

COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSES TO GRIEF IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS:
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF EXPECTATION OF DEATH, ATTACHMENT
ORIENTATION, AND RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY IN
BEREAVEMENT REACTIONS

by

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(Under the Direction of Jennifer A. Samp)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of expectation of death, attachment orientation, and relational uncertainty in bereavement coping responses in romantic relationships. The current study posits that the degree to which loss is anticipated and the attachment orientation of the bereaved impact cognitive appraisals of loss. Additionally, attachment orientation is predicted to impact sources of relational uncertainty and communicative responses to loss in the bereaved. One hundred and five bereaved participants recruited from the University of Georgia completed a questionnaire, measuring the following variables: expectation of death, appraisal of loss, self and partner uncertainty, and coping responses.

In total, the results of this investigation suggested that the expectation of death and attachment orientation influence appraisals of loss. Results also supported the contention that attachment orientation impacts sources of uncertainty and communicative responses to loss. These results are interpreted as offering support for a nuanced model of communication among

bereaved individuals and romantic partners. Limitations of this thesis are addressed, as are the implications and directions for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Grief, Romantic relationships, Expectation of death, Attachment orientation, Appraisal of loss, Relational uncertainty, Bereavement coping, Communicative responses

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B. A., The University of Georgia, 1999

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004

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DEDICATION

For Jimmy, may your death not be in vain. With your suffering, comes light. A light that burns brightly in my heart through all my days as I keep the promise I made to you. May you find peace through my soul's work. May you dance again and dream again through the lives of those who knew and loved you more than you could have imagined. And may you live on...

And, for my mother, with endless love and light, may you keep loving and living in your precious and beautiful ways. My kindred spirit...I love you, always and forever. And, for my father, my deepest love and sincerest gratitude for reminding me to continue the journey, even when full of grief and pain, for love continues to grow. And, finally, for my brother, together we shall remember our Jimmy and celebrate his spirit in our relationships and in our lives. I love you, Ryan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever grateful to have been granted the opportunity to study, what I believe to be, a communication phenomenon of such grave importance to my own as well as countless individuals' lives and interpersonal relationships. I am truly thankful to my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Samp, not only for encouraging me to undertake this project, but also for her unwavering support and encouragement during my most challenging and joyous moments during the course of this scholastic journey. Dr. Samp, thank you for allowing me to find my way on this journey while simultaneously helping me chart my course. I am also endlessly grateful to Drs. Hale and Monahan for their remarkably close and careful evaluations of my work. Dr. Hale, without you, I would not have had the opportunity to venture into the field of Speech Communication. As I continue to expand in my scholarship, I will always remember the root of my beginning. And, Dr. Monahan, my words cannot express my gratitude to you, both professionally and personally. You have been a source of great strength at many of my most difficult hours during the course of my Masters program. I will always appreciate your candor, albeit more honest and straightforward than I wished the truth were at times, and will never forget the guidance you provided for the duration of my program.

I would also like to thank a very special mentor and friend, Dr. Aaron Fausz. Aaron, you found me at the end of my first degree at The University of Georgia and shaped me into a young professional who was not afraid to tackle any opportunity or challenge that crossed my path. I am forever indebted to you for believing in me and making me who I am today. Thanks to you, I did not forget my dreams of pursuing an advanced degree when it was easy to forget it was

possible to move beyond my current position. Without the freedom and respect you granted me, I would not have met Jerry and found my place. Thank you, Aaron.

My acknowledgements would not be complete without mentioning my graduate school cohort: Tara Bulger, Kelli Fellows, Shannon Holland, Michael Lee, Carson Martin, Ann Miller, Richard Nabring, Alison Trego, and a few later additions whom we adopted as our own, Jarrod Atchison, Laura Keck, Justin Killian, Shanara Reid, and Bryan Townsend. Also, I want to acknowledge Keisha Edwards for her unwavering support and for the laughter she brought to my days. To my original cohort, I remember our first days in Dr. Deluca's class (with the exception of Kelli and Ann) when none of us could keep from laughing at only the most inappropriate times, following Michael Lee's lead of course. We made it together, down a long and arduous road. I am grateful I had the opportunity to share the ride with you all.

To my family and friends (who were especially patient and faithful in me and our relationships despite my inability to spend the time and express the care they so rightfully deserve), I owe endless thanks and countless hugs. In particular, without my mom and dad, I would never have come this far and continued to believe in the remarkable beauty around me, even in the midst of numerous thesis revisions and tireless days of data analyses. Thank you both from the bottom of my heart, however exhausted it may be at times.

And, finally, I want to acknowledge Mike, my continuous source of strength, courage, and love, even in the face of my own grief and struggle. You truly have been an angel in my life from the first time I told you that to now. I could never thank you enough for all that you have given me and taught me. You truly are the physical manifestation of my hope and ultimate belief that there is life after loss.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

All love leads to loss. If we commit ourselves to another person, form an attachment, we will surely have to relinquish that attachment. It may be through death or some other form of separation. Either they leave or you do. That is not the issue, however. What is important is that some time in our life we must face and deal with loss and separation. For some, it may happen in later life, for others it may occur earlier and more frequently. Frequency, however, doesn't make it any easier. When separation occurs, we will grieve, we will suffer. No one is immune. It's the price we pay for commitment (Sanders, 1999, p. 3).

As Sanders (1999) explicates, grief and loss are natural phenomena that individuals experience in response to the separation from a loved one. Temporary or permanent loss of important attachment figures elicits emotions ranging from immediate distress to long-lasting pain and disorientation (Weiss, 1993). While bereavement represents the general state of loss, or "the vast array of emotions, experiences, changes, and conditions that take place as a result of the loss" (Sanders, 1999, p. 4), grief signifies the specific reactions experienced while in the bereavement state. Parkes (1993) defines grief as "an emotion that draws us toward something or someone that is missing. It arises from awareness of a discrepancy between the world that is and the world that 'should be'" (p. 92). When grieving, or mourning for the loss of a loved one, individuals are consequently subjected to a new world around them, a world that no longer offers them the presence and comfort of their loved one. Instead, bereaved individuals are left in a

world that elicits intense emotions derived from loss. These emotions range from general sadness to overarching despair. In an effort to cope, bereaved individuals will often seek comfort from close others.

Quite understandably, the death of a loved one constitutes one type of disruption of close interpersonal relationships (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Bereavement scholars have argued that such a disruption creates a need for support mechanisms called “belonging” (Cohen & McKay, 1984). In an attempt to receive comfort and create a sense of belonging to other close individuals, bereaved individuals often times share and seek information from others within their social network. Stylianos and Vachon (1993) suggest that close, relatively intimate relationships will be most effective in meeting this need. Because relational partners are thought to provide individuals with a safe haven where support can be sought in times of distress (Feeney, Noller, & Roberts, 2000), bereaved individuals would similarly be expected to seek refuge in their romantic partners when coping with grief. Interestingly, few studies have examined coping responses employed by bereaved individuals in this context. Based on the assumption that bereaved individuals seek support from romantic partners in times of distress, an exploration of how individuals cope with bereavement in the context of close, personal relationships would add valuable insight and greater depth to the study of interpersonal relationships.

Coping with Grief

As bereaved individuals turn to close others for support during the grieving process, these potential providers of support are similarly faced with the challenge of coping with the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral responses associated with grief. The specific reactions or symptoms experienced during the grieving process include shock, anger, guilt, sadness, despair, physical complaints, and illnesses (Sanders, 1999; Shuchter & Zisook, 1993). While the

intensity of these reactions may vary, all bereaved individuals grieve to some degree, whether explicitly or implicitly (e.g., Freud, 1917/1957; Sanders, 1999). To manage the stress and negative reactions associated with grief, bereaved individuals must cope in some way. Coping is generally thought to encompass “the person’s cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage (reduce, minimize, master, or tolerate) the internal and external demands of the person—environment transaction that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & De Longis, 1986, p. 572). Although coping strategies differ, communication is central to coping with bereavement (e.g., Bonanno, 1999; Bowlby, 1980; Freud, 1917/1957; Lindemann, 1944; Pennebaker, 1995; Stroebe, 1992; Worden, 1982). Through communication, individuals express bereavement emotions and reactions.

Communication affords bereaved individuals the opportunity to share their feelings, ask for support, and find comfort with others. In the context of close, personal relationships, communication is particularly important because communicative responses act as the observable byproduct of bereavement reactions. When examining how bereaved individuals cope with partners, communication is key to understanding how the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to grief manifest in relationships and impact relational dynamics.

The Role of Communication in the Coping Process

Disclosing feelings and reactions to loss has been shown to promote healthy adjustment for the bereaved (e.g., Lindemann, 1944; Worden, 1982). This emphasizes the central importance of communication in the coping process. Specifically, bereaved individuals may exhibit enhanced coping abilities during stages of early negative affect if invited to talk about the death and circumstances surrounding it (Richardson & Balaswamy, 2001). Beneficial effects of communication on long-term bereavement adjustment have also been highlighted. For example,

in one study conducted by Muller and Thompson (2003), bereaved participants actually “remarked that they enjoyed and/or benefited from participating” in the study itself, which solicited narratives and stories from those whom had experienced grief from bereavement (p. 195). Providing narratives or stories about the deceased and bereaved individual’s relationship with the deceased appears to enhance understanding of the grieving process for both the bereaved individuals and those with whom they share their experiences (Muller & Thompson, 2003). Consistent with the argument that communicating feelings and reactions to loss promotes healthy adjustment (e.g., Lindemann, 1944; Worden, 1982), the inability to disclose emotional responses to loss when an individual wants to express feelings has been suggested to predict negative adjustment (e.g., Lepore, Silver, Wortman, & Wayment, 1996). Thus, communication is relevant and essential in the context of bereavement coping and adjustment. Further, communication among the bereaved and romantic partners could impact relational maintenance. If narratives regarding the deceased can enhance understanding for those exchanging and receiving the stories, then communication among partners could allow for positive relational outcomes. Of course, this is assuming that understanding and healthy adjustment will alleviate stress on the relationship.

While bereavement research affirms the importance of communication in coping responses (e.g., Lindemann, 1944; Pennebaker, 1993; Richardson & Balaswamy, 2001; Worden, 1982), research on communicative responses to grief has been scant. Typically, general patterns of communication within bereavement contexts have been explored. Communicative responses to grief range from avoiding the event or distress to confronting thoughts and feelings associated with the loss. Models of coping pertinent to bereavement have mainly focused on these wide-ranging dimensions and processes of coping. When confronting feelings and reactions to loss,

bereaved individuals will typically choose either a problem- or emotion-focused coping response (e.g., Folkman, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Problem-focused coping is directed at managing and altering the problem associated with the stressor while emotion-focused coping involves managing the resulting emotion (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In contrast to confronting grief and loss, bereaved individuals may employ more avoidant strategies when coping with loss. Some degree of avoidance may be a healthy aspect of coping with severely traumatic events (Kaminer & Lavie, 1993). As Stroebe and Schut (2001) point out, such findings may substantiate the possibility that “keeping grief within” or regulating grief may serve an adaptive purpose (p. 390). Thus, while general patterns of communication and coping have been suggested, very little is known about the specific ways bereaved individuals communicate their feelings of loss, especially when seeking comfort from close others.

The Influence of Appraisals on Communicative Responses

An important process of coping that appears to influence the degree to and manner in which bereaved individuals confront or avoid feelings of grief is the appraisal of the loss. Past research suggests that some bereaved individuals ruminate (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema, Parker, & Larson, 1994) in response to the death of a loved one. This response appears to be reflective of a more negative appraisal of loss. Still, other bereaved individuals experience positive psychological states (Keltner & Bonanno, 1997; Stroebe & Schut, 2001). This response reflects a more positive appraisal of loss.

Rumination is defined as focusing one’s thoughts and behaviors on negative emotions and the possible causes and consequences of those emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). In the context of bereavement, rumination involves chronically and passively focusing on grief-related emotions and symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). In this sense, a ruminative style of coping

seems to follow a more negative appraisal of loss in that the individual cannot stop thinking about the negative aspects of loss and the grieving process. Individuals who ruminate, therefore, may be more inclined to express negative emotions and feelings when communicating feelings of loss to close others. On the other hand, they may avoid expressing their feelings altogether. Conversely, some bereaved individuals may disclose and confront positive aspects of loss and, in turn, experience positive psychological states (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Keltner and Bonanno (1997) found that smiles and laughter displayed during the grieving process have been associated with positive adjustment outcomes. The ability to find positive meaning during the experience of bereavement-related stress produces positive affect and reduces distress (Stroebe & Schut, 2001). In other words, the positive confrontation of grief, even in the form of nonverbal communication, facilitates positive meaning and affect in the bereaved, and such positive confrontation should arise from a more positive appraisal of loss. Although these negative and positive appraisal processes address the cognitive and affective states of grief, both types of appraisals should ultimately affect how an individual communicates his or her feelings of loss to a close partner. To summarize, bereaved individuals who appraise their loss negatively and ruminate over the negative aspects of their loss may either confront their loss negatively with partners or avoid communicating their negative feelings altogether. On the other hand, bereaved individuals who appraise their loss positively are expected to confront their loss positively, or communicate their feelings of loss constructively and openly with romantic partners.

The focus on the overall dimension of confrontation versus avoidance in the coping literature suggests that the presence (whether positive or negative) or absence of communication is important in the bereavement process, especially in terms of how an individual copes with a relational partner. Questions remain, however, regarding: 1) what explanatory mechanism drives

the confrontation and avoidance of grief, and 2) what specific behaviors characterize either the confrontation or avoidance. Therefore, bereavement research has not yet grounded confrontation and avoidance behavior within a theoretical framework by which specific responses can be either explained or predicted. The appraisal process appears to play a role in determining the valence of disclosure, where negative appraisals, as evidenced by ruminative styles of coping, lead to more negative disclosures of loss and positive appraisals, or more positive psychological states, lead to more positive disclosures of loss. However, an explanatory mechanism is lacking by which to predict those individuals who will ruminate during bereavement and, when they do, whether their rumination drives them to communicate negative aspects of loss or avoid communicating altogether. Specifically, when does an individual passively ruminate and when does rumination lead to negative disclosure. Similarly, an explanatory mechanism is needed by which to predict what type of individuals will experience positive psychological states and, when they do, whether or not these feelings will lead to positive confrontation with others. Folkman (1997) argues that positive appraisals of stress initially lead to positive psychological states, which then lead back to appraisal and coping reinforcing the initial positive appraisals. Applying Folkman's (1997) position to bereavement, the general creation and maintenance of positive psychological states following loss may be explained; however, the specific predictors of positive appraisals following the loss of a close other are still unknown. The predictors and characteristics of confrontational and avoidant responses to bereavement have, therefore, yet to be examined. Because minimal research has focused on confrontation and avoidance behavior within the context of close, personal relationships, this gap in bereavement research exists.

While bereavement research has yet to examine communicative (or lack thereof) responses to grief among bereaved partners, communication scholars have studied the avoidance

of confrontation following other types of distressing events in the context of close, personal relationships. For example, when examining irritating behavior of the self or partner, perceptions of dependence power have been suggested to influence an individual's appraisals and decisions to communicate (e.g., Cloven & Roloff, 1990; Samp & Solomon, 2000; Solomon & Samp, 1998). Issues of dependence power, however, should not apply to an examination of grief and loss because bereavement responses are not a direct extension of the self or partner's independent behavior. Instead, bereavement responses stem from situations that originate outside the relationship. While bereavement could be considered a distressing event in a similar way that irritating behavior among partners may be, such that the bereaved individual's coping responses may negatively impact the way he or she is perceived by a relational partner, bereavement is a unique situation that evokes specific cognitions and emotions for the bereaved partner. The conditions of bereavement extend beyond the romantic relationship. The loss of a loved one occurs outside the intact relationship, yet subsequently affects the dynamics of the romantic relationship as one partner copes with the loss and the other acts as a support system. Factors that affect bereavement responses, or the specific cognitive and emotional effects of grief, should be taken into account when examining the confrontation and avoidance behaviors employed in this specific distressing event.

When examining factors that influence bereavement responses, it is crucial to briefly revisit the previous discussion regarding appraisal of loss. How an individual appraises the loss of his or her loved one may affect the presence and valence of communicative responses with romantic partners. If the bereaved individual appraises the loss positively, he or she should positively confront feelings of loss with his or her partner. On the other hand, if the bereaved individual appraises the loss negatively, he or she should either negatively confront or avoid

feelings of loss with his or her partner. Thus, the appraisal of loss should affect coping responses to bereavement.

To predict the valence of appraisal of death, two specific variables of interest will be addressed: expectation of death and attachment orientation. Applying research regarding type of death experienced and adjustments to bereavement (Sanders, 1982-1983), the degree to which an individual anticipates the death of his or her loved one should impact the appraisal of loss. Further, grief as a reaction to loss has been considered “a special case of separation anxiety, bereavement being an irreversible form of separation” (Holmes, 1993, p. 89). This separation anxiety should activate the attachment behavioral system, or “model of the world in which the self and significant others and their interrelationship are represented and which encodes the particular pattern of attachment shown by an individual” (Holmes, 1993, p. 68). The attachment behavioral system develops into attachment orientations, which include broad expectancies regarding romantic relationships (Simpson & Rholes, 1998). Such expectancies include how comfortable one feels in close relationships as well as one’s ability to trust and depend on others. Thus, the loss of a loved one acts as a distressing event for an individual, and the stress associated with this event activates the individual’s attachment orientation. Further, this attachment orientation manifests not only in how the individual reacts to the loss, but also in how the individual copes with romantic partners. Current research focused on the role of individual differences in coping processes suggests that attachment working models may function as inner structures by which individuals organize, handle, and respond to distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). In addition, recent research on attachment suggests that romantic relationships evoke similar responses in individuals as do infant-caregiver bonds (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Therefore, attachment orientation is also activated in romantic

partnership. Based on these premises, attachment orientation should not only influence appraisals of bereavement situations but also coping responses to grief in romantic relationships. Ultimately, the valence of the appraisal, which has been impacted by expectation of death and attachment style of the bereaved, drives different coping and communicative responses to loss.

The present study seeks to examine the factors that influence the different coping and communicative responses employed by bereaved individuals with romantic partners. I argue that the degree to which the death of a loved one was anticipated and the attachment style orientation of the bereaved drive appraisals of and communicative decisions in response to grief in the context of romantic relationships. Specifically, I posit that negative appraisals increase feelings of uncertainty in the individual, which reinforce the different communicative responses employed among different attachment styles. In order to advance these predictions, in Chapter 2 I will explore: 1) the role of expectation of death and attachment orientation in the appraisal process following loss and, 2) how the valence of the appraisal subsequently affects the source of uncertainty in the individual and, ultimately, 3) the communicative responses chosen among individuals when coping with loss in the context of romantic relationships. In Chapter 3, I will present the method by which I will examine the hypotheses and assumptions posited in Chapter 2. In addition, Chapter 3 will present the results of this study. Finally, Chapter 4 will provide a discussion of the findings and implications of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

A COMMUNICATIVE MODEL OF GRIEF IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter, I will first discuss the role of anticipation of death and attachment orientation in the appraisal process following the death of a loved one. I will then explore how the valence of the appraisal of loss elicits different sources of uncertainty within the individual depending on the attachment style orientation of the bereaved. Given the discussion of these variables, predictions can then be made regarding the specific communicative responses employed by bereaved individuals with romantic partners. Specifically, the model of communication among bereaved individuals and romantic partners that I advance suggests that there are two main steps to this process. First, the degree to which the bereaved partner anticipates the death of his or her loved one initially impacts the appraisal of the loss. Further, the distress associated with the death triggers the attachment orientation of the bereaved, which also influences the appraisal of the loss. The second step of this process involves the valence of the appraisal, level of uncertainty experienced, and communication outcomes. The valence of the appraisal, influenced by attachment orientation, will elicit different communication outcomes. If the bereaved individual appraises the loss and subsequent bereavement experience as positive, positive confrontation behaviors will be employed. If the bereaved individual appraises the loss and bereavement experience as negative, sources of uncertainty will be ignited. Attachment orientation, therefore, will influence the type of uncertainty experienced. The source of uncertainty ultimately drives the communicative response. Negative appraisals lead to communicative responses ranging on a continuum from avoidance to negative confrontation (see

Figure 1). To review, two variables affect the appraisal of loss, expectation of death experienced and attachment orientation, and three variables affect the communicative responses to loss, the attachment orientation, valence of the appraisal, and source of uncertainty provoked.

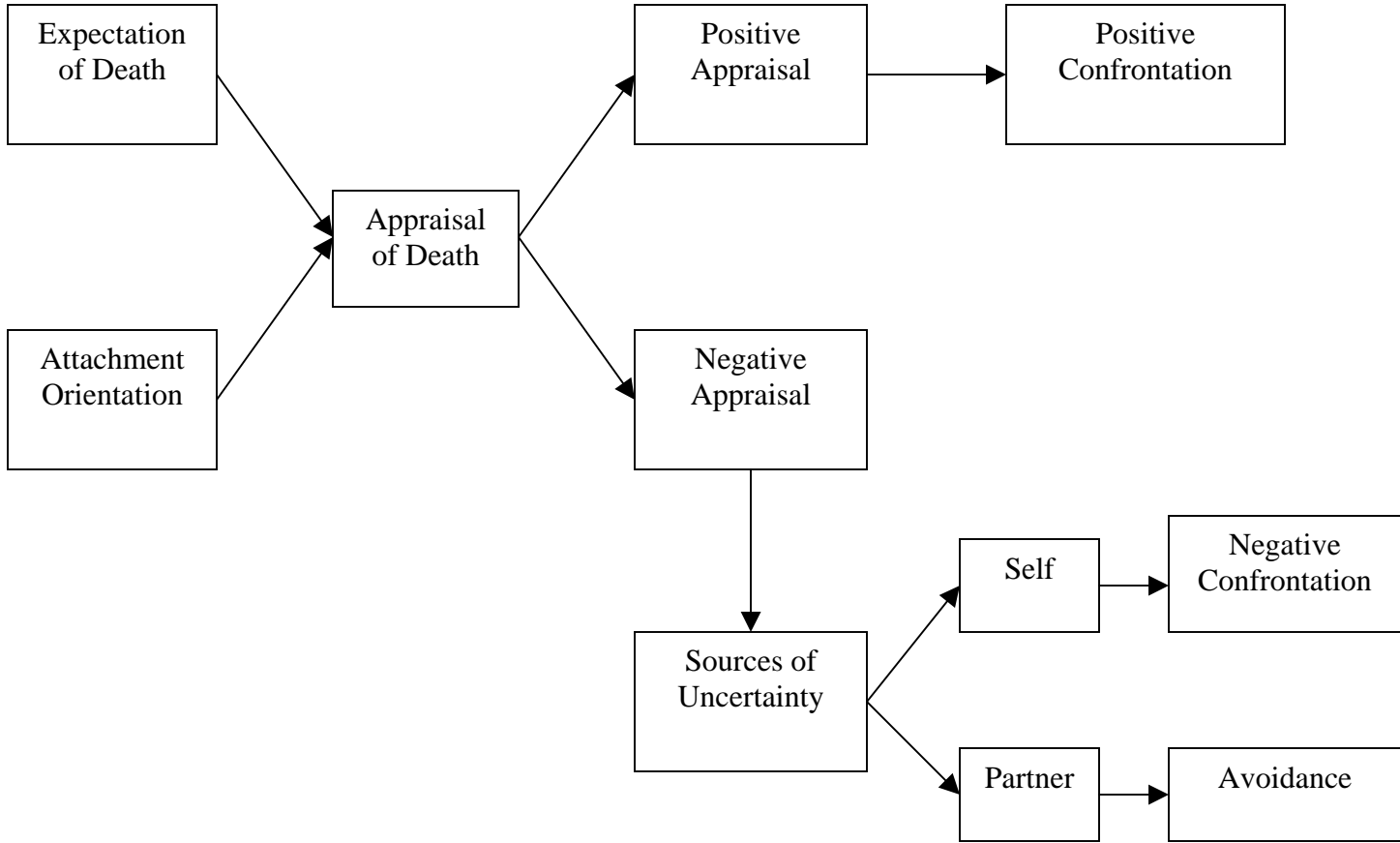
Expectation of Death

The extent to which a death is anticipated has been linked to grief symptomatology during bereavement. Sanders (1982-1983) observed that sudden deaths produced poorer bereavement adjustments than those that were not as sudden, or those that had been anticipated for greater amounts of time. In addition, survivors of a sudden death exhibited longer-lasting physical responses and a greater degree of anger and guilt than did those who survived a short-term chronic illness death (Sanders, 1982-1983). This finding suggests that individuals who do not anticipate the loss of their loved one may appraise their loss differently than those who anticipate the loss of their loved one. In particular, individuals who are least suspecting of their loss may suffer more adverse bereavement outcomes because they have appraised their loss negatively. Conversely, individuals who anticipate the loss of their loved one may be more resilient following the actual death of their loved one because they have been able to appraise their loss positively. Based on these assumptions, I advance that positive appraisals of loss increase as the expectation of death increases. This association between anticipation of death and appraisal of loss, however, has not yet been examined in the bereavement context. Thus, I posit the following hypothesis:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between expectation of death and positive appraisal of loss.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of Communication Among Romantic Partners When Coping with Grief and Loss.



Attachment Orientations and Reactions to Loss

Although the death of a loved one is typically considered a significant and troubling event (Shaver & Tancredy, 2001), not all individuals experience the same feelings during bereavement, nor do they cope with grief in the same way. Attachment theory provides a useful framework by which to examine the internal and social mechanisms that drive individuals to experience loss in different ways. Studies on attachment and distressing events demonstrate that people with different attachment orientations cope with their emotions differently (e.g., Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993; Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995; Ognibene & Collins, 1998). In the following sections, I will describe the adult attachment system, explain how attachment styles give rise to different attachment orientations, and, finally, review relevant research regarding how attachment orientation affects emotional responses and cognitive appraisals. In conclusion, I will discuss how this research can be applied to romantic partners in the bereavement context.

The Adult Attachment System

Attachment theorists conceptualize internal working models of the self and other as forming the underlying basis of attachment styles (Klohn & John, 1998). According to attachment theory, individuals construct internal models of the self, significant others, and the world based on their individual experiences (Goldberg, 2000). Working models of self represent an individual's internalized sense of self-worth and competence (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). Working models of others represent the degree to which an individual aspires toward intimacy with others and views relationships as desirable and rewarding (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). Internal working models, therefore, include expectations about the worth of the self and others.

Expectations also center on the availability and responsiveness of significant others during times of distress (Klohnen & John, 1998).

Interactions with significant others who are available in times of stress serve as the prototype for *secure* working models. Secure working models consist of positive beliefs and feelings about the self and the world, encourage support-seeking behavior, and contribute to the formation of warm relationships (Mikulincer & Selinger, 2001). Individuals with secure attachments feel comfortable seeking out and maintaining intimate relationships and are more confident in expecting significant others' availability in times of distress due to their positive perceptions of their competence and worthiness (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). Securely attached individuals therefore exhibit low levels of avoidance and anxiety with relational partners (Gallo & Smith, 2001) and have more positive attachment history than those with insecure attachments.

In comparison, interactions with significant others who are not available in times of distress function as the prototype for *insecure* working models. Insecure working models consist of negative or inconsistent beliefs and feelings about the self and the world and encourage the development of defensive strategies. In turn, those with insecure working models exacerbate relational problems and are unable to successfully cope and adapt to life stressors (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998; Mikulincer & Selinger, 2001).

Several theorists have suggested that internal working models of attachment can be further differentiated along two underlying dimensions (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney, 1995). One dimension, which Feeney (1995) labeled *comfort with closeness*, reflects judgments about significant others and their dependability. Individuals who are comfortable with closeness have a positive view of others and believe significant others are trustworthy; thus, these individuals are willing and able to trust others. On the other hand, individuals who are

uncomfortable with closeness have a negative view of others and believe that significant others cannot be relied upon to provide support in times of distress; thus, these individuals have difficulty trusting others. In contrast to the *comfort with closeness* dimension, the second dimension concerns the degree to which individuals feel *anxiety over relationships*. This dimension involves judgments about the self and whether or not one is worthy of receiving support from significant others. Individuals who are anxious about their relationships have a negative view of self, believe they are unworthy of support, and fear potential rejection and abandonment from significant others. Conversely, those who are less anxious about their relationships possess a positive view of self and feel worthy of support; thus, these individuals are assured of the availability and responsiveness of their significant others.

Adult Attachment Orientations, Coping Responses to Stress, and Appraisals of Loss

In order to predict the influence of attachment orientation on appraisals of loss, the association between attachment dimensions and coping responses to stress should first be examined. Adult attachment predicts expectancies, behaviors, and emotions in romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1993), which includes coping responses during times of stress. Attachment orientation specifically influences an individual's attributions through the elicitation of distinct patterns of cognitive and emotional reactions to distress. Attachment literature describes individuals who are comfortable with closeness and experience little *anxiety over relationships* as dealing with distress by acknowledging it, enacting constructive actions, and seeking emotional and instrumental support from others (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Stressful events elicit more tolerance from these individuals as their comfortability with others and little anxiety about relationships allows accessibility of unpleasant emotions without being overwhelmed by the resulting distress experienced (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Lazarus and

Folkman (1984) conclude that these individuals deal with distress by relying typically on problem-focused and support-seeking strategies. Coping strategies include those that are confrontive, such as expressing emotion and feelings regarding the source of distress, and problem-solving oriented, including proposing solutions and drawing on past experiences (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986). Furthermore, individuals who are comfortable with closeness and low in anxiety are more likely to engage in positive reappraisals, which involve reframing negative aspects of a stressful event, finding meaning in distress, and growing from the experience (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986). Based on this explanation of positive reappraisals, we can conclude that these individuals ultimately appraise distressing events as positive, regardless of whether or not they initially appraised the event or situation negatively based on the negative emotions experienced.

Individuals low in comfort with closeness are thought to deal with stressful events by restricting the acknowledgement of distress (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Individuals low in comfort with closeness emphasize autonomy and self-reliance while dismissing the importance of the source of distress and inhibit the display of negative affect (Bowlby, 1973). Mikulincer and Orbach's (1995) suggest that individuals low in comfort with closeness do not allow themselves to access unpleasant thoughts and emotions, and, thus, erect barriers against external and internal sources of stress. Distancing withdrawal strategies, then, characterize these individuals' reaction to distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). By distancing themselves from the source of stress and withdrawing from others, these individuals escape from any direct or indirect confrontation with life's stressors. Coping responses that include distancing, withdrawal, and escape-avoidance behaviors might best be labeled as detachment behaviors. Because they suppress or avoid

attachment-related emotions, individuals low in comfort with closeness are not likely to become emotional about the loss of close other (Fraley, Davis, & Shaver, 1998).

When assessing coping strategies within the context of grief, Shaver and Tancredy (2001) argue that individuals who high in comfort with closeness and have little anxiety should react emotionally to the loss of a close relational other, but will not feel overwhelmed by grief. These individuals should be able create a narrative about their loss and not suffer from intense guilt or lowered self-esteem (Shaver & Tancredy, 2001). In this sense, these individuals should be more optimistic when coping with loss (Shaver & Tancredy, 2001) and appraise their loss positively.

On the other hand, individuals who experience high *anxiety over relationships* deal with stressful events by directing attention toward distress in an overly vigilant manner and by mentally ruminating on negative thoughts, memories, and affect (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). These individuals appear to be unable to suppress negative thoughts, repress negative emotions, and detach from inner pain (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995). Highly anxious individuals are therefore highly emotional and expressive but unable to cope constructively with attachment-related feelings (Shaver & Tancredy, 2001). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that anxious individuals deal with distress by relying on passive, ruminative, and emotion-focused strategies. Specific coping strategies include focusing on the negative and emotional aspects of distress and engaging in self criticism and blame, since preoccupieds hold a negative model of self and positive model of others (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). In this sense, individuals high in anxiety over relationships seem most likely to accept responsibility for the distress experienced (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986). When coping with grief, highly anxious individuals are most likely those who would be extremely emotional and preoccupied with their loss (Shaver & Tancredy, 2001). In this sense, anxious individuals appear

to appraise loss as negative and direct their pain and grief inward, targeting the distress at themselves.

Upon reviewing and comparing the coping strategies of individuals who are comfortable with closeness with those who are anxious over relationships, I posit that individuals high in comfort with closeness should appraise their loss as positive while individuals high in anxiety over relationships should appraise their loss as negative. These predictions regarding attachment orientations and cognitive appraisals, however, have not yet been empirically tested in the context of bereavement. To test these predictions, I advance the following hypotheses:

H2: There will be a positive relationship between comfort with closeness and positive appraisal of loss.

H3: There will be a negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive appraisal of loss.

To review, a bereaved individual's expectation of death and attachment orientation has been suggested to influence the appraisal of death. In order to predict the specific coping and communicative responses of bereaved partners, the next section will discuss how the valence of the appraisal of loss affects feelings of uncertainty in the bereaved. Depending on the existence and type of uncertainty experienced in response to the appraisal of death, different coping and communicative responses will be exhibited by bereaved individuals when coping with romantic partners.

Adult Attachment Orientations, Sources of Uncertainty, and Communicative Responses to Grief

While differences in working models influence the appraisal process, this study seeks to advance that internal working models also influence the experience of uncertainty when experiencing the loss of a loved one through death. As previously noted, some individuals

employ more ruminative coping, or respond more negatively to loss, which appears to increase feelings of confusion and uncertainty (Gentry & Goodwin, 1995). Conversely, other bereaved individuals employ more positive confrontation, or respond more positively, which elicits positive psychological states and meaning (Keltner & Bonanno, 1997; Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Therefore, the valence of the appraisal, which is impacted by expectation of death and attachment orientation, must similarly influence the level of uncertainty experienced in an individual. In particular, feelings of uncertainty following loss should increase following negative appraisals of loss while more positive affect and meaning should arise from positive appraisals.

When the loss is appraised positively, I posit that bereaved individuals will not experience uncertainty in their relationship. Individuals who are able to find positive meaning during the bereavement experience and experience positive psychological states (e.g., Keltner & Bonanno, 1997, Stroebe & Schut, 2001) are most likely those who appraise their loss as positive. If individuals who are more likely to appraise loss as positive are comfortable with closeness and experience little anxiety over relationships, then these individuals should also be less likely to experience uncertainty following loss. These individuals should deal with bereavement as they deal with other types of distress, by employing problem-focused and support-seeking strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As previously mentioned, individuals who are comfortable with closeness should constructively cope through confrontation with partners. In other words, these individuals should express feelings and emotions regarding their loss with their partners. Through their confrontation with loss, individuals comfortable with closeness should experience more positive psychological states. Evidence regarding whether or not individuals who experience positive psychological states during bereavement are those that engage in positive

confrontation, however, is yet to be conclusive. The association between these variables, therefore, warrants further examination. Applying findings regarding typical coping behaviors employed by individuals who are comfortable with closeness and experience little anxiety in relationships to the context of bereavement, I argue that these individuals will be more likely to positively confront their loss with relational partners by seeking support and openly discussing their loss. To test these predictions, I advance the following hypotheses:

H4: There will be a positive relationship between comfort with closeness and positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.

H5: There will be a negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.

While individuals who are comfortable with closeness and low in anxiety are predicted to appraise loss as positive and confront grief positively with others, bereaved individuals who are relatively anxious and not comfortable with intimacy are expected to appraise loss as negative. When loss is appraised as negative, I advance that grief acts as an uncertainty-increasing event in romantic relationships. Depending on the attachment orientation of the bereaved individual, different sources of uncertainty will be provoked in the individual following a negative appraisal of loss due to differences in internal working models. The source(s) of uncertainty ignited will, in turn, influence the bereaved individual's communicative decisions within his or her relationship.

The experience of grief due to bereavement has been shown to increase feelings of uncertainty for the bereft when examined in a singular context (Gentry & Goodwin, 1995). Many times feelings of uncertainty manifest as a perceived loss of self (e.g., Gentry & Goodwin, 1995; Shapiro, 2001). This loss of self acts as a source of stress and uncertainty to the bereaved,

which may alter the behavioral and communicative responses of the bereaved when interacting with others (Gentry & Goodwin, 1995). Changes in the communication patterns of the bereaved may subsequently affect the way others respond to and support them (Gentry & Goodwin, 1995). Interferences of some type may therefore exist when coping with grief in the context of close relationships, whether in terms of the self, partner, or overall relationship. Thus, I argue that grief acts as an uncertainty-increasing event within a romantic relationship when the bereavement experience is appraised as negative. Based on this assumption, I seek to examine whether different sources of uncertainty will be provoked following a negative appraisal of loss dependent on the attachment orientation of the bereaved individual.

Sources of Uncertainty In Close Relationships

Romantic partners frequently face relational events that raise uncertainty about their self, partner, or relationship (e.g., Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp, Rutherford, & Honeycutt, 1988). Specific relational events that have lead to an increase in uncertainty include, but are not limited to, third party competition, unexpected sexual behavior, personality or attitude changes, deception, and betrayal (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). When appraised negatively, I predict that grief also acts as an uncertainty-increasing event in romantic relationships. If anxious individuals who are not comfortable with closeness are more likely to appraise loss as negative, then they will similarly experience heightened levels of uncertainty as they attempt to cope with this type of stress. Differences in the internal working models between these dimensions, however, will elicit different sources of uncertainty in the individual. To review, anxious individuals have a negative model of self and individuals who are uncomfortable with closeness have a negative model of others. It is predicted that these negative models of self and other will evoke different sources of uncertainty in the bereaved individual. Uncertainty within

interpersonal interaction typically manifests in three different sources: the self, the partner, and the relationship. All three sources of uncertainty can occur at any stage of a relationship, not just during initial interactions (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999).

Self uncertainty. Feelings of self uncertainty arise when individuals are not able to predict or explain their own attitudes and behavior (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Berger & Calabrese, 1975). The inability to predict or explain one's behavior may be the result of two antecedent conditions: 1) there are too many behavioral options from which individuals can choose to act, and/or 2) individuals experience the loss of their self-concepts. The awareness of multiple ways to think and behave within a given interaction may create uncertainty in terms of which attitudes and/or behaviors an individual wishes to adopt in order to meet his or her goals (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Further, uncertainty within this type of situation may reveal a lack of knowledge about the self at some level (Berger & Bradac, 1982).

The symbolic loss of self following a negative appraisal of the loss of a loved should act as a source of self uncertainty in the bereaved individual. The loss of a loved one violates an individual's expectations of reality and what "ought" to be. This concurrent loss of normalcy engenders feelings of grave confusion, uncertainty, and disassociation. Feelings of uncertainty regarding one's reality, network of close others, and self as linked to this network could be described as symbolic losses that are "generally enmeshed within an actual loss" (Sanders, 1999, p. 5). Grieving in response to actual and symbolic losses can be viewed as a cognitive stressor, or "a life event that poses demands on the individual" (Stroebe & Schut, 2001, p. 378). In this sense, the bereaved individual may lack the ability to describe, predict, and possibly explain his or her own attitudes and behaviors during bereavement. Or, he or she may act in ways that are inconsistent with the self known by both him or herself and close others. Difficulty in choosing

a consistent manner of thinking about the self and interacting with close others may arise due to the larger feelings of uncertainty surrounding the experience of death and loss. These feelings of uncertainty will therefore reflect uncertainty regarding the self. Self uncertainty arises from the symbolic loss of self would therefore act as a cognitive stressor, one that most likely causes feelings of discomfort and elicits negative self appraisals. While we know that bereaved individuals may experience a symbolic loss of self (Sanders, 1999), which may act as a source of self uncertainty, minimal research has sought to uncover which individuals will ultimately experience this type of symbolic loss. Just as differences in internal working models predict differences in the appraisal of emotion, I advance that individuals with negative working models of self will experience higher levels of self uncertainty following negative appraisals of loss.

As previously discussed, individuals with high anxiety over relationships employ passive, ruminative, and emotion-focused strategies when coping with grief (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Anxious individuals will be more likely to initiate self criticism and blame following loss based on their negative working models of self. This negative self focus may elicit some form of uncertainty surrounding one's attitudes and behaviors within the anxious individual's relationship. Anxious individuals experiencing loss may therefore experience self uncertainty following negative appraisals of loss. Based on this assumption regarding the association between the attachment orientation of *anxiety over relationships* and self uncertainty, the following hypothesis is predicted:

H6: There will be a positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and self uncertainty following the loss of a loved one.

Partner uncertainty. In a similar way that uncertainty may arise about the self in a given interaction, partner uncertainty stems from the inability to predict the other's attitude and

behaviors during a particular interaction (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In this sense, partner uncertainty arises from a lack of knowledge about one's partner as an individual (Berger, 1979). More specifically, a lack of adequate information regarding a partner's unique attitudes, values, and preferences within a particular situation will generally create partner uncertainty (Berger, 1979).

Just as a bereaved individual may experience self uncertainty when faced with loss, he or she may simultaneously experience partner uncertainty. When a bereaved individual seeks solace in a partner, certain expectations in how the partner should response necessarily exist based on the bereaved attachment orientation. The partner's response, or actual behavior, may violate the expectations of the bereaved partner. The relational partner may not know what to say or how to console the bereaved partner. In this sense, the relational partner may not act in accordance with the bereaved partner's rules and expectations of behavior. If the relational partner cannot or does not console the bereaved individual in the manner that he or she desires, then the bereaved individual's support-seeking goals may be thwarted. The disruption in goals and behavioral norms for relational interaction will most likely evoke a feeling of uncertainty in the bereaved individual that revolves around his or her partner. The bereaved individual may experience a feeling of uncertainty regarding his or her partner's attitudes and behaviors. When communicating thoughts and feelings of loss, partner uncertainty may prevent the bereaved individual from predicting the attitudes and behaviors of his or her relational partner.

I posit that individuals who are uncomfortable with closeness will experience partner uncertainty following the loss of a loved one due to their negative view of others. In a bereavement situation, these individuals may lack the ability to predict and explain the attitudes and behaviors of relational partners due to their lack of desire to gather information regarding the

other. Just as these individuals are less likely to disclose their feelings of loss and ask for support because of the discomfort they experience when doing so, they will most likely fail to employ information-seeking strategies that allow them to gather knowledge about their partner's feelings and behaviors. In situations where individuals are unable to gather adequate information about their partner's preferences, attitudes, and values, partner uncertainty is generally present (Berger & Gudykunst, 1991). The following association between the attachment dimension of *comfort with closeness* and partner uncertainty is therefore advanced:

H7: There will be a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and partner uncertainty following the loss of a loved one.¹

Communicative Responses to Loss

In the context of bereavement, I have advanced that different sources of uncertainty will be provoked following a negative appraisal of loss dependent on the attachment orientation of the bereaved individual. Beyond these predicted associations between attachment dimensions and sources of uncertainty, I also argue that individual attempts to manage these sources of uncertainty will manifest in the form of either avoidance or negative confrontation with romantic partners contingent on the attachment orientation of the bereaved. In this sense, the communicative decisions employed in the face of sources of uncertainty following loss will be driven by attachment orientation.

In response to self uncertainty, I predict that individuals who are relatively anxious over relationships will seek support and confront their partners in an attempt to reduce self uncertainty during bereavement. In previous research, anxious individuals sought social support and used more confrontive coping strategies in response to both social and achievement-related stressors (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). Based on their negative working model of self, I argue that anxious

individuals will similarly employ more confrontive coping in the context of bereavement to benefit from the support of others. However, a negative model of self would affect the way in which they confront their loss. Specifically, I advance that anxious individuals will negatively confront their partners as their communication will more likely focus on negative aspects of loss. Therefore, I posit the following hypothesis:

H8: There will be a positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and negative confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.

In terms of how individuals who are uncomfortable with closeness will communicate following their negative appraisals of loss, however, I argue that these individuals will more likely to avoid their relational partners. In other stressful contexts, individuals who are uncomfortable with intimacy have engaged in more avoidant response behaviors (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). It has been argued that individuals with a negative model of others may be uncomfortable when disclosing their feelings or asking for social support (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). In terms of asking for social support, they may even believe that support from others will be ineffective in alleviating their stress (Ognibene & Collins, 1998). Therefore, I predict that individuals who are uncomfortable with closeness will similarly avoid their romantic partners when coping with grief following the loss of a loved one. The following hypothesis is advanced:

H9: There will be a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and avoidant behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.

To conclude, this chapter advanced a model of communication among bereaved individuals and romantic partners. First, this chapter linked expectation of death and attachment orientation of the bereaved to appraisal of loss. Then, this chapter examined the associations between attachment orientations, sources of uncertainty, and communication behaviors following

the loss of a loved one. Thus, two variables were hypothesized to influence positive appraisals of loss, expectation of death and attachment orientation. Three variables were predicted to affect the communicative responses to loss, the attachment orientation, valence of the appraisal and source of uncertainty. Table 1 reviews the hypotheses associated with this investigation.

Chapter 3 details a method to examine the hypotheses advanced in this chapter.

Table 1

Summary of Hypotheses

- H1: There will be a positive relationship between expectation of death and positive appraisal of loss.
- H2: There will be a positive relationship between comfort with closeness and positive appraisal of loss.
- H3: There will be a negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive appraisal of loss.
- H4: There will be a positive relationship between comfort with closeness and positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.
- H5: There will be a negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.
- H6: There will be a positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and self uncertainty following the loss of a loved one.
- H7: There will be a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and partner uncertainty following the loss of a loved one.
- H8: There will be a positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and negative confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.
- H9: There will be a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and avoidant behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one.
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CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and five students (70 females and 35 males) at the University of Georgia participated in a study about experiencing the loss of a loved one while in a romantic relationship. All participants were solicited from the Department of Speech Communication research pool and received either course or extra credit for their involvement. Participants ranged from 18 to 33 years of age ($M = 20.64$, $SD = 2.02$). Of the participants, 57 reported they were currently in a dating relationship with the same partner whom they had been with at the time they experienced the loss of their loved one. The length of time these individuals had been dating ranged from two to 72 months ($M = 29.54$, $SD = 17.19$). Forty-eight individuals were no longer in a dating relationship with the individuals whom they had been with at the time of their loss.

Procedure

After providing informed consent (see Appendix A), participants individually completed questionnaires in groups of 10 people at a time. The first portion of the questionnaire solicited demographic information, such as gender, age, and year in college. In addition, attachment orientation was measured in this portion of the questionnaire. The second portion of the questionnaire prompted participants to recall a time when someone close to them passed away while they were in a romantic relationship with someone else. Specifically, participants were instructed to recall the individual who passed away, the relationship they had with the deceased,

and how they felt about their loss. If participants lost more than one close other while in a romantic relationship, they were instructed to focus on only one of the individuals they lost for the purpose of answering the questions in this study. The participants were asked to indicate their relationship with the deceased, how long ago the death occurred, how long they knew this individual prior to their death, how old they were at the time of loss, and how the individual died. Participants then completed the measures of expectation and appraisal of death. Participants were then asked to think about the person they were dating when their loved one passed away. The final portion of the questionnaire contained a series of questions involving partner and relationship demographics and measures of relational uncertainty and coping behaviors, or management strategies, employed during bereavement. Most participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 45 minutes. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their participation in the study and given a debriefing form (see Appendix B).

The methodology of this study entailed retrospective inquiry, which some researchers have noted as problematic (e.g., Stroebe et al., 2002). As is the case in this research, most studies examining the effects of emotional disclosure of bereavement-related feelings have been retrospective in nature (e.g., Pennebaker & O’Heeron, 1984). While this may not be the ideal methodology by which researchers may wish to study grief and loss, I posit that the use of retrospective accounts is the most plausible alternative. The experience of grief and the individual and relational outcomes associated with coping with death are extremely difficult phenomena to study. Due to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral responses associated with grief, individuals may experience psychological discomfort should they be asked to reflect upon their bereavement experience while simultaneously experiencing the initial pain and disorientation associated with their loss. Giving individuals the opportunity to discuss their

bereavement experience when they feel ready is a much more ethical and psychologically sound alternative. Thus, retrospective inquiry into the bereavement experience is generally the most viable methodology by which researchers can study grief and examine the themes and variations embedded in this inevitable reality of the human condition while preserving the psychological and emotional health of participants.

Measures

The following sections outline the measurement of the independent variables: attachment orientation and expectation of death.

Attachment Orientation

Attachment orientation can be conceptualized as distinct content categories, or in terms of underlying dimensions. Theorists who have focused on a categorical approach argue that typological measures can be used to sort individuals into distinct groups (see Fraley & Waller, 1998 for a review). However, substantial variation among individuals within each attachment style has been identified (e.g., Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Further, other research has examined attachment types in terms of underlying dimensions (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney, 1995). By measuring attachment orientation dimensionally, the challenges associated with categorizing individuals into groups that do not reflect differences in variation are avoided. Further, a continuous measure of attachment allows for greater statistical power. Given the utility of the dimensional approach, attachment orientation was measured in this way.²

Participants completed a measure of attachment style that is derived from the original measures of Hazan and Shaver (1987) and modified by Feeney (1995, 1999; see Appendix C). This 13-item measure provides scores on the two components of attachment style: *comfort with closeness* and *anxiety over relationships*. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not

at all like me; 5 = very much like me). There is evidence to suggest that more than two dimensions of attachment exist (Collins & Read, 1990; Dillard, Solomon, & Anderson, 2002; Samp, 1999). To determine if the two dimensions were evident in this study, the items were submitted to a principle axis factor analysis with varimax rotation.

Nine items indicated primary factor loadings above .60 and no substantive cross-loadings; three meaningful factors were suggested by the analysis. One factor was similar to Feeney's (1995) measure of *anxiety over relationships*. This subscale included two items: (a) Sometimes people are scared away by my wanting to be too close to them; and (b) I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. Feeney's (1995) comfort with closeness factor was split into two separate factors. The second factor contained items related to *comfort with intimacy*. Four items comprised this subscale: (a) Love partners often want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being (reverse coded); (b) I am nervous when anyone gets too close (reverse coded); (c) I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others (reverse coded); and (d) I find it relatively easy to get close to others. The third factor reflected *comfort with dependence*. This subscale contained three items: (a) I find it difficult to depend on others (reverse coded); (b) I find it easy to trust others; and (c) I feel comfortable depending on others. Responses to the individual items on each subscale were averaged to produce a single score. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics and reliabilities for each attachment subscale. The items comprising these subscales indicated in the exploratory factor analysis were subjected to tests of internal consistency and parallelism using LIMSTAT (Hunter & Lim, 1987). Although the results of this factor analysis deviate from Feeney's (1995) conceptualization of the measures, the three factors identified in this examination are in line with prior research (Collins & Read, 1990; Dillard, Solomon, & Anderson, 2002; Samp, 1999).

Table 2

*Attachment Dimensions, Expectation and Appraisal of Death, and Self and Partner**Uncertainty: Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Anxiety over Relationships ^a	1.93	0.84	.73
Comfort with Intimacy ^a	3.73	0.91	.84
Comfort with Dependence ^a	3.13	0.97	.83
Expectation of Death ^b	2.68	1.47	.86
Appraisal of Death ^b	1.82	0.81	.75
Self Uncertainty ^c	4.59	1.25	.98
Partner Uncertainty ^c	4.95	0.93	.96

^aResponses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all like me; 5 = very much

like me). ^bResponses were measured on 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly

agree). ^cResponses were measured on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = completely or almost

completely uncertain; 6 = completely or almost completely certain).

Expectation of Death

Six items reflecting the degree to which the death of the close other was anticipated were constructed for this study. On a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the following items: (a) The loss of my loved one was anticipated; (b) I knew that my loved one was going to die soon; (c) I was not expecting my loved one to die (reverse coded); (d) I knew about the possibility of my loved one's death for a long time before he/she died; (e) The loss of my loved one was expected; and (f) I knew about the possibility of my loved one's death for only a short time before he/she died (reverse coded). Responses were averaged to create an expectation of death scale; see Table 2 for the descriptive statistics and reliability of this scale. Higher values indicate greater anticipation of the death. Tests of internal consistency and parallelism using LIMSTAT (Hunter & Lim, 1987) were conducted on the items comprising this scale indicated in the exploratory factor analysis.

The remaining sections outline the operationalization of the dependent variables: appraisal of death, relational uncertainty, and coping responses to grief, or management strategies.

Appraisal of Death

Three items reflecting the degree to which the death was appraised as positive were constructed for this study. On a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), participants were asked to indicate their opinion regarding the following items: (a) I mourned the loss of my loved one after he/she died (reverse coded); (b) I was very distraught after my loved one passed away (reverse coded); and (c) The events surrounding my loved one's death were upsetting (reverse coded). Responses were averaged to create a scale. See Table 2 for the

descriptive statistics and reliability of this measure. Higher values indicate more positive appraisals of loss. The items comprising this scale indicated in the exploratory factor analysis were subjected to tests of internal consistency and parallelism using LIMSTAT (Hunter & Lim, 1987).

Relational Uncertainty

Items adapted from Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) relational uncertainty scale were used to measure the participant's uncertainty about his or her own relational involvement and the participant's perceptions of the partner's relational involvement after experiencing the loss of a loved one. Participants rated their certainty about each aspect of involvement using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = completely or almost completely uncertain; 6 = completely or almost completely certain). Sixteen items measured *self uncertainty* (see Appendix D for full scale); sample items include: After experiencing your loss, ... (a) How certain were you about your feelings for your partner? (b) How certain were you about whether or not you wanted this relationship to last? and (c) How certain were you about your goals for the future of the relationship? *Partner uncertainty* involved 11 items (see Appendix D for full scale). Sample items from the *partner uncertainty* scale include the following: (a) How certain were you about how much your partner wanted this relationship at that time? (b) How certain were you about your partner's goals for the future of the relationship? And (c) How certain were you about whether or not your partner wanted this relationship to last? Each scale was computed as the average of the responses to the individual items. See Table 2 for the descriptive statistics and reliabilities of each scale. Higher values indicate greater degrees of certainty on each dimension. Tests of internal consistency and parallelism using LIMSTAT (Hunter & Lim, 1987) were conducted on the items comprising these subscales.

Management Strategies

The predicted management orientations in this study included *positive confrontation*, *negative confrontation*, and *avoidance*. To explore the hypothesized range of coping strategies used to manage grief, a modified version of the revised Ways of Coping scale (WOC; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986) was used in conjunction with items constructed for this study. The revised WOC is a 66-item questionnaire containing a wide range of thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to deal with the internal and external demands of stressful situations. Because this scale was developed to measure responses across a variety of stressful situations, many of the items do not conceptually apply to bereavement. For this reason, 41 items were adapted from the revised WOC scale and 40 items were created in order to capture a more comprehensive range of communicative coping behaviors (see Appendix E). Adapted and constructed items generally reflect confrontive coping (or confronting the situation), problem-solving, seeking social support, engaging in self-blame and criticism, and distancing and avoidance behaviors. Participants were asked to indicate on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not used; 4 = used a great deal) the extent to which they used specific coping strategies when dealing with the death of a loved one.

To establish the factor structure of the *management strategies* measure, all 81 items were initially entered in a principle axis exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation. Items that loaded high on one factor (factor loadings greater than .60) and low on all other factors (loadings less than .40) were selected. Factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted from the items remaining to create the final factor pattern matrix. Ten meaningful factors were identified, consisting of 39 items. Then, the items comprising these subscales indicated in the exploratory factor analysis were subjected to tests of internal consistency and parallelism using LIMSTAT

(Hunter & Lim, 1987). This analysis indicated that 13 items should be removed, and the 10 subscales could be retained.

In all, twenty-six items were retained and the decision rules identified 10 meaningful factors. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics and reliabilities for each subscale. Factor 1 was defined by a combination of five items; one adapted from the revised WOC *seeking social support* subscale and four constructed for this study. Items include: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Asked my dating partner for advice; (b) Discussed the emotional aspects of my grief with my partner; (c) Discussed my feelings of sadness with my partner; (d) Got to talk through my feelings with my partner; and (e) Went to my partner for emotional support. These items reflect management strategies related to active and direct confrontation of feelings associated with loss with romantic partners; therefore, this factor was labeled *directly communicating with partner*.

Factor 2 included six items constructed to measure rumination. Items consist of: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Thought about it when I didn't mean to; (b) Had trouble falling asleep or staying asleep because of pictures or thoughts that came into my mind; (c) Had waves of strong feelings about it; (d) Had dreams about it; (e) Kept seeing pictures/images of it in my mind; and (f) Experienced feelings about it every time I was reminded of my loss. These items reflect coping strategies related to repetitive thinking about the loss experienced and/or negative feelings associated with the loss, as well as wishing the situation could be altered and/or the transformed in some way. In turn, this factor was labeled *ruminating*.

The third factor was defined by two items constructed to assess the desire to communicate with romantic partners. These items tapped into a situation where bereaved individuals wanted to communicate with partners but were unable to do so due to either: 1) uninterested partners, or 2) partners who were unable to provide support for whatever reason.

Table 3

Management Strategies: Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Directly Communicating with Partner	2.59	0.97	.94
Ruminating	2.57	0.94	.90
Desiring Communication	1.43	0.83	.84
Accepting Blame	1.72	0.83	.72
Directly Communicating with Others	2.89	0.94	.79
Indirectly Communicating with Partner	1.85	0.87	.75
Distancing	1.67	0.74	.74
Escaping	1.69	1.02	--
Seeking Outside Help	1.07	0.40	--
Waiting It Out	2.68	0.98	--
Positive Confrontation	2.68	0.83	.89
Negative Confrontation	1.53	0.58	.72
Avoidance	2.22	0.72	.85

Note. Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not used; 4 = used a great deal).

The two items are: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Wanted to talk to my partner but he/she wasn't interested; and (b) Wanted more support from my partner but he/she couldn't supply it to me. Because these items reflect a desire to communicate, but inability to communicate with one's partner, this factor was labeled *desiring communication*.

Factor 4 was defined by three items: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Criticized or lectured myself; (b) Made a promise to myself that I would do things differently if I were ever in the situation again; and (c) Blamed myself for my feelings. Two items, one from the revised WOC *accepting responsibility* subscale and one constructed for this study, reflected self-blame and criticism regarding the loss and/or feelings associated with the loss. The third item, adapted from the revised WOC *accepting responsibility* subscale, reflected feelings of responsibility regarding mismanagement of the situation. Factor 4 was therefore labeled *accepting blame*.

Factor 5 included two constructed items reflective of discussing feelings of loss with and receiving emotional support from friends and family; items include: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Discussed the emotional aspects of my grief with my friends and family; and (b) Got the emotional support I needed from my family and friends. This factor was labeled *directly communicating with others*. The sixth factor was defined by two constructed items reflecting indirect, nonverbal expressions of loss with partners; the two items are: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Sulked in front of my partner because of my feelings of loss; and (b) Sighed in the presence of my partner because of my feelings of loss. For this reason, this factor was named *indirectly communicating with partner*.

Factor 7 was comprised of three items from the revised WOC *distancing* subscale; items include: When coping with my loss, I...(a) Went on as if nothing had happened; (b) Tried to forget the whole thing; and (c) Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it. This

factor was therefore labeled *distancing*. Factor 8 consisted of one item taken from the revised WOC *escape-avoidance* subscale. The item was: When coping with my loss, I tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or medication, etc. Because this item reflects behaviors enacted to escape feelings associated with grief, this factor was called *escaping*. Factor 9 was defined by one item from the revised WOC *seeking social support* subscale; the item was: When coping with my loss, I got professional help. Thus, this factor was labeled *seeking outside help*. The tenth factor was also defined by one item adapted from the revised WOC. This item was: When coping with my loss, I felt that time would make a difference—the only thing to do was to wait. Thus, Factor 10 was labeled *waiting it out*.

Management orientations

Although ten *management strategies* emerged from the results of this study, the initial assumption of this investigation was that three general orientations existed among coping responses to grief. Bereaved individuals were predicted to positively confront, negatively confront, or avoid grief. Therefore, in order to determine if a higher order structure existed among factors, the 10 subscales were entered into a principle axis exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation. Subscales that loaded highly on one factor (factor loadings greater than .60) and low on all other factors (loadings less than .45) were selected. Factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted from the subscales remaining to create the final higher order factor pattern matrix. Results suggested a 4-factor higher order structure. Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics and reliabilities for each scale.

Factor 1 was defined by one *management strategy*: *directly communicating with partner*. This *management strategy* reflects active and direct communication with romantic partners regarding feelings of loss; therefore, this higher order factor was labeled *positive confrontation*.

Table 4

Management Orientations: Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
Positive Confrontation	2.68	0.83	.89
Negative Confrontation	1.53	0.58	.72
Avoidance	2.22	0.72	.85

Note. Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not used; 4 = used a great deal).

The second higher order factor included the *management strategies* of *desiring communication*, *indirectly communicating with partner*, and *seeking outside help*. These *management strategies* involve the desire for communication and non-confrontational attempts to communicate thoughts and/or feelings associated with loss, but fail to include active expression and assertion of feelings. Further, this factor includes direct attempts to seek help and support outside of the relationship; thus, this factor was called *negative confrontation*. The third higher order factor was defined by the *management strategies* of *ruminating*, *accepting blame*, and *escaping*. This factor includes cognitive and behavioral coping mechanisms that focus on the loss and associated feelings regarding the role of the self in a more destructive way. Behaviors involve negative repetitive patterns of thought and self-criticism regarding the actual death and efforts to medicate subsequent feelings of loss. Such behaviors act as a form of figurative and literal escape and avoidance from addressing feelings with romantic partners and/or other individuals; therefore, this factor was labeled *avoidance*. The fourth higher order factor included one item reflecting the desire to wait out the bereavement experience as a means to cope; thus, this higher order factor was labeled *waiting it out*. Tests of internal consistency and parallelism using LIMSTAT (Hunter & Lim, 1987) were conducted on the items comprising these higher order factors.

To review, the first set of analyses indicated that 10 meaningful subscales comprised the *management strategies* used when coping with grief. The *management strategies* included: *directly communicating with partner*, *ruminating*, *desiring communication*, *accepting blame*, *directly communicating with others*, *indirectly communicating with partner*, *distancing*, *escaping*, *seeking outside help*, and *waiting it out*. These 10 *management strategies* were then subjected to an exploratory factor analysis in order to determine if a higher order structure existed among subscales. This analysis was conducted in order to examine the initial assumption

that three general orientations of coping existed. Results revealed a 4-factor higher order structure comprised of eight *management strategies*. Management orientations include: *positive confrontation*, *negative confrontation*, *avoidance*, and *waiting it out*.

Chapter 4 presents the preliminary analyses and results associated with the examination of the nine hypotheses that framed this investigation.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Before the hypotheses for this investigation could be examined, several preliminary analyses were warranted. In total, four sets of preliminary analyses concerning the measures in the study were conducted. To determine if men and women exhibited different patterns of behaviors in this investigation, gender differences on all relevant variables related to the hypotheses were examined. In addition, analyses examined if participants exhibited different patterns of coping behavior depending on the relationship with the deceased, as operationalized by two categories: friend or family member. Further, the type of death was examined in order to uncover differences in responses based on the manner in which the participants' loved one died. Also, because the management strategies were operationalized by a set of communicative and coping variables, the associations among the multiple measures of constructs were examined.

Preliminary analyses involved a variety of tests, including *t*, *r*, and ANOVA. Generally speaking, assuming a medium effect size and $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), the power for *t*-tests exceeded .88. Power for the tests of *r* exceeded .69 and ANOVA exceeded .96.

Gender differences

Previous research has found that males and females exhibit differences with respect to bereavement outcomes (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1983, 1987). At the same time, certain symptomatology associated with bereavement, such as depression, is also related to gender in the

general population, which suggests that concluding that a gender difference in adjustment to loss exists is unfounded (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1993).

To assess whether or not gender is associated with responses to loss, gender differences on all of the relevant variables related to the tests of hypotheses were examined. Of the seventeen comparisons, seven variables exhibited significant differences in responses between male and female participants. See Table 5 for the means of all significant comparisons. Males reported more anxiety with relationships than did females, $t(103) = 2.26, p < .05, d = .46$, and more positive appraisals of loss than did females, $t(103) = 3.11, p < .05, d = .64$. Females indicated that they experienced higher levels of *partner uncertainty* than did males, $t(103) = 2.79, p < .01, d = .55$. In terms of management strategies, females reported higher scores on *ruminating* than did males, $t(103) = 2.35, p < .05, d = .49$. In addition, females reported higher scores on the management strategy of *indirectly communicating with partner* than did males, $t(103) = 2.35, p < .05, d = .52$. On the other hand, males reported higher scores on the management strategy of *distancing* than did females, $t(103) = 2.07, p < .05, d = .42$. Further, males relied more on *escaping* behaviors to manage their grief than did females, $t(103) = 3.40, p < .01, d = .66$. Given these differences between males and females, the participants' sex was treated as a covariate in the relevant tests of hypotheses.

Relationship with Deceased

The second set of analyses examined the differences in means among the type of relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) and 11 relevant variables related to the tests of hypotheses. In the study, participants were asked to indicate the type of relationship they had with the deceased. Possible responses ranged from immediate or extended family members to friends. Participants were also given the opportunity to respond as

Table 5

Significant Gender Differences On Relevant Variables

Sex	Dependent Variable						
	Anxiety Over Relationships	Appraisal Of Death	Partner Uncertainty	Rum--	Indirectly Comm-- With Partner	Distancing	Escaping
Males	2.19 ^a (0.91)	2.15 ^a (0.81)	4.60 ^a (1.07)	2.27 ^a (0.89)	1.57 ^a (0.65)	1.88 ^a (0.85)	2.15 ^a (0.81)
Females	1.80 ^b (0.78)	1.65 ^b (0.76)	5.12 ^b (0.81)	2.72 ^b (0.93)	1.99 ^b (0.93)	1.56 ^b (0.67)	1.65 ^b (0.76)

Note. Cell entries are means, parenthetical values are standard deviations.

Means in the same column with different superscripts are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level.

“other.” Based on the small variability across frequency of responses, the type of relationship with the deceased was collapsed into two main categories: family member or friend. Previous research has demonstrated that the relationship with the deceased impacts grief and recovery from loss (Sanders, 1999; Weiss, 1993) such that individuals who experience the loss of a close family member exhibit intense and prolonged grief while a lesser degree of grief is typically associated with the death of a friend (Weiss, 1993).

To assess the impact of the type of relationship with the deceased on responses to grief, *t*-tests were performed on all relevant variables. Significant differences were found between the two categorizations of relationships with the deceased for expectation of death, appraisal of death, and the management strategies of *ruminating*, *desiring communication*, *indirectly communicating with partner*, *distancing*, *escaping*, and *seeking outside help*. See Table 6 for the means of significant comparisons. For expectation of death, participants noted significantly higher levels of expectation for the death of a family member than for a friend, $t(101) = 3.82, p < .001, d = .83$. In other words, individuals anticipated the loss of a family member more than that of a friend. For appraisal of death, participants indicated significantly more positive appraisals for a family member than for a friend, $t(101) = 2.43, p < .05, d = .54$. Thus, individuals were more likely to rate the death of a family member more positively than the death of a friend. In terms of management strategies, individuals reported higher scores on *ruminating* when grieving over the loss of a friend than that of a family member, $t(101) = 2.77, p < .05, d = .58$. They also reported higher scores on *desiring communication* when grieving over the death of a friend than that of a family member, $t(101) = 2.57, p < .05, d = .52$. Further, higher scores were reported on *indirectly communicating with a partner* when participants lost a friend rather than a family member, $t(101) = 2.25, p < .05, d = .47$. Individuals who lost a friend rather than a family

Table 6

Relationship with Deceased: Significant Differences On Relevant Variables

Relationship With Deceased	Dependent Variable			
	Expectation Of Death	Appraisal Of Death	Ruminating	Desiring Communication
Family Member	3.06 ^a (1.42)	1.94 ^a (0.86)	2.38 ^a (0.87)	1.28 ^a (0.71)
Friend	1.93 ^b (1.30)	1.53 ^b (0.63)	2.92 ^b (0.99)	1.72 ^b (0.97)

Note. Cell entries are means, parenthetical values are standard deviations.

Means in the same column with different superscripts are significantly different at the

$p < .05$ level.

(table continues)

Relationship With Deceased	Dependent Variable			
	Indirectly Communicating With Partner	Escaping	Seeking Outside Help	Distancing
Family Member	1.72 ^a (0.80)	1.54 ^a (0.89)	1.00 ^a (0.00)	1.44 ^a (0.65)
Friend	2.13 ^b (0.95)	2.03 ^b (1.23)	1.16 ^b (0.63)	1.75 ^b (0.77)

Note. Cell entries are means, parenthetical values are standard deviations.

Means in the same column with different superscripts are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level.

member also reported higher scores on *escaping*, $t(101) = 2.31, p < .05, d = .46$. Lastly, individuals who experienced the loss of a friend rather than a family member reported higher scores on the management strategy of *seeking outside help*, $t(101) = 2.11, p < .05, d = .36$. On the other hand, higher scores were reported on the management strategy of *distancing* when participants lost a family member rather than a friend, $t(101) = 2.01, p < .05, d = .44$. Given these differences between individuals who experience the loss of a family member and those who experience the loss of a friend, the type of relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) was treated as a covariate in the relevant tests of hypotheses.

Type of Death

The next set of analyses concerned the type of death experienced and relevant independent and dependent variables. In the study, participants were asked to indicate how their loved one had died (open-ended question). Responses were categorized based on content descriptions provided by the participants. Content categories were collapsed into five main types of death, which captured the ultimate cause of death provided. The five categories include: medical illness, accident (e.g., vehicle, medical), suicide, homicide, and old age. The way in which the deceased dies has been shown to affect the intensity of grief experienced by the bereaved (Sanders, 1999).

To examine the impact of type of death on responses to grief, an association among variables was examined through a series of one-way ANOVAs where expectation of death, appraisal of death, self uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and all management strategies were listed as the dependent variables and the type of death was the independent variable. Preliminary analyses indicated an overall difference between type of death and expectation of death, $F(4, 100) = 13.06, p < .000, \eta^2 = .34$. Post-hoc Bonferroni analyses indicated that the death was

significantly more expected when due to a medical illness rather than either an accident or suicide. Further, the death was significantly more expected when the loss was due to old age than an accident or suicide. Analyses also indicated an overall difference between type of death and appraisal of death, $F(4, 100) = 4.17, p < .01, \eta^2 = .14$. Post-hoc Bonferroni analyses indicated that the effect was driven by differences in appraisals between deaths due to a medical illness and deaths due to an accident; individuals appraised deaths due to a medical illness more positively than those due to an accident. Further, there were significant differences in appraisals between deaths due to old age and deaths due to an accident; individuals appraised deaths due to old age more positively than those due to an accident. An overall difference between type of death and the management strategy of *ruminating* was also indicated $F(4, 100) = 5.57, p < .000, \eta^2 = .18$. Post-hoc Bonferroni analyses indicated that the effect was driven by differences in the utilization of *ruminating* between deaths due to an accident and deaths due to a medical illness. The effect was further driven by differences in the utilization of *ruminating* between deaths due to accidents and those due to old age. Table 7 provides a summary of means and significant differences among type of death and all relevant variables. Given these differences, type of death was treated as a covariate within the relevant tests of hypotheses.

Correlations Among Variables

The communicative responses to grief were operationalized by a set of measures. Although three general orientations were predicted (positive confrontation, negative confrontation, and avoidance), 10 specific management strategies emerged from the data. The nature of the associations among the management strategies have important implications for the analyses of the hypotheses. In particular, high correlations among the measures would suggest that the measures provide alternative operationalizations of the strategy and/or are jointly

Table 7

Type of Death: Significant Differences On Relevant Variables

Type Of Death	Dependent Variable		
	Expectation Of Death	Appraisal Of Death	Ruminating
Medical Illness	3.15 ^a (1.39)	1.94 ^a (0.83)	2.43 ^a (0.89)
Accident	1.36 ^b (0.65)	1.33 ^b (0.39)	3.12 ^b (0.81)
Suicide	1.53 ^b (0.56)	1.67 (0.70)	3.17 ^b (0.82)
Homicide	1.10 (0.14)	1.33 (0.47)	3.08 (1.30)
Old Age	3.62 ^a (1.34)	2.31 ^a (1.00)	1.86 ^a (0.79)

Note. Cell entries are means, parenthetical values are standard deviations.

Means in the same column with different superscripts are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level.

employed. To illuminate these issues, associations among the 10 management strategies were examined. As reported in Table 8, several of the management strategies were significantly associated with one another. Zero-order correlations indicated that the management strategies of *directly communicating with partner* and *directly communicating with others* were positively associated. This finding is in line with the higher factor analysis, which indicated that these two management strategies reflect active and direct communication with partners and others regarding feelings of loss and, thus, were labeled *positive confrontation*.

Ruminating was found to be positively correlated with *desiring communication*, *accepting blame*, *directly communicating with others*, *indirectly communicating with partner*, *escaping*, and *waiting it out*. *Desiring communication* was positively associated with *accepting blame*, *indirectly communicating with partner*, *escaping*, and *seeking outside help*. *Accepting blame* was positively associated with the management strategies of *distancing* and *escaping*. Lastly, *indirectly communicating with partner* was positively associated with *seeking outside help*. Zero-order correlations also suggested that *directly communicating with partner* and *directly communicating with others* were negatively associated with *distancing*. These findings indicate that the management strategies and higher order *orientations* may be jointly employed as coping mechanisms.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis posited that there would be a positive relationship between expectation of death and positive appraisal of loss. The association between expectation and appraisal of death was examined through hierarchical regression, where appraisal of loss was the dependent variable and expectation of death was the independent variable. Based on preliminary

Table 8

Correlations Among the Management Strategies

	Directly Communicating With Partner	Ruminating	Desiring Communication	Accepting Blame With Others	Directly Communicating
Directly Communicating With Partner	---	.10	-.14	-.07	.40**
Ruminating	.10	---	.38**	.35**	.24*
Desiring Communication	-.14	.38**	---	.31**	.06
Accepting Blame	-.07	.35**	.31**	---	.04
Directly Communicating With Others	.40**	.24*	.06	.04	---
Indirectly Communicating With Partner	.15	.31**	.32**	.12	.17
Distancing	-.44**	-.13	-.06	.21*	-.39**
Escaping	-.14	.30**	.24*	.31**	-.08
Seeking Outside Help	-.05	.15	.30**	.14	.03
Waiting It Out	.01	.30**	.08	-.12	.05

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.*(table continues)*

	Indirectly Communicating With Partner	Distancing	Escaping	Seeking Outside Help	Waiting It Out
Directly Communicating With Partner	.15	-.44**	-.14	-.05	.01
Ruminating	.31**	-.13	.30**	.15	.30**
Desiring Communication	.32**	-.06	.24*	.30**	.08
Accepting Blame	.12	.21*	.31**	.14	-.12
Directly Communicating With Others	.17	-.39**	-.08	.03	.05
Indirectly Communicating With Partner	---	-.10	-.02	.25	.20
Distancing	-.10	---	.04	-.03	-.03
Escaping	-.02	.04	---	.08	.12
Seeking Outside Help	.25**	-.03	.08	---	.13
Waiting It Out	.17	-.03	.12	.13	---

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

analyses, gender, type of death (categorized as medical illness, accident, suicide, homicide, or old age), and relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) were entered as covariates on the first step of the analysis. All three variables were significantly associated with appraisal of death. Results suggested that expectation of death was significantly associated with appraisal of loss, such that as expectation of death increased, positive appraisals of loss increased, $R(4, 98) = .51, R^2 \Delta = .12, p < .001$; therefore, H1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 and 3

The next two hypotheses examined the relationship between attachment orientation and positive appraisals of loss. H2 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between comfort with closeness and positive appraisal of loss. H3 advanced that there would be a negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive appraisal of loss. Based on preliminary analyses assessing the associations among gender, type of death (categorized as medical illness, accident, suicide, homicide, or old age), and relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) and appraisal of loss, all three variables were treated as covariates in these analyses. The independent variable for both hypotheses was attachment orientation. As previously mentioned, measurement analyses of Feeney's (1995; 1999) scale identified three dimensions of attachment: *comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships*. Because the three dimensions together constitute the attachment construct, they were entered on the second step of a regression analysis, after the covariates were entered on the first step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the third and fourth steps. The dependent variable was appraisal of loss. Table 9 presents the results of analyses associated with H2 and H3. Results indicated that *comfort with intimacy* was negatively associated with appraisal of loss, such that individuals who reported higher scores on

Table 9

Summary of the Regression of Appraisal of Loss on Attachment Dimensions

Appraisal of Loss	β	R	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1: Covariates:		.37**	.14**
Gender	.26**		
Relationship with Deceased	.23*		
Type of Death	.10		
Step 2: Attachment Dimensions:		.45	.06
Anxiety over Relationships (AR)	.03		
Comfort with Intimacy (CI)	-.28**		
Comfort with Dependence (CD)	.14		
Step 3: 2-Way Interactions:			
AR x CI	.38	.47	.02
AR x CD	-.39		
CI x CD	-.54		
Step 4: 3-Way Interaction:			
AR x CI x CD	1.82	.48	.01

Note. For the first step of all analyses, $df = (3, 99)$; for the second step, $df = (3, 96)$; for the third step, $df = (3, 93)$; for the fourth step, $df = (1, 92)$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

comfort with intimacy reported more negative appraisals of loss, $\beta = -.28, p < .01$. Considering that comfort with closeness was operationalized as *comfort with intimacy*, H2 was not supported. Further, results suggested that anxiety over relationships was not significantly associated with appraisal of loss, $\beta = .03, n.s$; thus, H3 was not supported.

Hypotheses 4 and 5

The next two hypotheses examined the relationship between attachment orientation and positive confrontation behaviors. H4 advanced that there would be a positive relationship between comfort with closeness and positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one. H5 predicted that there would be a negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one. The independent variable for both analyses was the three-dimensional measure of attachment orientation. *Comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships* were entered on the first step of a regression analysis. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the second and third steps. The dependent variable was the management orientation of *positive confrontation*. Table 10 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analyses for H4 and H5. Results indicated that *comfort with intimacy* was significantly associated with *positive confrontation*, $\beta = .36, p < .01$. Thus, support was found for H4. With respect to H5, a bereaved individual's anxiety over his or her relationship was not significantly associated with the use of *positive confrontation* behaviors after the death of a loved one, $\beta = .03, n.s$. However, results did suggest a significant relationship between the three-way interaction among attachment dimensions and *positive confrontation*, $R^2 \Delta = .05, p < .05$. To evaluate the form of this interaction, procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) were employed to compute the slope for each predictor variable

Table 10

Summary of the Regression of Positive Confrontation on Attachment Dimensions

Positive Confrontation	β	R	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1: Attachment Dimensions:		.40***	.16***
Anxiety over Relationships (AR)	-.06		
Comfort with Intimacy (CI)	.36**		
Comfort with Dependence (CD)	.06		
Step 2: 2-Way Interactions:		.41	.01
AR x CI	.22		
AR x CD	-.38		
CI x CD	.28		
Step 3: 3-Way Interaction:		.47*	.05*
AR x CI x CD	-5.02*		

Note. For the first step of all analyses, $df = (3, 101)$; for the second step, $df = (3, 98)$; for the third step, $df = (1, 97)$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

within all possible high and low combinations of the other two independent variables. The most comprehensible interpretation of the three-way interaction indicated the association between *comfort with intimacy* and *positive confrontation* at different levels of *comfort with dependence* and *anxiety over relationships*. These slopes are presented in Table 11. The pattern of slopes is consistent with H4 and inconsistent with H5. For ease of interpretation, Figure 2 provides a graph of this three-way interaction, which was produced using a three-predictor regression analysis described by Aiken and West (1991). Specifically, the most consistent interpretation is that when a bereaved individual's *comfort with dependence* was at average levels and their *anxiety over relationships* was at low, average, or high levels, average levels of *comfort with intimacy* were positively associated with *positive confrontation*. Therefore, additional evidence was found in support for H4. Results did not reveal a negative interaction or main effect between anxiety over relationships and positive confrontation; thus, support was not found for H5.

Because the management strategy of *directly communicating with partner* comprised the higher order management orientation of *positive confrontation*, an analysis was also performed to determine the association between the attachment orientations and *directly communicating with partner*. Using hierarchical regression, the three attachment dimensions were entered on the first step of a regression analysis. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the second and third steps. The dependent variable was *directly communicating with partner*. Preliminary analyses revealed no significant covariates associated with this management strategy; thus, no covariates were entered in this analysis. Table 12 presents the results of these analyses. Results suggested that *comfort with intimacy* was positively associated with *directly communicating with partner*, $\beta = .30, p < .01$. Therefore, additional support was found for H4.

Table 11

Slopes for the Regression of Positive Confrontation on Comfort with Intimacy at Varying Levels of Comfort with Dependence and Anxiety over Relationships

Comfort with Dependence	Anxiety over Relationships		
	Low	Average	High
Low	.14	.37**	.59*
Average	.33*	.31**	.29*
High	.52**	.26	-.00

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Figure Caption

Figure 2. A Graph of the Three-Way Interaction of Comfort with Intimacy on Positive Confrontation at Varying Levels of Comfort with Dependence and Anxiety over Relationships.

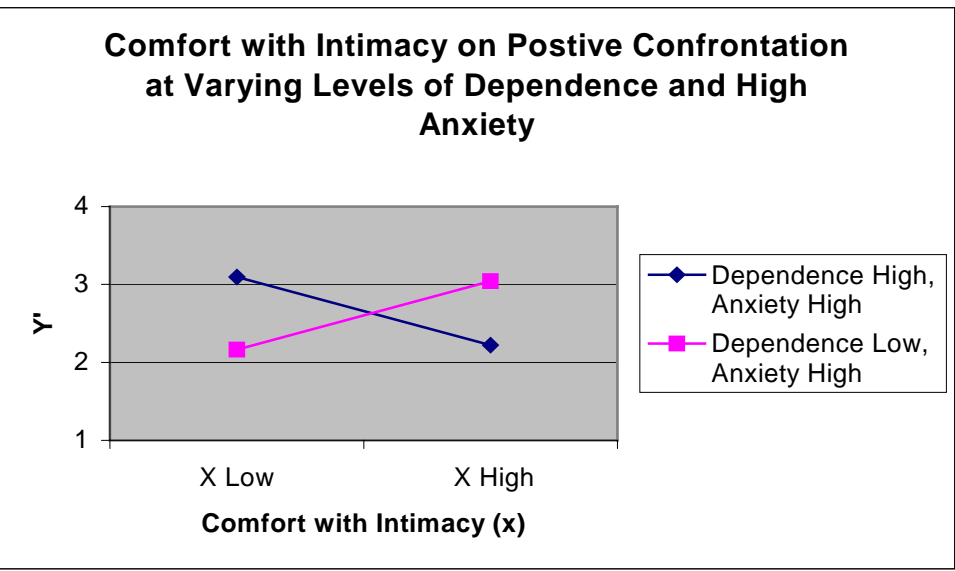
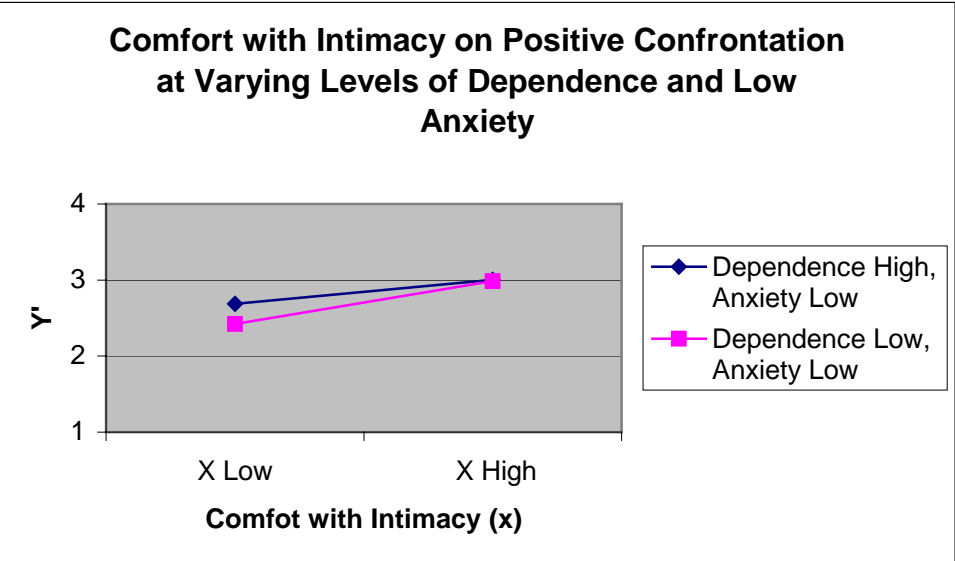


Table 12

*Summary of the Regression of Directly Communicating with Partner on Attachment**Dimensions*

Directly Communicating with Partner	β	R	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1: Attachment Dimensions:		.34**	.12**
Anxiety over Relationships (AR)	-.08		
Comfort with Intimacy (CI)	.30**		
Comfort with Dependence (CD)	.07		
Step 2: 2-Way Interactions:		.36	.01
AR x CI	.36		
AR x CD	-.29		
CI x CD	.42		
Step 3: 3-Way Interaction:		.44**	.07**
AR x CI x CD	-5.80**		

Note. For the first step of all analyses, $df = (3, 101)$; for the second step, $df = (3, 98)$; for the third step, $df = (1, 97)$.

** $p < .01$.

Further, results indicated a significant association between the three-way interaction among attachment dimensions and *directly communicating with partner*, $R^2 \Delta = .07, p < .01$. To evaluate the form of this interaction, procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) were employed to compute the slope for each predictor variable within all possible high and low combinations of the other two independent variables. The clearest interpretation of the three-way interaction indicated the association between *comfort with intimacy* and *directly communicating with partner* at different levels of *comfort with dependence* and *anxiety over relationships*. These slopes are presented in Table 13.

For ease of interpretation, Figure 3 provides a graph of this three-way interaction, which was produced using a three-predictor regression analysis described by Aiken and West (1991). The most concise interpretation of this interaction is that when a bereaved individual's *comfort with dependence* was at low levels and their *anxiety over relationships* was at low, average, and high levels, average levels of *comfort with intimacy* were positively associated with *directly communicating with partner*. Thus, further support was found for H4.

Although the management strategy of *directly communicating with others* was not a confirmed subscale of *positive confrontation*, this management strategy aligns theoretically with other types of direct communication. A bereaved individual may communicate his or feelings of loss with either a romantic partner or another individual. An examination of the variables associated with the management strategy of *directly communicating with others*, therefore, may provide further insight into the variables associated with the employment of direct forms of communication, in general, when coping with loss.

To determine the association between the attachment orientations and *directly communicating with others*, the variables were subjected to a hierarchical regression analysis.

Table 13

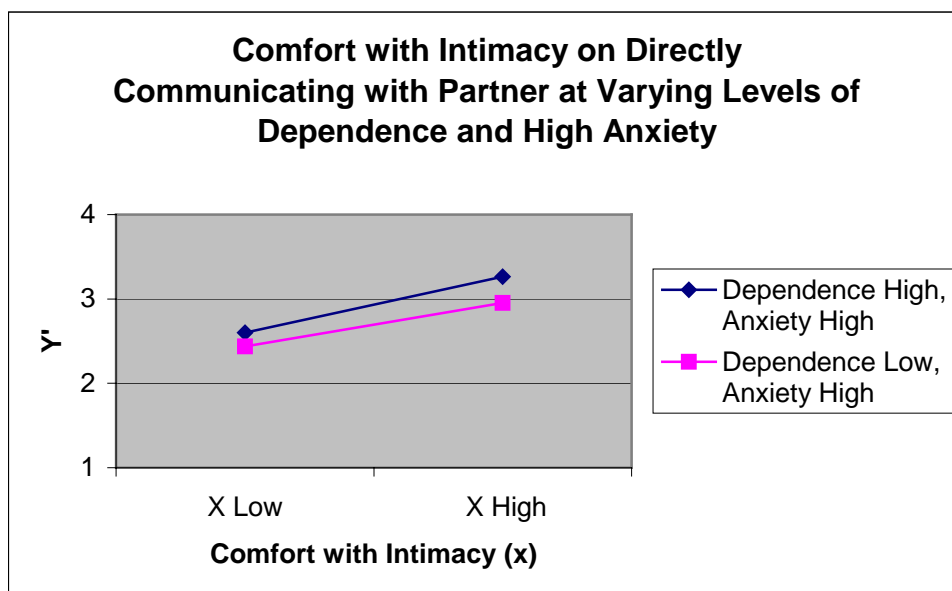
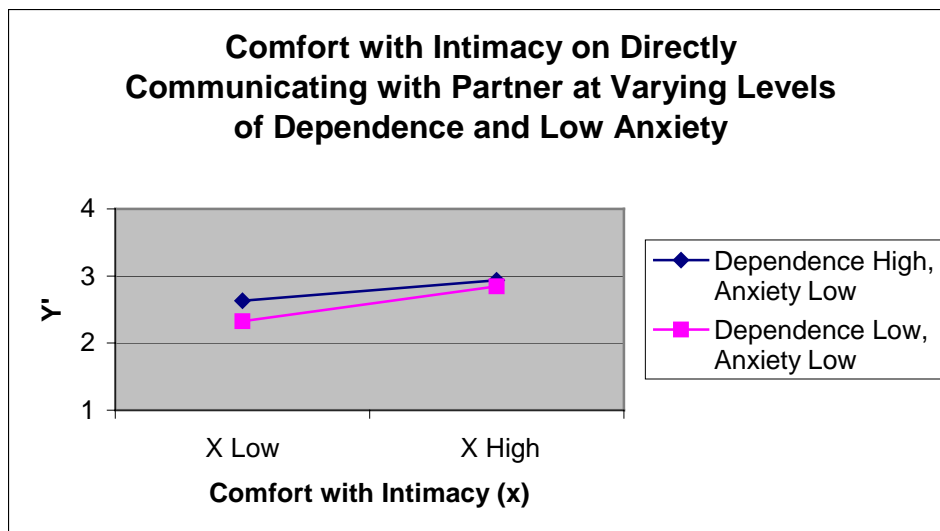
Slopes for the Regression of Directly Communicating with Partner on Comfort with Intimacy at Varying Levels of Comfort with Dependence and Anxiety over Relationships

Comfort with Dependence	Anxiety over Relationships		
	Low	Average	High
Low	.02	.34*	.67*
Average	.29	.29*	.29
High	.55*	.23	-.10

* $p < .05$.

Figure Caption

Figure 3. A Graph of the Three-Way Interaction of Comfort with Intimacy on Directly Communicating with Partner at Varying Levels of Comfort with Dependence and Anxiety over Relationships.



The independent variable was the three-dimensional measure of attachment orientation; thus, *comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships* were entered on the first step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the second and third steps. The dependent variable was *directly communicating with others*. Preliminary analyses revealed no significant covariates associated with this management strategy; thus, no covariates were entered in this analysis. Results suggested that *comfort with intimacy* was positively associated with *directly communicating with others*, $\beta = .40, p < .001$. No significant two- or three-way interactions among attachment dimensions were obtained. Additional evidence, therefore, was found in support for the predicted association between *comfort with closeness* and direct communication behaviors.

Hypothesis 6

The next two hypotheses examined the relationships between attachment orientations and sources of uncertainty. H6 suggested that there would be a positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and self uncertainty following the loss of a loved one. The independent variable was attachment orientation. The dependent variable was amount of self uncertainty. Using hierarchical regression, the three identified dimensions of attachment were entered on the first step of a regression analysis. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the second and third steps. The dependent variable was self uncertainty. Preliminary analyses revealed no significant covariates associated with self uncertainty. Table 14 presents the results of analyses for H5. Results suggested that *comfort with intimacy* was positively associated with self uncertainty, such that individuals who report higher scores on *comfort with intimacy* report higher levels of self uncertainty, $\beta = .31, p < .01$. Further, results indicated that *anxiety over relationships* was negatively associated with self uncertainty,

Table 14

Summary of the Regression of Self Uncertainty on Attachment Dimensions

Self Uncertainty	β	R	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1: Attachment Dimensions:		.40***	.16***
Anxiety over Relationships (AR)	-.25**		
Comfort with Intimacy (CI)	.31**		
Comfort with Dependence (CD)	-.02		
Step 2: 2-Way Interactions:		.43	.02
AR x CI	.57		
AR x CD	-.38		
CI x CD	.42		
Step 3: 3-Way Interaction:		.48*	.05*
AR x CI x CD	-4.92*		

Note. For the first step of all analyses, $df = (3, 101)$; for the second step, $df = (3, 98)$; for the third step, $df = (1, 97)$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

$\beta = -.25, p < .01$. Further, results indicated a significant association between the three-way interaction among attachment dimensions and self uncertainty, $R^2 \Delta = .05, p < .05$. To evaluate this interaction, procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) were employed to compute the slope for each predictor variable within all possible high and low combinations of the other two independent variables. The most comprehensible interpretation of the three-way interaction indicated the association between *comfort with intimacy* and self uncertainty at different levels of *comfort with dependence* and *anxiety over relationships*. These slopes are presented in Table 15. To assist in interpretation, Figure 4 provides a graph of this three-way interaction, which was produced using a three-predictor regression analysis described by Aiken and West (1991). Specifically, the clearest interpretation suggests that when a bereaved individual's *comfort with dependence* was at low levels and their *anxiety over relationships* was at low, average, and high levels, average levels of *comfort with intimacy* were positively associated with self uncertainty. Results did not reveal a negative interaction or main effect between *anxiety over relationships* and self uncertainty; thus, support was not found for H6.

Hypothesis 7

H7 posited that there would be a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and partner uncertainty following the loss of a loved one. This hypothesis was examined through a hierarchical regression, where the independent variable was attachment orientation and the dependent variable was partner uncertainty. Given the preliminary analyses, gender was entered as a covariate on the first step. The three attachment dimensions were entered on the second step of a regression analysis. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the third and fourth steps. Table 16 presents the results of analyses for H7. Results indicated that comfort with closeness was not associated with partner uncertainty,

Table 15

Slopes for the Regression of Self Uncertainty on Comfort with Intimacy at Varying Levels of Comfort with Dependence and Anxiety over Relationships

Comfort with Dependence	Anxiety over Relationships		
	Low	Average	High
Low	.02	.45**	.89**
Average	.32	.40**	.48*
High	.63*	.35	.08

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Figure Caption

Figure 4. A Graph of the Three-Way Interaction of Comfort with Intimacy on Self Uncertainty at Varying Levels of Comfort with Dependence and Anxiety over Relationships.

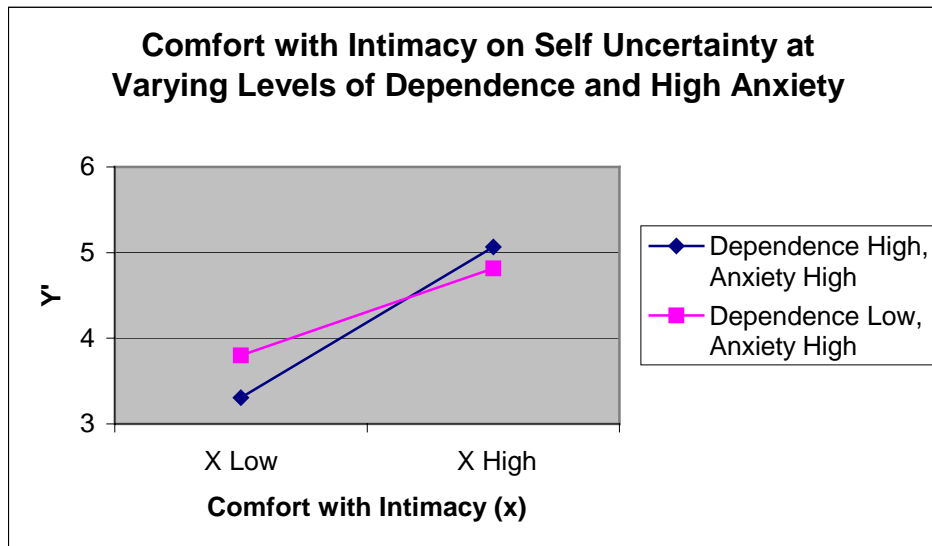
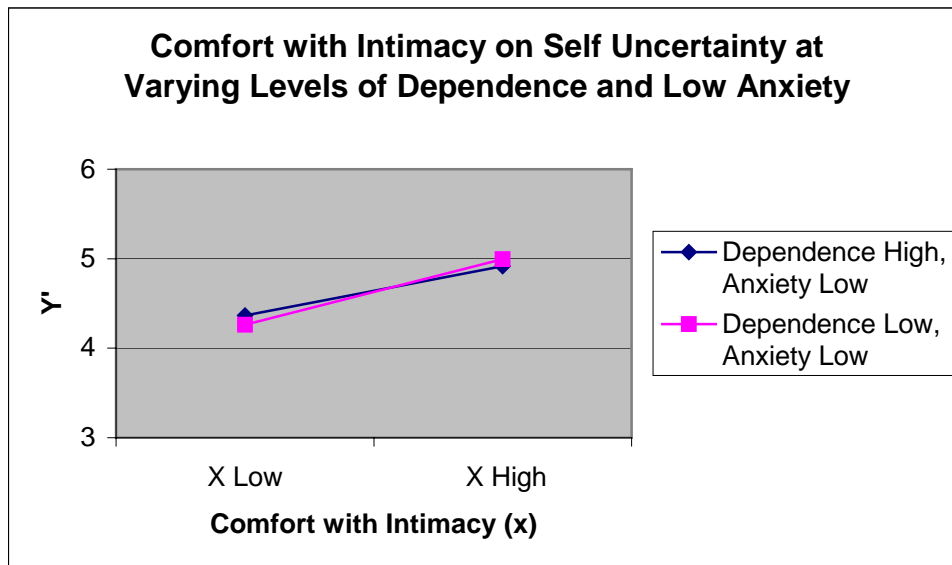


Table 16

Summary of the Regression of Partner Uncertainty on Attachment Dimensions

Partner Uncertainty	β	R	$R^2 \Delta$
Step 1: Covariate:		.27**	.07**
Gender	.27**		
Step 2: Attachment Dimensions:		.39*	.08*
Anxiety over Relationships (AR)	-.21*		
Comfort with Intimacy (CI)	.19		
Comfort with Dependence (CD)	-.01		
Step 3: 2-Way Interactions:		.47	.07
AR x CI	.93*		
AR x CD	-.43		
CI x CD	1.00		
Step 4: 3-Way Interaction:		.47	.00
AR x CI x CD	.33		

Note. For the first step of all analyses, $df = (1, 103)$; for the second step, $df = (3, 100)$; for the third step, $df = (3, 97)$; for the fourth step, $df = (1, 96)$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

$\beta = .19$, n.s. However, results did suggest that *anxiety over relationships* was negatively associated with partner uncertainty, such that individuals who report lower scores on *anxiety over relationships* report higher levels of partner uncertainty, $\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$. Further, results indicated a significant two-way interaction effect between anxiety over relationships and comfort with intimacy on partner uncertainty, $\beta = .93$, $p < .05$; thus, when anxiety over relationships is high and comfort with intimacy is high, individuals are more likely to experience partner uncertainty. Given these results, support was not found for H7.

Hypothesis 8

The last two hypotheses examined the relationships between attachment orientation and the communicative behaviors of negative confrontation and avoidance. H8 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and negative confrontation behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one. This prediction was examined using hierarchical regression, where the independent variable was attachment orientation and the dependent variable was the management orientation of *negative confrontation*. Given the preliminary analyses, gender and relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) were entered as covariates on the first step. *Comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships* were entered on the second step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the third and fourth steps. Results indicated that *anxiety over relationships* was positively associated with *negative confrontation*, $\beta = .23$, $p < .05$. Results revealed no significant two- and three-way interaction effects. Thus, support was provided for H8.³

Hypothesis 9

H9 advanced that there would be a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and avoidant behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one. This hypothesis was examined through hierarchical regression, where the independent variable was attachment orientation and the dependent variable was the management orientation of *avoidance*. Given the preliminary analyses, type of death (categorized as medical illness, accident, suicide, homicide, or old age) was entered as a covariate on the first step. *Comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships* were entered on the second step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the third and fourth steps. Results indicated that attachment orientation was not significantly associated with the management orientation of *avoidance*, $R(3, 100) = .21$, $R^2 \Delta = .04$, n.s. Further, results revealed no significant two- and three-way interactions among attachment dimensions. Given these results, support was not found for H9.⁴

Analyses were also performed to determine the associations among attachment dimensions and the three management strategies that comprised the higher order orientation of *avoidance*: *ruminating*, *escaping*, and *accepting blame*. All three associations were examined through hierarchical regression, where attachment orientation was the independent variable and the dependent variable was the management strategy of either: *ruminating*, *escaping*, or *accepting blame*. Based on preliminary analyses, gender, relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend), and type of death (categorized as medical illness, accident, suicide, homicide, or old age) were entered as covariates on the first step in the hierarchical regression analysis involving *ruminating*. Gender and relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) were entered as covariates on the first step in

the hierarchical regression analysis involving *escaping*. Preliminary analyses indicated no significant covariates for *accepting blame*; thus no covariates were included in the analysis for this management strategy. *Comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships* were entered on the first or second step of all analyses, depending on whether or not covariates were entered on the first step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the second and third or third and fourth steps, based on the inclusion of covariates. Results indicated that attachment orientation was not significantly associated with *ruminating*, $R(3, 96) = .40, R^2 \Delta = .02, n.s.$, or *escaping*, $R(3, 97) = .45, R^2 \Delta = .03, n.s.$ However, results did suggest that *comfort with intimacy* was negatively associated *accepting blame*, $\beta = -.36, p < .01$. No significant interactions among attachment dimensions were revealed. Given the significant findings revealed in this analysis, partial support was found for H9.

Although the management strategy of *distancing* failed to load on the higher order structure of management orientations, this strategy theoretically falls into the category of *avoidance*; thus, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed to assess the association between attachment and *distancing*. In this analysis, attachment orientation was the independent variable and *distancing* was the dependent variable. Given the preliminary analyses, gender and relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) were entered as covariates on the first step. *Comfort with intimacy*, *comfort with dependence*, and *anxiety over relationships* were entered on the second step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the third and fourth steps. Results suggested that *comfort with intimacy* was negatively associated with *distancing*, $\beta = -.31, p < .01$. No significant interaction effects among attachment dimensions were revealed. Given these results, more evidence in support for a negative relationship between comfort with closeness and avoidant behaviors was found.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Prior research has indicated that communication plays an integral role in bereavement coping and adjustment (Lindemann, 1944; Muller & Thompson, 2003; Pennebaker, 1993; Richardson & Balaswamy, 2001; Worden, 1982). Models of coping with bereavement have mainly focused on wide-ranging dimensions of communication. The present investigation examined a more nuanced model of communication in the context of bereavement and romantic relationships. In particular, this thesis argued that the range of communicative and coping responses among bereaved partners includes more distinct categories than simply confrontation and avoidance. The results of this examination are consistent with the predictions that expectation of death and attachment orientation of the bereaved individual impact appraisals of loss. Further, the results indicated that attachment orientation is related to feelings of self and partner uncertainty and ultimately drives different communicative responses among bereaved individuals following the death of a loved one.

This study was the first to examine the specific communicative strategies employed by bereaved individuals with romantic partners as a result of expectation of death, attachment orientation, and appraisal of death. To review and evaluate the model examined in this thesis, this chapter discusses the findings associated with each of the following hypothesized relationships: 1) expectation of death and appraisal of loss, 2) attachment orientation, appraisal of loss, and communicative responses to loss, and 4) attachment orientation and sources of uncertainty in the bereaved following the loss of a loved one. In conclusion, this chapter

identifies limitations of the current investigation and highlights the implications of this thesis for future examinations exploring the role of expectation of death and attachment orientation in the communicative responses to loss of bereaved individuals in romantic relationships.

Expectation of Death and Appraisals of Loss

The model advanced in this thesis advanced that a bereaved individual's expectation of the death of a loved one would be associated with appraisals of loss. As expected, the results of this investigation indicated a positive relationship between expectation of death and positive appraisal of loss. Given time to acknowledge the potential loss of a loved one, individuals may find ways to come to terms with the death of their loved one. A more positive appraisal following higher levels of anticipation of the death suggests that the bereaved has found some way of accepting the death, regardless of the pain associated with the loss. These results provide insight into the relationship between expectation of death and cognitive appraisal of death, which may also help explain differences in bereavement outcomes (Sanders, 1982-1983). When an individual anticipates the death of a loved one, he or she may appraise the loss more positively, resulting in enhanced adjustment to the loss. On the other hand, if an individual does not anticipate the death of his or her loved one, the death may be appraised more negatively, resulting in more negative bereavement outcomes.

Attachment Orientation, Appraisals of Loss, and Communicative Strategies

The attachment orientation of the bereaved was also predicted to influence appraisals of loss and ultimately drive communicative responses to loss. The results of this examination provide support for the prediction that comfort with closeness impacts appraisals of loss. Further, both hypothesized attachment dimensions, comfort with closeness and anxiety over

relationships, affect the communicative responses employed by bereaved individuals following the death of a loved one.

Comfort with Closeness

Contrary to the hypothesized positive relationship between comfort with closeness and appraisal of loss, results indicated that comfort with closeness was negatively associated with appraisal of loss. These results suggest that individuals who are comfortable being close with others will appraise the death of a loved one as negative. This may be explained by the fact that individuals who are comfortable with closeness actually allow themselves to experience intimate and close relationships. Because they possess a positive model of others and view others as trustworthy (Feeney, 1995), individuals who are comfortable being close with others are able to form intimate and meaningful relationships, affording them with greater possibilities of pain and grief upon the death of another. Further, individuals who are comfortable being close with others allow themselves to access unpleasant emotions (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Thus, these individuals not only allow themselves to experience close intimate relationships, but also to experience the pain associated with the loss of that relationship. Additionally, their accessibility of emotions makes them more inclined to report negative feelings associated with the death of a loved one.

Following the appraisal of loss, comfort with closeness was positively associated with positive confrontation behaviors as hypothesized. Results also indicated that when bereaved individuals possessed average levels of comfort with being close with and depending on partners they would directly share bereavement feelings with partners, regardless of the level of anxiety they felt over their relationship. Results examining the two management strategies that theoretically comprised the management orientation of *positive confrontation* indicated that

comfort with closeness was positively associated with *directly communicating with partner* and *directly communicating with others*. Results also suggested that bereaved individuals who possess at least average levels of comfort with partners, even if they feel less comfortable depending on others and have varying levels of anxiety over relationships, employ direct communication strategies with partners. Because these two management strategies, *directly communicating with partner* and *directly communicating with others*, are theoretically similar to positive confrontation behaviors, these findings are in line with the predictions of this study.

These results suggest that bereaved individuals who are comfortable being close with and depending on partners cope with their loss more constructively, utilizing more open and direct means of communication with their partners. These individuals will talk about their loss with their romantic partners and express feelings associated with the death of their loved one candidly and directly. Given the pattern of results regarding appraisals of loss and communicative responses, bereaved individuals who are comfortable being close with and depending on others will appraise the loss of a loved one as negative and consequently seek out and ask for help from romantic partners in order to find constructive ways to cope with their grief. These results are consistent with the idea that individuals with a positive view of others are able to access attachment-related feelings, merit them, and seek for support and comfort from partners as a means to cope with distress.

The results of this study also highlight the possibility that bereaved individuals who are comfortable being close with others may first appraise their loss negatively due to the loss of a significant relationship, then find constructive ways to cope, and ultimately reappraise their loss as positive. Prior research suggests that these individuals are more likely to engage in positive

reappraisals, which involve reframing negative aspects of a stressful situation, finding meaning in distress, and growing from the experience (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986).

Contrary to the hypothesized negative relationship between comfort with closeness and avoidant behaviors with romantic partners following the loss of a loved one, no association between attachment dimensions and avoidant behaviors was found. However, when analyses were performed using the management strategies that comprised the higher order management orientation of *avoidance*, results revealed that comfort with closeness was negatively associated with *accepting blame* and *distancing*. These results suggest that bereaved individuals who are comfortable with being close with partners are less inclined to blame themselves for circumstances surrounding their loss and/or bereavement feelings. In addition, these individuals are less likely to distance themselves by refusing to think about their loss and/or trying to forget it happened. These findings can be explained by the fact that individuals who are comfortable being close with partners also appraise their loss more negatively and, consequently, engage in positive confrontation behaviors with romantic partners in an effort to cope with their feelings. As a result, individuals high in comfort do not blame themselves for nor distance themselves from their feelings because they acknowledge their grief as a necessary outcome to the loss of a close, loving relational other. Moreover, these individuals recognize the need to confront their feelings with close others and value themselves and others enough to do so. In short, these individuals believe they are worthy of support and think their partners are competent providers of support.

To review, the results of this study suggest that bereaved individuals who are comfortable being close with and depending on others appraise the loss of a loved one as negative and cope with their grief by constructively confronting their feelings, seeking support from their partners,

and directly talking about their feelings. Further, these individuals avoid blaming themselves for their feelings, as they believe they are worthy of acknowledgment and confrontation. Lastly, individuals high in comfort prohibit distancing themselves from their feelings as a viable way to cope.

Anxiety Over Relationships

Interestingly, results suggested that anxiety over relationships is not associated with appraisals of loss. This investigation, then, did not reveal support for the hypothesized negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and appraisal of loss. Although highly anxious individuals appear unable to suppress negative thoughts, repress negative emotions, and detach from inner pain (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995), the results of this study suggest that there is no relationship between these behaviors and appraisals of loss. The prediction that anxiety over relationships is related to heightened expression of attachment-related emotions must therefore be further examined. The findings of this study support previous research that suggests highly anxious individuals may actually try to avoid the expression of attachment-related feelings of distress to alleviate fears of alienating relational partners (Feeney, 1999). In this sense, the present investigations' results are consistent with past research suggesting that highly anxious individuals exert greater emotional control.

Contrary to the predicted negative relationship between anxiety over relationships and positive confrontation behaviors, results indicated that anxiety over relationships was not significantly associated with positive confrontation following appraisals of loss. Further, the results of this investigation suggested that bereaved individuals with average levels of comfort with being close and depending on partners openly and constructively talked about their feelings associated with bereavement regardless of the level of anxiety they had about relationships.

Anxiety over relationships, therefore, may not actually be associated with less direct communicative strategies, particularly when individuals possess average levels of comfort with partners.

This study argued that open and direct communication strategies were indicative of positive confrontation behaviors while passive, ruminative, and emotion-focused strategies were suggestive of negative confrontation behaviors. Rather than being inversely related, as predicted, these types of strategies may somehow be theoretically different. Alternatively, there may be something qualitatively different about the individuals who employ them.

As expected, the results of this study indicated that anxiety over relationships was positively associated with negative confrontation behaviors. Highly anxious individuals do employ more passive communicative responses to loss with romantic partners. The previous discussion regarding the potential emotional control of anxious individuals sheds more light on the rationale behind using more subtle, indirect responses such as nonverbal appeals and desiring communication but not directly requesting it. Highly anxious individuals not only have a negative view of self, which may impede them from believing they are worthy of support, but also rely on more passive, ruminative, and emotion-focused strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In light of the desire to control their emotion with partners, for fear of alienating them, anxious individuals may find themselves in this interesting dilemma. They may need to find a way to cope with their emotions internally in order to control their emotional display with partners. Consistent with past research, anxious individuals' desire for emotional control causes a physical manifestation of their anxiety that is displayed in myriad behaviors (Feeney & Noller, 1996). Thus, anxious individuals may communicate passively, confronting their grief in a more covert way. Such behaviors may be construed as negative or destructive by the romantic

partners of anxious individuals due to the passive aggressive nature of the communicative responses.

To review, the results of this investigation indicate that anxiety over relationships is not associated with appraisals or positive confrontation behaviors. Instead, highly anxious individuals may attempt to control their emotional expression of bereavement-related feelings with partners for fear of abandonment. This attempt to suppress extreme outbursts of emotion may subsequently lead to the repression of cognitive appraisals of distress. While trying to contain bereavement-related emotions, anxious individuals eventually communicate their grief in more passive, indirect ways with partners. Thus, individuals who are anxious over their relationships confront their grief using more negative means of communication, rather than employing more positive or avoidant communicative methods.

Attachment Orientation and Sources of Relational Uncertainty

This study also sought to examine the relationship between the attachment orientation of the bereaved and sources of relational uncertainty experienced after the loss of a loved one. Results indicated that comfort with closeness was positively associated with self uncertainty and not associated with partner uncertainty. In addition, anxiety over relationships was negatively associated with both self and partner uncertainty. Moreover, results suggested that when anxiety over relationships was high and comfort with closeness was high, individuals were more likely to experience partner uncertainty. Finally, results revealed that when the bereaved individual's *comfort with dependence* was low and their *anxiety over relationships* varied at different levels, average levels of *comfort with closeness* were positively associated with self uncertainty.

Contrary to the predicted positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and self uncertainty, results suggest that bereaved individuals who are comfortable with closeness will

report higher levels of self uncertainty following loss. Further, in contrast to the hypothesized negative relationship between comfort with closeness and partner uncertainty, no association was found between individuals who are comfortable being close with partners and partner uncertainty following the loss of a loved one. As previously discussed, individuals who are comfortable being close with partners may report negative appraisals of loss because they are able to access their feelings and mourn the loss of a close relationship. The results of this study indicate that individuals who are comfortable being close with others not only care and mourn for close others, but also experience the distress associated with loss. Rather than displacing their pain and disorientation associated with loss on their partner, individuals high in comfort experience any potential uncertainty associated with the death of their loved one within themselves. Thus, these individuals may seek the support and comfort of their partners and do not doubt their partner's relational commitment or goals. Should these individuals experience uncertainty within their relationship, it is based on their own feelings of doubt and uncertainty. In this sense, individuals who are comfortable being close with and trusting partners may actually embrace the idea of unwavering support and commitment from relational others. When experiencing doubt in the relationship following loss of a loved one, they may therefore attribute it to themselves rather than partners. The results of this study, then, are consistent with the overall relationship among working models, attachment-related emotions, and coping styles of individuals high in comfort.

In contrast to the predicted positive relationship between anxiety over relationships and self uncertainty, results suggest that bereaved individuals who are anxious over relationships will report lower levels of self uncertainty after the death of a loved one. Moreover, results indicate that highly anxious bereaved individuals will report lower levels of partner uncertainty. However, results also suggest that bereaved individuals who are both highly anxious and

comfortable being close to partners will report higher levels of partner uncertainty. As mentioned previously, the possibility exists that highly anxious individuals exert greater control of their emotions due to their fear of being rejected by romantic partners. Thus, although they are highly emotional, anxious individuals may suppress extreme emotions related to relational maintenance in order to avoid the loss of their relationship. Because this study is retrospective, anxious individuals may perceive in hindsight that they did not experience these emotions when in actuality they may have controlled them. However, when bereaved individuals are both highly anxious and comfortable being close to partners, they will report higher levels of partner uncertainty. In addition, the significant three-way interaction highlights the assumption that individuals who are comfortable being close with partners, especially at lower levels of dependence on partners, experience some type of unwavering belief in the commitment of their partners and attribute all potential uncertainty to themselves, rather than their partners. Thus, individuals with lower levels of dependence may actually attribute more responsibility for external relational issues to themselves. In this sense, individuals who are comfortable being close with partners, yet simultaneously feel uncomfortable being dependent on their partners accept more responsibility for external events.

Evaluating the Proposed Model

Overall, the model that was proposed in this thesis received partial support. Results of this investigation support the proposed relationship between expectation of death and positive appraisal of loss. In addition, one of the attachment dimensions, comfort with closeness, was significantly associated with positive appraisals of loss following the death of a loved one. Further, the prediction that attachment orientation drives different communicative responses to loss was supported. Specifically, attachment orientation impacts the employment of both

positive and negative confrontation behaviors. Additionally, attachment orientation influences the use of management strategies that are theoretically similar to avoidant behaviors. Although the predicted associations between attachment orientation and communicative responses received the most support, the results of this study also revealed significant associations between the attachment dimensions and self and partner uncertainty.

Interestingly, the results of this study suggest that bereaved individuals actually use ten different types of management strategies: *directly communicating with partner, directly communicating with others, desiring communication, indirectly communicating with partner, seeking outside help, ruminating, accepting blame, escaping, distancing, and waiting it out*. Eight of these management strategies can be placed into four higher order management orientations: *positive confrontation, negative confrontation, avoidance, and waiting it out*. Thus, bereaved individuals do employ more nuanced modes of communication when coping with romantic partners than has been suggested by past research.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The results presented in this thesis provide valuable insight into the ways in which bereaved partners cope with grief and loss. Specifically, this study has shown that individuals respond to grief in a variety of ways and manage their expression of grief in a much more nuanced way than simply confronting or avoiding their feelings with partners. Bereaved individuals express their feelings with a multiplicity of communicative strategies and orientations; however, several limitations of this study should be noted. In the remaining section, I will address the current challenges with this study as well as highlight directions for future research. I will begin with methodological and sampling issues, in general. Then, I will discuss more specific limitations that focus on the measurement used in this study and propose

directions for future investigations focusing on the communicative responses to grief in romantic relationships.

First, the methodology by which this study used to examine bereavement reactions and coping mechanisms elevates the question of retrospective inquiry. Because participants were asked to recall how they were feeling at the time of their loss as well as how they felt about their partner at the time of loss, the notion is raised regarding the reliability and validity of the participants' recall abilities. The possible error associated with the participants' memory is confounded by the fact that the very topic under question poses additional room for inconsistencies based on the cognitive and emotional stress associated with grief from loss of a loved one. In addition to being asked to recall a bereavement experience, the participants were also asked to recall their dating partner at the time of their loss. If the participant's loss occurred while in a past relationship, then their responses to questions probing the existence of self and/or partner uncertainty following the loss of their loved one may be skewed due to the fact that they are no longer in the relationship. In this way, participants may unknowingly employ a retrospective attribution effect, such that they answer in a way that is consistent with the current dissolution of their pre-existing relationship. Conversely, the opposite effect may also arise, where participants who are currently with romantic partners may minimize the amount of uncertainty they may have been feeling at the time of their loss due to the fact that the relationship is still intact. Thus, these participants may want to assert the current status of their relationship, which may color past feelings and attributions.

Therefore, retrospective inquiry poses a number of limitations for the findings in this thesis. Although past research has suggested that individuals may have difficulty accurately recalling an event from long-term memory (Stafford, Burggraff, & Sharkey, 1987; Stafford &

Daly, 1984), still other scholars have noted the difficulties with hypothetical scenarios. Poole and McPhee (1994) have argued that hypothetical scenarios may not approximate responses to actual events. Thus, participant-recalled events were chosen in lieu of hypothetical scenarios to first assess actual responses to life events. The use of retrospective accounts is arguably the most feasible methodology by which to study grief and loss when attempting to study actual responses to life events. The cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral responses associated with grief makes this phenomenon extremely challenging to study. Emotional pain and psychological discomfort are grave possibilities associated with the study of grief during the initial phases of bereavement. Therefore, it would not be possible to observed bereaved individuals directly through participant observation during their actual bereavement experience. Although limiting, retrospective inquiry into the bereavement experience is generally the most ethical and emotionally sound alternative methodology by which researchers can study grief. Future studies might consider replicating the findings in this study with the use of hypothetical scenarios.

A further limitation in terms of the methodology of this study is that participants were not asked to comply with a specified time frame concerning how long ago the death of a loved one occurred. Nor did specifications exist as to how long the participants had to have known the person prior to their death. Significant differences among the bereaved may exist depending on what stage they are in of bereavement as well as how close they were to their loved one and for how long that relationship lasted (e.g., Bowlby, 1980; Sanders, 1999; Shaver & Tancredy, 2001). Due to the nature of this study, however, specifications regarding the length of the relationship with the deceased, how intimate the relationship was, and the amount of time that had passed since the loved one had passed away were not made. Because this was an exploratory study, the impact of these factors on the coping responses of the bereaved with romantic partners had not

yet been examined in previous research. The intent of this study was not to limit the sample based on assumptions that had not yet been explored, but to allow for all bereavement experiences. At this point, research in this context is still exploratory and as long as bereaved individuals wished to participate, they were recruited for this study.

An additional limitation in this study pertains to the sampling procedures used. Because participants were gathered from a research pool at the University of Georgia, the sampling frame was limited to college-aged participants. This limitation concerning the relatively small age range inhibits the generalizability of findings to other populations. It could be argued that bereavement responses and efforts to cope could be different depending on whether or not individuals are significantly committed to one another. Only 21.9% of the participants in this study had discussed marriage and/or were engaged at the time the death occurred. Therefore, relatively few individuals were seriously committed to one another, which may have altered their communicative strategies. Further, relatively small frequencies existed for types of death that have been thought to be associated with complicated mourning: suicide and homicide (Sanders, 1999). It has been argued that certain conditions surrounding the death of a loved one, such as suicide and homicide, may produce complicated grief, which is a chronic form of grief that keeps the bereaved agitated and grief stricken for a much longer time than more typical bereavement situations. Should differences exist in relational uncertainty and communicative responses based on complicated mourning, which would be predicted based on past research, a larger sample with more variation in type of death would be needed to more accurately detect this effect. In line with this limitation is the fact that this study only requested that one relational partner needed to have experienced the loss of a loved one outside the relationship. More complicated bereavement conditions are also more typically associated with the loss of certain people, such as

children or a key person in the social unit (Lindemann, 1944). I would argue that such a loss, when experienced by both partners in a relationship, gravely affects coping and communicative responses because both partners are simultaneously grieving their own loss and supporting the other.

An important limitation also exists concerning the relational uncertainty measures. Due to the retrospective methodology, difficulty exists in assessing whether sources of uncertainty arose after the death of one's love based on the level of satisfaction the individual had concerning his or her communication attempts with a partner, or if uncertainty arose directly after the loss of the loved one, regardless of the success of communicative strategies employed. In other words, a challenge arises in examining whether the individual felt uncertain about him or herself or partner due to the cognitive effects of grief and loss, or if he or she began to feel uncertain of either the self or other after specific attempts were made in communicating his or her feelings associated with the death. Even still, the individual may have initially felt uncertain about him or herself or partner after the death due to cognitive uncertainty surrounding the pain and disorientation of loss, but the uncertainty dissipated after he or she experienced successful attempts at managing grief communicatively with his or her partner. Assessing a directional relationship among variables was not possible in this study due to the retrospective inquiry and non-specific wording on the measurements.

The inadequacy in the measurement of appraisal of death also should be noted. Generally, when a loved one dies, bereaved individuals should appraise the passing as negative. For this reason, the majority of scores on the appraisal of death scale were low ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.79$). Based on the items comprising the appraisal measurement as well as the retrospective method of inquiry, it is difficult to determine if individuals were able to re-appraise their loss and

find meaning in the death of their loved one, and, thus, appraise the overall loss as positive, even if they had originally appraised the death of their loved one as negative. Folkman (1997) posits that positive reappraisals, or when individuals can find positive meaning in bereavement-related stressful events, lead to positive psychological states, which then creates a negative feedback loop where individuals search for and create positive psychological states to find relief and, in turn, reinforce appraisal and coping efforts. This behavior could arguably be associated with more healthy individuals, who use positive affect and enhanced coping mechanisms, which, in this study, would be predicted to accompany securely attached individuals. Results of the study, however, indicate that securely attached individuals report more negative appraisals of loss. The items included in the appraisal of loss measurement fail to assess more nuanced appraisals, which shed light on more complex coping mechanisms. Future studies involving appraisal of death measurements should incorporate items associated with positive re-appraisals in order to capture this more sophisticated assessment of loss.

Overall, this thesis extends existing research on the communication processes evident in romantic relationships. Specifically, this investigation focused on the communication patterns among individuals in romantic relationships within a bereavement situation. Understanding the factors that affect coping and communicative responses to grief has far reaching implications for both bereavement and communication scholars. Prior to this study, bereavement researchers had little knowledge of the specific communicative responses employed by bereaved individuals. Moreover, relational communication scholars had conducted scant research on the impact of bereavement on romantic relationships. Upon further research into the communication patterns of bereaved individuals, bereavement coping models may be expanded to include the complex interplay of variables, such as expectation of death, appraisal of death, attachment orientation,

and relationship uncertainty. In this sense, future coping models may account for the psychosocial circumstances surrounding loss that affect the messages exchanged among bereaved individuals and romantic partners. Future research should, therefore, focus on replicating the findings of this investigation in order to confirm the ten management strategies uncovered in this thesis. Replication of this investigation may also provide further support for the some of the interesting yet weaker results found in this study, such as the two-way interaction effects between attachment dimensions on partner uncertainty. Because the results of this interaction analysis were relatively weak ($p = .04$), it is possible that a Type I error was made in the current study. Future investigations should seek to replicate these complex findings such that a refined model of communicative responses to loss can be proposed.

Additionally, an examination of the sequential employment of strategies among bereaved individuals warrants future study. Such an investigation would shed light on: 1) how rumination is manifested in communicative behaviors, and 2) the sequential order of other management strategies and/or orientations. Another important avenue for future research lies in the study of romantic dyads within the context of bereavement, such that the communicative exchange and subsequent outcome among romantic partners coping with the death of a loved one can be examined.

Conclusion

This thesis advanced and tested a nuanced model of communicative responses to loss following the death of a loved one among romantic partners. In particular, this thesis proposed that the degree to which the death is expected and the attachment orientation of the bereaved influence appraisals of loss. Further, this study argued that the attachment orientation of the bereaved individual impacts sources of relational uncertainty experienced and, ultimately, drives

different communicative responses to loss with romantic partners. Support was observed from the empirical examination of these predictions. In total, the results of this investigation suggest that bereaved individuals communicate with partners using more complex strategies than indicated on a general approach-avoidance continuum. Thus, this thesis provides further insight into the study of bereavement coping within the context of close, romantic relationships and proposes further avenues of research for bereavement and communication scholars.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Aside from either self or partner uncertainty, individuals may experience doubt about the status of the relationship that has or has not been established (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Fundamentally, relationship uncertainty differs from self and partner uncertainty due to its focus on the dyad as a whole, rather than on only one relational partner at a time, which also makes this course of uncertainty more abstract (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Knobloch and Solomon (1999) demonstrated that relationship uncertainty covaries with both self and partner uncertainty. This finding suggests that while self and partner uncertainty may exist independently, either source of doubt may also be a sufficient instigator of doubts about the overall state of the relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Extending this argument, I posit that individuals coping with loss who question themselves and their partners will also be more likely to question the current and future state of their relationship. When uncertainty arises about whether or not an individual and his or her relational partner desires to maintain and/or develop the relationship in response to negative appraisals of loss, it is very likely that general relationship expectancies will also be questioned. I argue, however, that the experience of relational uncertainty within the context of bereavement will not appear as a different source of uncertainty. Relational uncertainty, rather, will be displaced in either self or partner uncertainty, and, thus, will not act as a third source of uncertainty.

² A categorical measure of attachment orientation was also used in order to examine the utility of this approach. Respondents completed Bartholomew's 4-categorical measure of

attachment. Participants were asked to read descriptions of four attachment styles (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful). The descriptions read as follows:

Secure: It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

Preoccupied (or anxious-ambivalent): I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that other don't value me as much as I value them.

Dismissing: I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

Fearful: I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

Respondents were asked to place a check mark next to the one description that most accurately portrayed their feelings about close relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Results suggested that 50.5% of respondents were securely attached ($n = 53$), 34.3% were fearful-avoidants ($n = 36$), 9.5% were dismissing-avoidants ($n = 10$), and 2.9% were preoccupieds ($n = 3$). The results associated with the categorical measure for most of the hypotheses were not significant; thus, the findings associated with the categorical measure are not included in the results of this study. One possible explanation for this is the relatively low frequencies of the dismissing-avoidant and preoccupied categories. Based on the small number

of respondents who reported the dismissing-avoidant and preoccupied attachment styles as well as the majority of non-significant findings associated with the categorical measure of attachment, this approach was not included in the analyses.

³ Factor analyses suggested that three management strategies comprised the higher order orientation of *negative confrontation: desiring communication, indirectly communicating with partner, and seeking outside help*. All three strategies were subjected to hierarchical regression analyses in order to determine their associations with the attachment dimensions. For all analyses, the independent variables were attachment dimensions (*comfort with intimacy, comfort with dependence, and anxiety over relationships*). Preliminary analyses revealed that relationship with the deceased (categorized as family member or friend) significantly covaried with all three management strategies involved in these analyses; therefore, relationship with the deceased was treated as a covariate. Using hierarchical regression, the three identified dimensions of attachment were entered on the second step of a regression analysis, after the covariate was entered on the first step. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the third and fourth steps. The dependent variable was the management strategy (*desiring communication, indirectly communicating with partner, and seeking outside help*, respectively). Results suggested that the attachment dimensions were not significantly associated with *desiring communication*, $R(3, 98) = .28$, $R^2 \Delta = .02$, n.s., *indirectly communicating with partner*, $R(3, 98) = .30$, $R^2 \Delta = .04$, n.s., or *seeking outside help*, $R(3, 98) = .23$, $R^2 \Delta = .02$, n.s.

⁴ An additional analysis was performed to examine the association between attachment dimensions and the fourth higher order management orientation, *waiting it out*. Using hierarchical regression, the three identified dimensions of attachment were entered on the first step of a regression analysis. Interactions among attachment dimensions were entered on the

second and third steps. The dependent variable was the management orientation of *waiting it out*. Preliminary analyses indicated that there were no covariates associated with this management orientation; thus, no covariates were included in this analysis. Results suggested that there was not a significant association between the attachment dimensions and *waiting it out*, $R(3, 100) = .16, R^2 \Delta = .03, n.s.$

APPENDIX A

RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION, AND RESPONSES TO LOSS:

CONSENT FORM

I, _____ agree to participate in the research study titled “Relationships, Communication, and Responses to Loss” conducted by Julie Christie from the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Georgia (583-0952) under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Samp, Department of Speech Communication, University of Georgia (542-3246). I understand that this participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to examine individuals’ responses to loss due to the death of a loved one while involved in a romantic relationship with another individual.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Answer questions about myself.
- 2) Recall the death that either my romantic partner or I experienced.
- 3) Answer questions about my feelings for my partner at the time the loss occurred.
- 4) Answer questions about how my partner and I coped with the loss.

In total, my participation should take me no longer than 60 minutes.

I will receive course credit for completing this survey. I know that although answering every question is preferable, I have the right to skip any questions that I do not want to answer. I also have the right to stop participating at any time prior to the completion of the survey. Even if I do not fully complete the survey, I will still receive credit for research participation.

While this is an important task to complete, there will be no immediate benefits or severe risks from my participation. However, there is a rare chance that I may experience some psychological discomfort or stress while answering the questions about the death my partner or I experienced. If this task becomes too difficult for me to complete, I may stop participating at any point in time without foregoing course credit. I will receive a list of contacts for psychological services at the end of this study should I need a referral. All of my responses will be confidential. I will be assigned an identifying number and this number will be used on the questionnaire that I fill out. The master list that contains my name along with my identifying number will be kept separate from my questionnaire at all times and will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, the master will be destroyed.

This project is being conducted under the supervision of the University of Georgia. The researcher, Julie Christie, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 583-0952. Questions can also be answered by the director of this study, Dr. Jennifer Samp, who can be reached by telephone at: 542-3246.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
Telephone: _____		
Email: _____		

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX B

RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION, AND RESPONSES TO LOSS:

DEBRIEFING FORM

You have just completed a questionnaire for a research study entitled, “Relationships, Communication, and Responses to Loss,” conducted by Julie Christie from the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Georgia. As the consent form stated, the purpose of this study was to examine individuals’ responses to loss due to death of loved one while involved in a romantic relationship with another individual.

We asked you to answer questions about yourself and recall the loss that either you or your partner experienced while you were dating. Additional questions that you answered involved providing feedback about how you felt about your partner at the time the loss occurred and how the two of you coped with the loss you experienced. We will use your responses in order to attempt to understand how couples communicate their feelings of loss to one another and cope with the pain of loss.

We realize that this experience may have been very difficult for you, which is why we truly appreciate your participation in this study. If participating in this study has caused you any undue stress, the following services are available for you:

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at the University Health Center: (706) 542-2273; <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/CAPS>
- Psychology Clinic at the University of Georgia: (706) 542-1173; <http://www.uga.edu/psychology/clinic>

Please feel free to consult these services at your convenience. Should you have any additional questions about this research, you can contact either the researcher, Julie Christie (Telephone: 583-0952; E-Mail Address: jchrist@uga.edu) or the director of the study, Dr. Jennifer Samp (Telephone: 542-3246; E-Mail Address: jasamp@uga.edu).

Thank you, again, for your participation in this study.

APPENDIX C

ATTACHMENT MEASURE

The following questions ask you about **YOURSELF**. For each question, please circle the number that best reflects your opinion, using this scale:

1	2	3	4	5
not at all like me	not much like me	neutral	somewhat like me	very much like me

1. I find it difficult to depend on others1 2 3 4 5
2. Sometimes people are scared away by my wanting
to be too close to them1 2 3 4 5
3. Love partners often want me to be more intimate than
I feel comfortable being1 2 3 4 5
4. I am nervous when anyone gets too close.....1 2 3 4 5
5. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.....1 2 3 4 5
6. I often worry that my dating partners won't want to stay with me.....1 2 3 4 5
7. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others.....1 2 3 4 5
8. I find it relatively easy to get close to others1 2 3 4 5
9. I find it easy to trust others1 2 3 4 5
10. I feel comfortable depending on others.1 2 3 4 5
11. I don't often worry about someone getting too close to me.1 2 3 4 5
12. I often worry that my dating partners don't really love me1 2 3 4 5
13. I don't often worry about being abandoned.....1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX D

RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY MEASURES

For the following questions, we would like you to rate how certain you were about the degree of involvement that you had in your relationship **after experiencing your loss**. Please note, we are not asking you to rate how much involvement there was in your relationship, but rather how certain you were about whatever degree of involvement you perceived. Please respond to each item using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
completely or almost completely uncertain	mostly uncertain	slightly more uncertain than certain	slightly more certain than uncertain	mostly certain	completely or almost completely certain

After experiencing your loss, how certain were you about...

1. how committed you were to the relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
2. how committed your partner was to the relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
3. whether or not your partner wanted this relationship to last?1 2 3 4 5 6
4. your feelings for your partner?1 2 3 4 5 6
5. how much your partner liked you?1 2 3 4 5 6
6. how much you liked you partner?1 2 3 4 5 6
7. whether or not you wanted this relationship to last?1 2 3 4 5 6
8. whether or not you and your partner felt the same way about each
other?1 2 3 4 5 6
9. how important this relationship was to you?1 2 3 4 5 6
10. how much your partner wanted this relationship at that time?1 2 3 4 5 6

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4	5	6
completely or almost completely uncertain	mostly uncertain	slightly more uncertain than certain	slightly more certain than uncertain	mostly certain	completely or almost completely certain

After experiencing your loss, how certain were you about...

11. how much your partner was romantically interested in you?1 2 3 4 5 6
12. how you felt about the relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
13. whether or not your partner wanted to be with you in the long run?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
14. how much you were romantically interested in your partner?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
15. the future of the relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
16. your view of this relationship?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
17. whether or not you wanted to be with your partner in the long run?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
18. how your partner felt about the relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
19. the definition of this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
20. your partner's goals for the future of the relationship?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
21. where you wanted this relationship to go?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
22. how ready your partner was to get involved with you?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
23. whether or not you and your partner would stay together?1 2 3 4 5 6
24. how much you wanted to pursue this relationship?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
25. how you and your partner would describe this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
26. the norms for this relationship?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
27. your goals for the future of the relationship?.....1 2 3 4 5 6

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4	5	6
completely or almost completely uncertain	mostly uncertain	slightly more uncertain than certain	slightly more certain than uncertain	mostly certain	completely or almost completely certain

After experiencing your loss, how certain were you about...

28. whether or not your partner wanted to maintain your relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
29. what you could or could not say to each other in this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
30. how ready you were to get involved with your partner?1 2 3 4 5 6
31. how much your partner wanted to pursue this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
32. whether or not this was a romantic or platonic relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
33. the boundaries for appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior
in this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
34. your partner's view of this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
35. whether or not your partner liked you as much as you liked
him or her?1 2 3 4 5 6
36. the current status of this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
37. whether or not you were ready to commit to your partner?1 2 3 4 5 6
38. whether or not this relationship would end soon?1 2 3 4 5 6
39. whether or not you wanted to stay in a relationship with your
partner?1 2 3 4 5 6
40. where your partner wanted this relationship to go?1 2 3 4 5 6
41. how you and your partner viewed this relationship?1 2 3 4 5 6
42. whether you wanted a romantic relationship with your partner or to
be just friends?1 2 3 4 5 6

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4	5	6
completely or almost completely uncertain	mostly uncertain	slightly more uncertain than certain	slightly more certain than uncertain	mostly certain	completely or almost completely certain

After experiencing your loss, how certain were you about...

43. whether or not your partner wanted this relationship to work out
in the long run?1 2 3 4 5 6
44. where this relationship was going?1 2 3 4 5 6
45. whether your partner wanted a romantic relationship with you or to
be just friends?1 2 3 4 5 6
46. how you could or could not behave around your partner?.....1 2 3 4 5 6
47. the state of the relationship at that time?1 2 3 4 5 6

APPENDIX E

ADAPTED WAYS OF COPING (REVISED) MEASURE

The following set of questions asks you to reflect on how you coped with the loss of your loved one. Please read each item below and indicate to what extent you used it **when you were coping with the loss of your loved one**, using this scale:

1	2	3	4
not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal

When coping with my loss, I...

1. Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things1 2 3 4
2. Felt that time would make a difference—the only thing to do was to wait1 2 3 4
3. Talked to my partner to find out more about the situation 1 2 3 4
4. Criticized or lectured myself.....1 2 3 4
5. Hoped a miracle would happen.....1 2 3 4
6. Went on as if nothing had happened.....1 2 3 4
7. Slept more than usual.....1 2 3 4
8. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone1 2 3 4
9. Accepted sympathy and understanding from my partner1 2 3 4
10. Told myself things that helped me to feel better.....1 2 3 4
11. Was inspired to do something creative1 2 3 4
12. Tried to forget the whole thing1 2 3 4
13. Got professional help1 2 3 4

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4
not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal

When coping with my loss, I...

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Waited to see what would happen before doing anything | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Made a plan of action and followed it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. Discussed my feelings with my partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. Realized I made the situation worse for myself..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. Talked to someone who could do something concrete to help me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking,
using drugs or medication, etc | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. Found new faith | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. Maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. Rediscovered what is important in life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. Changed something so things would turn out all right | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Avoided being with people in general | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. Asked a relative or friend I respected for advice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. Asked my dating partner for advice..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. Made light of the situation; refused to get too serious about it..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. Talked to someone about how I was feeling..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. Talked to my partner about how I was feeling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4
not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal

When coping with my loss, I...

32. Took it out on other people1 2 3 4
33. Took it out on my partner1 2 3 4
34. Drew on my past experiences; I was in a similar situation before.....1 2 3 4
35. Refused to believe that it had happened1 2 3 4
36. Made a promise to myself that I would do things differently if I were ever
in this situation again1 2 3 4
37. Accepted it, since nothing could be done1 2 3 4
38. Wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt.....1 2 3 4
39. Changed something about myself.....1 2 3 4
40. Daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.....1 2 3 4
41. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.....1 2 3 4
42. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out1 2 3 4
43. Prayed1 2 3 4
44. Went over the events of the situation in my mind1 2 3 4
45. Jogged or exercised.....1 2 3 4
46. Thought about it when I didn't mean to.....1 2 3 4
47. Had trouble falling asleep or staying asleep because of pictures
or thoughts that came into my mind1 2 3 4
48. Had waves of strong feelings about it.....1 2 3 4
49. Had dreams about it1 2 3 4

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4
not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal

When coping with my loss, I...

50. Kept seeing pictures/images of it in my mind1 2 3 4
51. Tried to change the situation.....1 2 3 4
52. Felt guilty for how I was feeling.....1 2 3 4
53. Experienced feelings about it every time I was reminded of my loss1 2 3 4
54. Discussed the emotional aspects of my grief with my friends and family1 2 3 4
55. Expressed anger1 2 3 4
56. Discussed the emotional aspects of my grief with my partner1 2 3 4
57. Was very emotional when expressing grief to my partner1 2 3 4
58. Discussed my feelings of sadness with my partner1 2 3 4
59. Was not very emotional in front of my partner.....1 2 3 4
60. Had intense conversations with my partner about the loss of my loved one.....1 2 3 4
61. Got the emotional support I needed from my family and friends.....1 2 3 4
62. Got the emotional support I needed from my partner.....1 2 3 4
63. I was satisfied with the support I received from friends and family.....1 2 3 4
64. Was satisfied with the support I received from my partner1 2 3 4
65. Received adequate support from my partner1 2 3 4
66. Felt good about the support I received from my partner1 2 3 4
67. Complained to my partner about my feelings of sadness a lot1 2 3 4
68. Hinted to my partner about my feelings of loss a lot while I was grieving1 2 3 4

Please turn to the next page...

1	2	3	4
not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal

When coping with my loss, I...

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 69. Let my feelings out somehow | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 70. Blamed myself for my feelings..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 71. Sulked in front of my partner because of my feelings of loss | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 72. Defended my feelings in some way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 73. Sighed in the presence of my partner because of my feelings of loss | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 74. Cried in front of my partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 75. Did not receive enough support from my partner..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 76. Asked my partner for emotional support | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 77. Asked my partner for help | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 78. Wanted to talk to my partner but he/she wasn't interested..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 79. Wanted more support from my partner but he/she couldn't supply it to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 80. Got to talk through my feelings with my partner..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 81. Went to my partner for emotional support..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |