Marital conflict and threatening interpersonal situations play influ-ential roles in shaping the quality of relationships and personal well-being (Ryff, 1995). The fate of any relationship—whether happy or haunted—depends on how partners think, feel, and behave toward one another in difficult situations. In the present research, we integrate the way in which mental representations and expectations formed in past relationships combine with proximal structures of interdependence in current relationships to understand how individuals react in relationship-threatening situations. We suggest that one cannot fully understand how and why individuals respond to relationship-threatening situations as they do without considering both their working models, which are based partly on past relationship experiences, in conjunction with their perceptions of the ties that bind their current relationships. Drawing on attachment theory (Bowby, 1973, 1980, 1969/1982) and interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), we tested a series of theoretically derived predictions that address (a) people’s differential emotional responses to potentially threatening interactions and (b) the differential behaviors they enact during these interactions.

Attachment Theory

According to attachment theory, patterns of interaction with attachment figures that occur earlier in life shape individuals’ beliefs and expectations of later relationships (Bowby, 1973, 1980, 1969/1982). Once formed, these relationship expectations (working models) lead individuals to rely on different types of coping strategies designed to manage negative affect in threatening situations (Kobak & Scerri, 1988; Simpson, 1990). Two orthogonal dimensions underlie adult attachment orientations (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). The first dimension, labeled anxiety, assesses concerns that relationship partners might not be available and supportive when needed. The second dimension, termed avoidance, assesses the desire to limit intimacy and to maintain psychological and emotional independence from significant others. Individuals who score low on both dimensions are prototypically “secure” in that they feel comfortable with closeness and intimacy and remain confident in the availability and good intentions of significant others.

Individuals who possess different attachment orientations evaluate and cope with stressful situations in unique ways (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). When faced with a partner’s potentially destructive behaviors, for example, individuals who harbor negative expectations about their partners or relationships often experience such events as especially threatening, and they lack the coping skills needed to react constructively. Indeed, when romantic partners display potentially destructive behaviors, more insecurely attached individuals (both anxious and avoidant) typically respond in a more defensive and destructive manner than do more secure people (Gaines et al., 1997; Pistole, 1989; Simpson et al., 1996). Moreover, greater security is associated with the use of more constructive accommodation strategies, whereas greater fearful-avoidance (i.e., the combination of having negative views of both the self and partners) predicts the use of more destructive strategies (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995).

Anxious Attachment

Anxious attachment develops from receiving inconsistent or unpredictable care from attachment figures (Cassidy & Berlin, 1994). The anxious orientation centers on concerns about one’s worthiness of
love, which is manifested in chronic fear of rejection and doubts about the ultimate availability of and support from attachment figures. Highly anxious individuals are hypervigilant with regard to the availability of support from their partners, and they ruminate over worst-case relationship outcomes (Kobak & Scerrey, 1988; Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). They tend to use hyperactivation strategies, which include clinging, controlling, and coercive behaviors, to ensure that their attachment figures remain psychologically close and available (see Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

The combination of anxious individuals’ longing to be loved, their fears that sufficient support may not be forthcoming, and their hypervigilance for negative or rejecting partner behaviors generates social interactions that are often tense and unstable. Given anxious individuals’ insatiable desire for relationship security and reassurance (Mikulincer, 1998), their partners’ degree of commitment to the relationship should be the best barometer of how much they worry about their relationships dissolving (cf. Attridge, Berscheid, & Simpson, 1995). To the extent that their partners are more committed to the relationship, highly anxious individuals ought to experience less relationship threat and should react less negatively. If, however, their partners are less committed, then highly anxious persons should experience stronger threat, exacerbating their hypervigilant coping tendencies.

A considerable body of research indicates that greater attachment anxiety is associated with more negative emotional, cognitive, and behavioral regulation strategies. For example, highly anxious individuals tend to respond to stressful events with heightened emotional distress (B. C. Feeney & Kirkpatrick, 1996), and they remain distressed long after actual threats have abated (Rholes, Simpson, & O’Riha, 1999). Moreover, they develop negative explanations for their partners’ ambiguous behaviors, frequently harboring thoughts that their relationships are in jeopardy and that their partners are unresponsive, are not trustworthy, or are purposely rejecting them (Collins, 1996; Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006; Gallo & Smith, 2001; Pereg & Mikulincer, 2004). When their romantic partners display potentially destructive behaviors, highly anxious people typically respond defensively and destructively (L. Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001; Gaines et al., 1997; Pistole, 1989; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995), often displaying elevated anger, hostility, or coercive attempts to seek reassurance (J. A. Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994; Levy & Davis, 1988; Pistole, 1989; Simpson et al., 1996).

Avoidant Attachment

Avoidant attachment develops from a history of unsuccessful attempts for proximity in which an individual’s efforts are consistently met with neglect or rejection from attachment figures (Bowlby, 1973; Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). For highly avoidant individuals, the attachment system is activated by reminders of their futile efforts to solicit care and support, making them vulnerable to re-experiencing emotional rejection (Bartholomew, 1990). As a result, highly avoidant people rely on defensive deactivation strategies that limit intimacy and deny or suppress their underlying needs for closeness (Bowlby, 1980; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). Avoidant attachment is also characterized by strong preferences to maintain autonomy, control, and emotional distance (Fraley Davis, & Shaver, 1996; Fraley & Shaver, 1998; Mikulincer, 1998; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). In light of this desire, greater commitment to a relationship, and particularly greater commitment on the part of relationship partners, may limit the likelihood that highly avoidant individuals can achieve and maintain sufficient control and independence in their relationships.

Despite their desire to maintain autonomy and independence, highly avoidant persons often experience distress when their partners are not available or are unsupportive, particularly in stressful situations (B. C. Feeney & Kirkpatrick, 1996; Meifen, Vogel, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005; Mikulincer, Florian, & Tolmazc, 1990). They also experience elevated negative emotions during partner separations (B. C. Feeney & Kirkpatrick, 1996; Mikulincer et al., 1993), make more negative attributions for their partners’ ambiguous and even positive behaviors (Collins, 1996; Collins et al., 2006), exhibit more defensive behaviors (Gaines et al., 1997; Pistole, 1989), and are less likely to use constructive conflict resolution tactics (Carneal, Pietromonaco, & Jaffe, 1994; Simpson et al., 1996).

Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theory represents another major theoretical framework within which to understand relationships. Interdependence theory asserts that most individuals undergo a “transformation of motivation” when deciding whether to do something that is good for themselves versus good for their partner or relationship (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). According to this theory, a distinction must be made between the given matrix and the effective matrix (see Figure 1). The given matrix represents an individual’s primitive or “gut-level” self-centered preferences in a specific situation. People generally experience negative emotions when treated badly, and their immediate impulse often is to reciprocate negative behavior in kind. Reactions indexed by the given matrix, however, do not necessarily dictate how an individual actually behaves when confronted with partner negativity. According to interdependence theory, most individuals undergo a transformation of motivation when deciding whether to act on their initial, self-interested preferences.

erences or whether to behave in ways that might promote broader relationship goals (see Rusbult, Arriaga, & Agnew, 2001). Determinants of transformation tendencies include interpersonal orientations, such as individual dispositions and/or relationship motives. These variables are believed to determine the amount of transformation that occurs via their impact on cognitive interpretations of and emotional reactions to specific situations in which relationship partners’ self-interests are at odds with broader relationship goals. The effective matrix, therefore, reflects the eventual transformation of the given matrix (if transformation occurs), and it guides behavioral actions.

Commitment

According to Rusbult, Verette, Whitmeny, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991), an individual’s willingness to respond constructively and inhibit impulses to react destructively when a partner engages in potentially destructive behaviors defines accommodation. Commitment is perhaps the central construct for understanding motivations underlying accommodation (Rusbult et al., 1991). It entails concern for the future and stability of the relationship along with the desire for the relationship to continue. Commitment, therefore, correlates highly with persistence in relationships (Bui, Peplau, & Hill, 1996; Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999; Etchevery & Le, 2005), and it is the most powerful predictor of most prorelationship maintenance behaviors, such as derogation of alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989) and willingness to make sacrifices for the partner or relationship (Van Lange et al., 1997). Most notably, greater commitment also predicts the enactment of more constructive behaviors and fewer destructive ones (W. K. Campbell & Foster, 2002; Etchevery & Le, 2005; Menzies-Toman & Lydon, 2005; Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998; Rusbult et al., 1991; Rusbult, Yovetich, & Verette, 1996; Weiselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999).

Attachment and Commitment

For some individuals, a history of negative interpersonal experiences may prevent them from behaving in ways that could bolster the stability and longevity of their relationships. In response to previous maladaptive relationships, people may develop negative or unrealistic expectations about the availability, responsiveness, and intentions of partners (Baldwin, 1992). Patterns of negativity may then be maintained in subsequent relationships via behavioral confirmation processes (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). For example, insecurely attached individuals may anticipate negative reactions or behaviors from their romantic partners, perceive greater partner negativity or mal-intent, overreact to these perceptions, and then unwittingly evoke negative behaviors from their partners. Indeed, women who are more rejection sensitive (and who also tend to be more anxiously attached) behave in a more hostile and defensive manner during conflict interactions, which leads their partners to experience greater anger and dissatisfaction (Downey, Frietas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998). Negative expectations and relationship insecurities, therefore, can easily subvert relationship quality. Not surprisingly, chronic concerns about rejection are associated with greater relationship costs and lower levels of commitment (Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1994; Pistolet & Clark, 1995). Thus, the combination of negative expectations about the partner and less relationship commitment may only intensify perceptions of deficient spousal regard, feelings of rejection from the partner, and/or destructive behaviors directed at the partner.

Fortunately, not all relationships in which one or both partners are insecurely attached (or hold negative relationship expectations) are destined for failure. Insecurely attached people who are involved in highly committed relationships might be able to quell or suspend their worries about rejection and loss, eventually extricating themselves from a continuing cycle of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. More specifically, greater commitment may provide insecurely attached people with a broader, long-term perspective that might help them achieve happier and more stable relationships (see Kelley, 1983). This, in turn, might allow them to disregard or sidestep their immediate attachment-based concerns and worries and work more effectively toward meeting their long-term relationship goals. Greater relationship commitment reported by individuals, therefore, could serve as a buffer against their attachment insecurities.

However, the partner’s level of commitment is likely to have an even stronger effect on an individual’s emotional and behavioral reactions to relationship-threatening events, given that partners can easily destabilize and terminate relationships (Attridge et al., 1995). Indeed, greater commitment on the part of partners may be the foundation upon which insecurely attached individuals can feel more confident that their partners truly do love, care for, and respect them. This realization may allow insecure people to experience less intense negative affect and to behave in a more constructive, accommodative manner when relationship-threatening events are encountered.

Less committed individuals, in contrast, should experience more negative outcomes, especially if they are involved with more insecurely attached partners. The combination of low personal commitment and high partner insecurity may result in particularly negative outcomes with regard to how less committed people think, feel, and behave in relationship-threatening situations. In other words, the maladaptive coping strategies characteristic of highly insecure individuals may be even worse for the relationship if one or both partners lack the commitment and positive motivation necessary to counteract these tendencies.

The buffering effects of commitment, however, ought to be stronger for more anxiously attached than for more avoidantly attached people. Avoidantly attached individuals are motivated to achieve and maintain control and comfortable emotional distance in their relationships (Mikulincer, 1998). Without sufficient autonomy, highly avoidant people may feel vulnerable and maybe even trapped in relationships. As a consequence, higher levels of one’s own commitment or having partners who are highly committed may threaten highly avoidant individuals’ desire for autonomy and control. In contrast, highly anxious individuals are motivated to achieve greater felt security with their partners (Mikulincer, 1998). For this reason, greater self-commitment and particularly greater partner commitment may especially help highly anxious people believe that they are closer to achieving sufficient felt security.

According to transformation-of-motivation principles (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), an individual’s interpersonal dispositions (e.g., attachment anxiety) and relationship motives (e.g., the desire to maintain the current relationship) should both affect his or her perceptual, emotional, and behavioral reactions to important relationship events (e.g., an accommodative dilemma). These reac-
tions, in turn, should affect how he or she behaves, especially during a relationship-threatening interaction. The specific behaviors enacted, however, ought to be more strongly influenced by the specific thoughts and feelings that an individual has during a threatening interaction than by his or her global dispositions or general motives. Thus, we expected that associations between attachment anxiety and accommodative behaviors and between commitment and accommodative behaviors would be mediated by perceptions of and emotional reactions to the specific dilemma that each couple discussed.

The Present Research

The present study was designed to test the joint roles of attachment and commitment in predicting emotional and behavioral reactions during a potentially relationship-threatening interaction. Married couples engaged in two videotaped “accommodative dilemma” discussions. In the first dilemma, one partner (the initiator) was randomly assigned to initiate a discussion about a characteristic, habit, or behavior of his or her partner that she or he (the initiator) wanted to see change. Accommodative dilemmas are a particularly good context in which to test transformation-of-motivation processes because the partner (the accommodator) has the option to react constructively (by attempting to accommodate the request for change), to react neutrally, or to react destructively (in line with his or her personal self-interests). The initiator and accommodator roles were reversed in the second dilemma discussion.

Hypotheses

We derived and tested six hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1:** Main effects should be found for attachment orientations predicting emotional reactions (i.e., feelings of acceptance and rejection) and behavioral reactions (i.e., constructive and destructive behaviors, rated by observers) during the accommodative dilemma discussions. Specifically, more insecurely attached individuals should (a) have more negative emotional reactions and (b) display fewer accommodative behaviors than less insecure persons.

**Hypothesis 2:** Main effects should also emerge for commitment, predicting emotional and behavioral reactions to the accommodative dilemmas. Specifically, individuals who report being more committed to their relationships should (a) experience fewer negative emotions and (b) behave in a more accommodative manner than less committed individuals.

**Hypothesis 3:** Two-way interactions should be found between attachment anxiety and commitment, predicting emotional and behavioral reactions to the accommodative dilemmas. Highly anxious individuals should show greater variability in their emotional and accommodative behavioral reactions during the dilemmas, depending on their level of commitment. Less anxious individuals, by comparison, should show less variability. In particular, highly anxious individuals should (a) experience fewer negative emotional reactions if they are more committed but more if they are less committed, whereas less anxious individuals should have fewer negative emotional reactions, regardless of their commitment level. Highly anxious individuals should also (b) display more accommodative behaviors during their discussions if they are more committed and fewer if they are less committed, whereas less anxious individuals should display more accommodative behaviors, regardless of their commitment level.

**Hypothesis 4:** An interaction should emerge between individuals’ attachment anxiety and their partners’ level of commitment, predicting individuals’ emotional reactions and behavioral reactions during the accommodative dilemmas. Specifically, more anxious individuals should (a) have fewer negative emotional reactions if their partners are more committed but more if partners are less committed, whereas less anxious individuals should respond with fewer negative emotions, regardless of their partners’ commitment level. More anxious individuals should also (b) display more accommodative behaviors if their partners are more committed but fewer if partners are less committed, whereas less anxious individuals should display more accommodative behaviors, independent of their partners’ level of commitment.

**Hypothesis 5:** An interaction should exist between individuals’ own commitment levels and their partners’ attachment anxiety, predicting individuals’ emotional and behavioral reactions during the accommodative dilemmas. Specifically, less committed individuals should (a) experience more negative emotional reactions if their partners are highly anxious but react less negatively if their partners are less anxious, whereas highly committed individuals should have fewer negative emotions, regardless of their partners’ attachment orientation. Less committed individuals should also (b) display fewer accommodative behaviors if their partners are highly anxious but more if partners are less anxious, whereas highly committed individuals should display more accommodative behaviors, independent of their partners’ attachment orientation.

**Hypothesis 6:** Connections between (a) attachment and accommodative behaviors and (b) commitment and accommodative behaviors ought to be mediated by the emotional reactions experienced during the accommodative dilemmas.

Method

Participants

Married couples (N = 74) were recruited from a large midwestern city. Couples were recruited via newspaper ads and flyers posted on bulletin boards. They were required to have been married at least 2 years but no more than 20 years.\(^{1}\) The mean length of marriage was 5 years (SD = 3.64), and the mean ages for men and women were 32 and 33 years (SD = 7.28 and 8.56), respectively. Of the 148 participants, 126 were Caucasian, 3 were African American, 7 were Hispanic, 6 were American Indian, and 6 were Asian. Each couple received monetary payment ($50 per couple) for their participation.

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\(^{1}\) This range of relationship length was chosen to limit the variability that exists between newlywed and older, more well-established married couples.
Participants first completed the following questionnaires, privately and independently of their spouse:

**Attachment.** Adult romantic attachment orientations were assessed using an adapted version of the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) measure (Brennan et al., 1998). The questionnaire was adapted to measure how participants felt about their romantic partners in general, rather than a mixture of in general and with respect to their current partner or relationship. This measure assesses two dimensions: avoidance and anxiety. The avoidance dimension taps the degree to which individuals harbor negative views of others and seek to avoid closeness and intimacy in relationships. The anxiety dimension assesses the degree to which individuals have negative views of themselves as relationship partners and are preoccupied with abandonment and loss of attachment figures. These items were answered on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The average of the 18 avoidance items was computed to create the avoidance score (α = .91 and .88 for women and men, respectively), and the average of the 18 anxiety items was computed to create the anxiety score (α = .90 and .89 for women and men, respectively). Secure individuals tend to score low on both dimensions.

**Relationship commitment.** Relationship commitment was assessed using the Investment Model Commitment Scale (Rusbult, 1983). Five items assessed commitment level (e.g., “How much longer do you want your relationship to last?” and “Do you feel committed to maintaining your relationship with your partner?”). Each item was answered on 9-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (a month or less/not at all) to 9 (ten years or more/completely). The average of the items was computed to create scores for commitment (α = .66 and .65 for women and men, respectively).

**Relationship satisfaction.** Relationship satisfaction was assessed using Hendrick’s (1988) Relationship Satisfaction Scale. Seven items assessed relationship satisfaction. Sample items are “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” and “How good is your relationship compared to most?” These items were answered on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (not at all/ extremely poor) to 7 (a great deal/ extremely good). The average of the seven items was computed to create the relationship satisfaction score (α = .88 and .84 for women and men, respectively).

**Relationship closeness.** Relationship closeness was assessed using two measures. Subjective closeness was measured using Aron, Aron, and Smollar’s (1992) Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale. This one-item measure contains a series of overlapping circles. For each choice, there are two circles representing the self and the partner, ranging from 1 (completely separate circles) to 7 (almost completely overlapping circles). Objective closeness was assessed using the Influence subscale of Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto’s (1989) Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI). Sample items from this measure are “My current partner influences important things in my life” and “My current partner influences and contributes to my overall happiness.” These items were answered on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 7 (I strongly agree). An average of the 27 items was computed to create the RCI influence scale score (α = .89 and .90 for women and men, respectively).

**Neuroticism.** Neuroticism was assessed using John and Srivastava’s (1999) Big Five Personality Inventory. Sample items from this measure are “I get nervous easily” and “I can be tense.” Items were answered on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The average of the seven items was computed to create a neuroticism score (α = .78 and .69 for women and men, respectively).

**Feelings of acceptance and rejection.** A self-report measure created for this study assessed attachment-related feelings of acceptance and rejection during the two discussions. Unlike the measures reported above, participants completed this measure immediately after each interaction to assess their postinteraction feelings of acceptance and rejection. Participants answered each item on the basis of “the extent to which you felt [each item] during the interaction.” The seven items for the Acceptance scale were loved, supported, safe, comforted, cared for, secure, and calm. The seven items for the Rejection scale were rejected, insecure, abandoned, betrayed, misunderstood, dismissed, and hostile. Items were answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The items were averaged to compute scale scores for general feelings of acceptance (α = .86 and .94 for women and men, respectively) and general feelings of rejection (α = .85 and .86 for women and men, respectively).

The hypothesized effects should not be attributed to extraneous or confounding variables. Thus, the primary analyses reported below also statistically controlled for length of marriage, age of participants, order of discussion initiation, relationship satisfaction, relationship closeness, and neuroticism using the relevant measures described above.

**Procedure**

Participants were first given a general overview of the study and were asked to sign a consent form. The partners were then led to separate rooms to complete their questionnaires (see above), after which they were reunited for the two videotaped interactions.

The videotaped interactions involved two accommodative dilemma discussions. In each interaction, one partner (the initiator) was assigned to “choose a topic for discussion pertaining to a characteristic, habit, or behavior of your partner that you would like to see changed.” This accommodative dilemma permitted the partner (the accommodator) to react constructively by attempting to accommodate the request of his or her partner, to react neutrally, or to react destructively by pursuing his or her own personal self-interests. The initiator and accommodator roles were reversed in the second interaction. Which partner (male or female) selected the topic for the first discussion was counterbalanced.

The following instructions were read to each couple:

We would like you to discuss a topic that is relevant to your relationship. The interaction will last approximately 8 minutes, and it will be videotaped. The videotape will then be coded by trained researchers at a later time. Again, I’d like to remind you that all of the data is confidential. During your discussion, I will leave the room so that you will have privacy. No one will be monitoring your conversation while you’re having it, so please feel free to say whatever you wish.
When the 8 min had passed, the experimenter returned to give each participant the acceptance and rejection emotion measures (see above). Once both participants completed these measures, each couple was given a 5-min break during which they were told to not discuss the prior interaction. The second interaction was conducted identically to the first interaction, except that the initiator and accommodator roles were reversed.

Coding
To assess participants’ constructive and destructive behaviors, each videotaped interaction was independently rated by five trained researchers. The coding scheme was developed on the basis of Rusbult and Zembrodt’s (1983) dimensions for constructive and destructive behaviors. Each coder rated the target partner (accommodator) in terms of the extent to which he or she displayed constructive behaviors (e.g., compromising, suggesting solutions, showing optimism, attempting to resolve the problem, working to maintain or enhance the relationship) and destructive behaviors (e.g., criticizing the partner, using a condescending tone, allowing the problem to continue, avoiding the issue). Each item was rated for the extent to which the target partner (accommodator) exhibited each behavior. The ratings were made on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). Averages of the coders’ ratings of each item were computed to generate observer-rated scores for constructive and destructive behaviors. These behavioral ratings had high interrater reliabilities, with alpha values ranging from .87 to .94. All of the ratings correlated at least .49 ($p < .001$) between each rated item.

Results
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations
A summary of zero-order correlations between all predictor variables is presented in Table 1. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were correlated within each gender, which is common in married samples. Consistent with past research (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991; Simpson, 1990), attachment anxiety and avoidance were negatively correlated with commitment for women, and attachment avoidance was negatively associated with commitment for men. Women’s and men’s commitment were modestly correlated. Correlations between partners (i.e., within-couple correlations) revealed one significant effect: Women’s avoidance scores were positively correlated with men’s anxiety scores. This is consistent with the relatively common anxious partner–avoidant partner pairing (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994).

A summary of the means and standard deviations of all predictor and outcome variables are presented in Table 2. Matched paired $t$ tests revealed that women were rated as being more constructive and engaged in the discussion than men.

A summary of zero-order correlations between the predictor variables and the outcome variables is presented in Table 3. As expected (see Hypothesis 1a), women’s anxiety and avoidance scores were negatively correlated with feelings of acceptance and positively associated with feelings of rejection in response to the videotaped interaction. Likewise, men’s avoidance was negatively associated with feelings of acceptance, whereas men’s anxiety was positively associated with feelings of rejection during the interaction. In other words, individuals who were more insecurely attached felt more rejection and less acceptance during the interaction. Women’s anxiety and avoidance scores were also negatively associated with observer-rated accommodative behaviors (see Hypothesis 1b). Specifically, highly anxious and highly avoidant women engaged in fewer constructive behaviors, and highly avoidant women displayed more destructive behaviors.

In contrast to the effects for attachment insecurity, women who were more committed to their partners or relationships reported feeling more acceptance and less rejection during the interaction (see Hypothesis 2a). Finally, women’s commitment scores were positively associated with constructive behaviors and negatively associated with destructive behaviors (see Hypothesis 2b).

Because the results revealed several nonsignificant correlations for men’s commitment, differences between correlations for men’s and women’s commitment were tested. The results showed that, compared with men’s commitment, women’s commitment was significantly more strongly correlated with their experiences of both rejection during the interaction, $t(145) = -3.74, p < .001$, and constructive and destructive behaviors during the interaction, $t(145) = 2.05$ and $-2.53, p < .001$, respectively. We model and discuss these gender effects further below.

Primary Analyses
We conducted the primary analyses using the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kashy & Kenny, 2000; Kenny, 1996). The APIM is appropriate for use when the dyad (the romantic couple) is the unit of analysis and tests are performed between and within dyads (Kashy & Kenny, 2000). The APIM can test not only whether an actor’s own attributes predict his or her responses and behaviors, controlling for the partner’s attributes, but also whether the partner’s attributes predict the actor’s responses and behaviors, controlling for the actor’s attributes. In the present study, for example, an actor effect for anxiety would be evident if an individual’s score on the anxiety attachment dimension predicted his or her destructive behaviors, controlling for his or her partner’s level of anxiety. A partner effect would be evident if an individual’s partner’s anxiety score predicted the actor’s

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Table 1  
Correlations Among Predictor Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Women’s anxiety</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women’s avoidance</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Men’s anxiety</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Men’s avoidance</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Women’s commitment</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Men’s commitment</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  
$N = 74$ women and 74 men.  
$^p < .10$.  
$^{*}p < .05$.  
$^{* *}p < .01$.

2 Most couples reported high levels of commitment ($M = 8.05, SD = 0.81$). Although the majority of the hypothesized effects involving commitment were significant, the restricted variability of scores on the commitment scale could have attenuated some of the effects reported below.
destructive behaviors, controlling for the actor’s own level of anxiety.

To minimize the number of analyses, we created composite variables for the two major criterion variables: (a) emotional reactions during the interaction and (b) accommodative behaviors during the interaction. We composed the composite variable for emotional reactions by first converting the scale scores for feelings of acceptance and feelings of rejection during the interaction ($r = -.77, p < .001$) into $z$ scores. The $z$-scored measure of feelings of rejection was reverse scored, and we then averaged the two measures to create the composite emotional reaction variable. Thus, positive scores reflect greater positive emotions, and negative scores reflect greater negative emotions. Similarly, the composite variable for accommodative behaviors was composed of ratings of constructive and destructive behaviors. The correlation between these variables was $- .82 (p < .001)$. The measures for these variables were first converted to standardized $z$-scores. The $z$-scored measure of destructive behaviors was reverse scored, and we then averaged both measures to create a composite accommodative behaviors variable. Thus, positive scores reflect greater constructive behaviors, and negative scores reflect greater destructive behaviors.

**APIM Tests of Attachment $\times$ Commitment**

For each analysis, we entered actor anxiety, actor avoidance, partner anxiety, and partner avoidance scores as the first block of variables in the analyses, and we entered actor and partner commitment scores in the second block; we entered the two-way interactions between Actor Anxiety $\times$ Actor Commitment, Actor Avoidance $\times$ Actor Commitment, Partner Anxiety $\times$ Partner Commitment, and Partner Avoidance $\times$ Partner Commitment we entered in the third block; and we entered Actor Anxiety $\times$ Partner Commitment, Actor Avoidance $\times$ Partner Commitment, Partner Anxiety $\times$ Actor Commitment, and Partner Avoidance $\times$ Actor Commitment in the last block. To adjust for experimentwise error rates given the large number of statistical tests, we set alpha values at .01 rather than at .05 when reporting and interpreting statistically significant effects.

### Table 2

**Means of Predictor and Outcome Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Women M (SD)</th>
<th>Men M (SD)</th>
<th>t(74)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major predictor variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment anxiety</td>
<td>3.37 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.32 (1.14)</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment avoidance</td>
<td>2.10 (0.85)</td>
<td>2.20 (.83)</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>8.10 (0.84)</td>
<td>8.00 (0.78)</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major outcome variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of acceptance</td>
<td>6.02 (1.01)</td>
<td>6.01 (1.14)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of rejection</td>
<td>1.62 (0.91)</td>
<td>1.50 (.82)</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodative behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive</td>
<td>4.66 (0.86)</td>
<td>4.06 (1.16)</td>
<td>3.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive</td>
<td>4.06 (1.02)</td>
<td>3.85 (1.31)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $N = 74$ women and 74 men. ** $p < .01$.*

### Table 3

**Correlations Between Predictor and Outcome Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anx Avd Com</td>
<td>Anx Avd Com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of acceptance</td>
<td>$-.28^*$</td>
<td>$-.28^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of Rejection</td>
<td>$-.32^*$</td>
<td>$.28^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodative behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive</td>
<td>$-.30^*$</td>
<td>$.25^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive</td>
<td>$.16</td>
<td>$.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $N = 74$ women and 74 men. Anx = Anxiety; Avd = Avoidance; Com = Commitment. $^*$ $p < .10$. $^*$ $p < .05$. $^{**} p < .01$.

**Emotional reactions during the interaction.** There were no significant two-way interactions between actor anxiety and actor commitment predicting emotional reactions (see Hypothesis 3a) or between actor anxiety and partner commitment predicting emotional reactions (see Hypothesis 4a). However, as expected (see Hypothesis 5a), a significant interaction emerged between partner anxiety and actor commitment predicting emotional reactions during the discussion ($\beta = .29$, $t(130) = 2.95, p < .01$). This interaction, depicted in Figure 2a, indicates that individuals involved with more anxious partners experienced more negative emotions if they were less committed and more positive emotions if they were more committed, $t(130) = 3.60, p < .001$. Greater commitment, in other words, curtails or cushions the potentially negative emotions that often arise while interacting with highly anxious partners.

In contrast, individuals involved with less anxious partners had more positive emotional reactions during the interaction if they were less committed. If they were more committed, however, they had slightly less positive reactions. This difference approached significance, $t(130) = -1.77, p = .08$. Though speculative, if highly committed individuals are married to less anxious (i.e., more secure) partners, then having a potentially threatening discussion about one’s own flaws may be atypical. As a result, such persons may have felt relatively less positive about their lab discussion compared with their typical daily interactions. In contrast, people married to highly anxious partners may have distressing conversations more regularly, which could have led them to feel comparatively less threatened during the lab interaction.

**Behavioral accommodation during the interaction.** Although no significant effects emerged for the interaction between actor anxiety and actor commitment (see Hypothesis 3b) or between actor anxiety and partner commitment predicting accommodative behaviors (see Hypothesis 4b), we found a significant interaction.

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We also statistically controlled for relationship length, participants’ age, relationship satisfaction, relationship closeness, neuroticism, and order of partners’ initiation of the discussions. Virtually all of the main effects and interactions reported below remained significant or marginally significant ($p < .06$ or less) when each of these variables was partialed. Two main effects became nonsignificant after controlling for satisfaction, namely actor and partner commitment predicting accommodative behaviors.
between partner anxiety and actor commitment predicting accommodative behaviors (see Hypothesis 5b; $\beta = .29$, $t(130) = 2.84$, $p < .01$). As shown in Figure 2b, individuals married to more anxious partners displayed more destructive behaviors than did those married to less anxious partners, $t(130) = 4.21$, $p < .001$. If these individuals reported greater commitment, however, then they behaved more constructively, $t(130) = 4.13$, $p < .001$. As predicted, individuals married to less anxious partners showed no significant difference in their behavioral accommodation, regardless of their level of commitment, $t(130) = -1.19$, ns.

Test of Mediations

We tested the mediating effect of emotional reactions on the connection between attachment anxiety and behavioral accommodation (see Hypothesis 6a) following procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). All of the conditions necessary to test for mediation were present. As shown in Figure 3a, attachment anxiety significantly predicted less behavioral accommodation during the discussion, it significantly predicted more negative emotional reactions during the discussion, and more negative emotional reactions significantly predicted less behavioral accommodation, controlling for anxiety. In addition, the link between attachment anxiety and behavioral accommodation became nonsignificant when we partialed emotional reactions (Sobel’s $z = -3.09$, $p < .001$). Thus, the association between attachment anxiety and behavioral accommodation was mediated by participants’ emotional reactions. Individuals who were more anxiously attached experienced more negative emotions, which resulted in more destructive behaviors.

We also tested the mediating effect of emotional reactions on the connection between commitment and behavioral accommodation (see Hypothesis 6b). As shown in Figure 3b, commitment
significantly predicted more behavioral accommodation during the discussion, it also significantly predicted more positive emotional reactions during the discussion, and more positive emotional reactions significantly predicted greater behavioral accommodation, controlling for commitment. Moreover, the link between commitment and behavioral accommodation became less significant when we partialed emotional reactions (Sobel’s $z = 3.05, p < .01$). These results suggest that individuals who were more committed to the partner and relationship displayed more positive emotional reactions during the discussion, which in part led them to behave more constructively.

**Test of Cross-Groups Comparison Between Men and Women**

Because several gender effects emerged in the preliminary analyses, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the mediation model across groups of women and men. More specifically, we conducted SEM analyses to test whether the associations between (a) attachment anxiety and accommodative behaviors and (b) commitment and accommodative behaviors were mediated by participants’ emotional reactions. All regression paths, error variances, and disturbance terms were constrained to be equal for women and men, unless otherwise indicated. The chi-square tests, comparative fit index (CFI), and root-mean-square of approximation (RMSEA) all indicated excellent model fit$^4$, $\chi^2(9, N = 148) = 8.36, ns$, $CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00$.

As shown in Figure 4, attachment anxiety was negatively associated with emotional reactions, and emotional reactions were associated with accommodative behaviors for both genders. However, commitment was positively associated with emotional reactions only for women. Additionally, there was a negative association between anxiety and commitment for women, but not for men.

These findings indicate that emotional reactions mediated the connection between both anxiety and accommodative behaviors for women and men. Specifically, more anxiously attached people experienced more negative emotions during the interaction, and more negative emotions, in turn, predicted more destructive behaviors. Furthermore, women who reported greater commitment to the partner or relationship experienced more positive emotions, which contributed to more constructive behaviors. For men, however, we found no similar commitment effects. Consistent with these results, the unexplained error variance for accommodative behaviors was significantly larger for men versus women, meaning that relationship commitment explained more of the variance in women’s than in men’s accommodative behaviors. These findings suggest that gender differences are important to consider when testing relationship-based predictions in accommodative situations (see also Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994).

**Test of Process Model for Dyadic Gender Effects**

Given the effects reported above, we developed another process model to test relations between wives’ commitment, husbands’ commitment, their respective reports of emotional reactions during the accommodative interaction, and their respective behavioral reactions. As displayed in Figure 5a, the model fit the data reasonably well, $\chi^2(6, N = 148) = 7.84, ns$, $CFI = .99, RMSEA = .07$. As expected, the link between wives’ commitment and their accommodative behaviors was mediated by their emotional reactions. Although husbands’ emotional reactions were significantly associated with their accommodative behaviors, husbands’ commitment was not significantly associated with their emotional reactions. Wives’ and husbands’ commitment was correlated at a marginally significant level, and wives’ and husbands’ emotional reactions were significantly correlated.

It is interesting to note that wives’ commitment significantly predicted their husbands’ emotional reactions, and husbands’ emotional reactions predicted their wives’ behaviors. The association between wives’ commitment and their accommodative behaviors, therefore, was partially mediated by their husbands’ emotional reactions during the discussion, highlighting the dynamic interchange between partners. Consistent with these dyadic effects, wives’ emotional reactions also predicted their husbands’ behav-

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$^4$ The adequacy of chi-square tests can be questionable with small sample sizes. Given the sample size of this study, the chi-square test may not be an adequate estimate of model fit. It should be noted, however, that RMSEA and CFI are less sensitive to sample size than other fit indexes (Fan, Thompson, & Wang, 1999).
iors. Hence, wives’ commitment had a stronger impact on husbands’ emotional reactions than did husbands’ own reported levels of commitment. Husbands’ and wives’ emotional reactions, however, both had significant effects on each other’s accommodative behaviors during the interaction.

Finally, we tested a comparison model, excluding the dyadic paths between wives and husbands. As shown in Figure 5b, this model fit the data less adequately, $\chi^2(9, N = 148) = 42.50, p < .001$, CFI = .21, RMSEA = .78, than did the previous model that included the dyadic paths, $\Delta \chi^2(\Delta df = 3) = 34.66, p < .001$.

**Figure 5.** The dyadic process model for (a) wives’ and husbands’ commitment and (b) the comparison path model (without dyadic paths). CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation. † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

**Discussion**

This study fills several critical gaps in the literature by linking two major theories—attachment theory and interdependence theory. Most important, the results reveal how individual characteristics intersect with dyadic characteristics to jointly affect how romantic partners feel and behave during an accommodative dilemma. By examining actual relationship dynamics as they unfold between marital partners during a potentially relationship-threatening interaction, we were able to model how each individual’s feelings and behaviors were tied to those of his or her spouse.

**Summary of Results**

The results supported most of our predictions. As expected (e.g., Gallo & Smith, 2001; Pereg & Mikulincer, 2004), we found that more insecurely attached individuals felt more rejected during the interaction and less acceptance from their partners. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Gaines et al., 1997; Simpson et al., 1996), more anxious and more avoidant individuals displayed fewer constructive behaviors during the accommodative interaction, and more avoidant individuals behaved more destructively. The results also suggest that the source of more insecure individuals’ less accommodative tendencies stemmed, at least in part, from their more negative emotional reactions during the interaction.

This research advances a core theoretical proposition made by Kelley and Thibaut (1978). Specifically, individuals’ attachment vulnerabilities (a motivational disposition) were meaningfully tied to negative emotional reactions during a potentially relationship-threatening event. These negative emotions, in turn, predicted more destructive behaviors. Thus, consistent with the transformation process model, the extent of accommodative behaviors (or, in this case, the lack of accommodation) was a function of interpersonal dispositions, mediated through emotional reactions to a theoretically relevant social interaction.

Individuals who were more committed to their partner or relationship also reported feeling less rejected and more accepted during the interaction, which partly explains why they were rated as behaving more constructively and less destructively. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991), women’s commitment predicted the enactment of more accommodative behaviors, and highly committed women’s more accommodative behaviors appeared to be due in part to their more positive emotional reactions during the interaction. In other words, the strong moti-
viation to maintain relationships characteristic of higher commitment allows individuals to react positively to potentially threatening events, permitting more accommodative actions.

Not surprisingly, lower levels of commitment exacerbated the effects of partners’ insecurities. Less committed individuals married to more anxious partners, for example, felt more negative emotions and behaved more destructively during the interaction, and the combination of lower self-commitment and higher partner anxiety culminated in particularly negative outcomes. Fortunately, higher levels of commitment buffered some of the deleterious effects of partner insecurities. More committed individuals, for example, felt more positive emotions during the interaction and, in turn, behaved more constructively, despite having highly anxious partners. Thus, if individuals are involved with highly anxious partners, it is especially important that they create and sustain higher levels of commitment to counter the negative effects of their partners’ insecurities. These results highlight the importance of both partners strong commitment to the relationship.

The present findings suggest that commitment and attachment anxiety jointly affect how people feel and behave during accommodative dilemmas with their romantic partners. Although longitudinal effects cannot be fully tested with the present data, these constructs are likely to mutually affect one another across time. For example, greater commitment on the part of the self and particularly the partner may sustain “vulnerable” relationships long enough so that both partners learn they can trust one another, allowing attachment insecurities to wane gradually. Declines in insecurity may then change how highly anxious individuals perceive and react when compromises must be reached, eventually resulting in more positive emotional and behavioral reactions. Highly committed partners, in other words, may diminish an individual’s insecurity over time by consistently providing a “secure base,” particularly in situations in which partners’ outcomes are not correspondent (see Simpson, 2007). This, in turn, ought to enhance felt security, allowing anxious individuals to feel better and behave more constructively in accommodative dilemmas. Conversely, highly anxious individuals who begin to feel more secure with the relationship can come to accept their partners’ support and affection and believe that they are worthy of love, and this might trigger the development of greater commitment over time. Thus, relationship commitment and attachment anxiety are likely to have reciprocal influence on one another over time.

Other Major Findings

Some predicted effects did not emerge. The Actor Anxiety × Actor Commitment and Actor Anxiety × Partner Commitment interactions predicting emotional and behavioral reactions, for example, were not significant. Highly anxious individuals may have been less able to take advantage of their own commitment or their partner’s commitment to buffer their attachment insecurities during the lab interaction. Instead, the heightened anxiety and vulnerabilities generated by the interaction may have caused them to revert to their hypervigilant working models and ruminative coping strategies. If so, then highly anxious individuals’ commitment to the relationship may not have been enough to shield them from their own maladaptive coping strategies. As discussed above, however, the buffering effects of one’s own commitment and especially one’s partner’s commitment may be revealed more clearly across time, as insecure individuals practice, develop, and maintain more adaptive coping strategies.

It is of interest that the effects of commitment were stronger for women than for men. For example, as depicted in Figure 5a, women’s commitment was significantly associated with their own as well as their husbands’ emotional reactions. Men’s commitment, however, did not affect either their wives’ emotions or their own emotions. These findings imply that there could be a slight disconnect between men’s commitment and their expression of it. Despite the fact that a man may be highly committed to the relationship, he may not necessarily communicate that devotion in his emotions and behaviors. Women, by comparison, may readily express their thoughts and feelings more openly and directly. This set of findings indicates that wives’ commitment may play a larger role in determining how their husbands feel during threatening interactions, independent of the husbands’ own levels of commitment.

The results also documented that wives’ and husbands’ emotional reactions both had a significant impact on each other’s behavioral accommodation tendencies. This reciprocal influence highlights the dynamic interchange between partners, and it highlights why studying only one partner in a relationship provides insufficient information. These findings make sense when one considers that the partner’s reactions ought to be the best barometer of how well the relationship is doing (Attridge et al., 1995). Indeed, the effect of partners’ emotional reactions on each individual’s own behaviors testifies to the importance of dyadic influences in regulating emotional and behavioral experiences in partners.

Limitations and Caveats

This study has some limitations. First, we examined only married couples. Given the high levels of commitment in many marital relationships, there was somewhat restricted variability in this sample on certain measures. Range restrictions, for example, may have attenuated effect sizes for our commitment measure. Second, with regard to commitment, the dynamics for dating or cohabiting couples may be slightly different than those we found for married couples (Drigotas et al., 1999). Greater commitment is usually construed by interdependence theorists as a protective factor that should facilitate relationship maintenance, particularly in marriages in which partners have vowed to be faithful and devoted to one another. In newly developing relationships, however, couples may not necessarily view greater commitment as a protective factor. Rather, at the beginning of many dating relationships, there may often be considerable uncertainty about the mutuality of each partner’s trust and commitment to the relationship (Drigotas et al., 1999). If so, then greater commitment may be perceived as threatening in certain types of relationships, especially if there is uncertainty about whether a partner will reciprocate commitment.

Implications and Conclusions

The present research contributes to the literature in several significant ways. First, it examines accommodative behaviors in the context of actual social interactions between married couples. Unlike most prior research on accommodation (e.g., Pistole, 1989; Rusbult et al., 1991; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995), our behav-
ioral observation methodology provides richer and more multifaceted data that cannot be captured in self-report or partner-report measures. In doing so, it permitted a very detailed examination of naturalistic and spontaneous behaviors and emotional reactions between established partners, one that documented actual behavioral and emotional reactions rather than self-reports of intentions or anticipated emotions.

Second, we used an accommodative dilemma interaction task in which one partner (the initiator) initiated a discussion topic that set up a direct dilemma to which the other partner (the accommodator) had to respond. Unlike previous research in which conflict resolution paradigms have been used (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991; Simpson et al., 1996), the present paradigm gave the “accommodating” partner an opportunity to react constructively by accommodating his or her partner’s request, to react neutrally, or to react destructively in line with vested self-interests. This type of interaction allows for a more direct and precise test of transformation of motivation processes (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

Third, this study introduces new attachment-relevant measures of perceived acceptance and rejection. The experience, expression, and regulation of emotions are central to the operation of the attachment system (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Simpson, 1990; Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007). Accordingly, measures that tap feelings of acceptance and rejection are central to understanding interpersonal experiences, particularly during threatening events. The present study reports theoretically consistent findings for these two new measures.

Fourth, the present study documents potentially important gender differences in how women and men react in accommodative dilemmas. In particular, women’s greater commitment appears to buffer feelings of rejection in both partners. These findings highlight the special importance of women’s commitment in regulating couples’ emotional reactions during difficult interactions.

Fifth, this research showcases the need and value of adopting a dyadic perspective to relationships. Previous investigations of attachment and interdependence phenomena have all-too-often studied individuals in relationships rather than partners within relationships. Studies that focus solely on individuals cannot measure and model the ways in which partners jointly impact one another. As documented in this research, greater commitment by one partner appears to buffer the effects of other partner’s attachment insecurities, and each partner’s emotional reactions also have significant effects on the other’s behavioral outcomes. Characteristics of both partners, therefore, are essential to examining, modeling, and fully understanding relationship phenomena.

Finally, this research clarifies how mental representations presumably forged in prior relationships dovetail with proximal qualities of interdependence in current relationships to explain how actors and partners think, feel, and behave in an accommodative dilemma. As the present research shows, being involved with a highly anxious partner may impede one’s inclination to react constructively to relationship-threatening events. Greater relationship commitment, however, serves as a buffer against the negative effects of both partners’ attachment insecurities, diminishing feelings of rejection, enhancing feelings of acceptance, and promoting more constructive behaviors. The motivation to preserve and stabilize relationships, therefore, may at times override the maladaptive working models and coping strategies harbored by insecure people.

In conclusion, the present research underscores the importance of examining characteristics that exist both within individuals as well as emergent properties that exist between partners in close relationships. Negative relationship histories can and often do hinder an individual’s ability to cope effectively with threatening events, but one’s own level of commitment and particularly one’s partner’s level of commitment may offset negative outcomes by curtailing the tendency to react negatively and destructively and by promoting constructive actions.

References


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New Editors Appointed, 2011–2016

The Publications and Communications Board of the American Psychological Association announces the appointment of 3 new editors for 6-year terms beginning in 2011. As of January 1, 2010, manuscripts should be directed as follows:

- **Developmental Psychology** (http://www.apa.org/journals/dev), *Jacquelynne S. Eccles, PhD*, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109
- **Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology** (http://www.apa.org/journals/ccp), *Arthur M. Nezu, PhD*, Department of Psychology, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA 19102
- **Psychological Review** (http://www.apa.org/journals/rev), *John R. Anderson, PhD*, Department of Psychology, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**Electronic manuscript submission:** As of January 1, 2010, manuscripts should be submitted electronically to the new editors via the journal’s Manuscript Submission Portal (see the website listed above with each journal title).

Manuscript submission patterns make the precise date of completion of the 2010 volumes uncertain. Current editors, Cynthia García Coll, PhD, Annette M. La Greca, PhD, and Keith Rayner, PhD, will receive and consider new manuscripts through December 31, 2009. Should 2010 volumes be completed before that date, manuscripts will be redirected to the new editors for consideration in 2011 volumes.