look at gender and / or

culture differences specifically. Based on the current in the exploratory analyses, researching gender differences and understanding how culture relates to future marital status, is very important in understanding the depth of this research.

Although the evidence collected did not support the hypothesis for this study, there are several implications that warrant further research. By understanding the relationship between gender, age, and both avoidant and anxious personality types, in regards to finding and securing a life partner, one could better understand the different desires in emotional security for college aged adults. College aged students may be looking to fulfill their existential isolation needs and emotional security on a less permanent level, thereby explaining why many engage in casual / risky sexual behaviors. This could also be supported by the trend seen between the female gender and condition. Exploratory analyses results demonstrated that women had greater overall negative emotions when told they would be likely to find a secure a life partner. These negative responses could strongly be due to the fact that college culture warrants the ability for several individuals to fulfill emotional security and increase self-esteem and confidence. Thoughts about one partner for the remainder of their lives, could in fact be a negative thought.

Additionally, the mean age for the participants in this study was 19.25. This may contribute to why these women demonstrated negative emotions after receiving the positive condition, or being told that they are likely to find and secure a life partner. This trend may suggest that younger college age females are not anxious about finding and securing a life partner, but in fact see it as something fearful. Future studies could investigate differences in between age groups and how that has the ability to relate to emotional states. Also, to gain a better understanding of the relationship between gender, age, condition, and avoidance, in relation to PANAS – X and EI, a potential follow up study could include repeating a similar

study, but allowing for an equivalent number of men and women. Also, the LDT could focus not only on anxiety related words, but also include words that represent positive affect as well. This could explore the question, do college aged adults demonstrate avoidance in regards to finding and securing a life partner? This study could address gender differences, condition differences (wanting or avoiding a long term life partner), negative emotions in the PANAS – X and also how this relates to existential isolation. Furthermore, this study could include a wider variety of university participants which would allow for age and cultural differences to be analyzed as well.

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Appendix A

Script

Hello, I'm Jamie Oko. I am a research assistant here in the psychology department. Today you will be participating in a study looking at how personality traits relate to close relationships. Past research shows that personality plays a very significant role in relationships, and relationship success. First, you will complete a few personality questionnaires that are related to relationship success. Also, we are interested in how language plays a role in personality and how it can relate to relationships. To examine this, you will complete a language task that relates language style to personality styles and relationship success.

There are two parts to this study. First, you will complete some personality measures, which supplement some of the materials you filled out on the mass survey. And because people tend to be curious about their personality, we will provide you with some computer generated feedback about your personality based on those questionnaires. This feedback will assess some aspects of your personality and orientation towards close relationships. Second, you will complete a language task that determines how language styles relate to your personality.

All of your responses will be recorded on the computer. All your responses on the materials today will remain confidential. None of the questionnaires will ask you to report any identifying information. So what this means then, is you should feel free to answer openly and honestly on all the materials. Also, these personality and language activities are not focused on one specific trait, but personality and relationship orientation as a whole. Therefore you should approach each questionnaire in a relaxed, natural manner, and provide the first response that comes to mind. Do you have any questions?

If there aren't any initial questions, I'll ask you to enter one of these cubicles for privacy. On the desk you will find a consent form that outlines your rights as a participant. Please read through it and sign when you are ready to participate, then wait patiently and I will be by shortly to get you started.

All set? Everything will be presented on the computer. Please read the instructions carefully. When you have finished the study, crack open the door and I will come by and tell you what to do next.

Okay, so again this task will be presented to you on the computer.

In this task you will be presented with a word that will appear on the screen. For each word, you will have to decide if the word is real or not. All you have to do is press this right key when you think that the word is real and this left key when you think that it isn't. We are also measuring your response speed, so you should try to decide as fast as you can. Please just make sure that you're not pressing anything else, except the "space key" during the instructions. Wait patiently between the trials as the program is generating random words. When the task is over, crack open the door and I'll come by and tell you what to do next, Ok?

Appendix B

Attachment Style Questionnaire and Existential Isolation Scale

Show how much you agree or disagree with each of the following items by rating them on this scale: 1 = totally disagree; 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = slightly agree; 5 = strongly agree; or 6 = totally agree.

- 1. Overall, I am a worthwhile person.
- 2. I am easier to get to know than most people.
- 3. I feel confident that other people will be there for me when I need them.
- 4. I prefer to depend on myself rather than other people.
- 5. I prefer to keep to myself.
- 6. To ask for help is to admit that you're a failure.
- 7. People's worth should be judged by what they achieve.
- 8. Achieving things is more important than building relationships.
- 9. Doing your best is more important than getting along with others.
- 10. If you've got a job to do, you should do it no matter who gets hurt.
- 11. It's important to me that others like me.
- 12. it's important to me to avoid doing things that other's won't like.
- 13. I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think.
- 14. My relationships with others are generally superficial.
- 15. Sometimes I think I am no good at all.
- 16. I find it hard to trust other people.
- 17. I find it difficult to depend on others.
- 18. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
- 19. I find it relatively easy to get close to other people.
- 20. I find it easy to trust others.
- 21. I feel comfortable depending on other people.
- 22. I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them.
- 23. I worry about people getting to close.
- 24. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
- 25. I have mixed feelings about being close to others.
- 26. While I want to get close to others, I feel uneasy about it.
- 27. I wonder why people would want to be involved with me.
- 28. It's very important to me to have a close relationship.
- 29. I worry a lot about my relationships.
- 30. I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me.
- 31. I feel confident about relating to others.
- 32. I often feel left out or alone.
- 33. I often worry that I do not really fit with other people.
- 34. Other people have their own problems, so I don't bother them with mine.

- 35. When I talk over my problems with others, I generally feel ashamed or foolish.
- 36. I am too busy with other activities to put much time into relationships.
- 37. If something is bothering me, others are generally aware and concerned.
- 38. I am confident that other people will like and respect me.
- 39. I get frustrated when others are not available when I need them.
- 40. Other people often disappoint me.

Existential Isolation Scale

Please use the following scale to rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements **IN GENERAL**. Place your answer in the blank next to each item.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5-----------6----------7----------8----------9

strongly disagree   strongly agree

1. I usually feel like people share my outlook on life.
2. I often have the same reactions to things that other people around me do.
3. People around me tend to react to things in our environment the same way I do.
4. I regularly seek out people who think about things in the same way that I do.
5. People do <u>not</u> often share my perspective.
6. If I could choose to spend time only with people who understand me, I would.
7. I want other people to feel the way I do.
8. I want to find signs that other people share my experience of the world around me.
9. Other people usually do <u>not</u> understand my experiences.
10. I want to be with people who share my outlook on life.
11. People often have the same "take" or perspective on things that I do.
12. It is important to me to feel like other people experience the world in the same way I do.

Appendix C

Positive and Negative Condition Primes

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Participant number: 47

Time and Place of Evaluation: Spring, 2015

Methods used: Beck Personality Inventory, Rosenberg Self-Assessment, Sensitization Scale, Eysenck Trait Inventory, and the Relationship Orientation Assessment

Reason for referral: Research purposes.

Evaluation:

You are self-sufficient and are normal in your need for other people to like you and admire you. You tend to accept yourself but sometimes can be critical of yourself. Some of your energy is not used to full advantage. You have a few personality weaknesses. However, you are able to compensate for most of them. Your sexual adjustment has presented few problems for you.

While you may feel worrisome at times, you are usually confident in your abilities. You are concerned about realizing your potential. At times you doubt whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety but sometimes allow yourself to be hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.

You pride yourself on being an independent thinker and are open to new opinions and viewpoints. You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others. At times you are extraverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted and reserved. Some of your aspirations are a bit unrealistic but others are very likely attainable. Based on your traits and attitudes, you have the potential for a satisfying social life and your profile suggests it is highly likely you will be able to establish a very successful relationship with a longterm life partner.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Participant number: 47

Time and Place of Evaluation: Spring, 2015

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While you may feel worrisome at times, you are usually confident in your abilities. You are concerned about realizing your potential. At times you doubt whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety but sometimes allow yourself to be hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.

You pride yourself on being an independent thinker and are open to new opinions and viewpoints. You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others. At times you are extraverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted and reserved. Some of your aspirations are a bit unrealistic but others are very likely attainable. Based on your traits and attitudes, although you have the potential for a satisfying social life, your profile suggests it is highly unlikely you will be able to establish a successful relationship with a longterm life partner.

Appendix D

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Test (PANAS)

PANAS-X

This scale consists of a number of words and phrases that describe different feelings and

emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word.
Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past week. Use the following scale to
record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

_____ cheerful	_____ sad	_____ active	____ angry at self
_____ disgusted	_____ calm	_____ guilty	_____ enthusiastic
_____ attentive	_____ afraid	_____ joyful	___ down hearted
_____ bashful	_____ tired	_____ nervous	_____ sheepish
_____ sluggish	_____ amazed	_____ lonely	_____ distressed
_____ daring	_____ shaky	_____ sleepy	____ blameworthy
_____ surprised	_____ happy	_____ excited	____ determined
_____ strong	_____ timid	_____ hostile	____ frightened
_____ scornful	_____ alone	_____ proud	_____ astonished
_____ relaxed	_____ alert	_____ jittery	_____ interested
_____ irritable	_____ upset	_____ lively	_____ loathing
_____ delighted	_____ angry	_____ ashamed	_____ confident
_____ inspired	_____ bold	_____ at ease	_____ energetic
_____ fearless	_____ blue	_____ scared	____ concentrating
_____ disgusted	_____ shy	_____ drowsy	____ dissatisfied
			with self

Appendix E

Lexical Decision Task Words (Spielberger, 1968)

8 Anxiety Words	8 Neutral Words
- Nervous - Restless - Upset - Tense - Jittery - Worried - Frightened - Strained	- Creative - Upbeat - Artistic - Honest - Polite - Candid - Picture - Profound
8 Neutral Words	24 Non-Words
- Creative - Upbeat - Artistic - Honest - Polite - Candid - Picture - Profound	- Stenth - Luicd - Fance - Feasble - Eloqent - Headpones - Asute - Freindly - Beord - Smily - Siduwalk - Chidren - Bananna - Basektball - Hambruger - Eagel - Cruncky - Gralona - Toothie - Plumeage - Screach - Wierless - Batheing - Seriusly

Appendix F

Debrief

I am now just going to ask you a couple of questions about the study.

1. Did you enjoy participating in the study?
2. Were all of the instructions clear?
3. Do you have any general questions about the study?
4. When completing the personality questionnaires, did you wonder about anything specific?
5. Did you see any patterns within the language task?
6. What did you think of the personality feedback you received?
7. Did it seem accurate?
8. Did you think about why we gave you that feedback?
9. Did you see any specific connections among the measures we gave you?
10. Sometimes when people participate in psychology research, they think that there may be more going on than I initially told you from the start. Did you think there was more going on than I initially told you?

The reason why I'm asking you all these questions is because there actually was more going on than I initially told you. The reason I didn't tell you is because it would have influenced your responses, which would have invalidated our results. Now, I will tell you all about the specific purpose behind this study. The purpose of today's study was to investigate people's views about close relationships and whether those views influence concerns about finding a longterm life partner. Research shows that one of the main crises that young adults face is based on relationship statuses. In this study, we wanted to examine anxiety specifically concerning finding and securing a life partner.

We first gave you a few measures of personality including some specifically concerned with relationships, and then gave you some more of those at the end of the study. For example, we gave you measures of the extent to which you are avoidant and anxious regarding close relationships. After the first set of questionnaires, we gave you feedback supposedly based on your responses. Actually, you were randomly assigned to receive feedback that made it seem like you were either likely to find a life partner or you were not likely to find a life partner. This was our independent variable in this study. The main purpose of doing this was to see if this information, particularly that you may not find a life partner, would cause anxiety, and if this would be especially true for people with particular personalities and attitudes about relationships.

Before I explain further, I want to make it exceedingly clear that the computer actually generated just one of two personality profiles randomly, and so the feedback you received was not really based on anything but chance. We actually have not yet assessed your responses to either the mass survey questions or the initial questionnaires you filled out. So you should not take the feedback we gave you seriously. In fact, there is no highly accurate way to assess your likelihood of finding a good longterm life partner. There are too many hard to predict factors involved. The good news is that most people who want to find a longterm relationship do so eventually. But whether we told you it was likely for you or not, was determined completely at

random and there were only two versions of the feedback we randomly provided. I will therefore ask once more, if when you received the feedback, at that time did you believe it? One said "Based on your traits and attitudes, although you have the potential for a satisfying social life, your profile suggests it is highly unlikely you will be able to establish a successful relationship with a longterm life partner." The other said "Based on your traits and attitudes, you have the potential for a satisfying social life and your profile suggests it is highly likely you will be able to establish a very successful relationship with a longterm life partner." Doing this allowed us to see if getting the more pessimistic feedback creates anxiety, and if so, if this is particularly true for people with particular personalities and attitudes toward close relationships.

The way we assessed this was with two measures that tap anxiety. The first was the language task you completed. It is actually a subtle way to determine if anxiety-related thoughts are close to your mind. A lexical decision task measures the speed in which the participant can classify a word as being an actual word or not. If you are feeling anxious, you would be likely to recognize anxiety related words especially quickly. We expect that people who are given the pessimistic prognosis about finding a life partner will be especially fast to recognize the anxiety related words. The second dependent measure was the mood measure we gave you, which is known as the positive and negative affect schedules. One of the feelings this scale taps is feelings of anxiety. Again we'd expect people given the pessimistic feedback would score higher on such feelings.

So, you can see that there was in fact more going on then I told you in the beginning. The reason I didn't tell you exactly what the study is about from the start is that it would have most likely inhibited you from responding naturally. A study has what is called "demand characteristics" when participants know what the study is about. This is because if a participant knows what the study is about then he or she may give us the response we are looking for, whether consciously or unconsciously. Or for whatever reason, the response we are not looking for. Either way, these responses invalidate and mess up our results. Furthermore, we needed you to think the false personality feedback was real to test the primary hypothesis. Otherwise we couldn't get at people's anxiety regarding finding a life partner. So that's why we didn't tell you everything from the beginning. Does it make sense why we did that? Does anybody have a problem with the procedures we used in this study? Does everyone understand that the feedback we gave you about your relationship prospects was false? Is everyone ok with that?

That's good. We don't do these studies for fun, rather we think this study may have very important implications and may open the door for further research. For example, if young adults are anxious about finding a lifelong partner, it may help us understand why younger people engage in more risky or sexual behavior. Or, this type of anxiety might help people may stay in bad relationships where they might even be abused. By understanding this anxiety and the kind of people who may be most vulnerable to it, we may be able to develop better education tools to prevent future relationship problems and better ways to help people prone to getting in bad relationships.

Does everything within this study make sense? Do you have any last questions for me about the methods, procedures, or implications of this particular study? As I previously mentioned, your participation has been extremely valuable in this study. One last thing, I hope

it's clear that we have invested a lot in this research and that we take it very seriously. And, as I mentioned before, if you come here knowing what the study is about, then your responses would be skewed and our results wouldn't be valid at all. This would mean that everyone has wasted a lot of time and money and resources. So it's very important that you don't tell any of your classmates what the study is about, or what we were looking at, least until the end of the semester. It's absolutely crucial that people don't know what this study is about when they come in here, so we would appreciate your word that you won't discuss this experiment with anyone until the end of the semester, alright? **(Get head nod)**. I know that it might be tempting if your roommate or your friend asks you what this study was about, but please just tell them what we told you in the beginning; that we're studying how personality styles relate to attitudes about relationships, Okay? **(Get head nod)**. Thank you so much again for all of your participation and I hope you have a great rest of your semester (give credit slip).