**Introduction**

Anxious attachment is a basic uncertainty of personal relationship stability that typically leads individuals to excessively seek reassurance (ERS) and signs of the partner’s care in an effort to assuage their insecurity (Shaver, Schachner, & Mikulincer, 2005). Previous research suggests that highly anxious individuals may look for those signs through suspicion behaviors, such as by spying on their partners (Ickes, Dugosh, Simpson, & Wilson, 2003). Therefore, it is possible that they also take a more discreet approach to create test situations for their partner and obverse the subsequent behavior.

**Hypotheses**

- Individuals with high anxious attachment, low interpersonal confidence, or low perceived trust in partner care, will more greatly monitor, interpret, and test their partner’s behavior.
- Individuals that engage in testing behavior will also monitor and interpret partner behavior more, making all three behaviors highly correlated.

**Method**

Participants

- 160 heterosexual romantic couples recruited through newspaper ads, campus flyers, ads on internet bulletin boards, and a psychology subject pool.
- Average age: 22.11 years

Procedure

Participants individually completed multiple measures on 9-point response scales, 1: extremely disagree; 9: extremely agree

**Personality measures:**
- Attachment anxiety and confidence in interpersonal value

**Relationship-specific measures:**
- Responsiveness monitoring, interpretation, testing, and perceptions of the partner’s care.

Participants individually completed multiple measures on 9-point response scales, 1: extremely disagree; 9: extremely agree

**Results**

- **Monitoring**
  - Anxious Attachment: .40***
  - Perceived Partner Care: .19***
  - Interpersonal Confidence: .22***

- **Interpretation**
  - Anxious Attachment: .48***
  - Perceived Partner Care: .10
  - Interpersonal Confidence: .08

- **Testing**
  - Anxious Attachment: .53***
  - Perceived Partner Care: .03
  - Interpersonal Confidence: .36***

- Overall, interpretation, monitoring, and testing behaviors all highly correlated with one another.

**Discussion**

- Anxiously attached participants engaged in more monitoring, interpreting, and testing. The behaviors were highly correlated with each other, suggesting that anxious attachment includes a holistic method of approaching relationships involving these behaviors.
- Participants low in perceived partner care and interpersonal confidence also tested their partners more. These results suggest that although people with low confidence or security in their ability to achieve close relationships seem not to monitor their partners more than the average person, they may still resort to covert testing as a way to gather evidence of their partner’s care.
- However, forms of relationship insecurity other than anxious attachment do not seem to affect one’s cognitive belief of the meaning behind partner behavior.

**Limitations**

Since this study was purely correlational, we could not determine in what order the three different behaviors, monitoring, interpretation, and testing, may have caused the others or whether a causal link exists at all.

**Future Research**

- A longitudinal study could help illuminate the order of causality, such as whether low felt security in a partner’s care leads to more testing or vice versa.
- More research is needed to determine whether heightened monitoring and testing garners any ill effects in relationships and whether other personality types, such as individuals with naturally analytical mindsets, will engage in testing behaviors even within secure relationships.

**References**


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