

# **Romantic Attachment, Partner Violence & Stalking**

A Study of Early  
Relationships in a College  
Sample

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*Isaac T. Van Patten, PhD*

*Ms. Kya P. Parker*

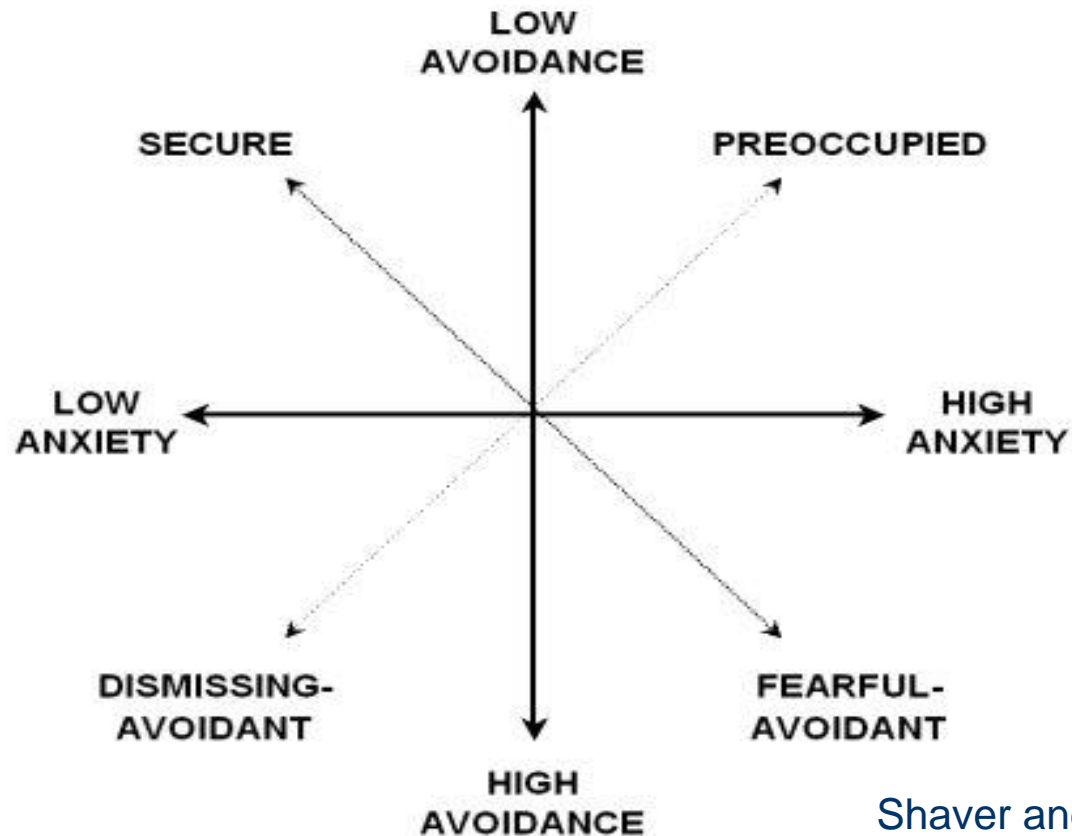
# The Current Study

- Examines attachment style, relationship conflict tactics and stalking behaviors in a sample of college students
- Main hypothesis:
  - Students with anxious attachment styles will have more trouble with partner violence and stalking behaviors after a break-up

# Attachment Theory

- In infancy:
  - Bowlby
    - Secure, Non-secure
  - Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall
    - Secure, Anxious-ambivalent, Avoidant
- In adulthood:
  - Bartholomew and Horowitz
    - Secure, Dismissing, Preoccupied, Fearful

# Attachment Styles



Shaver and Fraley (1997)

# Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking

## – Intimate Partner Violence

- Power and Control

- “pattern of abusive behaviors used by one individual to control or exert power over another individual in the context of an intimate relationship” (The Women’s Resource Center of the New River Valley, 2002)

## – Stalking

- the willful and malicious repeated following and harassing another person in which that person fears for his or her safety (Frieze and Davis, 2002)

# Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking

- NCVS from 1993-1998-during intimate partner violence, 69% of females and 65% of males were physically attacked (Rennison and Welchans, 2000)
- 1 in 12 women and 1 in 45 men have been stalked in their lifetime (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998)
- Between 30-60% of college students in America have experienced physical violence at least once in a dating relationship. (O'Hearn and Margolin, 2000)

# Dating Violence

- Beginning stages
- Jealousy, verbal insults, intimidation
- Pushing, slapping, shoving



- Dissatisfaction in Relationships

- Kaura and Allen (2004)

- IPV + stalking = more violence?

- Brewster (2003)

- Coleman (1997)

- Unwanted Pursuit Behaviors

- Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Palarea, Cohen, & Rohling (2002)



# This study

Analyzed survey responses of a sample of undergraduate students about past relationship experiences, conflict resolution tactics, and stalking behaviors.

Students with anxious attachment (mostly preoccupied and fearful) would have more problems in dealing with a relationship that has ended. (Specifically, exhibit more stalking-like behaviors towards their former partner)

# The Sample

- Participation in an on-line survey was requested from students in introductory criminal justice, psychology and sociology classes
  - An additional 486 paper survey sets were also distributed
- This resulted in 744 anonymously completed surveys
- This yielded a return rate of 53% without further follow-up

# The Instruments

- Attachment style was assessed using the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) questionnaire
  - Brennan, K.A., Clark, C.L. & Shaver, P.R. (1998)
- 36-item self-report, scored on 7-point Likert scale
  - Disagree strongly to Agree strongly

# The Instruments

- Conflict style was assessed using the Conflict Tactics Scale, 2<sup>nd</sup> version (CTS-2)
  - Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman (1996)
- 39-item, self-report of conflict resolution style
- 39-item report of partner's conflict resolution style

# The Instruments

- Stalking behavior were assessed with the Stalking Behavior Checklist (SBC)
  - Coleman, F. (1997), Jnl. Interp. Viol.
- A 29-item, self-report measure of stalking behaviors
- Two factors:
  - Harassing Behaviors
  - Violent Behaviors

# The Research Design

- An *Ex Post Facto Control Group* design was used by assigning those subjects who indicated that they had **never experienced** repeated, unwanted attention following a breakup and who had **never given** repeated, unwanted attention following a breakup to the control/comparison group condition

# Experimental Groups

- Subjects who indicated that they were the recipient of repeated, unwanted attention following a breakup were assigned to the “Stalked” group
- Subjects who indicated that they had given repeated, unwanted attention following a breakup were assigned to the “Stalker” group

# Results: Sample Description

Gender	Group			Total
	Control	Stalked	Stalker	
Male	43%	37%	34%	39%
Female	57%	63%	66%	61%

*Chi Sq N.S.*



# Results: Sample Description

**Mean Age**

**Group**

	Control	Stalked	Stalker	Total
Current	19.2	18.9	19.3	19
At Break- up		17.4	17.8	17.6

# Results: Sample Description

Race	Group			Total
	Control	Stalked	Stalker	
White	84%	91%	86%	89%
Non-White	16%	9%	14%	11%

# Results: Sample Description

## Mean Duration of Relationship

	Group		
	Stalked	Stalker	Total
Months	11.8	18.3	14.4
Range	1 – 50	1 – 84	1 – 84
Standard deviation	11.3	17.3	13.8

# Results: Sample Description

**Commitment level**

**Group**

**Stalked**

**Stalker**

Low

48 %

15 %

Medium

4 %

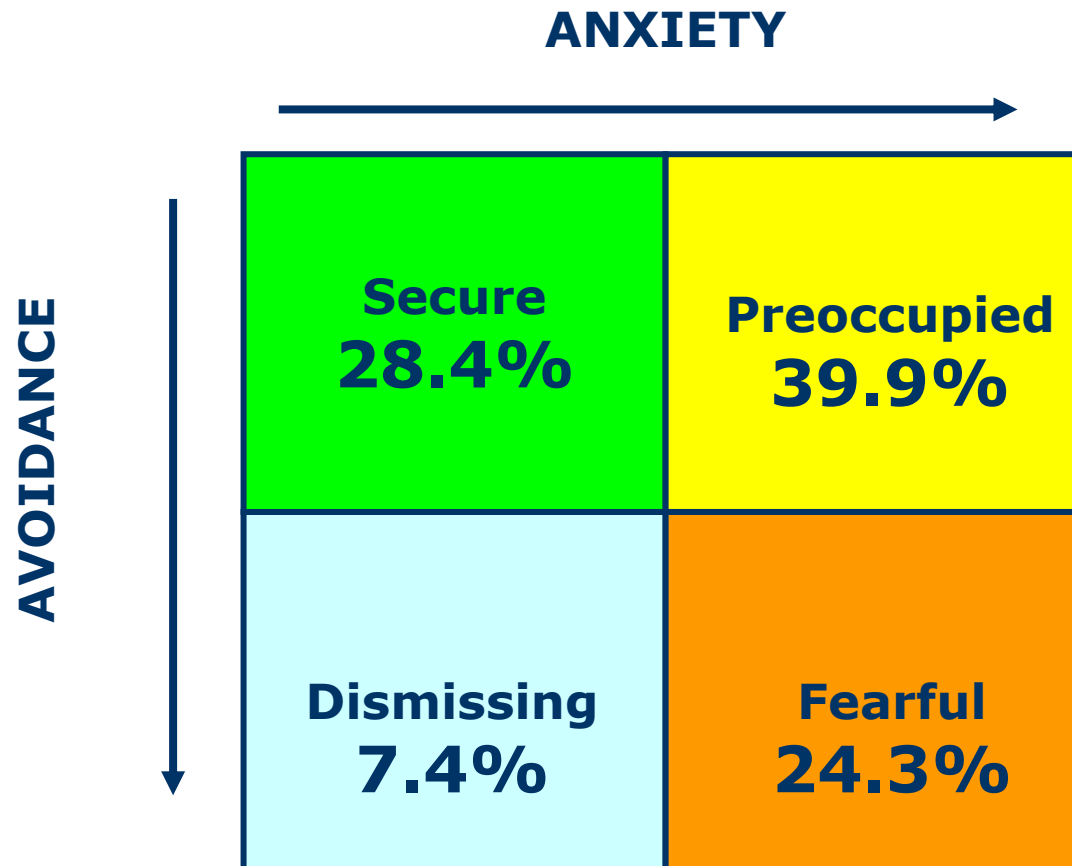
1 %

High

48 %

67 %

# Results: Sample



# Results: Attachment Style by Group

Attachment Style

	Comparison	Stalked	Stalker	Total
Secure	35.4%	41.7%	22.9%	100%
	30.6%	26.1%	17.7%	24.7%
Fearful	23.1%	45.2%	31.7%	100%
	21.6%	30.7%	26.6%	26.8%
Pre-occupied	22.9%	35.9%	41.2%	100%
	31.5%	35.9%	50.8%	39.4%
Dismissive	51.4%	31.4%	17.1%	100%
	16.2%	7.2%	4.8%	9.0%
Total	28.6%	39.4%	32%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Results: Attachment Style by Group

- $\chi^2(df=6, N=388)=21.76, p<.001$

# Results: Group Comparisons

- Hypothesis:
  - There will be a significant difference between groups on Anxiety in Relationships and Avoidance in Relationships
  - ANOVA for **Anxiety**:  $F(2,397)=17.23$ ,  $p<.001$
  - ANOVA for **Avoidance**:  $F(2,385)=0.537$ , **N.S.**
- The hypothesis is supported for Anxiety but not for Avoidance



# Results: Group Comparisons

- Post Hoc Analysis (Tukey's HSD; most possible pair-wise comparisons)
  - The Stalker group has significantly **higher** Anxiety scores than either the Control group or the Stalked group
  - The Stalked group's Anxiety scores are significantly **greater** than the Control group and significantly lower than the Stalker group

# Results: Group Comparisons

- Hypothesis: There will be a significant difference between groups in how conflict resolution is handled in the relationship
  - Stalkers will use less Negotiation, more Psychological Aggression, more Physical Assault, more Sexual Coercion, and inflict more Physical Injury

# Results: Group Comparisons

- **Negotiation:**  $F(2,406)=3.899$ ,  $p=.021^*$
- **Psychological Aggression:**  $F(2,410)=7.87$ ,  $p<.001^*$
- **Physical Assault:**  $F(2,404)=5.08$ ,  $p=.007^*$
- **Sexual Coercion:**  $F(2, 411)=1.91$ , **N.S.**
- **Injury:**  $F(2, 412)=2.49$ , **N.S.**

$*p<.05$

## Results: Post Hoc Analyses (Tukey's HSD)

- **Negotiation:** the Comparison group and the Stalked group reported using significantly less negotiation than the Stalker group ( $p=.015$ )
- **Psychological Aggression:** both the Stalked ( $p=.015$ ) and the Stalker ( $p<.001$ ) groups reported **higher** levels of psychological aggression than the Comparison group

## Results: Post Hoc Analyses (Tukey's HSD)

- **Physical Assault:** the Stalker group ( $p=.015$ ) reported using significantly **more** physical assault than did either the Comparison or Stalked group

# Results: Group Comparisons

- Hypothesis: There will be a significant difference between groups in how reported conflict resolution is handled in by partners
  - Stalkers will report partners use less Negotiation, more Psychological Aggression, more Physical Assault, more Sexual Coercion, and inflict more Physical Injury

## Results: Group Comparisons

- Partner uses Negotiation
  - $F(2,404)=0.822$ , *N.S.*
- Partner uses Psychological Aggression
  - $F(2,404)=8.27$ ,  $p<.001$

## Results: Group Comparisons

- Partner uses Physical Assault
  - $F(2,402)=7.49, p=.001$
- Partner uses Sex Coercion
  - $F(2,402)=5.99, p=.003$
- Partner inflicts Physical Injury
  - $F(2,402)=0.428, N.S.$



## Results: Post Hoc Analyses (Tukey's HSD)

- **Psychological Aggression:** both the Stalked ( $p=.033$ ) and the Stalker ( $p<.001$ ) groups report **more** use of psychological aggression by partners than the Comparison group; no difference between Stalked and Stalker groups
- **Physical Assault:** The Stalker group reported **more** physical assault by partner than did with the Stalked ( $p=.01$ ) or the Comparison groups ( $p=.001$ )

## Results: Post Hoc Analyses (Tukey's HSD)

- **Sexual Coercion:** the Stalker group ( $p=.002$ ) reported **more** use of sexual coercion by a partner than the Comparison; no difference between the Stalked group and the Comparison group or the Stalker group

# Recap

- Attachment Theory to assess Relationship Conflict and Stalking
- Surveyed 744 undergraduate students about past relationship experiences and behaviors
- Attachment was successful in
- Limitations

# Q&A

