BETRAYALS, MENTAL HEALTH, AND THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP CONTINGENT SELF-ESTEEM

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BETRAYALS, MENTAL HEALTH, AND THE ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP CONTINGENT SELF-ESTEEM

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ABSTRACT

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When a betrayal occurs within an intimate relationship the experience of negative and detrimental mental health symptoms (i.e., stress, anxiety, depression) can vary widely from person to person (Gottman, 2014; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). The primary goal of this study is to examine how a variety of factors (i.e., Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem, Attachment Style, Attributions, and Rumination) influence the degree to which an individual experiences negative mental health symptoms following a betrayal. The present study further strengthens the field of research and offers insight into the association between personality characteristics and the workings of the relationship dyad.

The present study used data collected from a population of students attending a private Mid-western university. Participants were administered questionnaire packets inquiring about a betrayal within their romantic relationship and subsequently answered questions regarding their contingency on the relationship, attachment style to their partner, attributions processes, and how often they ruminated about the betrayal.
It was hypothesized that high Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem would be associated with high Anxious Attachment, a replication of the finding by Knee et al. (2008). Additionally, individuals with high Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem would experience more severe negative mental health symptoms following a betrayal, would ruminate excessively about the betrayal, and be less satisfied with their relationship. Further, internal, generalized, and stable attributions were hypothesized to mediate the relationship between Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and relationship satisfaction. Due to the positive correlation between Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and Anxious attachment as documented by Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook (2008), the above hypotheses were mirrored for individuals with high Anxious Attachment.

Results indicate that Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and Anxious attachment are positively correlated, replicating Knee et al. (2008). Anxious Attachment was found to be associated with more severe mental health symptoms and excessive rumination about the betrayal. Internal, generalized, and stable attributions were found to mediate the association between Anxious Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction.

Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem was not related to negative mental health symptoms, relationship satisfaction, or rumination. Further, attributions did not mediate the relationship between Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that while Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem is a unique construct, it is not universally negative. Limitations and future directions are discussed.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Following a betrayal within an intimate relationship, the betrayed partner’s dependence on the relationship for personal fulfillment and self-worth (relationship-contingent self-esteem), methods of getting needs for security and support met (attachment style), process of placing blame for the incident (attribution processes), and the extent to which he or she obsessively thinks about (rumination) the betrayal may influence the degree to which negative mental health symptoms (i.e., stress, anxiety, depression) are experienced. The primary goal of this study is to examine the associations between the factors mentioned above (i.e., relationship-contingent self-esteem, attachment style, attribution processes, rumination) and the general mental health of individuals in romantic relationships after a betrayal has occurred.

Contingent Self-Esteem

William James (1890) suggested that contingent self-esteem is based on momentary feelings in reaction to good or bad events that occur in areas that an individual deems important. When the ego becomes involved in the outcome of events, it is said that an individual has developed a contingent style of self-esteem (Crocker & Knight, 2005). Subsequent research has found that some individuals base their self-esteem on a variety of domains encountered in everyday life (e.g., physical features,
academic performance, moral behavior, financial status, social status, competency, and influence over others; Coopersmith, 1967; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Horberg & Chen, 2010). The primary focus of research in this area has been to show that one’s contingencies can often predict the outcomes of self-esteem as a result of the successes and failures in contingent domains (e.g., Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, & Chase, 2003), such that an individual’s level of self-esteem can vary based on his or her performance within the domain(s) they deem important. (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Horberg & Chen, 2010; Knee et al., 2008). For example, Crocker et al. (2003) found that for individuals contingent in the academic domain, on days when students received positive grades, self-esteem and identification with their academic courses increased. Alternatively, when students received negative grades, self-esteem and identification with his or her academic courses decreased greatly. It is important to note that research shows performance within domains that an individual deems unimportant have little to no impact on their self-esteem (Crocker, Sommer, & Luhtanen, 2002).

Contingencies develop over time as a result of socialization, cultural norms, values, and parent-child interactions (Bandura, 1986, 1991; Bartholomew, 1990; Moretti & Higgins, 1990; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). Contingencies are commonly described as being stable, chronic, and de-contextualized attributes that exist over an individual’s lifetime (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Horberg & Chen, 2010). While contingent domains are predictive of self-esteem outcomes, it is important to note that factors such as individual’s personality traits, overall health, goal pursuit, and interpersonal behavior can also influence one’s self esteem. Not only can these factors influence self-esteem, they can be predictive of the type (s) of contingency an individual
may have as well as their response to a success or failure in his or her contingent domain. (Crocker, Sommer, Luhtanen, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Park & Crocker, 2005; Park & Crocker, & Mickelson, 2004). For example, it has been found that a person possessing narcissistic and neurotic personality traits is likely to have his or her self-esteem be contingent on physical appearance (Crocker et al., 2003). Due to the appearance based contingent domain, individuals have been found to spend significantly more time on themselves and activities which tend to improve their appearance (e.g., spending more time shopping, exercising, partying, and grooming); (Crocker et al., 2003). The preoccupation with their external image leads to shallow and less attentive social interactions and overall social problems. Additionally, the activities that go into achieving success (i.e., shopping) in the appearance domain often cause financial problems for the individual (Crocker et al., 2003). As a result of this accumulation of factors stemming from personality traits, an individual can experience more stress and a lower level of self-esteem if a failure in the contingent domain occurs (Crocker et al., 2003).

**Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem**

Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem is an unhealthy and unique type of self-esteem that occurs when the individual’s contingent domain is the romantic relationship, meaning the individual’s self-esteem is overly dependent on the state of the relationship (Knee et al., 2008). It is important to note that investment in and being impacted by events that occur in the relationship are normal and healthy (Aron & Aron, 1996; Cross & Morris, 2003; Rusbult, 1983;). This can be seen through the use of Rusbult’s (1983) investment model in regards to romantic relationships. The investment model proposes
that commitment to a partner and impact of events in the relationship is promoted by three intertwined factors: (1) satisfaction level (i.e., the individual’s subjective appraisal of the positive or negative nature about the experiences in the relationship), (2) investment size (i.e., the amount of resources that are related to the relationship that would be altered in a negative way or would be lost entirely upon dissolution of the relationship), and (3) quality of alternatives (i.e., attractiveness of other options an individual believes he or she would have if they were not involved with their partner) (Rusbult, 1983).

RCSE however, is a type of investment that goes further than exhibiting what are considered to be normal styles of investment in a relationship (e.g., including aspects of the partner’s belief systems and cognitive processing within the self, being invested and seeking reciprocity in the relationship, and developing a relational identity) and can be described as an extreme ‘over the top’ style of investment (Aron & Aron, 1996; Cross & Morris, 2003; Knee et al., 2008; Rusbult, 1983). Essentially, RCSE is similar to allowing one’s self-esteem to balance on the pendulum controlled by the very nature, essence, processes, and results of the relationship (Knee et al., 2008). Further, individuals high in RCSE are unsure of themselves and constantly seek validation from their partners and relationships to gain a feeling of assurance (Knee et al., 2008). In this manner, it can be said that someone high in RCSE would behave in a way that he or she believed would gain the partner’s approval and positive regard. The individual would then be more likely to place greater importance on and experience the events of a relationship as more impactful and meaningful than an individual without a high level of RCSE (Knee et al., 2008).
For an analogy, it is helpful to think of an example given in Knee et al. (2008) and imagine the relationship as a boat. Partners are able to negotiate the navigation of the boat, the direction of the sails, and the duration they stay at sea. However, the tossing and turning of the sea feels different to each. There is a wide array of effects a wave could have on passengers of a boat. Perhaps a wave would be unfelt by some, and by others barely noticeable. For an individual high in RCSE, it would be much like being tied to the bow of the boat. Even the small waves would feel as being greatly impactful, while the large waves almost devastating.

According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan 2000), humans have to have certain psychological needs fulfilled (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness), which can be met in a variety of ways. Autonomy refers to the need to believe one’s behavior is a personal choice and something the individual finds favorable (de Charms, 1968). Competence emphasizes the need to be effective and competent at what one does, and relatedness is concerned with belongingness in social aspects (Bandura, 1977; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1973; White, 1959). Healthy relationships can be categorized as facilitating the fulfillment of the above-mentioned psychological needs (Knee et al., 2008). When basic psychological needs are met within a relationship it is possible to conclude feelings of competence, authentic relatedness, and support for autonomy exist. Consequently, the promotion of a non-contingent, healthy and genuine sense of self-esteem occurs for the relationship partners. (Knee, et al., 2008).

Murray, Holmes & Collins (2006) identified the importance having confidence in one’s partner’s regard has on an individual’s choices and decisions to pursue healthy independence. In the conceptual development for Relationship-Contingent Self-Esteem,
Knee et al. (2008) acknowledged the aforementioned importance. Typically, those with lower global self-esteem and high RCSE do not choose self-protective relationship decisions (e.g., doing activities that they enjoy, find personally fulfilling, and enriching to growth), leading to a dependence on the relationship and partner’s approval.

Theoretically, RCSE develops from the thwarting of psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, relatedness, competence) over time that leads to the formation of an unhealthy, reliant, and contingent form of self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Knee et al., 2008). RCSE represents a lack of personal endorsement in the relationship, feelings that one is incompetent within the relationship, and a deficit in feelings of genuine caring and understanding by one’s partner (Knee et al., 2008). In sum, individuals high in RCSE experience more significant fluctuations accompanied by stronger emotions in self-esteem when events in the relationship occur. The fluctuations experienced in one’s self-esteem typically resemble self-evaluations made in a “good” or “bad” way (Knee et al., 2008). Due to evaluating the self in such a manner, individuals high in RCSE interpret negative events in the relationship or qualities of the partner as being more threatening to self-esteem than individuals low in RCSE (Knee, et al., 2008). As a result of this interpretation of the self, individuals high in RCSE have been found to use maladaptive coping methods in order to deal with the stresses of a relationship (e.g., alcohol consumption; Rodriguez, Knee, & Neighbors, 2014). Given this theoretical background, it is not surprising that Knee et al., (2008) found that RCSE is linked to anxious-attachment.
Attachment Theory

Attachment theory proposes that the processes of evolution and natural selection led children to possess the ability to develop behaviors that facilitate proximity to caregivers, specifically in situations where support is necessary (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). These interactions with caregivers are then seen to shape how people view themselves, close partners, and relationships throughout their lives (Sable, 2007). Through Bowlby’s ‘working models’ (1969; 1973), early attachment experiences lay the groundwork for the models of attachment figures throughout the lifetime. The term “attachment figure” is used to describe the placement and focus of one’s attachment tendencies or style or orientation to individual relationships that people form throughout life. An attachment figure usually offers feelings of security and protection to an individual and acts as a secure base (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). These long-lasting bonds typically tend to be to familiar, irreplaceable figures, and once they are made, the overall quality, happenings, and stability of these attachments influence emotional health and well-being. Further, Attachment Theory puts an emphasis on the desire for feelings of security as well as predictable and appropriate responsiveness from one’s partner. The desire for relatedness is also present (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Adult Attachment Theory refers to the ongoing usage of schemas and patterns of attachment styles, which have been present throughout life, being applied to attachment figures in adulthood and within romantic relationships. Adult Attachment Theory identifies specific styles of attachment in adulthood: anxious, avoidant, and secure (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Avoidant attachment style has been linked to neglect or the consistent unresponsiveness from an attachment figure. Avoidantly attached individuals
believe their partners cannot be trusted, relied on, or confided in. They also show a disinterest in the relationship and a greater level of desire for self-reliance and independence. Securely attached individuals feel close on an emotional level and intimate with their partners. They typically believe their intimacy and devotion to the relationship is a reciprocal event (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). Most important to this study and RCSE, anxious attachment has been linked to experiencing inconsistent responsiveness from the attachment figure, which leads to an uncertainty that others can be depended on or trusted. Individuals with high levels of anxious attachment tend to be overly preoccupied with the experience of love, almost to the point where it is an attempt to merge with their partner (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). Additionally, an individual with anxious attachment style has been found to fall in love much more easily and frequently in comparison with the other two attachment styles, but struggle in finding true love. This has been related to the anxiously attached individual possessing more self-doubts than the other individuals (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). As a result of these self-doubts, individuals high in anxious attachment tend to be sensitive to rejection and disapproval from partners and experience distress when separated. Further, anxiously attached people often enter relationships too quickly, over disclose in an attempt to build and keep the relationship, and show a preoccupation with commitment and dependability from their partner (Hadden, Smith, & Webster, 2014; Simpson, 1990). They also tend to interpret meaningless events as negative and negative events as catastrophic (Hadden et al., 2014). With these characteristics in mind, it is important to note that anxiously attached individuals have been found to experience much less trust and satisfaction within their relationships in comparison to securely attached individuals (Simpson, 1990).
Anxious attachment has been found to be positively related to RCSE (Knee et al., 2008). The preoccupation and obsession demonstrated with high levels of anxious attachment is also present with high levels of RCSE. The ‘more is better’ mindset in a romantic relationship seems positive to an individual with high levels of RCSE and Anxious Attachment. This potentially leads individuals to look for traces of security in the relationship at the cost of genuine security and a healthy relationship (Knee et al., 2008). Anxious Attachment and high RCSE can cause an individual to become overly invested in a relationship, when in fact that high level of investment is unhealthy and unsatisfying.

Interestingly, more anxiously attached people tend to perceive greater levels of daily relationship conflict than less anxious people and use the perception of said conflict to assess the current and future quality of the relationship (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005). In assessing conflicts within a relationship, attributions are made. The attributions process has been linked to attachment, as will be outlined in further detail below (Collins, Ford, & Guichard, 2006)

**Attribution Theories**

When an event occurs, such as a betrayal, it is natural to wonder what caused it (Shaver, 1985). This process of attempting to comprehend why people behave the way they do by looking at the context of the event and personality traits is known as attribution processes (Shaver, 1985). According to the original theory proposed by Heider (1958), examining actions of another requires looking at the dispositional factors on the individual level (e.g., ability, power, intention), as well as the configuration of factors in the environment (e.g., opportunity, availability, luck, or difficulty of task). For
an action to occur, the environment must be conducive, the individual’s ability to
cOMPlete the task must be up to standard, and the intention to act in a certain way must be
present (Shaver, 1985). This idea gives the basis for placing a certain amount of
responsibility for the outcome on an individual, object, or event.

Attribution theory typically is utilized in two ways: event causation and trait
inference (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). In regards to event causation, comprehension of
events or actions is done by attributing behaviors to specific causes (e.g., he hugged her
because she was sad). Alternatively, when we make a judgment about a person in order to
explain the behavior, we are making a trait inference (e.g., she held the door for him, she
must be a friendly and nice person); (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). When making
attributions in either sense, four dimensions are used for assessing the situation: locus,
stability, specificity, and responsibility (Weiner, 1986). Locus refers to identifying
whether the cause is internal or external with regards to the actor. Stability is the degree
in which the cause is a long-term or short-term factor. Specificity is the identification of
whether a causal factor is unique to the person or event, or if it is a more standard and
generalizable factor. Responsibility refers to the degree to which a person can be seen as
being responsible or blamed for what occurred (Weiner, 1986). Much of our day-to-day
attribution processing is automatic and consciously effortless; however, when a
particularly negative or surprising event occurs, intentional attribution processing occurs
( Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

When a betrayal occurs, and an individual is faced with a difficult decision
regarding how to handle the situation, attributions come into play (Boon & Sulsky, 1997).
Research has shown that rather than focusing on the cause of an action, we tend to focus
on the individual or thing responsible for the action or result of the action (Weiner, 2004). When individuals’ actions are seen as controllable, internal, and intentional we place more responsibility and blame on the individual (Weiner, 1995). Further, one study found that the type of factors involved in the betrayal matter. When a betrayal is considered by the victim to be severe and avoidable attributions tend to be much more negative (i.e., placing blame on the betrayer and judging his or her actions as deserving consequences); (Boon & Sulsky, 1997). In the same study, Boon & Sulsky (1997) also found that intent of the betrayal and severity were weighted to be more important than whether the action was avoidable. These studies show that people put a different amount of weight in the available informative factors when analyzing a situation. Further, when assessing placement of blame and responsibility, one takes into account the environment in which the betrayal occurred, the situation that led to the betrayal, and personality traits of the betrayer (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). In general, every action that occurs is susceptible to being put through an attributional analysis. The conclusion of the analysis can alter the way a person thinks and interacts with another (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). Regardless of what the action is, if it is seen as a controllable and intentional act, then a more negative attributional response is likely. Alternatively, if it is seen as out of the individual’s control or as a mistake, then attributions are going to result in a higher amount of sympathy and good will (Weiner, 2004).

Bradbury and Fincham (1990) developed a framework for the making of conscious attributions when a particularly surprising or cognitively alarming event occurs. When applied to romantic relationships, the victim makes attributions for his or her partner’s betrayal and the nature of the attributions will influence his or her response
to the betrayal. Hypothetically, if the victim makes internal, generalized, and stable attributions for the betrayal (e.g., “My boyfriend cheated on me because he is untrustworthy, regardless of the situation, and is never going to change.”), the victim then may have a higher likelihood to respond and be impacted more negatively by the betrayer’s actions (Hall & Fincham, 2006). Alternatively, if the victim makes external, specific, and unstable attributions (e.g., “My girlfriend only cheated on me because of the situation she got put into and she would not do it again.”), then the victim might be impacted in a negative way to a lesser degree by the betrayer’s actions (Hall & Fincham, 2006). Further, it has been shown that the internal, generalized, and stable attributions, which promote a conflict-response are related to higher rates of negative-response behavior towards the betrayer compared to the external, specific and unstable attributions, thus leading to a higher possibility of a break-up and negative health symptoms associated with relational turmoil (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Buunk, 1987; Hall & Fincham, 2006). When making these types of attributions, it has been found that individuals in distressed relationships typically make attributions that emphasize the partner’s negative behavior, while also minimizing any positive behavior. In other words, if the relationship is strained, the partners put more weight in negative actions and discount positive actions (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990).

Attachment style has been linked to the attribution making process (Collins, 1996). In assessing relationship status, people with anxious attachment style have been found to view the relationship with less satisfaction and experience more distress as a result of the interpretation of relationship events. Due to this increased level of distress and anxious attachment individuals then explain events in ways that identify their
partner’s lack of responsiveness as the root cause for the occurrence of the event (Collins, 1996). Additionally, Sumer and Cozzarelli (2004) found that anxious attachment is associated with a negative model of the self, which contributes to greater negative attributions towards the partner and the self. Due to possessing a negative model of themselves and lower global self-esteem, an anxiously attached individual is also more likely to attribute themselves as the cause of their significant other’s behavior and explain the behavior in a way that shows a lack of self-esteem (Collins, 1996). The complex manner in which attributions are placed has been clearly linked to attachment (e.g., Collins, 1996; Collins et al., 2006; Sumer & Cozzarello, 2004), and influences attitude, behaviors, and the manner in which the victim of a betrayal interacts with the betrayer. Attributions play a large part in the way a victim perceives a betrayal within the romantic relationship and consequently the severity of the negative impact the betrayal may have on the victim’s mental health.

**Relationship Turmoil and Effects**

Events such as betrayals may lead to the dissolution or break-up of a relationship, which can be viewed as one of life’s most turbulent and emotionally trying events. For example, when a relationship faces an event in which the dissolution of a relationship may occur, a variety of typical negative physical and emotional responses may result. Depression, loneliness, immune suppression, fatal and nonfatal illness or accidents, and anxiety have all been found to be associated with relational distress, turmoil, and potential dissolution (Gottman, 2014; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). The extent, manner, and duration an individual experiences distress and emotional responses to relationship turmoil varies widely (Frazier & Cook, 1993; Sprecher, 1994). There are a
few major types of variables that influence post betrayal distress and negative mental health symptoms: a) characteristics of the relationship, b) conditions in which the event took place, c) and differences in individual characteristics (Sprecher et al., 1998).

During the emotional response time period following a betrayal, the influence of attachment theory can be seen once more. Individuals higher in anxious attachment have been associated with greater levels of emotional and physical distress, anger, vengeful behavior, greater rumination and obsessive thoughts about the partner (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2003; Saffrey & Ehrenberg, 2007). Additionally, anxious attachment has been associated with the use of more maladaptive coping strategies following emotional turmoil such as alcohol and drug use (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2003).

It is clear that betrayal events can disturb the status quo within a romantic relationship, thus causing distress and turmoil for the partners. Due to the complex nature and commonality of betrayals within romantic relationships, it is important to understand how various factors influence an individual’s emotional and mental response to a betrayal within a romantic relationship.

**Current Study**

As discussed above, there are a variety of factors that influence an individual’s response to a betrayal within romantic relationships. One’s degree of relationship contingent self-esteem, attachment style, and the manner in which one makes attributions all contribute to the impact a betrayal has on the victim’s mental health and well-being. There is a growing field of literature that examines the association between the factors mentioned above and the outcomes of individual mental health after a betrayal has occurred within a romantic relationship. The goal of this study is to add to this field of
research and examine the general mental health outcomes of individuals in romantic relationships after a betrayal has occurred. In order to accomplish the goal of this study, participants’ experience with a relationship betrayal, overall relationship characteristics, and mental health are examined. Given the information discussed above, as a result of betrayal, an individual with high relationship contingent self-esteem is likely to assess the betrayal significantly differently than his or her counterparts, will be more likely to ruminate to an excessive degree about the betrayal, and experience a more severe degree of mental health symptoms. Additionally, due to the association between relationship contingent self-esteem and anxious attachment it is hypothesized that the findings for relationship contingent self-esteem are mirrored in an individual with higher anxious attachment. I hypothesized the following:

1) Relationship contingent self-esteem would be positively correlated with higher anxious attachment. This association has been previously found in Knee et al (2008); however, to my knowledge, this relationship has been scarcely examined for replication elsewhere (1A). I also predict that relationship contingent self-esteem is positively correlated with the experience of more negative emotional symptoms (i.e., stress, anxiety, and depression) (1B). Additionally, I hypothesize that an individual with high relationship contingent self-esteem compared to their counterparts, obsessively ruminates more about their partner’s betrayal (1C).

2) Individuals with high relationship contingent self-esteem would view their relationship as less satisfying (2A). Further, severe and negative attributions regarding the betrayer and the betrayal would mediate this relationship between RCSE and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, RCSE was predicted to be positively associated to
internal, generalized and stable attributions, which in turn would be negatively related to relationship satisfaction (2B).

As mentioned above, due to the association between anxious attachment and relationship contingent self-esteem, the above hypotheses starting with 1B through 2B were expected to be mirrored for anxious attachment in place of RCSE (i.e., hypotheses 1D, 1E, 2C, and 2D).
Participants

Participants signed up for the study using an online recruitment system and received class credit in return for their participation. The sample consisted of 126 undergraduate students, 54 male and 72 female, from a medium-sized Midwestern Catholic University. Only students who were in a romantic relationship at the time they participated were considered eligible for the study. Participants’ ages ranged between 18 and 35 years. The majority of participants were Caucasian (85.7%); 4.8% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.4% as Latino/a, 1.6% as African American, and 4.8% as ‘other’. The average relationship length of participants was 21 months. Participants identified as dating exclusively (77.8%); 13.5% identified as dating openly, 3.2% as engaged but not living together, 2.4% as friends with benefits, 8% as engaged and living together, and 2.4% as ‘other’.

Measures

Cronbach’s Alphas for all measures used in this study were found to be above .68. and are presented in Table 1.

Demographic and Relationship Background Measure. A demographic questionnaire assessed sex, age, relationship status, and nature of current romantic relationship (i.e., friends with benefits, dating exclusively, married, etc.).
Participants were asked to describe a betrayal within a relationship and keep the betrayal in mind while they answered parts of the questionnaire (i.e., Intrusiveness of Rumination Scale and the Attributions Scale). See Appendix A.

**Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem.** Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem was measured using the 11-item Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Knee, Patrick, & Neighbors, 2001). Items are rated on a 5-point scale, with scores ranging from 1= not at all like me to 5= very much like me (Knee, et al., 2008). This measure was developed from the Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) and the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). See Appendix B.

**Attachment Style.** The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) scale contains 36 items that assess attachment anxiety and avoidance in close relationships (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). The measure consists of two subscales, Anxiety and Avoidance. A 7-point scale with scores ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree is used to rate responses (Fraley, et al., 2000). See Appendix C.

**Relationship Satisfaction.** Participants were given the Relationship Assessment Scale, a 7-item scale questionnaire that assessed relationship satisfaction within romantic relationships (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). The items are rated on a 5-point scale, with different labels for each item (e.g., on item 1 the range is from 1=poorly to 5= extremely well; on item 2 the range is from 1=unsatisfied to 5=extremely satisfied). Higher scores on items (e.g., “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?”) indicate greater satisfaction with the relationship (Hendrick et al., 1998). For complete questionnaire see Appendix D.
**Mental Health.** The Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale-21 (DASS) measured the overall trait psychological distress of participants (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1996). Consisting of 21 items rated on a 1 to 3 likert-type scale with 0= does not apply to me at all to 3= applies to me very much or most of the time). The measure contains three separate subscales in total. The Depression subscale measures the participant’s general hopelessness, lack of involvement or interest, devaluation of life, and self-criticism (e.g., I feel that I am pretty worthless). The Anxiety subscale examines the participant’s general anxious affect, ease of automatic arousal, situational anxiety, and general skeletal muscle effects (e.g., I had a feeling of shakiness). The Stress subscale measures the extent of chronic but non-specific arousal such as difficulty relaxing, one’s tendency to be upset easily, and general irritability and impatience. (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1996). Each subscale has a range of 0 to 21 with higher scores indicating higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress overall. See Appendix E.

**Rumination.** The Intrusiveness of Rumination Scale, influenced by the Impact Event Scale, is a modified 8- item version of the Intrusiveness Scale for Rumination (McCullough, Orsulak, Brandon, & Akers, 2007; Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979). The scale targets ruminative thoughts regarding another’s behavior, such as “I couldn’t stop thinking about what they did”. For this study, participants were instructed to rate the degree to which they ruminated about the betrayal they described in the written response portion of the questionnaire packet. Scores range on a scale from 0= not at all true of me to 5= extremely true of me. See Appendix F.

**Attribution Processes.** The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) is a modified version of the scale originally developed by Fincham and Bradbury (1992) to
measure marital attributions. The original RAM contains eight hypothetical negative partner behaviors (e.g., “Your husband is intolerant of something you do.”) in which participants are asked to identify their agreement with the statements using a 6-point scale in which 1= Disagree Strongly to 6= Agree Strongly. In the original RAM, statements examine the degree to which the participant believes that the cause was due to the partner (locus), impacted other areas in the marriage (globality), and the likelihood of change (stability). Additionally, responsibility attributions focusing on intentionality, motivating factors, and whether the act can be seen as justifiable through extenuating circumstances are examined (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). The modified version of the RAM used in this study assessed attributions for a broader range of interpersonal relationships. For example, statements were changed from “My husband criticized me on purpose rather than unintentionally” to “My partner criticized me on purpose rather than unintentionally.” See Appendix G.

Procedure

The self-report measures/questionnaires were administered to groups of no more than 20 students. Prior to the distribution of the measures/questionnaires participants were provided with an informed consent (Appendix H), which outlined the voluntary and confidential nature of the study and their right to withdraw at any point. Participants were asked to describe in detail a betrayal event that had occurred within their romantic relationship. Participants were asked to answer as honestly and accurately as possible. Participants then completed the packet of self-report measures/questionnaires. Once the packet had been submitted, the participants then received a debriefing form (Appendix I) containing contact information of the research team should any questions or concerns
regarding the study arise. All procedures were approved by the relevant Institutional Review Board.
CHAPTER III
RESULTS

Prior to all analyses, missing values were replaced with each participant’s average response to the other items of each individual scale, but only when at least eighty percent of that scale’s items had been responded to.

All analyses were computed using the statistical software program SPSS. The descriptive statistics and correlations between all study variables are presented in Table 1.

Analyses of Hypotheses.

Bivariate Correlations. Bivariate correlations were computed to determine the association between Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and Anxious Attachment. Analyses revealed support for Hypothesis 1A (i.e., RCSE is positively correlated with Anxious Attachment). Contrary to hypothesis 1B (i.e., RCSE is positively related to the experience of negative mental health symptoms) bivariate correlations revealed no significant associations between RCSE, Overall Psychological Distress, Stress, Anxiety, and Depression. Also contrary to Hypothesis 1C, Rumination about the betrayal was not significantly related to Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem. Lastly, in contrast to Hypothesis 2A, Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem was not found to be associated with Relationship Satisfaction.
In support of Hypothesis 1D (i.e., Anxious Attachment is positively related to the experience of negative mental health symptoms), bivariate correlations revealed there is a significant association between RCSE, Overall Psychological Distress, Stress, Anxiety, and Depression. In support of Hypothesis 1E, Rumination about the betrayal was found to be significantly related to Anxious Attachment. Lastly, Hypothesis 2C (i.e., Anxious Attachment will be associated with Relationship Satisfaction in a negative manner) was not found to be significant. However, the correlation is trending towards significance at $p < .05$.

**Mediation Models.** Bootstrap Procedures described by Preacher and Hayes (2008) were used for meditational analyses; this method of meditational analyses is preferred because it does not assume normality of the distribution of the indirect effects and thus reduces Type II error, compared to procedures such as the Sobel Test. The results are based upon percentile confidence intervals, which were set at 0.95 with 1000 resamples. If the values of the estimated effect sizes within the confidence interval include zero, then a non-significant effect is indicated.

The mediation model was constructed in which Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem was the predictor, Causal Attributions (i.e., internal, generalized, and stable attributions) as the mediator, and Relationship Satisfaction as the outcome (2B). Contrary to Hypothesis 2B, analysis revealed Causal Attributions (i.e., internal, generalized, and stable) did not significantly mediate the relationship between Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and Relationship Satisfaction. Causal attributions showed a point estimate of $0.0032, z = .3501, p = .7263, S.E. = .0091$, and a 95% bootstrap CI of $-0.0164$ to $0.0258$. This model was replicated with Anxious Attachment as the predictor in order to examine
Hypothesis 2D. In support of Hypothesis 2D, analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of Causal Attributions (i.e., internal, generalized, and stable) on the relationship between Anxious Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction, $-.0116$, $z = -1.9393$, $p = .0525$, S.E. = .0060, and a 95% bootstrap CI of -.02647 to -.0023.
Table 1.

*Bivariate Correlations and Descriptive Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Anxious Attachment</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Rumination</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Overall psychological Distress</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Stress</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Anxiety</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.72***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Depression</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.88</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Causal Attributions</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Responsibility Attributions</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.45***</td>
<td>.53***</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.46***</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| SD   | 7.74  | 17.73 | 11.39 | 3.02  | 10.81 | 4.59 | 3.75 | 3.70 | 3.45  | 3.57 |
| α    | .85   | .93   | .97   | .85   | .91   | .82  | .76  | .83  | .68   | .71  |

Note: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem is typically an unhealthy form of self-esteem in which the individual’s self-worth is determined by the nature, process, and outcome of the individual’s relationship (Knee et al., 2008). The goal of this study was to add to the understanding of Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem first proposed by Knee et al. (2008). Specifically, the present study aimed to examine the associations of Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and Anxious Attachment with obsessive rumination about a betrayal event, assessment of a betrayal event, and the negative mental health symptoms experienced by a victim of a betrayal within a romantic relationship.

In support of previous research conducted by Davis, Shaver, and Vernon (2003) on mental health following relationship turmoil, anxious attachment was found to be related to the experience of more negative mental health symptoms (i.e., depression, anxiety, stress) and obsessive rumination about the betrayal and partner’s actions. It seems that by feeling a significant other cannot be relied upon for need fulfillment (e.g., help coping with stressors, promoting happiness, and intimacy) an individual may be more likely to internalize problems that he or she encounters and thus be less likely to cultivate a relationship in which he or she is able to gain stable and consistent
emotional support from his or her partner. Consequently, it seems that a greater state of mental worry occurs due to the lack of a stable emotional support system within the relationship. Further, it is possible that due to a greater state of worry and lack of emotional support systems an individual may be less likely to act in autonomous ways (e.g., personal hobby seeking), which stifles personal growth and fulfillment. Interestingly, and counter to previous work done by Collins (1996), anxious attachment was not found to be related to relationship satisfaction. The trend towards significance indicates that the lack of significance in the present study may be due to relatively small sample size or differences in procedures. Specifically, Collins (1996) used a relationship scale that they independently adapted which measured general satisfaction, communication, feelings of understanding, frequency and severity of conflict, and commitment level, where as the current study only used a scale that focused on general relationship satisfaction. It is possible that the scale used by Collins (1996) offers a more thorough and accurate examination of the various facets that are important when measuring relationship satisfaction. Thus, use of a more thorough scale led to more robust results than what was found within the current study.

The attribution-making process was found to be different in individuals with high anxious attachment compared to their counterparts, as evidenced by causal attributions significantly mediating the relationship between anxious attachment and relationship satisfaction. This finding replicates Collins’ (1996) previous work on attachment and attributions as well as further supporting the idea proposed by Hall and Fincham (2008) regarding differences in personality characteristics influencing the attribution-making process. The results (i.e., causal attributions mediating the relationship between anxious
attachment and relationship satisfaction) suggest that victims higher in anxious attachment place greater blame on the betrayer and are subsequently more negatively impacted by the betrayal event. It is interesting to note that even though this type of attributions process placed more blame on the betrayer, the relationship continued after the betrayal, as all of our participants were still in the same romantic relationship at the time of this study. This continuation of the relationship, even though the victim placed more severe attributions of blame onto the betrayer, perhaps can be linked to the degree of over investment in the relationship that is characteristic of individuals with high anxious attachment. These findings further bolster the attachment literature while highlighting the importance of attachment security within the relationship dyad.

A positive correlation between relationship contingent self-esteem and the construct of anxious attachment was found. This finding is in support of prior work from Knee et al. (2008), which further promotes the notion that RCSE as a construct is a type of manic style of affection in which the individual experiences extreme emotional highs and lows that is conceptually similar to Anxious Attachment yet is a unique characteristic. Due to the association between the two constructs, one might assume that similar to Anxious Attachment, RCSE would be related to more severe negative mental health symptoms, obsessive rumination, lower relationship satisfaction, and an altered attribution process, as I had hypothesized. However, results indicate that the construct of RCSE is not related to the aforementioned concepts (i.e., negative mental health, rumination, relationship satisfaction, and attributions) suggesting that while RCSE can be seen as a unique construct it may not be as detrimental and conventionally negative as Anxious Attachment. Upon initial examination this finding seems counterintuitive. First,
the two constructs (i.e., RCSE and Anxious Attachment) are positively correlated and conceptually similar. Second, RCSE exhibits itself as extreme personal investment in the relationship, overreliance on the success and nature of the relationship for self-validation and self-worth, and seemingly characteristic of drastic highs and lows of emotions based on seemingly miniscule events within the relationship. Thus, it is perplexing that RCSE is not related to the negative experience of mental health symptoms or obsessive rumination similar to Anxious Attachment, as one would expect.

However, the findings of this study support recent work conducted by Dixon, Lutz-Zois and Keefer (in progress; personal communication) suggesting the likelihood that the influence of RCSE on negative mental health symptoms, rumination, and relationship functioning may be more dependent on personality and protective factors than previously thought. The existence of high RCSE within an individual does not consequently mean that the individual will experience negative mental health symptoms, lower relationship satisfaction or obsessive rumination. Rather, certain types of personality characteristics in combination with the existence or lack of existence of protective factors and high RCSE may lead to negative outcomes. More research examining the combination of personality and protective factors in tangent with RCSE that is required to have a negative impact is needed within the field. Overall, their findings point to the notion that in the blueprint of a relationship dyad and relationship functioning, RCSE is not an autonomous influential entity but rather a cog that requires a specific combination of other gears to function and have an impact.
Implications

Often in psychotherapy, relationship issues and turmoil can be a driving factor for a client to seek help. From a preventative standpoint, the results of this study may be used to inform research on the development or modification of generalizable interventions aimed at lessening distress and increasing coping in individuals experiencing turmoil in their life as a result of a betrayal. Clinically, this study can help clinicians identify and understand how at-risk clients (i.e., individuals with high Anxious Attachment) may be impacted by relationship turmoil and a betrayal. A clinician would be able to focus individual therapeutic interventions around increasing coping skills in the client that may lessen their ruminative thoughts about the betrayal and simultaneously reducing the negative impact on their mental health. This study supports the idea proposed by Dixon et al. (in progress, personal communication) that while a construct may appear as negative (i.e., RCSE), in reality it is the combination of characteristics that lead to negative outcomes. Thus, clinicians are advised to be aware of the varying influence of differing personality characteristics and to not jump to conclusions regarding a potential outcome of a client based on solely one characteristic.

Limitations

Important limitations to this study must be addressed. Mainly, the data from this study are correlational and consequently statements of causal relations between the variables should be avoided and interpreted with caution. Additionally, generalizability of data would greatly benefit from a larger and more diverse participant pool. Because the participants were all recruited form a medium sized midwestern university and primarily were 18-25 years old, the ability to expand and apply this data to varying
cultures and other demographics is limited. Further, this study was not conducted on a clinical population, thus the results may not be applicable to severe cases that may be more likely to be found in the community setting (e.g., chronic infidelity and domestic violence). Future studies should consider expanding the demographics and size of the sample pool. Further, it may be beneficial to examine whether different types of relationships (i.e., dating couples vs. married couples) would have an influence on the severity of negative mental health symptoms experienced by victims and other associated variables discussed in this study.

This study utilized primarily self-report measures, which perhaps limits the objectivity of responses. In the future, it may be advisable to use alternative methods of data collection such as reports from other observers. Additionally, it is possible that it would have been beneficial to contact the partners of the participants to have them describe their perspective of the betrayal situation and further examine the relationship dyad. Lastly, the strength of the study would have been increased greatly had a longitudinal design been implemented. Future research could examine whether there is a difference over time on the impact betrayal events have on mental health as well as the likelihood that a couple may break-up. This future research possibility would offer further insight into how individuals assess and make attributions of a betrayal and whether those attributions change over time, the impact on their mental health, and perhaps most importantly what causes an individual to maintain a relationship with a betrayer or terminate said relationship. Despite these limitations, I believe that this study can effectively add to the field of research and offers a starting point for further research endeavors.
**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study helps to provide further understanding of the constructs of Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem and Anxious Attachment. In regards to Anxious Attachment, this study further illuminates the negativity of an insecurely attached romantic relationship dyad and offers further information on the association between Anxious Attachment and negative mental health symptoms. In addressing RCSE, this study helps to understand a slimly investigated perspective on self-esteem. The study strengthens the previous conceptualization made by Knee et al. (2008) and furthers that conceptualization by offering evidence for the notion proposed by Dixon et al. (in progress; personal communication) that RCSE is not universally negative, and does not act alone to influence negative mental health symptoms and relationship outcomes but rather acts as a part of a larger schematic of personality characteristics and protective factors to have an influence on relationship outcomes and mental health. Future research should be directed at understanding further the exact part that RCSE plays and the various combinations of personality characteristics and protective factors that would make individuals vulnerable for negative mental health outcomes following a betrayal in their romantic relationships.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC AND RELATIONSHIP BACKGROUND MEASURE

Instructions: Please complete the following questionnaire by checking or circling the appropriate number. All of your responses will remain confidential. Please do not place your name on this questionnaire.

1. Are you currently in a romantic relationship? If you are not, please respond “No” and discontinue the survey.

   Yes _____  No _____

2. Gender:  Male ____  Female ____

3. Age: ____

4. Race:

   1. ____ Caucasian (White)  2. ____ Asian or Pacific Islander
   3. ____ African American  4. ____ Latino/a
   5. ____ Native American  6. ____ Other (Specify) _______

5. How long have you been in a romantic relationship with your current partner? For example, if you’ve been together 3 months, please put a zero next to years and a 3 next to months; if you’ve been together two and half years, put a 2 next to years and a 6 next to months; if you’ve been together less than a month, please put a zero next to both years and months.

   Years ____  Months _____

6. What is the nature of your current romantic relationship?

   1. Friends with Benefits

42
2. Dating (open relationship)

3. Dating (exclusively)

4. Engaged (not living together)

5. Engaged (living together)

6. Married

7. Other (please specify) __________________

Please read all directions carefully and rate only what you actually have experienced, not what you think you should report.

Please focus upon some event or series of events in which you feel your partner did something that significantly hurt you and disrupted your current relationship (for example, lied, had an affair, betrayed a secret, broke a promise, let you down, etc.) and you forgave them. If such an event has happened recently in your current relationship, please choose that event. If not, then you may choose an event that happened in the past within your current relationship.

1. In the space below, please briefly describe in as much detail as possible the event or series of events that you have chosen. Also, please specify whom you are describing in these events (the kind of relationship you have with this person). Please do not write anything that would identify who you are writing about, such as the person’s name.
2. **How much do you feel you have forgiven this person? (check one)**
   
   ____not at all   ____somewhat   ____moderately   ____mostly   ____completely

3. **How severe do you think this betrayal was (circle one)?**
   
   Not at all | Severe
   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

4. **How hurt were you by this betrayal (circle one)?**
   
   Not at all | Hurt
   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7

5. **How damaging was this betrayal to your relationship with this person (circle one)?**
   
   Not damaging | Damaging
   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7
APPENDIX B

INTRUSIVENESS OF RUMINATION SCALE

**Directions:** Please rate the frequency with which you have had each of the following experiences following the event that you described above.

1. I couldn’t stop thinking about what he/she did to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

2. Thoughts and feelings about how he/she hurt me kept running through my head.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Strong feelings about what this person did to me kept bubbling up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Images of the offense kept coming back to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

5. I brooded about how he/she hurt me.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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6. I found it difficult not to think about the hurt he/she caused me.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
7. I found myself playing the offense over and over again in my mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Even when I was engaged in other tasks, I thought about how he/she hurt me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Considerably</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Directions: Please answer the following questions while keeping in mind your written description of a time when your partner hurt you. Please circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement, using the rating scale below:

Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6

1.) His/her behavior was due to something about him/her (e.g., the type of person he/she is, the mood he/she was in).

Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6

2.) The reason for his/her behavior is *not* likely to change.

Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6

3.) The reason for his/her behavior is something that affects other areas of our relationship

Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6

4.) He/she hurt me on purpose rather than unintentionally.

Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6
5.) His/her behavior was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns.

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

6.) He/she deserves to be blamed for his/her behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D
RELATIONSHIP CONTINGENT SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible.

1. I feel better about myself when it seems like my partner and I are getting along.
   Not At All Like Me  Somewhat Like Me  Very Much like Me
   1  2  3  4  5

2. I feel better about myself when it seems like my partner and I are emotionally connected.
   Not At All Like Me  Somewhat Like Me  Very Much like Me
   1  2  3  4  5

3. An important measure of my self-worth is how successful my relationship is.
   Not At All Like Me  Somewhat Like Me  Very Much like Me
   1  2  3  4  5

4. My feelings of self-worth are based on how well things are going in my relationship.
   Not At All Like Me  Somewhat Like Me  Very Much like Me
   1  2  3  4  5

5. When my relationship is going well, I feel better about myself overall.
   Not At All Like Me  Somewhat Like Me  Very Much like Me
   1  2  3  4  5

6. If my relationship were to end tomorrow, I would not let it affect how I feel about myself.
   Not At All Like Me  Somewhat Like Me  Very Much like Me
   1  2  3  4  5
7. My self-worth is unaffected when things go wrong in my relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not At All Like Me</th>
<th>Somewhat Like Me</th>
<th>Very Much like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

8. When my partner and I fight, I feel bad about myself in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not At All Like Me</th>
<th>Somewhat Like Me</th>
<th>Very Much like Me</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>

9. When my relationship is going bad, my feelings of self-worth remain unaffected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not At All Like Me</th>
<th>Somewhat Like Me</th>
<th>Very Much like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

10. I feel better about myself when others tell me that my partner and I have a good relationship.

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<tr>
<th>Not At All Like Me</th>
<th>Somewhat Like Me</th>
<th>Very Much like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

11. When my partner criticizes me or seems disappointed in me, it makes me feel really bad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not At All Like Me</th>
<th>Somewhat Like Me</th>
<th>Very Much like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E
EXPERIENCES IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS- REVISED

Instructions: The statements below concern how you feel in your relationships with others. 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 the love of others.

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

   Strongly Agree
   Strongly Disagree

2. I often worry that others will not want to stay with me.

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

   Strongly Agree
   Strongly Disagree

3. I often worry that others do not really love me.

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

   Strongly Agree
   Strongly Disagree
4. I worry that others won’t care about me as much as I care about them.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5 -------------- 6 -------------- 7
Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

5. I often wish that others’ feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for them.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5 -------------- 6 -------------- 7
Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

6. I worry a lot about my relationships.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5 -------------- 6 -------------- 7
Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5 -------------- 6 -------------- 7
Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

8. When I show my feelings for others, I’m afraid they will not feel the same about me.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5 -------------- 6 -------------- 7
Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

9. I rarely worry about others leaving me.

1 -------------- 2 -------------- 3 -------------- 4 -------------- 5 -------------- 6 -------------- 7
Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
10. Others make me doubt myself.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

12. I find that others don't want to get as close as I would like.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

13. Sometimes others change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

15. I'm afraid that once someone gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.

1  2  3  4  5  6  7

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
16. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from others.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

17. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

18. Others only seem to notice me when I’m angry.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

19. I prefer not to show others how I feel deep down.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with others.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree
22. I am very comfortable being close to others

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

Strongly Agree

23. I don't feel comfortable opening up to others.

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

Strongly Agree

24. I prefer not to be too close to romantic others.

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

Strongly Agree

25. I get uncomfortable when others want to be very close.

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

Strongly Agree

26. I find it relatively easy to get close to others.

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

Strongly Agree

27. It's not difficult for me to get close others.

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

Strongly Agree
28. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with others.

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

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

29. It helps to turn to others in times of need.

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

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

30. I tell others just about everything.

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

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

31. I talk things over with others.

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

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

32. I am nervous when others get too close to me.

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

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree

33. I feel comfortable depending on others.

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

Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree
34. I find it easy to depend on others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with others.

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<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</table>

36. Others really understand me and my needs.

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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE

Instructions: Please circle the number for each item which best answers that item for you. Answer these questions regarding your current relationship.

1) How well does your partner meet your needs?
1 2 3 4 5
Poorly Average Extremely Well

2) In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
1 2 3 4 5
Unsatisfied Average Extremely Satisfied

3) How good is your relationship compared to most?
1 2 3 4 5
Poor Average Excellent

4) How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
1 2 3 4 5
Never Average Very Often

5) To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
1 2 3 4 5
Not at All Average Completely
6) How much do you love your partner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Much</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
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7) How many problems are there in your relationship?

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Few</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Very Many</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, & STRESS SCALE

**Directions:** Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you *over the past week*. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement. *The rating scale is as follows:*

0 Did not apply to me at all
1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time
3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I found it hard to wind down</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I was aware of dryness of my mouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g., excessively rapid breathing,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I tended to over-react to situations</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I experienced trembling (e.g., in the hands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I felt that I had nothing to look forward to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I found myself getting agitated</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I found it difficult to relax</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I felt down-hearted and blue</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I felt I was close to panic</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I felt I wasn't worth much as a person</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I felt that I was rather touchy</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g., sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I felt scared without any good reason</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I felt that life was meaningless</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

INFORMED CONSENT

The Dating Study

Thomas N. Ballas and Lee Dixon, PhD (faculty sponsor)

This study will investigate various aspects of your current romantic relationship. You will complete a series of questionnaires independently. The questionnaires will ask you about events within your romantic relationship, reactions to betrayals, overall relationship satisfaction and commitment, how you view romantic relationships, and investigate processes of forgiveness and reconciliation. You will also be asked to write about a time your romantic partner hurt you and will be asked demographic questions (i.e., gender, age, race).

No adverse effects are anticipated. However, you will be asked to think about past betrayals within your romantic relationship, which may possibly raise minor negative emotions. In addition, you will be asked to reflect on your satisfaction in your relationship and issues regarding forgiveness and reconciliation post betrayal. You may stop at any time if you experience psychological/physical distress and will still receive credit for participating. If you are distressed by the study, you can contact the University of Dayton Counseling Center at 937-229-3141 to schedule an appointment. There is no cost to UD undergraduates for services at the Counseling Center.

The study will take approximately 40 minutes to complete.

Your name will be kept separate from the data. Both your name and the data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Only the investigators named above will have access to the locked filing cabinet. All data recorded over the course of the study will be stored anonymously and will be identified only by an anonymous code that we will provide you. Your name will be linked to this anonymous code only on a master list that will be secured so that only the primary researcher can access this information; it will only be used to combine your data, should you choose to participate in the second study, and then destroyed once the studies are completed. Your name will
not be revealed in any document resulting from this study. However, you may be identifiable based on the combination of responses you provide to the demographic questions. Please keep this in mind while answering questions.

Participants may contact Thomas Ballas at ballast1@udayton.edu or Dr. Lee Dixon at (937)-229-2160 or ldixon1@udayton.edu. In addition you may obtain free confidential services at the University Counseling Center if professional assistance is needed, by contacting (937) 229-3141. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant you may also contact the acting chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Ben Kunz, PhD in SJ 308, (937) 229-2789, bkunz1@udayton.edu.

I have voluntarily decided to participate in this study. If I had questions about this study, I have contacted the investigator named above and he or she has adequately answered any and all questions I have about this study, the procedures involved, and my participation. I understand that I may voluntarily terminate my participation in this study at any time and still receive full credit. In addition, I certify that I am 18 (eighteen) years of age or older. By signing my name and date below, I consent to participate in this study. If I do not want to participate, I can leave the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Student</th>
<th>Student’s Name (printed)</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Witness</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>

Please indicate by checking the correct area if you have are willing to be contacted to participate in Part 2 of this study for an additional credit and entrance into a raffle for a $50 VISA gift card?

YES  NO
APPENDIX I

DEBRIEFING FORM

The Dating Study

Objective:
Within romantic relationships it is not uncommon for a betrayal by a partner to occur. When a betrayal occurs, the partners are faced with a question: can the betrayer be forgiven and the relationship be salvaged? This study is examining the interaction between relationship-contingent self-esteem (the unhealthy over involvement and over reliance on the relationship and partner) and the process of forgiveness after a betrayal has occurred. In order to fulfill this goal, you completed a series of questionnaires regarding the nature of events within your relationship, relationship satisfaction, relationship-contingent self-esteem, attachment, and forgiveness processes. This question is important to investigate due to the need to understand why individuals continue to return to relationships in which their overall wellbeing and personal goals are not being satisfied. Additionally, individuals experience distress and emotional responses differently based on individual factors. Further understanding how individuals with high relationship-contingent self-esteem experience negative events will allow researchers to better comprehend the dynamics of relationships and break-ups.

Hypothesis:
The primary hypotheses that will be tested in this study are the following: an individual with higher relationship contingent self-esteem will think more about a betrayal; individuals with higher relationship-contingent self-esteem will view the relationship as less satisfying; blaming the betrayer will help explain the relationship between relationship-contingent self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. The remaining variables that were mentioned above are predicted to help us better understand these hypotheses, as we know they are related to forgiveness and relationship-contingent self-esteem.

Your Contribution:
your completing these questionnaires is essential in allowing us to study the interactions between relationship contingent self-esteem, attachment, attributions, and forgiveness after being hurt in a romantic relationship. We very much appreciate your help.
Benefits:
Understanding romantic relationships helps not only researchers with basic questions about how they work, but also therapists and counselors that are helping those who are struggling with their romantic relationships.

Assurance of Privacy:
We are studying romantic relationships and betrayals and are not evaluating you personally in any way. Your responses will be kept completely confidential and your responses will only be identified by a participant number in the data set with other participant numbers. Your name will not be revealed in any document resulting from this study.

Please note:
• We ask you to kindly refrain from discussing this study with others in order to help us avoid biasing future participants.
• If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact any of the individuals listed on this page.
• For further information about this area of research, you may consult the references cited on this page.

Contact Information:
Participants may contact Thomas Ballas at ballast1@udayton.edu or Dr. Lee Dixon at (937)-229-2160 or ldixon1@udayton.edu. In addition you may obtain free confidential services at the University Counseling Center if professional assistance is needed, by contacting (937) 229-3141. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant you may also contact the acting chair of the Research Review and Ethics Committee, Ben Kunz, PhD in SJ 308, (937) 229-2789, bkunz1@udayton.edu.

Thank you for your participation. I will update your research credit on the online system.

Disclaimer:
The University of Dayton supports researchers' academic freedom to study topics of their choice. The topic and/or content of each study are those of the principal investigator(s) and do not necessarily represent the mission or positions of the University of Dayton.

References: