“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference”:

Further Exploration of Attitude Alignment in the Context of Close Relationship Dyads

by

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Abstract

One hundred and five primarily Caucasian undergraduate couples were tested to study the phenomenon of attitude alignment, or the way in which individuals change their opinions to achieve greater attitudinal congruence with their romantic partners, and the hypotheses that relationship closeness, affect, attachment, social desirability, and centrality are each related to attitude alignment for individuals in close couples. The couples filled out an attitude questionnaire consisting of 50 issues in which they were asked to give their attitude on a scale from 1 to 9 as well as to rate the centrality, or importance, of that issue on a scale from 1 to 9. Before discussing four of these issues with each other – 2 were more central to the man and less central, or peripheral, to the woman, whereas the other 2 were central to the woman and peripheral to the man – the individuals completed established measures of relationship closeness, affect, attachment, and social desirability. The couples then filled out the identical attitudes questionnaire again, and their answers on the four discussion issues were compared to their pre-discussion answers to determine whether attitude alignment had occurred. There were two experimental groups: a social desirability group, where the couples were told it was natural and normal to disagree with their partners, and a control group. Results indicated that attitude alignment did significantly occur across all couples, but most other variables – including centrality, relationship closeness, and affect – did not predict attitude alignment behaviour. As well, the social desirability experimental groups did not significantly differ on attitude alignment behaviours, but higher scores on the social desirability scale, specifically self-deception, significantly predicted higher attitude alignment scores across all couples. Large differences between individuals’ frequency
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Introduction

Depending on whether you talk to Shakespeare or Sternberg, forming a close relationship with another human being, or "choosing whom we hope will be our life's companion, the person who will contribute half the parenting and half the genome for our children" (Lykken & Tellegen, 1993, p. 56), can be one of the most wonderful, emotional, terrible, awesome achievements in our lives. No matter the other goals in a person's plans, sharing the future with some significant other is often something that he or she wishes for, or falls into, at least once in life. This is not surprising, considering that almost everybody marries once in their lifetime (see Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Close relationships form the backbone of much of a culture's literature, music, and art, continuing to be an important topic of conversation for thousands of talk show hosts, clinical psychologists, and researchers. This attention has not been without important discoveries: healthy relationships have been linked with positive mental health (Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983) and reports of greater happiness and life satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995).

However, the many nuances of close relationships still evade and fascinate, resulting in more questions as research in the area continues and expands. The purpose of the present research is to add to this literature by taking a closer look at a fascinating behaviour in close relationships coined by Davis and Rusbult (2001) as attitude alignment, or "a phenomenon whereby interacting individuals change their opinions to achieve greater attitudinal congruence" (p. 65) and examining some possible explanations for the phenomenon. By demonstrating one of the possible mechanisms by which people manage to stay together in successful dyads, this study aims to show that attitude
alignment occurs regularly in close relationships and is related to a number of other relationship factors including social desirability, attachment, relationship closeness, and affect, and the attitude factor of centrality.

Defining Attitude Alignment

Attitude alignment is a newly recognized phenomenon, the first description and formal testing of the concept being executed by Davis and Rusbult (2001). The authors noted the tendency of partners, when interacting, to modify their attitudes to the point of attitudinal congruence, or an increased similarity in expressed attitude. The authors also noted that past research on attitude change focused on individuals with little or no previous interaction, and on issues that were trivial to the participants. The authors' concept of attitude alignment, in contrast, referred to real-life partners – in this study, those who are in dating relationships of an average of 13.76 months – dealing with issues that may be more salient to them (i.e., those issues “about which participants are likely to have somewhat enduring, preexisting opinions”, p. 65). Attitude alignment as defined for this study includes the concept of changing one’s attitude to more closely match that of the partner. Further explanation includes the tenet that the phenomenon occurs regularly within the context of a close, intimate relationship and with issues varying in importance for each of the partners involved. Operationally, attitude alignment is defined as the differences between the couples’ answers to the same attitudes as measured both before and after a discussion of them with each other.

Past Research on Attitude Alignment

As stated above, attitude alignment is a new concept and has therefore not received much research attention. However, attitude alignment as a concept closely
attitude resembles the concept and processes of persuasion (see Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), which deals with attitude change as a result of influences external to the individual (Alcock, Carment, & Sadava, 2001). Persuasion researchers have studied processes by which persuasive messages are communicated to and received by the target individual. For example, a persuasive message may be more closely considered and in turn lead to attitude change if it comes from someone who appears likable and attractive (Chaiken & Eagly, 1983; Roskos-Ewoldson & Fazio, 1992), and appeals to the individual through association with good feelings (see Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004). Attitude alignment among those in close relationships follows directly from this type of research in that many of the elements of the communicator may already be perceived as positive by the receiver of the message because the communicator and receiver are involved in a more personal, intimate, and special relationship than that of the majority of persuasion relationships. For example, in most cases of those involved in close relationships with a significant other, the individual already likes and is attracted to his or her partner.

As with the current study, Davis and Rusbult (2001) conducted their research on a more ecologically valid interpersonal environment than is usual in persuasion research—couples involved in close relationships—and with issues that may be more important to the individuals involved. Explaining the existence of attitude alignment from the tenets of balance theory (Newcomb, 1959, 1968) and interdependence theory (see Kelley et al., 1983), Davis and Rusbult proposed that when the two individuals in a couple become aware of their attitudinal dissimilarities, attitudinal alignment will occur, and that greater attitude alignment will occur for close partners than for nonclose partners. Their study supported both of these hypotheses. Most important to the current study, however, is the
authors' *centrality of issue* hypothesis, which states that greater alignment will occur for issues that are peripheral, or not important, to an individual’s self-concept and are central, or very important, to his or her partner’s self-concept. Using a sample of approximately 45 couples (45 men and 45 women) for each of three experiments, the authors found that centrality of issue was related to the likelihood of attitude alignment between couples, in that higher centrality scores for an individual and lower centrality scores for the partner were related to a decreased occurrence of attitude alignment with the partner. They also found that lower centrality scores for an individual and higher centrality scores for the partner were related to an increased occurrence of attitude alignment with the partner.

The present research was designed to replicate the centrality of issue hypothesis for attitude alignment, and to test the effects of social desirability on the alignment process, a topic yet unexplored in past research. The current study also proposes to expand on past research by testing a number of other factors that may be related to the attitude alignment between couples found in Davis and Rusbult (2001), namely attachment, relationship closeness, and affect.

*Theoretical Perspectives on the Development and Uses of Attitude Alignment*

An important antecedent to attitude alignment with one’s partner is forming a close bond with the partner. Understanding how individuals come to form a relationship is an important step in understanding why individuals align their attitudes with those with whom they have a relationship. One of the most important areas of relationship research concerns the mechanisms of relationship formation. Why does an individual choose one person over another? Why can two people become close when another seemingly suitable match barely retains a semblance of a bond? How does one go about choosing a life
partner? There have been any number of overlapping theories that attempt to answer these questions, ranging from Aristophanes’ ancient Greek concept of “the missing half” – humans, split in two in an earlier time, roam the earth looking for their perfect halves (Plato, 2002) – to the much more contemporary and simple concept of propinquity, which states that people are more likely to develop relationships with each other if they are geographically near to one another (Alcock, Carment, & Sadava, 2001).

**Similarity and Attraction**

There are several theories that have attracted attention over the years, one of the most widely researched being the link between similarity and attraction. According to this view, people who are alike in terms of personality attributes, opinions, and physical and demographic characteristics tend to be attracted to each other (see Weber & Harvey, 1994 for an overview), and this idea has found much support. For example, Newcomb (1961) found that people similar in salient demographic characteristics experience greater mutual attraction than those who are less similar demographically. Thirty years later, Carli, Ganley, and Pierce-Otay (1991) found that similarity and physical attractiveness can predict the level of satisfaction one reports about one’s roommate in a college dormitory. These findings have been extended from new meetings with people and transient relationships to dyads that experience more than a passing attraction. As well, people do tend to choose those who are of the same racial, religious, economic, intellectual, and social background for lifetime mates (Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962). Although much research has concentrated on a snapshot of attraction, often between strangers, early theorists did recognize that not all attractions lead to relationships and that similarity between couples may differ from that between two strangers (Byrne,
1971). An important point made about the continuation of relationships is that similarity is important to the beginning of a relationship, but unless two people communicate with each other, there is no hope of a long-lasting attraction (see Altman & Taylor, 1973). Moreover, no two people are exactly alike; there has to be compromise and convergence of ideas before a comfortable match can be made. Therefore, in close relationships, it is not only the attitudes that two people introduce to each other that engender similarity, but also the ideas and beliefs that are born out of close communication with one another. Well past initial attraction, similarity continues to change; partners become more similar as their relationship progresses (Blankenship, Hnat, Hess, & Brown, 1984), suggesting that similarity of behaviours, preferences, personality, physical appearance, and many more individual characteristics remain important to the relationship beyond initial attraction and meeting.

Theorists have also proposed reasons why being similar to somebody is so important to a relationship. Many of these explanations deal with the idea that, once the process of making somebody a close other begins, the search for similarity may facilitate the close feelings that are associated with intimacy. Duck (1988) summarizes this sentiment by stating that having a similarity of attitudes is attractive and represents specific similarity of thinking, which is generally rewarding. The positive rewards garnered from feeling “in tune” with another may increase the attractiveness one feels for the associated source of the positive feelings, a model referred to as reinforcement-affect (Byrne & Clore, 1970), and because these rewards are positive, the behaviours that precede them are likely to reoccur (Carver & Scheier, 2000). In the case of relationships, the rewarding similarity may facilitate further searching for similarity of attitudes, and
the cycle continues until a sense of intimacy has developed. It can be positively reinforcing to have another individual reiterate one’s own opinions in that this agreement may allow one to feel good about the attitudes one has. As S. S. Hendrick and C. Hendrick (1992) have stated, similarity can bolster one’s own sense of rightness, goodness, and positive self-concept. In a similar vein, Byrne and Clore (1970) state that similarity is rewarding in that it validates people’s views about the world. Again, these validating feelings may be rewarding to the individual, and it makes sense that people will want to continue receiving these rewarding feelings.

*Perceived Similarity and Attraction*

Opportunities for learning new things about a person who may or may not be similar to one’s self are not always plentiful; a person may choose — and often does choose — a mate who has many interests and beliefs that differ from him or her. If similarity is the catalyst for interpersonal attraction, how does one deal with a partner’s dissimilar attitudes and beliefs? Research has pointed to an important qualifier for the similarity-attraction relationship that has been shown to have an important impact on liking and loving: *perceived* similarity. It seems that one need only think that he is similar to another to feel an attraction to her. In an experiment by Lee and Gudykunst (2001), European Americans who perceived similarity in communication styles between themselves and their conversation partners found their partners more attractive than those who did not perceive these similarities with their partners.

Once a relationship has been formed, this perceived similarity is still evident, sometimes in a biased manner. One study involving 238 dating and married couples found that, when asked if one’s partner sees the world in the same way as he/she does,
there is a strong bias in favour of similarity, rather than difference (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001). These results, also supported by Schul and Vinokur (2000), suggest that those in relationships tend to see their partners in particular ways, often similar to themselves, and that this may help maintain relationships.

In summary, research on similarity indicates that individuals are often attracted to others who are similar to them on any number of characteristics, which may lead to the commitment and intimacy necessary in a close relationship. Research on perceived similarity suggests that another relationship may occur, in that being attracted to somebody can lead to greater similarity, whether it is in reality or in the perception of the individual, and this similarity can help enhance and maintain relationships. Attitude alignment may help accomplish the goal of increasing attraction between individuals by leading to an increase in similarity between the individuals, thus maintaining and enhancing close relationships.

*Cognitive dissonance in perceived similarity.* Although there is much research to suggest that perceived similarity contributes to the initial and ongoing attraction between people, there is also evidence that this belief in similarity has its drawbacks. This can be particularly true when the individual who believes he shares similar attitudes with another is presented with conflicting information (e.g., the woman who thinks she and her boyfriend have the same negative attitude toward cigarettes and catches him smoking). This may often occur, as correlations in spousal similarity in personality are low, averaging at .15 (see Buss, 1984), whereas correlations for social and personal values between life mates tends to range between .20 and .50 (Caspi & Herbener, 1993; Vandenberg, 1972). People who are in such situations experience confusion, or a
psychological tension attributed to disparate cognitive elements (Alcock, Carment, & Sadava, 2001; Festinger, 1957). This tension can be psychologically uncomfortable to the individual, so it makes sense to attempt to alleviate this tension in certain ways.

Festinger (1957) originally proposed the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance and suggested two ways in which cognitive dissonance can lead to tension alleviation. Elliot and Devine (1994) summarized cognitive dissonance as containing a psychological discomfort component, and “a bodily condition analogous to a tension or drive state” (p. 382). Noting that prior to this seminal work, research on cognitive dissonance had concentrated on the bodily arousal component (as redefined by Brehm & Cohen, 1962), Elliot and Devine instead concentrated on the psychological tension suggested by Festinger, showing in two experiments that dissonance is strongly associated with psychological tension. This finding is important to the present research, as disagreement between close couples may be an area of dissonance for one or both individuals. As noted above, partners tend to assume a similarity of attitudes and beliefs between them and their partners, and if, as in the present research, the partners are asked about certain issues on which they disagree in reality, and are allowed time to express these differences to the partner, a very real psychological dissonance may occur.

Although there are a number of tension-reducing actions suggested by Festinger (1957) the present research concentrates on two in particular, the first being modifying one’s cognitions to restore a sense of consistency. The dissonant situation of interest in this study is one that many couples face: differing opinions. If people tend to believe that their partners hold similar opinions, it may happen that when the partner disagrees, cognitive dissonance occurs. As Newcomb (1959) has suggested, partners who come to
realize that there is a difference in attitude about an issue can discuss the issue, which may lead to attitude change. This is consistent with the findings of Davis and Rusbult (2001), who proposed and found that partners who do have differing opinions exhibit attitude alignment after discussion of the disparate viewpoints, which may be a way of reducing the tension caused by the disagreement in the first place. Cognitive dissonance theory and research (see Elliot & Devine, 1994; Festinger, 1957; Norton, Cooper, Monin, & Hogg, 2003) provides an important method of explaining why attitude alignment may occur when there is disagreement between close couples.

Attitude alignment can be viewed via another mechanism of cognitive dissonance reduction, a second strategy explained by Festinger (1957) as “decreasing the importance of the elements involved in the dissonant relations” (p. 264). When an individual is presented with a differing opinion from one’s partner, instead of changing one’s own opinion to match that of the partner, one may change one’s idea of the issue’s importance. This reduces the tension by making the issue relatively irrelevant to the individual, therefore making it acceptable to disagree. This change in importance of the attitude is discussed in detail by Davis and Rusbult (2001), who describe the attitude’s importance to the individual as “centrality to self” (p. 67). Simon, Greenberg, and Brehm (1995) call this method of dissonance reduction trivialization, and state that it will occur when the attitude that is dissonant is very important to the individual. Trivialization is an important method of cognitive dissonance reduction, as some attitudes are very important to the individual, and are highly resistant to change, and some attitudes are less important and are more easily challenged.
Theoretical antecedents to dissonance reduction. There are a number of theories that attempt to explain why trivialization is used at times, and attitude change is used at others, two of the most important being the hydraulic model (Gotz-Marchand, Gotz, & Irle, 1974; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976), and Newcomb’s balance theory (1959, 1968). The hydraulic model, as discussed by Simon et al. (1995) states that “all else being equal, the easiest mode of dissonance reduction will be used, and the more one mode is used in a particular instance, the less other modes will be used” (p. 248). If the attitude is very important to the individual, the easiest thing to do is decrease the importance of the issue at hand, instead of changing one’s attitude. Research by Eagly and Chaiken (1993), and Johnson and Eagly (1989) have shown that attitudes that people consider important to them are less likely to change, so decreasing the importance of the attitude may be a more viable option for an individual.

Balance theory complements the hydraulic model (Newcomb, 1959), stating that cognitions are harmoniously organized, or balanced, in a triad consisting of the perceiver (p), the other person (o), and the attitude or object (x). Imbalance occurs when any of the three factors in the triad become untenable with another (e.g., an individual discovers he holds an attitude about a topic that opposes that of his very close partner). This imbalance leads to dissonance, and to reduce the tension that dissonance causes, changing the relationships between the points in the triad is important (e.g., the individual may change the way he feels about the attitude, thus changing the relationship between himself, p, and the attitude, x). Again, as in the hydraulic model, the easiest mode of dissonance reduction at the time is the one more likely to be used. If, as in the present study, the perceiver and the other are involved in a close, committed relationship, it would probably
be quite difficult to renegotiate the emotions and connections involved in this triad link, which leaves two choices: the perceiver or the other changing his or her stance toward the attitude object, or trivializing the argument. If the attitude is not important to the individual (referred to as peripheral by Davis & Rusbult, 2001), the easiest mode may be to change one’s attitude to match that of the partner. However, if the attitude is very important, or central, to the perceiver, it may be difficult to truly change one’s attitude to more closely match that of the partner. These relationships were hypothesized in Davis and Rusbult (2001), the results indicating that attitude alignment by the participant was more likely to occur when the issue was central to the participant’s partner, but peripheral to him- or herself. This finding supports the concept of balance, as it seems that when the attitude is less important to the individual than his or her partner, it is more likely that he or she will change his/her own attitude rather than attempt to change his or her partner, a seemingly more difficult action to take.

**Attitude Alignment as Relationship Maintenance**

Attitude alignment, to the extent that it is used as a strategy to reduce tension in situations where close partners disagree and may be affected by the importance of the issues at hand, can also be considered a form of relationship maintenance. Stafford and Canary (1991) described relationship maintenance behaviours as those designed to ensure the continuation of valued relationships through the prevention of their decline, through their enhancement, or through their repair and re-establishment. Coming to attitudinally resemble one’s partner may do all three of these things, as it increases the perceived similarity that is so important to an individual’s initial and continued attraction to a significant other.
Differing attitudes may be a threat to a relationship because they lead to disagreement and argument, particularly if they are voiced within the relationship. For example, Chinitz and Brown (2001) found that among Jewish couples, more disagreement on Jewish issues predicted higher levels of marital conflict, which in turn predicted less marital stability. The repulsion hypothesis (Rosenbaum, 1986) suggests that there is an inverse relationship between the amount of dissimilarity between two people and the attraction they feel for each other, in that the more dissimilarity there is, the less attracted they are to one another. This hypothesis that has been supported by research (see Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Smeaton, Byrne, & Murnen, 1989), and illustrates a factor that may be a threat to a pre-existing relationship. Discussing and coming to express more similar attitudes toward a particular issue as a way to reestablish and repair problems, the crux of Davis and Rusbult's (2001) concept of attitude alignment, may help prevent such threats.

It is also likely that attitude alignment behaviours help enhance a relationship. As previously discussed, similarity is a good predictor of attraction between people (Byrne, 1997; Russell & Wells, 1991; Singh & Ho, 2000). In many other similarity studies, the relationship between similarity of attitudes and attraction is positive, in that the more similar the attitudes between two people, the more the individuals are attracted to one another (Byrne, & Nelson, 1965). Therefore, increasing the attitude alignment or similarity between oneself and one's partner can enhance the relationship by enhancing attraction.

Attitude alignment may also be a strategy employed to help prevent the decline of an ailing relationship. Arrindell and Luteijn (2000) found that high similarity in
personality scores between intimate partners correlates significantly with subjective well-being, indicating that those who experience life in a similar fashion to their partners feel good about life, which may also keep them happy in their own relationships. There are many studies that have found that partners who are more similar are happier with their partners and their relationships (e.g. Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Russell & Wells, 1991). Sometimes, if partners vocalize their disparate opinions, an argument or a rift occurs. To keep an opinion from becoming a larger issue, or even from breaking up the relationship, an individual may align his or her outlook to more closely resemble that of the partner.

Given the criteria provided by Stafford and Canary (1994) to describe relationship maintenance behaviours, it is possible that attitude alignment can represent all three methods of keeping the relationship healthy and happy. By providing the means to prevent a relationship’s decline, enhance an already close relationship, or repair and re-establish lost connections within a relationship by increasing couple similarity, attitude alignment may be a relationship maintenance behaviour.

*Attitude Alignment and Relationship Expectancies*

Another explanation of attitude alignment that should be discussed is in the context of relational expectations. Defined as schemas, or mental organizations of information (Carver & Scheier, 2000), about the way relationships work, relational expectations include implicit “rules” on the form and timing of relationship stages, as well as the behaviours of the dyad in the relationship. Although people differ in their development of schemas and the things that are included in them (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993), one attitude that may often be included is the belief that couples are very similar to one another. This belief may lead to greater agreement with one to whom a person is
attained, or with a long-term relationship partner, a contention supported in part by
theories of expectancy confirmation (see Darley & Fazio, 1980), which posit that when a
perceiver has an expectation about another person, he or she will behave in certain ways
during interaction to confirm the expectation. Expectancy confirmation has been
supported by research by Curtis and Miller (1986), who found that when individuals enter
into an interaction with someone they believe is attracted to them they behave more
pleasantly, express a warmer attitude, and disagree less often with the other person. This
pleasant, agreeable stance may help in the continuation of a budding relationship, and
may also be considered an integral part of a “healthy relationship.” If individuals in the
Curtis and Miller’s (1980) study behaved in ways to confirm their expectancies about
their interactions, it is reasonable to suppose that other expectancies, like that of close-partner similarity, may lead to behaviours that confirm them.

Studies have shown that close-partner similarity expectancies do in fact exist. For
example, Schul and Vinokur (2000) studied the phenomenon of projection, in which “the
psychological state of observers influences how they view others” (p. 15), and found that
projection of the individual’s characteristics onto his or her partner is high when the
measures taken involved outcomes “shared” by the target, like marital satisfaction. In
other words, the participants viewed their partners as more similar to them when the
characteristics considered were significant to both individuals in the dyad.

The belief that the partner is similar to oneself, whether fact or positive illusion,
can have very positive consequences for the relationship. Two seminal studies by Murray
and colleagues (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a, 1996b) found that these positive
illusions not only sustain positive beliefs about the relationship, but act on the
relationship in unique and beneficial ways. Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996a) asked members of dating and married heterosexual couples to rate themselves and their partners on interpersonal qualities and feelings about their actual relationships and their ideal relationships. They found that individuals tended to attribute characteristics more similar to themselves, and more similar to their ideal partner, to their partners than the partners' own questionnaires revealed. Creating these ideal partners – more similar to the individual than the real partner - was related to a higher relationship satisfaction. In a longitudinal study, Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996b) asked dating couples to complete similar measures of idealization and satisfaction 3 times in one year. They found that, not only was idealizing the partner healthy for the relationship in the moment, but was self-fulfilling, in that when partners idealized each other the most, the relationships were most likely to persist, and the more likely individuals came to share their partners' idealized images of them.

What this research suggests is that similarity may be expected in a relationship, and individuals change to more closely resemble – or at least seem to closely resemble – the partners’ expectations. If this was the case, one might expect individuals to agree with their partners all the time to maintain the ideal, close relationship they expect and know is expected of them. However, couples do not always agree, nor do they always change their attitudes to suit those of the partner. This is why the importance of the issue itself is important in the study of attitude alignment, a contention that will be discussed in detail in the next section.

On the basis of these proposed antecedents to attitude alignment and the findings of Davis and Rusbult (2001), I hypothesized that when partners discuss a number of
issues on which they previously have indicated a disagreement, the two individuals in each couple will change their attitudes in such a manner as to bring their attitudes into closer alignment.

*Attitude Importance and Attitude Alignment*

Although individuals may change their attitudes to more closely resemble those of their partners, it is important to note that sometimes the attitude itself may be more important to the individual than agreement with the partner. As discussed above, some attitudes are more resistant to change, and are therefore less likely to change in discussion with the partner (Davis & Rusbult, 2001). These attitudes are referred to as “highly involving attitudes” (Johnson & Eagly, 1989, p. 290), because they closely involve an individuals values, or “modes of conduct and end-states of existence” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 159).

In their study, Zuwerink and Devine (1996) presented individuals with a previously established attitude (i.e., supporting gay people to serve openly in the military) with a counterattitudinal message. They found that those who considered their attitude high in personal importance were significantly more resistant to the message than were those who considered their attitude low in personal importance. This suggests that when attitudes are important to people, or “highly involving,” they are less likely to change in the face of persuasive information. So, although there is a wealth of research to suggest that those partners who are more similar also tend to be more satisfied with their relationships (e.g., Murray et al., 1996a), it is not always the case that individuals will strive to change all their attitudes to maintain or enhance the similarity between them and their significant others. Thus, in the present study, as in Davis and Rusbult (2001), part of
a second hypothesis is that attitude alignment is less likely to occur for an individual when the issues discussed by the partners are more central, or higher in personal importance to him or her.

The present study concentrates on the attitude alignment of both partners in a relationship dyad, so it is important to consider the importance — or lack thereof — of the issue for both individuals, and how the two attitudes work together to affect alignment. As previously discussed research has found, people are less likely to change their attitudes when the attitudes are important to them (e.g., Zuwerink & Devine, 1996). However, this research, and persuasion research in general, has tended to concentrate on how an external source affects the individual, rather than how two individuals actively interacting with each other come to affect each other. Therefore, it is important to discuss what might happen if two people are in disagreement over an issue, and both feel that their attitudes are central to their characters. These central attitudes are “persistent over time, resistant to change, and influence information processing and action” (Holland, Verplanken, van Knippenberg, 2002, p. 2). It may be that there will be less attitude alignment in such a case, as both parties are unwilling to change such a highly important opinion.

In situations where both parties maintain an attitude that is peripheral to their characters, there may also be much less measurable attitude alignment. In this case, however, attitude alignment may not regularly occur because neither party expresses a set opinion or a conviction that requires discussion, or agreement. Researchers in the area of attitude strength and behaviour prediction suggest that weak attitudes such as the peripheral attitudes expressed between partners, are less predictive of behaviour, and less
stable over time, than strong attitudes (e.g. Holland et al., 2002). It has also been proposed that strong attitudes are more easily retrieved from memory (Fazio, 1995), whereas weak attitudes may be inferred from overt behaviour (Holland et al., 2002), which may mean that when individuals have weak attitudes, they have to trigger these attitudes in some way before they become salient. If it does not become salient, it makes sense that couples do not engage in discussion over the issue, which keeps this disagreement implicit or unknown to the other partner. As Davis and Rusbult (2001) have stressed, “so long as dissimilarity is implicit rather than explicit – or exists at the periphery of partners’ awareness – discomfort should be minimal, in that partners can avoid confronting the issue about which they disagree” (p. 67). Also, as a weak attitude has very little personal significance to an individual, so there is less motivation to maintain it if discussion actually does occur (Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, & Fabrigar, 1995). Again, if maintaining the relationship is more important to an individual than maintaining an attitude, which may be the case when the attitude is unimportant to him or her, then attitude alignment is likely to occur.

In summary, an important issue, one that is central to at least one of the individuals in a relationship dyad, is more likely to come up in discussion than one that is peripheral to both. In contrast, if an issue is central to both partners, attitude alignment seems unlikely, as the issue is too important to elicit change. Likewise, if an issue is peripheral to both partners, it may not even warrant discussion between partners, which is necessary for attitude alignment.

The most interesting situation for attitude alignment research is one in which the attitude is central to one partner, but peripheral to the other. In this case, Davis and
Rusbult (2001) hypothesized that greater alignment would occur for an individual when the issues discussed were peripheral to the self rather than central, and for issues that were central to the partner, rather than peripheral, a hypothesis that was supported.

Given the results of Davis and Rusbult (2001) and past research concerning attitude strength and resistance to change, I hypothesized in the current study that in cases where the issue discussed between partners is peripheral to the individual and central to the partner, increased attitude alignment is likely to occur for the individual.

Factors Influencing the Process of Attitude Alignment

Davis and Rusbult (2001) studied attitude alignment and its relation to the salience of topic, centrality of the issue, and relationship status between the discussion dyads, and all three areas were supported by their model. I aim to replicate the findings concerning centrality of the issue, but also to include other possible factors that may help predict whether individuals will engage in attitude alignment in the context of close relationships. These proposed factors, namely social desirability, attachment, relationship closeness, and affect, will be discussed in detail below.

Social Desirability

An issue not considered by Davis and Rusbult (2001) is the effect of social desirability on one’s alignment of attitudes with that of the partner. Social desirability is the phenomenon by which an individual who knows that other people will be made aware of his or her responses may behave or report in a way our society believes is socially acceptable and desirable (Fisher, 1993). The phenomenon itself is sometimes described as a nuisance variable that must be controlled in psychological research (e.g. Nederhof,
1985) and sometimes as a separate construct worthy of research of its own (e.g. Nevid, 1983). Regardless, a large body of research has shown that people often over report engaging in socially desirable behaviours, including voting in the United States (Silver, Anderson, & Abramson, 1986), and going to church in the United States (Hadaway, Marler, & Chaves, 1993). Beliefs are also vulnerable to the social desirability bias. For example, a study by Randall and Fernandes (1992) found that people generally report a belief that they are more ethical than their peers. Reporting of other attitudes may also fall prey to this bias.

Social desirability may be related to an individual’s reporting of attitude alignment toward that of the partner not because of actual change in attitude from one time to another, but because being similar to one’s partner in attitudes and behaviours may be socially desirable, a contention that has support in the literature. Kenny and Acitelli (2001) found that when a participant is asked if one’s partner sees the world in the same way as he/she does, there is a strong bias in favour of similarity, rather than difference. Even old adages, “birds of a feather flock together” and, “great minds think alike” speak to society’s views that people tend to associate with those more similar to themselves, and that it is good to be alike. Social desirability may also be an indication of the individual’s relationship expectations. As stated above, Curtis and Miller (1986) found that when individuals enter into an interaction with someone they believe is attracted to them, they behave more pleasantly, with a warmer attitude, and disagree less often with the other person. If an individual believes that similarity is integral to close relationships, has expectancies about his or her partner’s similarity, and sees partner similarity as an acceptable social norm, it seems logical that he or she may want to
project an image of partner similarity on an attitude questionnaire. In other words, if an individual is more susceptible to social desirable responding, maintaining the impression that he or she and the partner are similar may be more important than maintaining his or her opinion about an issue.

There are a number of problems with social desirability studies that support the contention that the phenomenon may not be as definitive in self-report studies as previously supposed. For example, the major measures of social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Edwards, 1957) do not correlate well with each other, suggesting a lack of agreement about the definition of social desirability (see Holtgraves, 2004). In response to the previously mentioned American voting behaviour research, Krosnick (1999) stated that social desirability reporting is exaggerated in that the measurement error once thought to be attributable to social desirability response bias can be shown to be due to other factors. Others claim social desirability may be self-deception, an overly positive view of the self, or even deliberate faking (Helmes & Holden, 2003). Regardless of these contentions, the presence of social desirability is an important consideration in the present study. So important, in fact, that in the present study it is measured in two different ways.

As the first method of examining whether social desirability is a factor in attitude alignment effects, the participants in the study will be randomly divided into two groups: a social desirability group, who are told that it is normal and natural to disagree with one's partner before answering the attitudes questionnaire, and a control group, who are not given these special instructions before the questionnaire.
It is hypothesized that there will be significant differences between the group receiving the social desirability message and the control group, in that those receiving the message that disagreement is natural and normal with one’s partner will align their attitudes less than those receiving no information about disagreement. A finding that social desirability does play a role in attitude alignment would be an interesting result.

Social desirability will also be measured on the individual level using an established social desirability scale to test whether, within a couple, an individual who is higher in social desirability may be more likely to agree with his or her partner. This particular measure of social desirability was selected because it encompasses two commonly defined aspects of the concept; namely, self-deception, or the tendency to give self reports that are honest but positively biased, and impression management, or deliberate self-presentation to an audience.

This leads to a second social desirability hypothesis, namely that individuals who are higher in social desirability as measured by the scale will exhibit more attitude alignment behaviours than those who are lower in social desirability.

Attachment Orientation

Widely considered important “from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1973, p. 129), attachment has been defined as the internal mental schemas of one’s relationships with others, and how those relationships work (Carver & Scheier, 2000). These models are thought to develop in early childhood through contact and interaction with one’s primary caregiver, usually considered to be one’s mother. These models also form the basis for how an individual interacts with others outside of the infant-mother bond, and
were initially proposed to explain the observed distress of young children when they are separated from the caregiver (Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982). The working models are then thought to, among other things, influence personality development and guide social behaviours (Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). These working models are also thought to continue to guide behaviour and personality characteristics through childhood (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1973; Carlson, Sampson, & Sroufe, 2003; Cassidy, 1988; Creasey & Hesson-McInnis, 2001) and into adulthood (e.g., Duemmler & Kobak, 2001; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Simpson, 1990; Tidwell, Reis, & Shaver, 1996).

Ainsworth and her colleagues (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) initially described three patterns of infant attachment (namely secure, ambivalent/resistant, and avoidant attachment) through their *strange situation*. In this laboratory procedure, infants are given a chance to explore and are observed while the caregiver, the attachment figure, is intermittently present and absent from the situation. More recently another researcher, Bartholomew (1990), proposed a different model of attachment including four categories, which was defined and tested in a seminal paper by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). These new four attachment prototypes are created by using combinations of two dimensions, namely a person’s self-image and a person’s image of others, both of which can be dichotomized as either positive or negative. The basis of defining attachment with these two features is derived from Bowlby (1973) himself, who identified trust in the attachment figure (the other) and trust in the self as the two elements that make the internal representations formed during childhood (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). What Bartholomew (1990) suggests is that if an
individual sees the self as either worthy of love and support or not, and sees other individuals as both trustworthy and available or not, then four combinations can be defined. These represent theoretical prototypes that individuals might resemble along the two continuums (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). These four patterns are designated secure, preoccupied, fearful-avoidant, and dismissive-avoidant, each explaining a prototypic strategy of security and closeness in relationships.

Those individuals who are in the secure category – having both a positive model of self and a positive model of other – feel that they are worthy of love and support, and are able to turn to a few appropriately selected others, effectively, in times of trouble (Cassidy, 2000). Simpson (1990) noted that securely attached individuals tend to find it relatively easy to get close to others and to depend on them, while not fearing abandonment. In turn, others view securely attached individuals as socially skilled (DiTommaso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross, & Burgess, 2003) and high in social competence, peer acceptance, and popularity (Coleman, 2003, p. 352). In adulthood, securely attached individuals tend to consider themselves friendly, good-natured, and likable (Simpson, 1990).

A second attachment prototype has a positive model of other, but a negative model of self. Designated as preoccupied (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), these individuals feel that they are unworthy of love and affection from others, but they still feel that others are trustworthy, which might lead to exaggerated attempts to gain acceptance from others one feels are worthy. In their attachment interviews, those individuals designated as preoccupied showed a tendency to disclose inappropriately, to cry in the presence of others, and to rely on others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), all
elements that may be difficult for other people who come in contact with these individuals. They are characterized by an extreme sense of unworthiness, which motivates them to be excessively close and vulnerable to extreme distress (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

Individuals defined as fearful-avoidant – those who have both a negative model of self and a negative model of other – have both a sense of unlovability and an expectation that others are untrustworthy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), and tend to avoid getting intimate with others. When they do get close to others, they tend to experience less frequent positive emotions and more negative emotions (Simpson, 1990). Individuals designated as avoidant may also mistrust others and distance themselves from others (Feeney & Noller, 1990) and are thought to have “working models and interaction goals [that] lead to what we call ‘compulsive closure’ and reflect their lack of motivation to either merge with others or to create intimate relations with them” (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991, p. 329). It is difficult to become intimate, and maintain intimacy, with people who have an avoidant attachment.

A second prototype with a negative model of other, but a positive model of self is called dismissive-avoidant, and is marked by a sense that the self is worthy of love, but belief that others are not emotionally available and that close relationships are unimportant. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) note that this style of attachment is marked by an avoidance of relationships to protect the self from disappointment. In a study by Kafetsios and Nezlek (2002), 42 participants were asked to describe their important interactions over seven days and found that those with a dismissive attachment style rated the lowest on social integration measures, including disclosure and happiness,
and perceived the emotions of others as less positive and more neutral than those with a secure attachment style. It is these characteristics that may lead to negative interactions with others, as well as fewer interactions in general.

Attachment styles formed in childhood can affect interactions in the context of adult relationships, and many studies in recent years have attempted to show the connection between childhood and adult attachment. In their seminal article, Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed and found evidence that attachment styles in adulthood are partly determined by childhood attachment relationships, indicated by the similar prevalence rates of each attachment style in adulthood and childhood. Furthermore, adults in different attachment style groups experience romantic relationships in different ways (Shaver, 1987). This suggests that knowing an individual’s attachment style may aid in predicting his or her behaviours within the context of a close, committed relationship of the kind researched in this current study. Focusing particularly on the attachment style prototypes proposed by Bartholomew (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), I hypothesize that the frequency of attitude alignment can be predicted in part by the attachment style of the partners involved in predictable and systematic ways as discussed below. The proposed differences in the frequency of attitude alignment center on the two-dimensional axes of the individual’s model of the self and his or her model of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The four prototypic categories may therefore be useful in describing how attachment is related to attitude alignment in that they are each characterized by different positions along the two dimensions.

Model of self. Also referred to as the dependence dimension, the two prototypical groups that exhibit a positive model of self are the secure and dismissing categories.
Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) found that self models converged with direct measures of an individual’s positivity of their self-concepts, and that individual’s reported self-models also helped predict self-esteem in a follow-up test eight months later. In a study on Chinese trainee teachers, Man and Hamid (1998) also found a link between attachment prototype and self-esteem, in which the secure and dismissing individuals had a higher self-esteem than the preoccupied and fearful prototype individuals. The link between the positive self-model of the secure and dismissing attachment prototypes and higher self-esteem is important to linking self-concept and willingness to change one’s attitude.

First, individuals with higher self-esteem tend to hold more positive beliefs about themselves (Baumeister, 1998), which is reminiscent of the very definition of people who are high on the self-model dimension of the four-category attachment model (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). When it comes to beliefs and attitudes, particularly about the self, individuals with higher self-esteem are more confident in their ratings, and these ratings are more consistent and stable than those for individuals with lower self-esteem (Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Fehr, 1990). This stability of self-beliefs, as summarized by Story (2004), can lead to using the self more often to guide decisions (Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993), which is particularly important in situations that may lend themselves to attitude alignment. The research suggests that when individuals have high self-esteem, they are more likely to follow their own self-beliefs than those of others to guide actions, including changing one’s mind, unlike those with low self-esteem who are less likely to use their own self-beliefs. These results are also reflected in research showing that self-beliefs that are more certain to an individual are also more resistant to
change using conventional persuasion techniques (Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann, Pelham, & Chidester, 1988), including those that may be used in a regular discussion between two close partners about a topic on which their attitudes are disparate.

Evidence to support the contention that secure individuals — those for whom the model of self dimension is positive — will be less likely to align their attitudes comes from research on secure relationships. Individuals in secure relationships describe their relationships as equitable, in that they perceive extensive give and take within their relationships extensively (Grau & Doll, 2003). Secure individuals are also able to accept and support their partner despite the partner’s faults (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), which suggests they might have more of a realistic standpoint on relationships and may expect the same support from their partners. In other words, individuals who have a more positive model of self may see his or her attitudes as more worthy and acceptable and may strive to keep his or her attitudes consistent rather than strive to increase similarity with the partner.

Focusing on the model of self dimension as described by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), it is hypothesized that those who indicate a more positive model of self (i.e., a lower dependence dimension score) will be less likely to align their attitudes with those of their partners than those with a less positive model of self (i.e., a higher dependence dimension score). This is because of the beliefs those with a more positive model of self have in their own self-worth and in their ability to be accepted by others as they are.

Model of other. The definition of the model of others, also referred to as the avoidance dimension, is the degree to which others are generally expected to be available
and supportive (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). An individual with a negative model of others, the two prototypical categories with a negative model of other being fearful-avoidant and dismissing-avoidant, tends to shun intimacy, either to avoid potential rejection or potential disappointment (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). If this is truly the way these individuals view others, it is arguable that the avoidance of intimacy can also include the avoidance of other behaviours related to intimacy, such as trust, sharing, and, important for this research, self-disclosure. Collins and Sroufe (1999) stated that an individual, to be truly intimate, must be “capable of self-disclosure, mutual reciprocity, [and] sensitivity to the feelings of the other” (p. 127). As all three of these elements are relevant to discussion of disparate opinions, it seems that those with a negative model of other might not be able to honestly discuss such opinions, let alone take the other’s opinion into account. Actively increasing one’s similarity to a significant other may increase intimacy, the very thing these individual’s avoid. Those with a more positive model of others, however, react in more constructive ways, by acknowledging the problem – in the case of this study, the disagreement – and are less negative toward their partners (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001). Therefore, those with a more positive model of others may be more willing to agree with their partners to maintain intimacy, as they do not avoid becoming intimate with others and are less negative with their partners. If an individual believes that others are trustworthy and available he or she may be comfortable with shifting attitudes to reflect that trust and intimacy with the partner. The two prototypical categories characterized by a less negative model of others are the secure and preoccupied groups.
Based on these contentions, it is hypothesized that those with a more positive model of others (i.e., a lower avoidance dimension score) will be more likely to align their attitudes with those of the partner than those with a less positive model of others (i.e., a higher avoidance dimension score).

The relationship between model of self and model of other. If both the model of self and the model of other dimensions are related to attitude alignment scores, then it is possible that the two dimensions interact to affect attitude alignment. This interaction would fit with the attachment model described by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), where each attachment prototype is a combination of the two dimensions. Although there is no formal hypothesis about the relationship between the two attachment dimensions for the present study, this relation will be explored in the analyses. According to the hypotheses already established for the present study concerning the attachment dimensions and alignment, perhaps the prototype least likely to exhibit attitude alignment is the dismissing prototype, that which has a positive model of self and a negative model of other, while the prototype most likely to exhibit attitude alignment is the preoccupied prototype, which has a negative model of self and a positive model of other.

Relationship Closeness

The definition of another factor that may be related to attitude alignment, relationship closeness, has been shown to incorporate a number of other related concepts, including commitment to the partner (Fehr, 1999) and pro-relationship, or relationship maintenance behaviours (Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Relationship closeness, defined as the interdependence between two people’s activities (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989), is important not only for its relations to other relationship
concepts but also as a precursor to other positive behaviours within the context of a relationship dyad. When individuals attain a high level of closeness within the relationship, “partners can readily achieve desirable outcomes such as intimacy, companionship, and security” (Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Closeness has also been seen by many theorists as an incredibly influential and motivating force in an individual’s life. For example, on Maslow’s hierarchy of motives (1968), one human need that has the quality of an instinct is love and belongingness, or the need for companionship, affection, and acceptance from others, all elements of a close relationship. According to Maslow (1968) only once this need has been met can individuals strive to achieve esteem and self-actualization needs, which shows how closeness to others, or love and belongingness, is both a means to an end and an end in itself. Many studies also suggest that closeness between individuals in a relationship can facilitate coping (Coyne & Bolger, 1990) and social support (e.g., Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). An important element in theory and research, relationship closeness is included in the current study in order to gauge its effects on attitude alignment.

Relationship closeness has been linked to interdependence theory (see Kelley et al., 1983; Kelley & Thibault, 1978), which describes interdependence and its effect on the motivations and behaviours within a relationship pair. In this theory, a couple comes to assume the closeness and commitment that is integral to an intimate relationship via satisfaction with paired activities and impacts on each other’s lives over time. The couple becomes interdependent, in that they both need the relationship and their well-being is entwined within the continuation of the relationship (Agnew, van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998). The strength of this interdependence depends largely on the number of
good outcomes within the relationship, and a paucity of such outcomes in alternative relationships (Wieselquist et al., 1999). It is important to note that as both relationship closeness (see Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989) and commitment (see Agnew et al., 1998; Wieselquist et al., 1999) have been described and studied using the tenets underlying interdependence theory, the literature on both concepts is integral in explaining the effect of relationship closeness on attitude alignment. The connection between relationship closeness and commitment is also found in literature recording laypeople’s concept of commitment (e.g. Fehr, 1999), in which commitment figures centrally in concepts of close relationships, but peripherally in concepts of non-close relationships. These studies suggest that both theory and reality inexorably link commitment with close relationships and vice versa.

Commitment level, as an important component of a close relationship, has been described as a long-term orientation toward a relationship and an intention to remain in the relationship (Rusbult, 1983), and has often been considered an integral part of any close relationship dyad. Kiesler (1968) noted that when an individual makes a commitment to something, including a relationship, this commitment creates resistance to other alternatives and guides future behaviour in the context of that relationship, a sentiment shared by major theorists in the field of relationship research. For example, Sternberg (1986) considers commitment as one of the three central components in his triangular theory of love, the presence or absence of which is integral to the formation of the different forms of a loving relationship. Hendrick and Hendrick (2000) consider commitment a vital force in the progress of any relationship.
It is important to note that although commitment has been described and measured objectively through observable acts such as marriage vows (see Arriaga & Agnew, 2001), current research concentrates on the subjective qualities of commitment, and stresses the psychological facet of individuals who report being committed to their romantic partners. In their definition of commitment, Rusbult and Buunk (1993) often refer to it as a psychological state, and include feelings, desire, and cognitions, all subjective qualities. This reference acknowledges that although objective, traditional measures of commitment may be valid, the concept is far more complex and should be studied among populations whose relationships have none of these observable characteristics, but feel subjectively committed.

Commitment level has been linked to relationship maintenance acts, in that “committed individuals frequently are willing to exert significant effort or endure great cost toward the goal of maintaining their relationships” (Agnew et al., 1998, p. 941). This finding connects commitment and the traditional forms of relationship maintenance, like willingness to sacrifice one’s own desired outcomes (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, & Steemers, 1997) and devaluation of attraction alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989). These links also include the current study’s proposed relationship maintenance act, namely attitude alignment (Davis & Rusbult, 2001), where it has been found that closer and more committed couples – even among the undergraduate population tested by Davis and Rusbult (2001) – exhibited more attitude alignment than the stranger dyads tested using the same discussion technique. Closer to the heart of attitude alignment after initial disagreement is the finding that highly committed individuals are more likely to accommodate during interactions to ensure
more positive relations with their partner than are those who are less committed (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). As previously discussed, an important form of accommodation could be to align one’s attitude with that of the partner in order to “keep the peace” when argument threatens the relationship.

Research by Wieselquist et al. (1999) ties together the three important elements discussed in this section: close relationships, commitment, and relationship maintenance acts. In two longitudinal studies asking 53 heterosexual romantic couples questions concerning dependence, commitment level, accommodative behaviour, trust, and willingness to sacrifice, they found that the three main elements have a cyclical pattern as the relationship develops. The pattern indicates that dependence, an element of relationship closeness (Kelley, 1979), promotes commitment, which in turn promotes pro-relationship acts, which then, via other interconnections, increases willingness to become dependent on the partner. In this way, relationship closeness can be related to whether an individual is willing to engage in relationship maintenance acts.

These findings lend credence to the proposed hypothesis in the current study, that closeness of the relationship is related to attitude alignment behaviours, in that the closer the relationship observed between the individuals in a relationship dyad, the more likely the individuals are willing to align their attitudes with those of their partners.

Affect

The final factor proposed to be related to attitude alignment is affect, which has been described in a number of ways by researchers in the field (for an overview, see Schwarz & Clore, 1996). Although affect can refer to valence or feelings of knowing or
physicality, the most commonly used definition – and the one that is important to the current study – is that affect is a synonym of emotion, which has been described as an internal mental state focusing on positive and negative feelings (Clore, Ortoney, & Foss, 1987). Close relationships and affect are incontrovertibly linked, with relationships being described as the “crucible in which emotions are formed” (Shaver, 1984, p. 7). For example, Babad and Wallbott (1986) wrote that emotions are often expressed and experienced while interacting with others, joy and anger being significantly more likely to occur in social than in non-social situations. Emotions are also shaped by the social relationships that are formed. For example, researchers have found that marriage, a common social relationship, is linked to happiness and well-being for an individual (Gove et al., 1983), in that married individuals tend to be happier and have an increased sense of well-being, both of which are involved in positive affect.

Forgas (1995) provided an example of how emotion can affect environmental outcomes with the Affect Infusion Model (AIM), which explains how “affectively loaded information exerts an influence on and becomes incorporated in the judgmental process...eventually colouring the judgmental outcome” (p. 39). The emotions an individual experiences are often related to the corresponding surrounding social environment and social judgment literature abounds in examples of individuals whose level of depression, or negative affect, affects the judgments that they make about the environment, particularly within the context of relationships (e.g., Creasey & Hesson-McInnis, 2001; Forgas, 1991, 1994). Moreover, negative affect is related to the number of complaints about health, even though it is not related to actual, long-term health (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). When it comes to relationships, negative affect is related
to dissatisfaction with partners (Gottman & Levenson, 1986). Alternately, respondents in a study by Genero, Surrey, Miller, Swift, and Arons (as cited in Genero et al., 1992) who reported distress in close relationships also had higher depression scores, an element of negative affect. When relationship conflict is serious, individuals who are sad tend to blame themselves more often, and attribute the conflicts to internal, stable, and global causes (Forgas, 1994).

The most important distinction to make for the current study is between the concepts of individuals generally high in positive affect (PA), or people who tend to describe themselves as feeling more enthusiastic and alert than others (Berry & Willingham, 1997), and individuals generally high in negative affect (NA), or people who often describe themselves as feeling more negative emotions, such as hostility and distress (Berry & Willingham, 1997). These two concepts are relatively stable individual differences rather than merely emotional reactions to things on a situational basis (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), and are thought to encompass a large range of affective responses and experiences (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). It is important to note that they are independent from each other (Schmukle, Egloff, & Burns, 2002), in that, for example, a person who is high in positive affect is not necessarily low in negative affect, but can be high in both. Referred to as a circumplex structure of affect (Zelenski & Larsen, 2000), this perspective presents affect in a way that can be measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS, Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). This scale consists of two 10-item mood scales, one for both positive affect and negative affect, and both of which have been shown to be highly internally consistent, uncorrelated, and stable over time (see Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS
has been widely accepted by the psychological community and has been used in a variety of studies in many different research areas, ranging from human resources (e.g., McCloy & Wise, 2002) to behavioural neuroscience (e.g., Jacobs & Snyder, 1996). The PANAS, as a well-documented, reliable measure of positive and negative affect, is used in the current study to measure whether affect will be related to attitude alignment in close dyads.

People who exhibit differing levels of positive and negative affect have been shown to differ in both the quantity and quality of their relationship experiences. For example, those who are high in positive affect report more frequent social activity than do those low in positive affect (Watson, Clark, McIntyre, & Hammaker, 1992). There is also research to suggest that these more frequent social interactions are also marked by more positive evaluations by both the individuals high in PA and their interaction partners. One study, examining female pairs interacting, found that the higher the levels of positive affect the more highly both the individuals and the conversation partners’ evaluations of the interaction quality (Berry & Hansen, 1996). Berry and Willingham (1997) found, by asking participants to describe their current and past romantic relationships and their responses to conflict, that individuals higher in positive affect report having current relationships that are higher quality than those lower in positive affect. Furthermore, these high positive affect people are more likely to be in a relationship than others (Berry & Willingham, 1997).

Berry and Willingham (1997) also found that those higher in positive affect act differently when in conflict with the partner. The authors used the two-dimensional (active vs. passive and constructive vs. destructive) model of conflict behaviours
(Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986), in which the two dimensions can combine to form four types of conflict behaviours. Two types of destructive behaviours — neglect (e.g., ignoring the partner) which is destructive but passive, and exit (e.g., shouting at the partner) which is both destructive and active — can decrease relationship functioning (Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette, 1994). The two types of constructive behaviours — voice (e.g., compromising with the partner) which is constructive and active, and loyalty (e.g., being patient with the partner) which is both constructive and passive — are related to higher relationship health (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). The definitions of these four types suggest that accommodative behaviours such as attitude alignment fit into the category of constructive behaviours, in that they aid in the continuation of a healthy, satisfying relationship. Berry and Willingham (1997) found support for the contention that affect is related to the type of conflict behaviour used, in that those high in positive affect were found to engage less often in active destructive responses, and engage more often in active constructive responses. If positive affect here is related to increased willingness to engage in behaviours both helpful and healthy for the relationship, and attitude alignment is a behaviour that may be very helpful and healthy for the relationship, it stands to reason that positive affect may also be related to increased attitude alignment in individuals after disagreement and discussion with their romantic partners.

Negative affect was also found by Berry and Willingham (1997) to have an effect on the type of behaviours used in relationship conflict (Berry & Willingham, 1997), in that people high in negative affect described themselves as more likely to engage in destructive response techniques and less likely to engage in constructive response
techniques. Therefore, if negative affect here is related to increased willingness to engage in behaviours that are not healthy for the relationship, it stands to reason that negative affect may also be related to decreased attitude alignment.

Research on persuasion also offers evidence that those higher in positive affect may engage in more attitude alignment than those lower in positive affect (see Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman, 1993). For example, there are a number of studies that have shown a main effect of positive affect on the facilitation of persuasion (e.g., Srull, 1983). In other words, inducing a positive mood in an individual may increase their susceptibility to persuasion, and different studies have shown disparate methods of inducing this positive mood from the very simple (e.g., having a smile on one’s face, Laird, 1974), to the seemingly abstract (e.g., being persuaded by someone who’s scent is pleasant, Baron, 1983). Other studies have shown that the strength of the persuasive argument is also important in predicting whether affect will play a role in the susceptibility to persuasion. Bless, Mackie, and Schwarz (1992) found that people in neutral or negative moods are more likely to be persuaded by a message when the arguments are strong rather than weak. However, when people are in positive moods, they are equally persuaded by both strong and weak arguments. This suggests that those in positive moods may be easier to persuade than those in negative moods. As aligning one’s attitude toward greater congruence with the attitude of the partner after discussing the issue may been seen as a form of persuasion, this research supports the contention that positive and negative affect may play a role in the development of attitude alignment among couples.
Based on these contentions, I hypothesize that positive affect, as measured prior to discussion with the partner, will be related to attitude alignment in that when positive affect is high, attitude alignment will be more likely to occur than when positive affect is low. Negative affect will be related to attitude alignment as well, in that when negative affect is high, attitude alignment will be less likely to occur than when negative affect is low.

**Summary of Hypotheses**

This study aims to partially replicate the research by Davis and Rusbult (2001) which examined attitude alignment among dating partners, including the variable of attitude centrality. However, the current study also examines some alternate explanations of attitude alignment besides replicating the relationship between attitude alignment and the centrality of the attitudes. The study looks at attachment, operationally defined in terms of the two-dimensional model of attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991); relationship closeness, operationally defined as the interdependence between two people’s activities (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989); affect, defined as the current positive and negative emotional states of the individual as measured by the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellgen, 1988); and social desirability, defined as the reporting of responses thought to reflect societal norms and expectations, either through direct deception or the down-playing of true attitudes (Paulhus, 1984).

Dating partners from a primarily undergraduate university completed a questionnaire that assessed each individuals’ attitudes about a variety of issues, along with the centrality, or importance, of the issue to the individual’s identity. The partners were then asked to discuss a number of issues from the questionnaire on which they had
disparate opinions, and then completed a second questionnaire assessing their attitudes and the attitude centrality on the same issues. The couples were divided into two experimental groups: a control group, who were given the same instructions on the second attitude questionnaire as on the first, and a social desirability group, who were told, before filling out the second attitude questionnaire, it is natural and normal to disagree with one’s partner. Both individuals in each couple were tested for attitude alignment, which is operationalized as the amount of attitude change in the direction of the partner’s attitude. My hypotheses are summarized below:

1) When partners discuss a number of issues on which they previously have indicated a disagreement, each individual will change their attitudes in such a manner as to bring their attitudes into closer alignment.

2) Greater attitude alignment will occur for an individual in cases where the issue discussed between partners is more peripheral to the individual and more central to the partner.

3) The social desirability experimental group, told that disagreement is natural and normal, will exhibit significantly less attitude alignment than the control group, indicating that social desirability has an effect on the level of attitude alignment reported by individuals in relationship dyads.

4) Individuals who are higher in social desirability will exhibit more attitude alignment behaviours than those who are lower in social desirability.

5) Individuals who have a more positive model of self will exhibit less attitude alignment behaviours than those who have a less positive model of self.
6) Individuals who have a more positive model of other will exhibit more attitude alignment behaviours than those who have a less positive model of other.

7) Individuals who report higher levels of relationship closeness are more likely to align their attitudes with those of their partner than individuals who report lower levels of relationship closeness.

8) Individuals who are higher in positive affect right before discussion with their partners are more likely to align their attitudes than those who are lower in positive affect, whereas those who are higher in negative affect right before discussion with their partners are less likely to align their attitudes than those who are lower in negative affect.

It should be noted that to test hypotheses four to eight, pooled regression analyses will be employed. This method of analysis tests not only the effects of the individuals' difference variable scores on their own attitude alignment, but the effects of their partners' difference variable scores on their attitude alignment. A detailed explanation of pooled regression analyses is in the following section.

Method

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were partners in 105 heterosexual dating relationships (105 men, 105 women). Couples were recruited via posters in and around the Brock university campus, and received 25 dollars per couple after completion of the experiment. The advertisement flyers indicated that the couples had to be dating for at least 6 months to qualify for the experiment. The couples were asked to participate in the experiment together as a couple. Participants were at least 18 years of age.
Participants were 21.31 years old on average. The majority were students at the university (84.4%). The participants who indicated they were students had completed an average of 2.20 years of study. The non-students, the rest of the sample, were either working part-time, or unemployed. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (.5% Caribbean, 1.4% African American, 5.2% Asian American, .5% Native American, 92% Caucasian). Partners had been involved with each other for an average of 38.52 months, and the majority described their relationships as exclusive dating relationships (4.7% married, 7.1% engaged, 14.2% living together, .5% dating this person and others, 73.6% dating only this person).

Materials

Affect. The affect questionnaire used was the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988), a 20-item instrument that assesses the extent to which a person has feelings that are related to positive affect (e.g., excited, enthusiastic, inspired) and to negative affect (e.g., distressed, irritable, ashamed) by asking them to rate how applicable each word-item is to them (1 = Very slightly or not at all, 5 = Extremely). The test can be used to measure an individual’s mood affect at many different times (e.g., over the past year, in general), but in this test the affect was measured according to how the individuals felt at the moment of testing. The scale is divided into two continuous variables: Positive Affect (PA) and Negative Affect (NA). NA is measured by averaging the ten negative affect word-item scores (i.e., distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, afraid) which yields a single score ranging from 1 to 5. PA is measured by averaging the ten positive affect word-item scores (i.e., interested, excited, strong, enthusiastic, proud, alert, inspired,
determined, attentive, active) yielding a single score ranging from 1 to 5. In the present study, however, an eleventh item, “happy,” was added to the total PA score. The decision to include this item stems from the aspiration to include a term that seems to encompass the very definition of positive affect, or the extent to which an individual is experiencing a positive mood (Egloff, Schmukle, Burns, Kohlmann, & Hock, 2003). Moreover, although the PANAS is a widely-used scale for affect in psychological research, there are concerns that reflect the decision to insert a new item onto the original scale (e.g., Diener, Smith, & Fujita, 1995; Larsen & Diener, 1992), that happiness is the central positive emotion, but does not appear to be central to the PA scale. Therefore, “happy” was added to the composition of PA in the present study, but will only be included as a factor in PA if the reliability of the scale is not compromised by its addition. The PANAS scales have been used extensively in psychological research (e.g., Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Jundt & Hinsz, 2002). Watson et al. (1988) found an internal consistency of .89 and .85 for positive and negative affect, respectively, stability of reporting over 2-month time periods, and appropriate levels of convergent and discriminant validity.

Relationship closeness. The relationship closeness questionnaire used was the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) which “draws on the conceptualization of closeness as high interdependence between two people’s activities” (Berscheid et al., 1989, p. 792). This inventory is composed of three subscales: frequency, diversity, and strength of the partner’s impact on one’s life and activities. Frequency measures, with three items, the average number of minutes spent with the partner, as reported by the individual, over a one week period. Diversity measures the number of different activities done alone with the partner over the past week, as reported by the individual, by asking
the individual to check off all the activities from a 38-item list that they performed with
the partner. Strength measures, with 34 items, the influence the partner has over the
individual’s future and current activities and goals, as reported by the individual. For
each of the separate subscales the scores were summed, and these raw scores were
assigned a scaled score ranging from 1 to 10, where the Frequency, Diversity, and
Strength of the relationship increase as the scores increase from 1 to 10, respectively.
These three scores are then added together to yield a total Relationship Closeness score,
ranging from 3 to 30. Test-retest reliability for the RCI has been shown to be .82. The
RCI has acceptable levels of discriminant and construct validity (Berscheid et al., 1989).

Attachment. The attachment questionnaire used in the study is the Relationship
Scales Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).
Unlike other attachment inventories, this questionnaire measures the individual’s
attachment style based on two dimensions – concept of self and concept of others –
which combine to form four different attachment typologies: secure, dismissing,
preoccupied, and fearful. In this study, a composite score was calculated for each of the
two dimensions in the model of attachment (see Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992).
The rating scale for both dimensions ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all like me, 5 = Very
much like me).

The dependence dimension, or the model of self, was calculated as the mean of
five questions on the questionnaire: 11 (“I often worry that romantic partners don’t
really love me”), 18 (“My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away”),
21 (“I often worry that romantic partners won’t want to stay with me”), 23 (“I worry
about being abandoned”), and 25 (“I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I
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would like”) was computed, yielding a score ranging from 1 to 5. The avoidance dimension, or the model of other, was calculated as the mean of eight questions on the questionnaire: 10 (“I find it relatively easy to get close to others;”), 12 (“Romantic partners often want me to be closer than I feel comfortable being”), 13 (“I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others”), 15 (“I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me”), 20 (“I am comfortable having other people depend on me”), 24 (“I worry about others getting too close to me”), 29 (“I find it difficult to trust others completely”), and 30 (“I am comfortable depending on other people”). Items 10, 15, and 30 were reversed scored, so the raw scores must be inverted before they are used to compute the avoidance dimension. These dimensions have been shown to have acceptable construct and convergent validity with other methods of measuring attachment, and have been extensively used and cited in current research on attachment (see Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

Social desirability. The social desirability questionnaire used in the study is the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR, Paulhus, 1988). The inventory measures two constructs related to social desirability – self-deceptive positivity and impression management – in 40 statements on a scale from 1 to 7 where the participants are asked to indicate how much they agree with each statement (1 = not true, 7 = very true). To score the BIDR, one point is added to an individual’s score for each extreme response (6 or 7). The self-deception subscale consists of the summed score of items 1 to 20, yielding a single score ranging from 0 to 20. All the even-numbered items from 1 to 20 are reverse-scored. The impression management subscale consists of the summed score of items 21 to 40, yielding a single score ranging from 0 to 20. All the odd-
numbered items from 21 to 40 are reverse-scored. To yield a total social desirability score, all extreme responses were summed to yield a score ranging from 0 to 40. Paulhus (1988) found the overall inventory to have an internal consistency alpha of .81, and to have acceptable convergent validity with other commonly used measures of social desirability, with correlations ranging from .71 to .80.

*Attitudes questionnaire.* The attitudes questionnaire included 50 issues adapted from the game Scruples: 90's Edition (e.g., “You are very attracted to someone who is happily married. You have no attachments. Do you explore the possibilities?”, “A dear old friend adopts political beliefs you find repugnant. Do you distance yourself?”, “Your spouse stipulated that his life not be prolonged should he become terminally ill. Now he is dying yet seems to be fighting for life. Do you follow his earlier instructions?”). Participants indicate how strongly they feel about each issue (e.g., “You and your new lover have just gotten into bed for the first time when s/he admits to being married. Do you jump out of bed? 1 = definitely not, 9 = definitely jump out of bed). Participants also indicated how central the issue was to their identity (e.g., “indicate the degree to which the issue is central to who you are and how you think about yourself” 1 = do not feel strongly about the issue, 9 = feel very strongly about the issue). Although the use of questions from the game Scruples: 90's Edition is adapted from Davis and Rusbult (2001), who used similar questions from the game Scruples, the questions were not the identical issues used by Davis and Rusbult (2001). Every participant was given the issues in the same order, and the pre-discussion and post-discussion questionnaires were also in the same order. Refer to Appendix A for the list of attitudes questions.
Attitude alignment, as described by Davis and Rusbult (2001), “involves attitude change of a form that yields enhanced congruence with the attitudes of one’s partner” (p. 69). Therefore attitude alignment is operationally defined as the difference between the participant’s prediscussion and postdiscussion attitudes about the four issues which were discussed with the partner. These numbers are given a positive value if the observed change represented movement toward the partner’s attitude, and were given a negative value if the observed change represented movement away from the partner’s attitude.

*Attitude Differences and Centrality of Issue to Self and Partner*

My operationalization of both attitude discrepancy and issue centrality discrepancy between self and partner closely resembles that of Davis and Rusbult (2001), as they pioneered both the phenomenon and measure of attitude alignment. Using information from the prediscussion attitudes reported by the participants, four attitude issues about which the partners disagreed were selected. Disagreement was operationally defined as a difference of 3 or more scale points on the 9-point scale used in the attitude questionnaire. The four largest differences of opinion were selected for discussion by the couples. If difference scores were all the same, and there were more than four issues that met the criteria, the first four issues found that met the criteria were selected for discussion.

Centrality was operationally defined as a score on the 9-point centrality scale. In Davis and Rusbult (2001), issues considered to be central to the self were those rated as 5 or higher by the individual, whereas issues considered to be peripheral to the self were those rated as 4 or lower, resulting in a categorization of centrality. Centrality disagreement in the case of Davis and Rusbult (2001) was a matter of one individual in a
couple having a centrality score of 5 or more on a given issue, and the partner having a score of 4 or less on the issue. It was a concern in the present study that it might have been difficult to find two issues on which the male participant had a score above 5 and the female participant had a score below 5, and vice versa, for each couple. Therefore, in the present study, centrality was considered in non-absolute terms, with the issues discussed being *more central* or *less central* to that of the partner, instead of definitively being considered central or peripheral to the individual. In other words, centrality of issue was operationally relative to the specific issue and the importance attributed to it by both partners. In this way, an individual who had a centrality score of 5 for an issue was considered to have a high centrality for that issue, if their partner’s score was below 5, but was considered to have a low centrality for that issue if their partner’s corresponding score was above 5. This updated operationalization of centrality seems to correspond more realistically with the dynamic nature of opinions, and also recognizes the relative and dynamic process of making decisions in a close dyad. In this way, the centrality measurement in the present study is more a measure of centrality disagreement between the two individuals in a couple for a specific issue, and less a measure of absolute centrality for a given issue for an individual.

As mentioned, of the four issues discussed by the partners in the discussion phase, two were more central to the man but more peripheral to the woman and the other two were more central to the woman and more peripheral to the man. Centrality was a categorical variable in the present study, as in Davis and Rusbult (2001). A score of 1 indicated that the issue was more central to the male partner and less central to the female
partner, and a score of 2 indicated that the issue was more central to the female partner and less central to the male partner.

Procedure

The participants were tested in groups of two, the previously-established relationship dyads, to maintain the privacy of the individuals who had agreed to participate. Upon arriving at the experimental session, the couple was seated at separate cubicles, so they were unable to see one another’s testing materials and responses. The participants were instructed to fill out an attitudes questionnaire, a series of 50 dilemmas for which the individuals had to indicate their attitude on a 9-point scale (1 = completely disagree, 9 = completely agree). The individuals were also instructed to indicate the centrality, or importance of each issue to the self, also on a 9-point scale (1 = not important at all, 9 = extremely important). The participants were told that they would be discussing a number of the dilemmas with their partners later in the session, but they were not to discuss any of the issues at the time that they were completing the questionnaires.

When the two participants were finished, the researcher selected four issues from the couple’s completed attitudes questionnaires on which the couple indicated the most disagreement. The four largest differences of opinion were selected for discussion by the couples. Of the four issues selected for discussion, half were selected to be more central to the man in the couple but more peripheral to the woman and the other half were selected to be more central to the woman but more peripheral to the man. This procedure is replicated from that of Davis and Rusbult (2001).
While the researcher decided which of the 50 dilemmas met this criteria, the two participants were asked to complete a series of scales: the PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), which measured their current levels (at the time of the session) of positive and negative emotionality, the Relationship Closeness Inventory (Berscheid, et al., 1989), which measured their perceptions of their closeness and commitment, the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994), which measured their attachment style according to four prototypical categories, and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1984), which measured their levels of self-deception and impression management. The participants were reminded that no answers on these questionnaires would be revealed to their partners, nor would they be asked to discuss these answers. Also included in this group of questionnaires was a group of demographic questions, including those on age, sex, birth date, occupation, and ethnicity. Each individual in the couple was asked to give not just their own demographic information, but that of their partner as well.

When the couple completed these questionnaires, the pair was instructed to move their chairs to face one another, in preparation for discussion. The individuals were told that they would discuss four issues, for three minutes each, that were selected from the attitudes questionnaire. The researcher was present in the room with the couple and handed a cue card with each written issue to the participants after reading the issue aloud. The individuals were instructed when to begin and when to stop discussion of the particular issue. As in Davis and Rusbult (2001), the participants were instructed to take turns telling one another “how you feel about each issue and why you feel the way that you do.” Each three-minute discussion period was timed, and the couple was told that
the researcher would be present to time the discussions, and to take some notes. Throughout the discussion, the researcher did not participate other than to begin and end discussion periods.

After this discussion phase (approximately 15 minutes), participants were asked to move their chairs back to their separate cubicles as before. Here they were asked to reconsider their attitudes, by again indicating their opinions on the same 50 items from the first attitude questionnaire (1 = completely agree, 9 = completely disagree) as well as the centrality of each issue to the self. This questionnaire included the four issues that were selected for discussion between partners in the previous phase of the experiment. All participants were assured that their partners would not be informed of any of their answers to the second questionnaire. The differences between the participants’ answers to the pre-discussion attitudes and the post-discussion attitudes were measured as an operationalization of attitude alignment.

To ensure that the alignment effect is a separate phenomenon and not an artifact of social desirability, two different sets of instructions were randomly presented at the beginning of the post-discussion questionnaire. Half the participants, the control group, received the same attitude questionnaire as in the pre-discussion period, with the same instructions, i.e., “The following scenarios depict situations that may happen in everyday life. After reading and considering each scenario, you are asked to indicate on a 9-point scale, 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree, your attitudes about the scenarios. You are also asked to indicate, on a 9-point scale (1 = do not feel strongly about the issue, 9 = feel very strongly about the issue) how important you consider the topic at hand. Take your time and consider your answers. Your answers will not be revealed to your
partner." The other half of the participants received the social desirability treatment. They were told in a sentence along with the instructions before the attitude questionnaire that it is natural and normal to disagree with one’s partner, i.e., “The following scenarios depict situations that may happen in everyday life. After reading and considering each scenario, you are asked to indicate on a 9-point scale, $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ and $9 = \text{strongly agree}$, your attitudes about the scenarios. You are also asked to indicate, on a 9-point scale ($1 = \text{do not feel strongly about the issue}$, $9 = \text{feel very strongly about the issue}$) how important you consider the topic at hand. It is natural and normal to disagree with your partner, as many healthy couples have differences of opinion from time to time. Take your time and consider your answers. Your answers will not be revealed to your partner.” It was thought that, if attitude alignment is not an artifact of social desirability, the two groups would present similar attitude alignment results, regardless of the instructions the participants received. If attitude alignment is affected by social desirability, the group who received the social desirability treatment would present less attitude alignment than the control group. The two individuals in the study received the same manipulation. Frequency analyses indicated that 53% of the couples received the control condition instructions, whereas 47% of the couples received the social desirability instructions.

Throughout the experimental session, the participants were reminded that there are “no right or wrong attitudes or ways of discussing issues” (Davis & Rusbult, 2001, p. 69). The participants were then thoroughly debriefed and thanked for their time. As well, all participants received monetary compensation (25 Canadian dollars) for their participation.
Results

Preliminary Analyses

A total of 105 couples (105 men, 105 women) were included in the final analyses. Three of the couples of the original sample were same-sex couples, and thus were not eligible to participate in the study, and there were not enough same-sex couples to analyze them separately. Another couple was removed from the study as the male participant did not provide any centrality data for either the prediscussion or the postdiscussion attitudes questionnaire. A final couple was removed from the analyses as their alignment scores were extreme outliers in the attitude alignment distribution, (couple number 62, with a standardized residual of 5.04) and significantly changed the results of the final analyses, including the kurtosis and skewness values of the attitude alignment distribution.

Missing data constituted less than 3% of all predictor variables. For each of the variables that constitute a main predictor (e.g., the 40 items of the BIDR), the sample mean was imputed into any score that was missing for an individual. The only variable for which this was not possible was RCI Frequency, as the time spent with one’s partner is unique to each individual couple. Therefore, there is one individual who has missing data for RCI Frequency, although his partner has a score of 6. As this did not change the frequency distribution, and the couple did not differ from the other couples in other demographic or individual measures, it was unnecessary to remove them from the analyses. For the questionnaires whose scores were computed by the average of the items (e.g., RSQ Dependence and RSQ Avoidance dimensions, PANAS PA and NA scales),
the mean for the specific question for which data were missing was imputed into the sample before the overall scores were computed for that individual.

As the data are dyadic, the missing data in the demographic variables were unique in that it could be replaced by actual numbers as long as one individual in the couple filled out the questionnaire properly. For example, the age of participant 31 was missing. However, his partner indicated that he was 25, and thus his age could be imputed. A second individual’s age was imputed from her partner’s score. This same procedure was used for 12 participants’ missing ethnicity scores. It was assumed, given the closeness of the participants’ relationships, that the individuals filled in their partners’ ethnicity and ages correctly.

Of the fifty issues in the attitudes questionnaire, every issue was selected at least once for discussion for the remaining couples, with issues 43 (“You are writing your will. Two of your children are struggling while the third is affluent. Do you give them equal shares?”) and 50 (“You are getting married. Your divorced mother won’t come to the wedding if your father is there. You like both parents. Do you invite your dad?”), being selected only once, and issues 2 (“As a surgeon, you sell diseased tissue to a company that uses it to produce a new drug. Do you offer to share your handsome profits with the patient who supplies the tissue?”) and 22 (“You see a beetle crossing your kitchen floor. Do you squish it?”), being selected seventeen times, the most of any of the issues. The probability of each issue being selected as target varied from .20% to 4.00%, values that do not differ greatly from the expected probability of 2.00%. In other words, no issue was disproportionally selected as a target, the same conclusion reached by Davis and Rusbult (2001) with their selection of issues. The small variations that were observed, according
to Davis and Rusbult and upheld here, may be attributable to order of issue in the questionnaire because the researcher went through the questions in the same order every time until she found one that matched the selection criteria. Having a number of copies of the questionnaire with the issues mixed in each may reduce the uneven selection of issues that was evident in the present study. However, given the narrow range of the observed selection probabilities, there is no concern that the issues selected may have affected the outcomes of the current study.

As mentioned previously, the dependent variable of attitude alignment, as in Davis and Rusbult (2001), was operationally defined as the discrepancy between the participant's prediscussion and postdiscussion attitudes about a given issue as compared to the partner's prediscussion attitude such that this score is a positive value if the change represented movement toward the partner's prediscussion attitude, and a negative value if the change is away from the partner's prediscussion attitude. For each of the four issues discussed by the couple an attitude alignment score was calculated, resulting in four attitude alignment scores. To develop a single measure of attitude alignment across all four issues, the four measures were averaged for each individual. For all analyses, the individual's attitude alignment score was used (Mean = 1.00, SD = .08).

There were four prediscussion centrality scores for each of the four issues discussed. Attitude alignment scores were divided into two groups, depending on whether the issue in question was more or less central to the individual. In this way, the attitude alignment scores for the two issues on which the male participant was more central than his partner were averaged to yield a single attitude alignment score, and the attitude alignment scores for the two issues on which the male participant was less central than
his partner were averaged to yield a single attitude alignment score. These calculations yielded two attitude alignment variables based on centrality: One variable where the issue was more central to the male and less central or peripheral to the female (Male High centrality) and a second variable where the issue was more central to the female and peripheral to the male (Female High centrality). These scores were used in the centrality analyses.

The individual difference variables – relationship closeness, attachment, affect, and social desirability – were operationalized by their respective inventory scores, as previously explained. The Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) and the three separate subscales (e.g., Frequency, Diversity, and Strength), the Relationship Scales Questionnaire’s two attachment dimensions, Dependence and Avoidance, the PANAS PA and NA scales, and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) separate scales, Impression Management and Self-deception. See Table 1 for the means and standard deviations of all the predictor variables and their subtests.

The Centrality scores for all individuals range from 1.25 to 8.75, out of a possible range of 1 to 9. The skewness (-.27) and kurtosis (1.98) are within acceptable ranges. The histograms and frequency distributions of the variable indicate that the distribution is acceptably normal, but leptokurtic.

The RCI total score ranges from 11 to 25, out of a possible range of 3 to 30. The skewness (-.29) and kurtosis (-.27) of the distribution are excellent, and the histogram shows that the variable is normally distributed. There are three subtests in the RCI total scores: Frequency, Diversity, and Strength. The RCI Frequency scores range from 3 to 10 out of a possible range of 1 to 10. The skewness (.19) and kurtosis (-.79) of the
Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Predictor Variables, Centrality Scores, RCI Scores, Relationship Questionnaire Scores, PANAS scores, and BIDR scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality</td>
<td>5.71 .85</td>
<td>5.61 1.04</td>
<td>5.66 .95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCI</td>
<td>19.04 2.61</td>
<td>18.23 2.75</td>
<td>18.62 2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>6.87 1.76</td>
<td>6.35 1.65</td>
<td>6.60 1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>6.12 .85</td>
<td>5.97 1.03</td>
<td>6.05 .94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>6.11 1.16</td>
<td>5.90 1.25</td>
<td>6.00 1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence</td>
<td>1.80 .81</td>
<td>2.04 .90</td>
<td>1.92 .86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>2.24 .63</td>
<td>2.28 .79</td>
<td>2.26 .72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANAS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive affect</td>
<td>39.73 7.98</td>
<td>36.99 7.67</td>
<td>38.38 7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative affect</td>
<td>15.79 6.04</td>
<td>14.65 4.94</td>
<td>15.25 5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIDR</td>
<td>12.08 4.74</td>
<td>11.99 4.73</td>
<td>12.00 4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-deception</td>
<td>7.03 2.96</td>
<td>5.60 2.64</td>
<td>6.28 2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression</td>
<td>5.05 2.79</td>
<td>6.39 3.03</td>
<td>5.71 2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

distribution are excellent, and the histogram indicates that the variable is normally distributed. The RCI Diversity scores range from 3 to 8 out of a possible range of 1 to 10. The skewness (-.33) and kurtosis (.47) are excellent. The RCI Strength scores range from 2 to 10 out of a possible 1 to 10 range. The skewness (-.21) and kurtosis (.66) are
excellent, and the histograms for both RCI Diversity and RCI Strength have acceptable normality.

The two dimensions of attachment used were dependence (model of self) and avoidance (model of other). The dependence dimension ranges from 1 to 4.6 and the avoidance dimension ranges from 1 to 4.5 out of possible ranges from 1 to 5. The dependence dimension skewness (1.02) and kurtosis (.24), and the avoidance dimension skewness (.64) and kurtosis (.13) are both within acceptable ranges. The histogram of the avoidance sample shows acceptable normality, while the dependence dimension histogram is slightly positively skewed.

The PANAS consists of a measure of positive affect and negative affect. The skewness (-.03) and kurtosis (-.32) of the positive affect distribution are excellent. The skewness (1.49) of the negative affect distribution is positively skewed but within acceptable ranges, while the kurtosis (2.35) indicates that the distribution is leptokurtic, but only marginally outside the acceptable range. The histograms show that while the positive affect distribution is acceptably normal, the skewness and kurtosis of the negative affect distribution make it less acceptably normal. However, the mean and standard deviation of the negative affect measure is similar to that found in other research (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), suggesting that lower scores on this measure are expected, particularly when asking about affect in the moment. Asking individuals about their general affective state may lead to a normal negative affect distribution.

The BIDR total social desirability score has a skewness of .10 and a kurtosis of -.37, which are both excellent. The histogram of the distribution shows that the sample is acceptably normal. The BIDR self-deception scores distribution has a skewness of .21
and a kurtosis of -.67, while the BIDR impression management scores distribution has a skewness of .17 and a kurtosis of -.59. The histograms of both distributions show that both are acceptably normal.

Each of the four main predictor variables – relationship closeness, social desirability, attachment, and affect – was composed of a number of items that are combined to form the total scores. Refer to Table 2 for the coefficient alphas for each measure. All coefficients are acceptable with the exception of relationship closeness, which is not sufficient to consider the subtests a cohesive measure of relationship closeness. Moreover, the three subtests are not highly correlated with each other; all are significant at the $p < .05$ level but are less than $r = .25$. For the remainder of the analyses, the three subtests will be tested separately in place of total relationship closeness, as each individual measure may contribute an understanding of how the mechanisms of relationship closeness contribute to attitude alignment without an acceptable cohesive measure of relationship closeness. The self-deception coefficient from the BIDR is also low, but the subtests of social desirability (self-deception and impression management) were used as separate measures of social desirability instead of the combined total social desirability measure for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1984) was developed to measure two different but common modes of social desirability: self-deception and impression management. Discriminant validity of the two subtests is evident in their modest Pearson correlation with each other, $r = .30$, $p < .01$, indicating that they may not measure the same concept. Finally, the two measures exhibited different patterns in the present study between men and women: men score significantly higher than women on self-deception, and women score significantly
Table 2

Coefficient Alpha Scores for the Predictor Variables, RCI Scores, Relationship Questionnaire Scores, PANAS scores, and BIDR scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Coefficient Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Closeness</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>-*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ Dependence</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ Avoidance</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Desirability</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-deception</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression Management</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Scale consists of a single item.

higher than men on impression management, as described below. This finding, also exhibited in Paulhus (1988), indicates that the two concepts are measuring different things, and should be tested separately. Positive affect consists of 10 items, but in these analyses, the word “happy” was added as a final item. The coefficient alpha in the table is that with the word happy. Without this item, the coefficient alpha was lower, at .83. Although the difference between the coefficient alphas may not be significant, the new item was kept in the measure, as the only proposed reason for removing it was if it
compromised the reliability. The correlation between PA and NA in the present study was $r = -0.03$, $p = .63$, indicating that the discriminant validity of the scales was acceptable.

*Participant sex.* Although sex is not proposed as a factor in any of the hypotheses, a number of the means of the main variables differ as a function of sex of the participant. A paired-samples t-test comparing the differences between sex for all the main variables, including centrality, revealed that total relationship closeness scores significantly differed between men and women, $t(104) = 2.89$, $p < .01$, with men having higher total scores than women. Of the three subtests, only frequency significantly differed between men and women, $t(103) = 2.46$, $p = .02$, with men having higher frequency scores than women. Diversity scores were marginally significant in differing between men and women, $t(104) = 2.00$, $p = .05$. For the attachment dimensions, the dependence dimension, or model of self, differed significantly between men and women, $t(104) = -2.25$, $p = .03$, with men having lower dependence scores than women. For affect, positive affect differed significantly, $t(104) = 2.61$, $p = .01$, with men having higher scores than women. Finally, although the social desirability total scores did not significantly differ based on sex, the two subtests did differ on sex: self-deception scores were significantly higher for men than for women, $t(104) = 4.01$, $p < .001$, and impression management scores were significantly higher for women than men, $t(104) = -3.63$, $p < .001$. Because the significant differences in all these variables may affect attitude alignment, sex was tested in regressions with all the variables to determine whether it moderated any relationships between the predictors and attitude alignment. All other variables did not significantly differ based on sex.
Attitude Alignment

A one-sample t-test was calculated to test the hypothesis that when partners discuss a number of issues on which they previously have indicated a disagreement, they will change their attitudes in such a manner as to bring their attitudes into closer alignment. The level of analysis to test this hypothesis is the individual. The skewness of the attitude alignment sample distribution (1.30) was acceptable, but the kurtosis (3.33) indicates that the distribution is leptokurtic. The histogram showed that the distribution is slightly positively skewed. The mean for individual attitude alignment is 1.00, $SD = 1.11$, indicating that on average, the alignment score is positive, which means toward the prediscussion attitude of the partner. Results of the one-sample t-test indicated that this mean does deviate significantly from zero, $t(211) = 13.03, p < .001$, which indicated that individuals do change their attitudes to more closely align with their partners. Because this analysis was based on the individual as the unit of analysis, the results suggest that both individuals in the relationship tend to align their attitudes to a certain degree with their partners.

Effects of Experimental Condition and Centrality of Issue

To examine the effects of the experimental conditions and the centrality of issue on attitude alignment, I performed a three-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA), including as within-dyad variables centrality of issue (central to male partner, peripheral to female partner vs. peripheral to male partner and central to female partner) and sex (male vs. female), and including as a between-dyad variable experimental condition (control vs. social desirability instructions). The couple is the unit of analysis rather than the individual, so the individuals’ scores within each couple were summed to represent
the total alignment for the couple across the appropriate centrality condition (e.g., to compare attitude alignment in the Male High and Female High centrality conditions, the sum of his attitude alignment scores for issues that were central to himself and peripheral to his partner, and his female partner’s attitude alignment scores for issues that were peripheral to herself and central to her partner represents the couple’s total alignment for issues in the Male High condition). Levene’s test showed that the assumption of homogeneity was met. This method was adapted from that used by Davis and Rusbult (2001) to test their centrality hypotheses. Figure 1 represents the mean levels of attitude alignment as a function of centrality condition and sex.

Results revealed that there was no significant main effect of experimental condition, with individuals exhibiting the same amount of attitude alignment in the condition that offered no new instructions on agreement and the condition that stated it was natural and normal to disagree with one’s partner. This does not support the hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the levels of attitude alignment between the social desirability and control groups. This result indicated that the two conditions could be combined in the final analyses. Results also revealed that there was no main effect of centrality of issue, indicating that on average individuals did not exhibit greater alignment for issues that were peripheral to the self and central to the partner than for issues that were central to the self and peripheral to the partner which is not consistent with the centrality hypothesis. There was no main effect of sex, indicating that men and women do not have significantly different attitude alignment scores, but there was a significant interaction between sex and centrality of issue, $F(1, 103) = 5.19, p < .05.$
Follow-up tests of simple effects revealed that centrality of issue was not significantly related to attitude alignment for the male participants ($M_s = 1.10$ vs. .82), $F(1, 104) = 1.51, p = .22$, but the female participants exhibited significantly greater alignment for issues that were peripheral to the self and central to the partner than issues that were central to the self and peripheral to the partner ($M_s = 1.16$ vs. .72), $F(1, 104) = 6.83, p = .01$. Simple effects also revealed that there were no differences between males’ and females’ attitude alignment when the issue was central to the man and peripheral to the
woman, or when the issue was central to the woman and peripheral to the man. No other main effects or interactions were significant.¹

Female participants tend to follow the hypothesized pattern of attitude alignment with respect to issue centrality and the effect, although not significant, was in the right direction for male participants, indicating that the hypothesis was supported partly by these results. However, overall the results do not support the hypothesis that greater alignment will occur (a) for issues that are peripheral to the self than for issues that are central to the self and (b) for issues that are central to the partner than for issues that are peripheral to the partner. The pooled regression analyses reported next looks at other factors that are hypothesized to contribute to attitude alignment.

**Multiple Regression Analyses**

Further analyses testing the hypothesized predictors of attitude alignment were carried out with pooled hierarchical multiple regression analyses (see Kenny, 1996; Kashy & Snyder, 1995), as the individuals in the study enter into and complete the study as one half of a previously established dyad. The correlation between all individual attitude alignment scores and their partner’s attitude alignment scores, controlling for all the predictors being tested in the analyses, was .24. According to Kenny and Kashy (1991) this correlation is a liberal but important indication that there is nonindependence between the scores that needs to be tested using dyadic analyses methods. A pooled regression tests not only the effects of the individual’s own predictor scores on his or her attitude alignment as in the majority of research dealing with the individual as the unit of analysis, but also the effects of the partner’s predictor scores on the individual’s attitude alignment.
In the pooled regression analyses, two regressions of the dependent variable were estimated. In the first regression analysis, the within-dyad effects, difference scores of all the predictors were calculated and then regressed on the difference score of attitude alignment. In these analyses, alpha level was set at .05 for all significance tests. Marginal effects of alpha < .10 are also reported, but not included in the final conclusions. The most powerful predictors are in the first step of both analyses, so Model I error was employed in that the error term for each step is used in that respective step to calculate effects. This model is commonly used in the statistics program employed in the present study (SPSS).

The pooled regressions are used to estimate actor and partner effects by using the regression coefficients (b) for each of the terms. The equations for these terms are:

Player: \((b_{\text{BETWEEN}} + b_{\text{WITHIN}}) / 2\)

Partner: \((b_{\text{BETWEEN}} - b_{\text{WITHIN}}) / 2\)

An actor effect occurs when a person's scores on a predictor variable affects that person's score on an outcome variable; a partner effect occurs when a person's score on a predictor variable affects his or her partner's score on an outcome variable (Kashy & Snyder, 1995). For example, using a predictor variable in this study – social desirability – a hypothesis that the higher an individual's social desirability scores the more they align their attitudes is an actor effect, whereas the finding that the higher the individual's partner's scores on social desirability the more the individual aligns his or her attitude would be a partner effect. Pooled regressions come from the recognition that often, in a couple, a partner's scores may be just as important in predicting the dependent variable as the individual's own scores, and by estimating the actor and partner effect for each
predictor, a more comprehensive picture of attitude alignment may be presented. These two estimated effects are used with a pooled standard error of the within- and between-dyad analyses standard errors, s, which is defined by Erlebacher (as cited in Kenny, 1996) as the square root of \((s_{\text{BETWEEN}}^2 + s_{\text{WITHIN}}^2)/4\). Each of the actor and partner terms is divided by this pooled standard error term to create t-tests for the respective effects. These t-tests also have pooled degrees of freedom, based on a formula described by Kenny (1996) as:

\[
\frac{(s_{\text{BETWEEN}}^2 + s_{\text{WITHIN}}^2)^2}{s_{\text{BETWEEN}}^4 + s_{\text{WITHIN}}^4}
\]

In the pooled regression analysis the two hierarchal regressions performed are a within-dyad regression, which includes all of the differenced predictors and criterion, as well as variables that vary within the couple, but remain the same across all couples. This regression analysis represents the variability that occurs between the partners within each couple. The between-dyad regressions include all of the averaged predictors and criterion, as well as variables that vary between each couple, but remain the same between the partners in a single couple. This regression analysis represents the variability that occurs between the couples in the study. Combining these two regressions using the method described above yields the actor and partner effects calculated and interpreted below.

The development of a model to include in the final pooled regression included review of the bivariate correlations between all predictors and attitude alignment, a number of simple regressions including each predictor variable separately regressed onto
the attitude alignment score, and a further look at the influence of participant sex on the predictor scores and their subsequent attitude alignment.

Bivariate correlations (two-tailed) between all individuals’ predictor scores and their attitude alignment scores indicated that only self-deception scores were significantly correlated with attitude alignment, \( r = .14, p < .05 \). Bivariate correlations between all partners’ predictor scores and individual attitude alignment scores indicated that the partners’ self-deception scores were significantly correlated to individual attitude alignment, \( r = .16, p < .05 \), and partner impression management scores were significantly correlated to individual attitude alignment, \( r = .15, p < .05 \). All other individual and partner predictors were not significantly correlated with individual attitude alignment.

Bivariate analyses indicated that there were a number of significant correlations between the predictors themselves. All correlations were less than \( r = .30 \) with the exception of the dependence and avoidance dimensions which had a correlation of \( r = .45, p < .01 \), and negative affect and the dependence dimension which had a correlation of \( r = .34, p < .05 \). These relations were further explored, as described below, to be considered for inclusion in the final pooled regression model.

Four simple pooled regressions were conducted between each predictor and attitude alignment, one for each of the main predictor variables, namely relationship closeness, attachment, affect, and social desirability. Included in each of these regressions was the main variable or its subtests in step one and the interaction terms to help explain any important effects: an absolute difference score between the individual and partner’s scores on the main variable, to measure how the similarity of scores within the dyad affects individual attitude alignment (referred to as a difference interaction), and a
product term between the individual and partner's scores on the main variable, to measure how the relationship of scores within the dyad contributes to attitude alignment. As these interaction terms are common to the two partners in a dyad, but differ across dyads, they are purely between-subjects variables and as such were only included in the between-dyad regression analyses. Inclusion in the final model required an alpha of $p < .10$.

For the relationship closeness subtests (frequency, diversity, and strength) frequency of time spent together yielded a marginally significant partner effect, $t(192) = -1.93, p < .10$. No other main partner or actor effects were significant. Of the interaction terms in the second step, frequency difference interaction scores yielded a marginally significant effect, $t(94) = 1.91, p < .10$, indicating a trend toward the more disparate the individuals' reporting of the frequency of time spent with the partner in a couple, the more attitude alignment the individuals exhibited. Strength difference interaction scores yielded a significant effect, $t(94) = 2.12, p < .05$, indicating that the more disparate the individuals' strength of influence in a couple, the more attitude alignment the individuals exhibited. There were no other significant interaction effects.

For the two attachment dimensions, there were no significant actor or partner effects. The between-dyad regression yielded a significant partner effect for the interaction between the dependence and avoidance dimensions, $t(182) = 2.73, p < .01$, but there were no other significant interactions.

For affect, there were no significant partner or actor effects for positive affect or negative affect, nor were there any significant interaction effects for positive or negative affect. Finally, for social desirability, there was a significant actor effect for self-
deception, \( t(203) = 2.08, p < .05 \), and a marginally significant partner effect, \( t(203) = 1.84, p < .10 \). There were no other significant main effects, nor were there any significant interaction effects. In summary, the simple regression analyses yielded six significant or marginally significant effects involving five of the possible nine predictor variables: frequency, strength, dependence dimension, avoidance dimension, and self-deception. These variables were added to the final pooled regression analyses.

The relations between participant sex and the other predictors lead to the next step in forming a final model for the pooled multiple regression to test all of the predictors with participant sex to determine if there was any moderating effect of sex on the variables in predicting attitude alignment. This was examined by performing four simple pooled regression analyses as before, but with the additional variable sex added into the within-dyad analyses as a main variable, and with the product interaction term between sex and the main predictor being tested added into the second step in both the within- and between-dyad regressions. No other interactions were added in either analysis, as those that were significant were already chosen for the final analyses. Results showed that only one of the interactions was significant, sex by impression management, \( t(200) = -2.04, p < .05 \). This interaction was also included in the final model, along with the main variables sex and impression management.

As a result of these three analyses, the final model included the seven main predictors salient in the two preliminary analyses – frequency, strength, dependence dimension, avoidance dimension, self-deception, impression management, and sex – and included in the second and final step the four interactions shown to be significant or marginally significant in the two preliminary analyses: frequency difference interaction,
strength difference interaction, dependence by avoidance, and sex by impression management. Therefore, the first step of the within-dyad regression included the seven main predictor variables: RCI frequency and strength, dependence dimension scores and avoidance dimension scores, and BIDR self-deception scores and impression management scores. Sex was also added into this regression, as it is a within-dyad variable (intraclass correlation of -1). The second step of regression included the avoidance by dependence interaction term, and the interaction of sex with impression management. All the difference scores were in the same direction, in this case, all partner two scores were subtracted from partner one scores, and the intercept was not fitted, as this differencing is arbitrary.

The second regression analysis, involving the between-dyad effects, followed a similar procedure: step one of the regression included the six predictor variables excluding sex, and the second step included the two interaction terms in the within-dyad regression, as well as two more purely between-dyad interactions: the absolute difference terms for frequency and strength. These two variables are between-dyad because they differ from couple to couple, but the two partners in each couple have the same score. In the between-dyad regression all of the predictor terms and the criterion were averaged across the two individuals in the dyad.

There are a number of assumptions that both regressions must meet before the results can be interpreted. For the within-dyad regression, a look at a histogram of the frequency of standardized residuals suggests that the distribution is acceptably normal. The skewness (-.20) and kurtosis (-.13) of the criterion variable, attitude alignment (differenced for this regression), are within excellent ranges. A normal p-p plot of the
standardized residuals confirms the acceptable normality of the observed scores surrounding the predicted line. A scatterplot of the standardized predicted values and the standardized residuals suggested that homoscedasticity was met, as the majority of the scores settle around the middle of the scatterplot. No cases were diagnosed as outliers. The independence of the residuals was tested with the Durbin-Watson test, which yielded a score of 1.68. As optimal values are between 1.5 and 2.5, this result suggests that the residuals are sufficiently independent for the assumption to have been met.

For the between-dyad regression, a look at a histogram of the frequency of standardized residuals suggests that the distribution is acceptably normal. The skewness (.50) and the kurtosis (.27) of the criterion variable, attitude alignment (averaged between partners for this regression), are within acceptable ranges. A normal p-p plot of the standardized residuals confirms that the observed scores are acceptably normal surrounding the predicted line and a scatterplot of the standardized predicted values and the standardized residuals suggests that the assumption of homoscedasticity was met. The independence of the residuals was tested with the Durbin-Watson test, which yielded a score of 2.01, indicating that the assumption had been met. Refer to Table 3 for the regression coefficients (b), standard errors (s), t scores (t), and degrees of freedom of each predictor variable in both the within- and between-dyad regression analyses. The coefficients are not standardized.

Although it is the following actor and partner t-tests derived from these two regression analyses that are most salient in the analyses, there were a number of significant effects in the regression analyses. Results indicated that the overall model for
Table 3

*Regression Coefficients (b), t-values (t), Standard Errors (s), and Df's of the Predictor Variables for the Within- and Between-Dyad Regression Analyses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Between</th>
<th>Within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1 (df = 97)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ Model of Self</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ Model of Other</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>1.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCI Frequency</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCI Strength</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIDR Self-deception</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>3.156**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIDR Impression Management</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2 (df = 93)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model of Self by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Other</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex by Impression Management</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>-1.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency Difference scores</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>2.357*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength Difference scores</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>2.596*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *p < .05. **p < .01.*
the between-dyad analysis was significant, $R^2 = .25, F_{10,93} = 3.07, p = .002$. The overall results of step one of the analyses – the seven first main effects – were significant, $R^2 = .13, F_{6,97} = 2.45, p = .03$. Self-deception significantly and uniquely accounted for 8.94% of the variability in attitude alignment over and above all other variables entered in step one, $p = .002$. In the case of the between-dyad analyses, this means that the higher the average self-deception scores for a couple, the higher the average attitude alignment the couple exhibits after a discussion of the issues. These results support the hypothesis that social desirability is related to the incidence of attitude alignment, but a conclusion will not be made until the actor and partner t-tests are discussed. The overall results of step two of the analyses – the two interaction terms and the two difference terms – were significant, $R^2\Delta = .12, F_{\Delta,93} = 3.60, p = .009$. The difference interaction between frequency scores for the couple significantly and uniquely accounted for 4.49% of the variability in attitude alignment above and beyond the other variables in steps one and two, $t(93) = 2.36, p = .02$. Figure 2 represents the mean levels of attitude alignment as a function of the absolute difference scores between individual and partner frequencies. In the case of the between-dyad analysis, this means that the larger the difference between the individuals’ reporting of frequency of time spent together in a couple, the more the individuals aligned their attitudes with those of their partners.

Strength difference interaction scores significantly and uniquely accounted for 5.43% of the variability in attitude alignment over and above the effects of the other variables in steps one and two, $t(93) = 2.60, p = .01$. This indicates that the larger the difference between the individuals’ reporting of the strength of their partner’s influence in a couple, the more the individuals aligned their attitudes with those of their partners.
Figure 2. Attitude alignment as a function of the absolute difference between individual and partner frequency scores.

Figure 3 represents the mean levels of attitude alignment as a function of partner strength and individual strength. No other main effects or interactions were significant.

Results of the within-dyad analyses are more complex as they are composed of the difference scores of all the variables, and are thus not essential to interpret for the purposes of the final actor and partner analyses. Results indicated that the overall model for the within-dyad analysis was significant, $R^2 = .21$, $F_{9,95} = 2.75$, $p = .007$. The overall results of step one of the analyses were not significant, $R^2 = .11$, $F_{7,97} = 1.71$, $p = .12$. The overall results of step two of the analyses were significant, $R^2 \Delta = .10$, $F\Delta_{2,95} = 5.78$, $p = .004$. The dependence by avoidance dimensions interaction significantly and uniquely accounted for 8.41% of the variability in attitude alignment over and above the other
Figure 3. Attitude alignment as a function of the absolute difference between individual and partner strength scores

variables in steps one and two, $p = .002$. No other main variables or interactions were significant.

Actor and partner t-tests were conducted on each of the predictors and the interaction terms that were tested in the between- and within-dyad analyses to test each of the hypotheses as summarized above. It should be noted that sex was not significant in predicting attitude alignment. The results of the relationship closeness subtests indicated that the frequency of time spent together did not yield a significant actor effect, but the partner effect was marginally significant, $t(179) = -1.67, p < .10$, such that the less time an individual’s partner reported spending alone with the individual, the more the attitude alignment exhibited by the individual. The strength of perceived impact of the partner on
the individual revealed an actor effect that approached significance, $t(171) = 1.83, p < .10$, indicating that there was a trend that the stronger the impact of the partner perceived by the individual, the more the individual exhibited attitude alignment with the partner. Therefore, the hypothesis that individuals who report higher levels of relationship closeness are more likely to align their attitudes with those of their partner than individuals who report lower levels of relationship closeness was not supported.

Results of the attachment dimensions revealed that the dependence dimension, or the model of self, did not yield a significant actor effect, although it was in the hypothesized direction, nor did it yield a significant partner effect. These results do not support the hypothesis that individuals who have a more positive model of self will exhibit less attitude alignment behaviours than those who have a less positive model of self. The avoidance dimension, or the model of other, did not yield a significant actor effect, although it was in the hypothesized direction, or a significant partner effect. These results do not support the hypothesis that individuals who have a more positive model of other will exhibit more attitude alignment behaviours than those who have a less positive model of other. The model of self by model of other interaction yielded a significant actor effect, $t(188) = -1.99, p < .05$. Refer to Figure 4 for a plot of the interaction.²

The plot of the interaction suggests that when the individuals' model of self is positive, they tend to exhibit higher attitude alignment when their model of other is negative than when it is positive. When the individual's model of self is negative, however, the plot suggests that an individuals exhibit more attitude alignment when
Figure 4. Attitude Alignment as a function of individual model of other and model of self attachment dimensions.

their model of other is positive than when their model of other is negative. Attitude alignment appears to be highest for individuals when their model of other is negative and their model of self is positive, which corresponds to the dismissing attachment prototype (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Attitude alignment appears to be lowest for individuals when both their model of self is positive and their model of other is positive, which corresponds to the secure attachment prototype. This does not support the idea that the dismissing prototype would be least likely to align attitudes, and the preoccupied prototype would be most likely to align attitudes.
The model of self by model of other interaction also had a significant partner effect $t(188) = 2.54, p < .05$. Refer to Figure 5 for a plot of this interaction. The plot suggests that when partner model of self is positive, there is less attitude alignment when when partner model of other is positive. The plot suggests that the attitude alignment is highest when both partner model of self and model of other are negative (which corresponds with the fearful prototype of attachment), and is lowest when partner model of self is positive, and partner model of other is negative (which corresponds with the dismissing prototype of attachment).

For social desirability, impression management did not yield a significant actor effect, but it did yield a marginally significant partner effect, $t(189) = 1.67, p < .10$. This indicates a trend that when an individual’s partner is higher in impression management, the individual exhibits higher attitude alignment than when the partner is lower in impression management. Self-deception did not yield a significant partner effect, but there was a significant actor effect, $t(188) = 2.56, p < .05$, indicating that the higher the individuals’ self-deception scores, the more attitude alignment they exhibited after discussion of the issues with their partner than when their self-deception scores are lower. These results do support the hypothesis that individuals who are higher in social desirability will exhibit more attitude alignment behaviours than those who are lower in social desirability. The interaction between sex and impression management did not yield a significant partner effect or a significant actor effect.
Figure 5. Attitude Alignment as a function of partner model of other and model of self attachment dimensions.

In summary, comparing the difference between the couples’ scores for their predisdiscussion and postdiscussion attitudes indicated that attitude alignment significantly occurred in the present study. Average attitude alignment scores did not significantly differ between couples in the two different experimental conditions, nor did they significantly differ between men and women. Women tended to follow the hypothesized trend between centrality and attitude alignment, in that they aligned their attitudes significantly more when the issue was peripheral to them and central to their male partners than when the issue was central to them and peripheral to their male partners. However, the overall picture of centrality and attitude alignment suggests that the hypothesis was not supported, as there was no significant main effect of centrality. The
dyadic multiple regression analyses revealed that most of the hypothesized predictors, including positive and negative affect, diversity of activities performed together, relationship strength of impact, model of self, model of other, and impression management, could not significantly predict attitude alignment although there were some marginally significant results. Self-deception, however, revealed a significant actor effect in the hypothesized direction: the higher the individual’s self deception scores, the more he or she aligned attitudes with those of the partner. This means that of the eight hypotheses presented in this study, only one was fully supported, in that individuals who were higher in self-deception, a factor of social desirability, did exhibit more attitude alignment behaviours than those who were lower in social desirability.

Of the exploratory interactions, two of the similarity scores in the main analyses yielded significant effects, indicating that in this sample the larger the difference between the frequency scores of the individuals in a couple, the more the individuals exhibit attitude alignment, and the larger the difference between the strength scores of the individuals in a couple, the more the individuals exhibit attitude alignment. The attachment dimensions interaction, model of self by model of other, yielded both a significant actor effect and a significant partner effect, although not in the expected pattern.

Discussion

This research was intended to both partially replicate the work of Davis and Rusbult (2001) concerning the phenomenon of attitude alignment, and to further explore the concept by observing alignment in the context of other important personal and interdyadic variables, namely relationship closeness, affect, attachment, and social
desirability. Like Davis and Rusbuldt, a significant attitude alignment effect was found, in that individuals’ post-discussion attitude scores were significantly closer numerically to their partner’s pre-discussion attitude scores than were their own pre-discussion attitude scores, which also supported the first hypothesis. However, the finding that centrality, or attitude importance, was significantly related to attitude alignment was only partially replicated in this current study, indicating that the second hypothesis was not fully supported. Furthermore, of the final six hypotheses, only one was fully supported, demonstrating that individuals do exhibit increased attitude alignment when they have reported higher levels of self-deception, whereas relationship closeness, affect, and attachment are not significantly related to the rate of attitude alignment observed in the individuals of this sample.

There are a number of possible reasons why attitude alignment was not found to be related to centrality in this study as was found in Davis and Rusbuldt (2001). First, it was sometimes difficult to find four issues among an initial fifty that matched the exact criteria of the present study and of Davis and Rusbuldt (2001), in that a couple did not always have two issues on which the male participant had a score above 5 and the female participant had a score below 5, and vice versa. Therefore, centrality was redefined in this study in non-absolute terms; for example, for the four attitudes discussed two were more central to the man and more peripheral to the woman. This definition of centrality may have affected the outcome of the analyses because a larger absolute difference between the male and female centrality scores may have been required for an effect to become significant. If this was the case, these results show that the centrality-alignment connection is not as robust as that presented in Davis and Rusbuldt (2001). Alternately, it
is possible that the issues selected for discussion by the present researcher were not as controversial or important to any of the members in the dyads (i.e., they lacked ecological validity), and therefore the centrality of the issue was selected based on momentary feelings rather than previously established opinions. This lack of validity may have led the individuals to base their alignment on other factors rather than its centrality. Again, unless the exact questions used in the initial study were replicated in the current one, it is difficult to surmise their effects on centrality, or attitude alignment in general. Nevertheless, the probability of an issue being selected did not differ greatly from issue to issue, indicating that the issue content may not have had a large impact on the outcome of the study, which is similar to the findings of Davis and Rusbult. Regardless, centrality was not significantly related to attitude alignment, thus not supporting the relevant hypothesis. On the other hand, these results also point out the robustness of the attitude alignment effect, in that regardless of the individual’s centrality score, he or she was still more likely to align attitudes with those of the partner.

Another important point to consider concerning centrality was whether individuals’ centrality scores changed from pre-discussion to post-discussion. These results (see footnote 1) showed that when the issue was more central to the partner and less central to the individual, the individual did significantly change their self-reported centrality of issue to reflect increased centrality of issue, and in turn, increased agreement of centrality with the partner. Individuals for whom the issue was more central to the self and less central to the partner also aligned their self-reported centrality with the partner post-discussion, but to a lesser degree than if the issue was less central to themselves and more central to their partners. These findings that individuals change the importance of
the issues after discussion with the partner demonstrate that alternate forms of cognitive dissonance reduction, other than attitude alignment, can be employed in the context of a disagreement. Future research in this area should consider this alternate measure of pre-to post-discussion change as an explanation of situations where either attitude alignment has not occurred, or as another form of tension reduction. This analysis was also performed by Davis & Rusbullt (2001), and deserves further attention in future research concerning attitude alignment.

Social Desirability

The findings of the final regression analyses were noteworthy in that they suggested that self-deception predicted attitude alignment behaviour, but an individual's own mood, attachment style, and relationship closeness did not. It is not unanticipated that self-deception played such a role in this study as its importance has been noted in past research. As well, its relationship to other factors that may play a role in the formation and maintenance of close relationships makes its connections to attitude alignment reasonable. Beliefs about partner similarity are very important to an individual's relationship, with individuals reporting that their partners see the world the same way they do (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001), and partners becoming more similar as their relationship progresses (Blankenship et al., 1984). As dissimilarity in attitudes may cause problems within a relationship via arguments or even loss of attraction or compatibility with the partner, it follows that one may wish to maintain or enhance the similarity in one's relationships. Moreover, as similarity is an important antecedent and maintainer of attraction, and is a social phenomenon often observed and studied in social psychological research, it may be another common variable whose presence is over-reported in hopes of
appearing socially acceptable to others. Expectancies about the way an individual feels he or she should act may also be an important related factor. Curtis and Miller (1986) found that people do behave in more socially desirable ways when they are looking to maintain or increase an attraction in interactions with others, including disagreeing less often with the interaction partner. This study supports that notion by showing that people higher in self-deception also behave in ways that cut back on the disagreeable qualities of their interactions with the partner.

A major strength of the social desirability measure used in this study – the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1988) – was that it measures two common but different aspects of social desirability. These two factors were treated as separate elements, so it is possible to report that only one aspect of social desirability, self-deception, was related to the incidence of attitude alignment. That it was this aspect of social desirability, the tendency to give self-reports that are honest but positively biased, and not impression management, deliberate self-presentation to an audience, is an important finding. It may suggest that these same results would occur without the presence of a researcher in a more ecologically valid environment, as the aspect of social desirability tested that involves a “performance” for an audience was not found to be significantly related to attitude alignment, whereas the aspect that is more internal to the self was significantly related. This also may help explain why there was an actor effect of self-deception but no partner effect, as self-deception may be a more internal form of socially desirability that may not be discernable to the partner in conversation, whereas those individuals who are intent upon managing others’ impressions of them may make it clear to their partners via conversation cues that their goal is to appear more socially
acceptable, especially in those relationships where the individuals know each other very well.

There were two methods of testing socially desirable responding in this study: the BIDR self-report items, and the experimental conditions. That these experimental conditions did not result in differences in attitude alignment behaviours suggested that there may have been a problem with the conditions themselves. It is possible that the conditions were not significantly different from each other because the participants did not attend to the instructions as carefully as was wished. Most participants, knowing that the second attitude questionnaire contained the same questions as the first questionnaire, may have assumed the instructions were the same as well and may have skimmed them instead of attending to them carefully as instructed. It was a recorded observation that the individuals in the couples seemed to fill out the second attitude questionnaire much more quickly than the first pre-discussion questionnaire, which may suggest that they were reading the questions more quickly or just seeing cue words and remembering the general point of the question, something which may have happened with the instructions as well. Although the instructions were read out by the researcher, it is still possible that they were not attended to properly, or that the message was lost in the myriad instructions given to them through the testing period. It was a concern that with differing instructions, one had to be careful to be not too obvious in the differences and not too subtle. Perhaps the weakness of these experimental conditions was the latter. As the differences between the conditions was one sentence, in future research extra cues should be added. There is strength in these results, however, in that although roughly half of the couples in this study were told that it is natural and normal to disagree with their partners, they still
agreed with their partners as much as the couples who were told nothing. This is further evidence of the strength of the attitude alignment effect.

That self-deception was found to be significantly related to attitude alignment alone suggests that further research with social desirability and attitude alignment should be conducted to better understand how the dynamics of the former affects the outcome of the latter. Although the reliability of the self-deception measure was not acceptable, it was still reasonable to analyze how the two different measures of social desirability were related to attitude alignment. The fact that impression management was not a significant predictor of attitude alignment suggests that attitude alignment may occur outside the presence of the testing condition and the observing researcher much in the same way that it does within these conditions, as an audience does not seem to affect attitude alignment as much as a personal belief that one is behaving in a socially desirable way. These results both support and contribute to theories about how a couple comes to become more similar as time goes on, as it suggests a process through which individuals negotiate differences in attitude without the concerns over self-presentation to an audience. The results also may suggest that these attitude alignments are relatively stable or permanent, as it is the individual who feels he or she should align his or her attitudes, regardless of the presence of the researcher. Further research should concentrate on whether attitude alignment based on impression management may be as ephemeral as the testing period itself, whereas alignment based on a more personal desire to be socially acceptable may last long enough to become an individual’s true attitude. Using a more general, one-factor measure of social desirability instead of the two-factor approach used here may also better explain the relationship between social desirability and attitude alignment, and the
measures may be more acceptably reliable. Longitudinal research is also an important step in order to test whether such alignment does become relatively stable over time, or whether self-deception plays a part in this stability.

Non-Significant Results.

Equally important as what was found to be significantly related to attitude alignment is what was not found to be significant. As discussed above, of the individual difference variables only self-deception was found to be significantly related to attitude alignment, and not even results found before between centrality and attitude alignment (Davis & Rusbult, 2001) could be replicated. A number of variables hypothesized to predict attitude alignment were not even tested in the final regression analyses as they could not significantly predict a portion of attitude alignment on their own in preliminary simple regressions. Among these variables were positive affect and negative affect. These preliminary results were surprising as there is indirect support for the hypothesis that affect would be able to, in part, predict attitude alignment behaviour. Affect has been shown to affect social relationships and behaviours (e.g., Berry & Willingham, 1997; Watson et al., 1992), and persuasion research has shown that positive and negative moods may lead to differing susceptibilities to persuasion (e.g., Bless et al., 1992). However, in the current study, neither positive nor negative affect significantly predicted attitude alignment behaviours. There are a number of reasons why these results may have been obtained. First, positive affect was positively and significantly correlated with self-deception scores, $r = .16$, $p < .05$ (2-tailed), such that the higher the individual’s self-deception scores, the higher the reported positive affect of that individual. Negative affect was negatively and significantly correlated with both self-deception scores, $r = -.22$, $p <$
.01, and impression management scores, $r = -.20, p < .01$, indicating that the higher the individual's self-deception and impression management scores, the lower the reported negative affect of that individual. These correlations, though small, may indicate that if social desirability is related to the individuals' reporting of positive and negative affect, they may not be reporting these moods as honestly as they might have been.

A second reason why positive and negative affect were not significant predictors of attitude alignment may have been the nature of the affect measure. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule was administered in the present tense: the individuals were asked to indicate how they felt at that particular moment. This may not have been the most effective way of measuring affect, as any number of extraneous factors may have affected how each participant felt during the testing period, making the affect scores inappropriate for the individual. It is possible that asking individuals to indicate their positive and negative affect over a longer period of time may be a more valid way of measuring the predictor, particularly if one wants to predict attitude alignment as a factor of a continuing relationship. A look at the development of the PANAS itself (Watson et al., 1988) shows that the scale means for positive and negative affect for the moment in time instruction as used in the current study were both considerably lower than the general time instructions for positive and negative affect. Also, quite expectedly, the test-retest reliabilities for the present moment time instruction positive and negative affect were significantly lower than general time instruction positive and negative affect. This is reasonable as people may experience differing mood levels at any exact moment that may average out over time. Therefore, future research in this area should consider how a more generalized measure of affect is related to alignment, either on its own or in conjunction
with the immediate measure used in the current study. The usefulness of the PANAS also became an issue when it was discovered that the addition of another positive affect word, “happy,” increased the internal reliability of the measure, perhaps indicating that other descriptors for either positive or negative affect could be useful in measuring affect by addition to the scale in a similar fashion. It should be noted that this adjective addition is not the first time such a descriptor has been proposed, as there has been much controversy about “happy” in the measurement of affect (see Russell & Carroll, 1999a, 1999b; Watson & Tellegen, 1999).

On a more general level, there has been much controversy over recent years about even the nature of positive and negative affect, one of the most important debates being whether positive and negative affect really are independent of each other, as is assumed in the PANAS measure (see Watson & Tellegen, 1999 for a quick overview). Russell and Carroll (1999) pointed out that often the correlation between positive and negative affect depends on the descriptors being used in the measure, a major concern for both the validity of the measures themselves and for studies like this one that aim to observe correlations between affect and other variables. If positive and negative affect can be affected by their descriptors, how do the correlations between positive and negative affect measures, and other measures of interest, change as the descriptors change? As models of affect have changed and developed over the thirteen years since the PANAS was developed (e.g. Tellegen et al., 1999), perhaps new scales will be devised to address these issues.

The third variable that was not included in the final analyses was diversity of activities done together, which raises issues about the relationship closeness measure.
The other two subtests of relationship closeness used in the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI, Berscheid et al., 1989) – strength and frequency – were included in the final analyses and did yield some marginally significant results, as well as significant interactions, whereas diversity did not yield significant results in the simple regression preliminary analyses. This is interesting because one of the reasons the RCI was used in the present study was for its method of using three measures that combine for an overall measure of relationship closeness. However, in the present study, the coefficient alpha illustrated that all three subtests were not sufficiently correlated, and did not yield sufficiently high correlations with each other that were observed in the initial research by Berscheid et al. (1989). The fact that frequency of time spent together was included in the final analysis but diversity was not is also an important finding, in that it suggests that the *quantity* of time spent with the partner, as measured by the frequency of time spent together, may be a better predictor of attitude alignment behaviour than diversity, or the myriad activities done together in that time. Strength of the influence within the relationship is arguably a more subjective measure of relationship closeness, but it was included in the final analyses whereas diversity was not. Moreover, the average scores for frequency, diversity, and strength in this sample were higher than the corresponding means found by Berscheid et al. for romantic couples. This may have affected the outcome of the results in the current study as well, as the Berscheid et al., (1989) study showed no significant difference between frequency and diversity scores for romantic couples, whereas the current study had a significant difference between the two subtests. It may be this separation between two variables that are both theoretically and statistically linked in past research that dropped diversity from the final analyses in the
current study. Regardless, the current results suggest that the diversity subtest is not an important addition to total relationship closeness. Further research is necessary to determine whether this sample was different than the norm or, alternately, whether diversity is a useful measure of relationship closeness.

Post hoc Interactions

There were other marginally significant results in the final analyses that may have made clear, at least in part, the contributions of relationship closeness to the outcomes of attitude alignment. As discussed above, two subtests of relationship closeness yielded marginally significant results, with frequency yielding a partner effect, and strength an actor effect. The latter effect was in the hypothesized direction for relationship closeness, in that the stronger the partner’s influence on the relationship as reported by the individual, the more that individual aligned his or her attitude with that of the partner. The frequency partner effect, however, was not in an expected direction; the less time the partner reported spending with the individual, the more that individual aligned his or her attitude with said partner. Although unexpected, this result can be interpreted within the theories of the current study, in that the increased attitude alignment here can be seen as a relationship maintenance behaviour when other aspects of a healthy relationship, like frequently spending time together, are lacking. Relationship maintenance behaviours are those designed to ensure the continuation of relationships through prevention of decline, relationship enhancement, or through repair and re-establishment (Stafford, 1994). If individuals are not spending a lot of time with their partners, it may be very important to have quality positive interactions in the time actually spent together, which may be achieved through aligning one’s attitude with the partner. Impression management also
yielded a marginally significant partner effect, indicating a trend toward the higher the partners' impression management scores, the more the individuals tended to align their attitudes. Although partner effects were not hypothesized, this result is in the expected direction and points to the importance of the partners' individual characteristics in the attitude alignment behaviours of the individuals.

Of the three significant results in the final analyses, two were actor effects, and the other one was a partner effect. This pattern of results illustrates the importance of examining not only each individual, but each partner in the dyad. The results also further stress the importance of dyadic research. It is a major strength of the current study that both actor and partner effects were examined, without which only a less complete picture of attitude alignment behaviour in this sample could be examined.

There were also four interactions tested in the final analyses, three of which yielded significant effects. Two of the interactions were pure between-dyad variables, in that the scores were identical for the two individuals in the couple, but differed from dyad to dyad in the analyses. These interactions, referred to as difference interactions in the results, were for the frequency and strength variables, and were both significant. These are interesting results, as they indicate that the larger the absolute difference in scores for frequency and strength in each couple, the more the individuals in the couple align their attitudes with their partners. These results, if robust in replication, show how sometimes it is not the couples' similarities but their differences that are important. The interpretation of these results are treated with extreme caution, however, as they were not predicted in any of the hypotheses and are a result of post hoc analyses.
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It is very important to note that because of the nature of these findings, and all other *post hoc* analyses results presented here, it is quite likely that these patterns occurred by chance and require further testing before we can be confident in their interpretation. Clearly, further exploration is needed to understand why these phenomena have occurred, and whether they can be replicated. In the meantime, interpretation of the findings must be extremely cautious, in that they may not be replicable.

It seems somewhat unusual that attachment, affect, and social desirability did not have significant difference interactions, whereas frequency, in which one might assume that partners would have virtually identical scores, did have a significant effect in a *post hoc* analysis. Frequency is quantitative in that it is measured by how much time one spends with one’s partner, thus one might assume that the partner’s scores would be very similar; how can an individual spend more time alone with his or her partner than the partner spent with him or her? However, in the current sample, the individuals and partners scores were significantly different from each other, leaving one to assume that either one partner is not telling the truth about the time spent with their partner, the partners used the rating scales differently, the partners interpreted the measures differently, or the partners had differing beliefs about their relationships that biased their answers. As the answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this current study, further analyses are required to more fully understand the underlying reasons why this frequency variable differs between the individuals when it seems the scores should be virtually identical.

The third and final significant interaction in *post hoc* analysis was between the two attachment dimensions, dependence and avoidance. Although neither of the main
variable effects was significant, this interaction provided an opportunity to observe whether the four attachment categories differed on the level of attitude alignment exhibited. The actor effect was significant, and the plot of the interaction suggested that when the individuals’ model of self was positive, they tended to exhibit higher attitude alignment when their model of other was negative than when it is positive. When the individual’s model of self was negative, however, the plot suggested that an individual exhibited higher attitude alignment when their model of other was positive than when their model of other was negative. Attitude alignment was highest for individuals when their model of other was negative and their model of self was positive, which corresponds to the dismissing attachment prototype (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Attitude alignment was lowest for individuals when both their model of self was positive and their model of other was positive, which corresponds to the secure attachment prototype. This does not support the idea that the dismissing prototype would be least likely to align attitudes, and the preoccupied prototype would be most likely to align attitudes.

These results present a tentative step toward uniting attachment characteristics to a behaviour that occurs within most close relationships, and enable one to make further suppositions concerning the nature of the attachment-alignment relationship. Although these results are post hoc and therefore necessitate a more careful interpretation, it is interesting that those individuals closer to the dismissing prototype of attachment also had the highest attitude alignment scores in the plot. This result does not support the research previously presented on dismissing individuals, who avoid intimacy to protect the self from disappointment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and who rate low on social integration measures, like disclosure and happiness (Kafetsios & Nezlek, 2002).
Individuals with a positive model of self, like dismissing individuals, are more confident in their ratings than those with lower self esteem (e.g., Campbell, 1990), and may depend less on the opinions of others to form attitudes like those tested in the current study. How an individual who is confident in one’s own self-worth and tends to distance oneself from distressing scenarios within relationships (e.g., Collins & Feeney, 2000) can align attitudes in a situation that is arguably both distressing (e.g., disagreement with a close partner) and requires trust and intimacy via discussion of issues with the partner is a surprising finding that requires more thought and research.

That attitude alignment was lowest for those whose dimension patterns correspond with the secure prototype was not expected, but still partly fits with the descriptions of secure avoidant persons. Although secure individuals lack the negative model of others inherent in dismissing individuals – those proposed to align attitudes the least – they still have the positive model of self and tend to hold more positive beliefs about themselves (Baumeister, 1998). In situations where these individual have to make a choice, they use their own ideas more often to guide decisions (Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993), which may in part explain why these individuals were least likely to align their attitudes with their partners. Their comfort and belief in equitable relationships (Grau & Doll, 2003) may also lead them to be comfortable with disagreement within their close relationships. Although not an exact match to the proposed relations, it is this high sense of self-worth and comfort with one’s own ideas that makes secure individuals a good fit for lower attitude alignment. But the question of why the two attachment prototypes marked by a positive model of self can appear to behave in such different ways is an interesting one. It is important to note, however, that the range of attitude alignment
across the four conditions was only at lowest .831 and at highest 1.183, a difference of only .352.

As further evidence of the importance of the partners’ characteristics to an individual’s outcomes, the model of self by model of other interaction also had a significant partner effect. These results illustrate the individual’s reaction to his or her partner’s attachment prototype. The plot of this interaction suggested that when partner model of self was positive, there was less attitude alignment when partner model of other was negative than when it was positive. When partner model of self was negative, attitude alignment appeared higher when partner model of other was negative than when partner model of other was positive. The plot indicated that in this sample attitude alignment was highest when both partner model of self and model of other were negative (which corresponds with the fearful prototype of attachment), and was lowest when partner model of self was positive, and partner model of other was negative (which corresponds with the dismissing prototype of attachment).

These results are mixed in support of theories on how a partner’s attachment patterns can affect an individual’s behaviour. For example, individuals who are high on avoidance, or have a low model of other like the dismissing and fearful avoidant prototypes, tend to deal with unpleasant situations, like disagreement, by distancing themselves from others or withdrawing from their partners (see Bowlby, 1973, 1980; Collins & Feeney, 2000). These types of individuals also offer less support to their partners (e.g., Mikulincer & Florian, 1998) “in some cases in order to avoid the pain of being rejected and in others to avoid being subjected to pressure to become someone else’s caretaker” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 138). These patterns of behaviour may lead to an
expectation from their partners that there will be a distinct lack of support from them, and
may lead these partners to return this apathy in kind. This is the basic contention of a
study by Campbell et al. (2001) who found that people behaved more negatively in a
stressful situation if their partners were more avoidant. As agreeing with one’s partner is
arguably a relationship maintenance act, and also a positive one, it is in accord with this
study that individuals with dismissing partners tended to align their attitudes the least, but
not in accord that those with fearful-avoidant partners seem to align their attitudes the
most.

Two reasons are proposed to explain why individuals in the current study were
more likely to align their attitudes when their partners had a less positive model of self
and a less positive model of other. First, the individuals with fearful-avoidant partners
may have an attachment prototype that is related to increased agreement with the partner.
As discussed previously, securely attached individuals might align their attitudes with
that of a fearful-avoidant partner, as they tend to have a positive model of others and tend
to support their partner despite the partner’s faults (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), which may
lead to agreement with a partner who is not participating fully in a disagreement. The
supposition here is that an individual with a fearful-avoidant partner has a different
attachment pattern that both overrides the negative feelings derived from a conflict with
that partner and leads to increased agreement with the partner.

A second potential explanation of these results is that the attachment prototype is
not the only factor involved in whether the individual or partner aligns his or her
attitudes. This proposition is derived from Campbell et al. (2001), who propose an
interaction between attachment and interdependence to explain an individual’s behaviour
in distressing situations. As previously explained, interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibault, 1978; Thibault & Kelley, 1959) focuses on how a couple assumes the commitment and intimacy central to a close relationship through paired activities and communication over time. Individuals who become more dependent on the relationship over time are more motivated to respond positively to the needs of their partners, and to ensure the successful continuation of the relationship (see Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997). Therefore, even if one has a dismissing attachment pattern, or has a partner with a fearful-avoidant attachment pattern, a negative and destructive reaction in a disagreement may not occur because of the level of dependence on the continuation of the relationship. Campbell et al. (2001) did find an interaction between attachment and dependence, in that individuals who were less avoidant and highly dependent behaved less negatively toward their partners, and more avoidant and less dependent people behaved more negatively. Therefore, the desire to maintain or enhance the relationship may override any negative feelings derived from a disagreeable interaction with one’s avoidant partner. Neither of these proposed explanations was tested in the current study, but future research should concentrate on testing these proposals in more detail as they relate to attitude alignment behaviours.

This study clearly contributes to the present research on behaviour within close couples, particularly research on the phenomenon of attitude alignment. The attempt to replicate the centrality-alignment relationship was not successful, making the significant relationship between self-deception and attitude alignment even more intriguing. The suggestion that people become more similar as their relationship progresses in part because of self-deception is an interesting spin on current theory on perceived similarity
and the importance of being alike for continued attraction, as explained above. Moreover, the data suggest that one does not tend to outright "lie" to those who may be privy to conversations and disagreements with one's partner (e.g., impression management) but instead tends to positively bias one's own thoughts and feelings regarding the relationship. As previously stated, the current research also offers some preliminary results concerning the relations between the attachment dimensions and attitude alignment leaving much opportunity for future thoughtful research on these connections.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations of the current research, including the lack of a longitudinal element to test whether the attitude changes observed in the data remained stable over time. This limitation is particularly important because of the finding that self-deception significantly predicted attitude alignment, suggesting that this element of social desirability may not be as important in a more ecologically valid environment for the couple, and therefore not be related to alignment as significantly as it did in the experimental session. Another potential limitation was the experimental manipulation, which may not have been as effective as expected. In experimental manipulations like this one, where the only difference between the two groups is a change in instructions, it is very difficult to find the proper combination of getting the message across and keeping the participants unaware that they are doing things differently than other groups, and the instructions in this study may have erred too far on the latter side of the problem. A manipulation check, particularly a forced choice question asking individuals about the nature of their instructions would go far in correcting this problem. In this way, individuals who were aware of the change in instructions could be compared to those
who were given the control instructions, and those who were unsure or incorrectly guessed at their instructions could be dropped from the analyses.

A further limitation of the experimental design was a lack of a control group for the attitude alignment effect, making it difficult to report with certainty that attitude alignment was a result of the discussion between individuals and not regression toward the mean, a common phenomenon observed with repeated measurements such as the pre- and post-discussion attitudes questionnaires. If a control group were given two attitude questionnaires without being asked to discuss an issue with the partner and exhibited lower attitude alignment scores as those who did discuss the issues with their partners, the problem could be greatly reduced. Furthermore, without a control group, it is difficult to say with any certainty that individuals align their attitudes with those of their partners because of relationship closeness. Initiating a group where individuals discussed issues with strangers and comparing these attitude alignment scores with the close-dyad group could help correct this uncertainty. It is important to note, however, that issues that are important to the individuals are more resistant to change, so the finding that attitude alignment occurred despite the difficulty in persuading individuals to change a strong attitude indicates that attitude alignment is an important phenomenon above and beyond a regression toward the mean effect.

Demand characteristics may have also played a role in the attitude alignment effect. If individuals assumed agreement was the purpose of the study, they may have behaved accordingly. Increasing the time between the first and second attitude questionnaires, adding a longitudinal element to the study, or better mixing the data so the pre-discussion questions are better embedded in a less recognizable pattern may all
help diffuse the effects of such demands. In any case, a post-experiment question concerning the purpose of the study could determine whether any individuals were aware of the purpose, and did in fact align their attitudes significantly more than those who did not appear to be aware of the true purpose.

Furthermore, because of the nature of the variables and the dyadic analyses performed, the interactions between the attachment dimensions were only discussed based on the suggestion of the plots that were derived from normal hierarchical regressions treating the individual as the unit of analyses. Future research that concentrates on these relations should look more closely at developing a concise way of examining interactions between such variables whose results were derived from pooled regression analyses.

A final limitation of the study was the six-month relationship cutoff required for inclusion in the study. Although this time period makes sense, as those who have been together for six months or longer may be more committed than those who have been together for a shorter amount of time, this requirement was arbitrary and could have caused some problems within the study. For example, the length of relationship could be related to the characteristics tested by the analyses. There is some research to suggest that attachment orientation can change along with relationship status (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994). As well, positive and negative affect can be affected by environmental factors, including one’s partner, as explained in the introduction to this study. These two contentions were not tested in the present study. However, the pearson correlation between couple attitude alignment and the length of the relationship was $r = .09, p = .36$, showing that at least attitude alignment was not affected by the length of the couple’s
relationship. Further analysis to distinguish whether other individual difference characteristics were related to the length of the relationship should be conducted in future research.

Future research should also concentrate on an increased understanding of how social desirability is related to an individual's attitude alignment behaviours, as well as how social desirability may moderate the relations between other possible predictors and attitude alignment. As discussed above, the connection between the two attachment dimensions definitely requires further research attention, as the current research not only suggests intriguing connections between the dimensions in relation to attitude alignment, but also the requirement to concentrate more fully on how a couple's attachment dimensions interact to moderate behavioural outcomes like attitude alignment for each individual, as well as the role of relationship dependence in the attachment-alignment relationship. Adding a longitudinal element to the data, as well as a stronger experimental condition, would greatly improve any research in this area.

A major strength of this research was the inclusion of partner effects in the statistical analyses. Partner effects made up close to half of the significant and marginally significant results found in the study, which would not have been discovered or reported had the individual been treated as the unit of analysis. This finding stresses the importance of the concept of the dyad in research and how individuals in a couple are rarely only affected by their own personalities and attitudes, as well as the importance of continued research with couples as the unit of analysis. Rarely do people exist in isolation, and therefore their data should not be treated as such without strong evidence otherwise, particularly when they entered into and completed a study with their
significant other. Another important and fascinating strength of this research was the addition of social desirability measures, which resulted in one of the few significant results observed. For this sample, attitude alignment is not related to many of the individual difference variables tested in the present study, but instead is significantly related to how much self-deception one reports. Again stressing the importance of the partner in dyadic analyses, of the four other significant results three were based on interactions between individual and partner scores, as in the frequency and strength difference interactions, and the interactions between the model of self and model of other attachment dimensions.

Regardless, attitude alignment did occur. The effect occurred regardless of the positivity or negativity of an individual’s mood, or of how many different activities an individual performed with one’s partner. It occurred regardless of how positive or negative an individual’s model of self and model of other. It occurred regardless of an individual’s centrality of issue, or of how high an individual’s impression management scores. It occurred in the absence of significant relations with virtually all of the hypothesized predictors.

These findings suggest two important points. First, attitude alignment is a robust effect that occurs within this sample, which strengthens the initial findings of Davis and Rusbult (2001). Second, the findings suggest that attitude alignment may be simpler than supposed. If almost all of the hypothesized predictors in the present study are not related to attitude alignment, the effect stands on its own as a phenomenon of relationships without further explanation. There may be other reasons that were not tested, or it may be a relationship maintenance act on its own, an end in itself. Individuals are attracted to
those who are more similar (e.g., Weber & Harvey, 1994), and those who are attracted to others tend to perceive more similarity between them and the object of their attraction (e.g., Schul & Vinokur, 2000). Similarity itself is even attractive (e.g., Duck, 1988).

When individuals are in a close relationship, and are ostensibly attracted to their partner, they may both perceive many similarities between them and their partners and want to maintain or enhance those similarities. Discussing issues for which their attitudes are dissimilar may lead to attitude alignment – as in the present study – to increase similarities or beliefs in perceived similarities. In this way, an individual need not be happy, upset, securely attached, or even have an incredibly close relationship with the partner; they may merely have to perceive that there are dissimilarities in attitudes between them and their partners, and behave in a way to reduce the dissimilarity. Why should attitude alignment be something more than a technique to increase similarity between the self and the attractive partner, a characteristic very important to relationships? This question cannot be answered with the current study; further research on attitude alignment may include measures of real and perceived similarity to observe whether increases in similarity may be related to the incidence of attitude alignment.

As the study was conducted, the realization that taking a mere hour out of a couple’s life together and attempting to grab slices of real life behaviour proved a daunting task. The present study took great strides toward providing a more ecologically valid environment in which to test real-life phenomenon like attitude alignment. However, even greater attempts to provide an opportunity for a couple to have an open and honest discussion or disagreement while still measuring desired variables need to be devised to determine whether social desirability is just a factor of testing, and not real
life. It is true that often perceived similarity is important for an individual’s attraction to another as previously discussed. But the question remains that, if after controlling for extraneous factors self-deception is still significantly related to attitude alignment, are we comfortable with self-deception playing a role in attitude alignment with our partners? As stated before, the many subtle nuances of close relationships still evade and fascinate, resulting in more questions as research like the current study seemingly answers so few.
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Footnotes

1 Does trivialization occur, or do self-reported centrality scores change, in the process of attitude alignment? As in Davis and Rusbult (2001), a measure of the changes in individuals' self-reported centrality of issue was conducted. This test was conducted to explore the possibility that individuals may trivialize their own attitudes when there is cognitive dissonance between real and perceived similarity. It was also conducted to replicate more fully the results of Davis and Rusbult (2001), who found significant changes between some individuals pre- and post-discussion reporting of attitude centrality. Therefore, I conducted post hoc a two-factor within-couple ANOVA of centrality alignment, or changes in the individuals' self-reporting of attitude importance, with centrality of issue (Male high vs. Female high centrality) and sex (Male vs. Female) as the independent variables. Results indicated there were no main effects of sex or centrality of issue, but there was a significant interaction between sex and centrality, $F(1, 103) = 88.59, p < .001$. Follow-up tests revealed that for issues that were more central to the male partner than the female partner, females tended to align their self-reported centrality with that of their partners more than males, ($M_s = 1.47$ vs. $.48$), $t(104) = -5.41$, $p < .001$. For issues that were more central to the female partner, males tended to align their self-reported centrality with that of their partners more than females, ($M_s = 1.50$ vs. $.38$), $t(103) = 7.31$, $p < .001$. These results are similar to those of Davis and Rusbult (2001), who conclude that the results support the contention that individuals may also change their feelings about the issues at hand in the face of disagreement, in that when an issue is less central to the self and more central to the partner, the individual may not only align his or her attitudes with the partner, but may alter his or her feelings about the issue.
believing them more important to their personal identity. Although an interesting and important finding, these results do not support the contention that individuals may trivialize their feelings about the attitudes after disagreement. To test the supposition that trivialization may play a role in attitude alignment, one-sample t-tests were conducted on the males centrality alignment scores in the Male High centrality condition and the females centrality alignment scores in the Female High centrality condition. Results revealed that centrality alignment occurred for males even when the issue was more central to them initially, $M = .48, t(104) = 3.93, p < .001$, and centrality alignment occurred for females even when the issue was more central to them initially, $M = .37, t(104) = 4.25, p < .001$. These results indicate that although individuals may align their centrality scores more when the issue is more central to their partners, they still significantly align their centrality scores when the issue is more central to themselves, a finding that supports the contention that trivialization of the issue may play a role in attitude alignment.

Plotting variable interactions from two pooled regression analyses provided a unique challenge. In the current study the pooled regressions were completed because of a significant test of interdependence between the partners in the dyads for the outcome variable - attitude alignment - with the other variables partialed out of the correlation, which came to .24, a number just under the cutoff point suggested by Kenny and Kashy (1991). Two regular hierarchical regressions were performed on the analyses using the same predictors from the final dyadic regression analyses, both of which used the individual as the unit of analyses, one using every individual’s scores as the predictor variables, the other using every partner’s scores as the predictor variables. These
regressions led to similar results as the pooled regression analyses, but in some cases the coefficients were slightly inflated. For illustrative purposes, the final regression equations from these regressions were used to calculate the predicted score on attitude alignment when model of self was high or low and when the model of other was high or low. High and low scores for the attachment dimensions were determined by adding or subtracting one standard deviation of each distribution from the means, respectively.
Appendix A

Attitudes questions

Adapted from Scruples, 90’s Edition.

The questions are in the order that the participants answered them.

1. You sell stereos. Your manager instructs you to sell a backlog of inferior product. Do you steer your customers to the inferior product?

2. As a surgeon, you sell diseased tissue to a company that uses it to produce a new drug. Do you offer to share your handsome profits with the patient who supplies the tissue?

3. Two-year-olds fly for free. You have a small three-year-old and can’t afford the extra fare. Do you teach your child to say “I’m two”?

4. You are destitute. In a ‘good’ neighborhood, you notice a pair of new shoes on someone’s porch. Yours are worn out. Do you take the new ones?

5. It’s your cherished night out with friends. Your spouse has a headache and hints that you should stay home and look after the kids. Do you ignore the hint?

6. Fanatics threaten violence against employees of your bookstore because a book you carry offends them. Do you continue to sell the book?

7. From your window you notice a couple in a nearby apartment making love. Later, when you see them on the street, do you suggest they draw their blinds?

8. You and your steady are in love but s/he has a much more intense Platonic relationship with a friend of the same sex. Do you object in any way?

9. You need to hire and train someone for a key long-term position. When interviewing women candidates, do you try to discover their family plans?

10. You mate wants to add gusto to your lovemaking by first watching a pornographic video. Do you agree?

11. Full of amorous anticipation, you shower and shave only to find your exhausted mate has fallen asleep waiting. Do you wake him/her?

12. The only other person waiting at your bus stop is visibly upset and in tears. Do you say anything?
13. Your gritty current affairs program is in a ratings war. You can take the lead by broadcasting the ‘execution of the week.’ Do you?

14. To cut pollution, the city is encouraging car pools. Your colleagues organize one that will add 30 minutes to your daily travel time. Do you join?

15. You are a transplant surgeon. An elderly person is at the top of the waiting list for a rare organ. You can give it to a young person down the list. Do you?

16. A week before your scheduled promotion you attend a function at which the boss tells an offensive racist joke. Do you speak up immediately?

17. After a bank robbery you see the fleeing thieves stash a bag in a garbage can. You retrieve the loot, $100,000, unseen. Do you keep it?

18. You are a nurse who opposes abortion. Refusal to participate in the procedure results in demotion and censure. Do you assist in abortions?

19. You and your new lover have just gotten into bed for the first time when s/he admits to being married. Do you jump out of bed?

20. You are a married man. A good friend in a stable lesbian relationship asks you to impregnate her. Do you? (Wives: Would you consent to this?)

21. Your 10-year-old is getting pushed around at school. Do you tell your child to just walk away?

22. Your spouse stipulated that his life not be prolonged should he become terminally ill. Now he is dying yet seems to be fighting for life. Do you follow his earlier instructions?

23. While abroad, a friend invites you to a brothel. He says that in this culture prostitution is not degrading to women. Do you go?

24. You are a contender in a marathon race when you accidentally trip the runner beside you. Do you stop to help him up?

25. A friend gets drunk and confides that a month ago s/he seriously injured a pedestrian in a hit-and-run accident. Do you report your friend?

26. You see a beetle crossing your kitchen floor. Do you squish it?

27. You are the executive director of a charity. A senile old man gives your cause $50,000. One week later he wants it back. Do you return the money?
28. A dear old friend adopts political beliefs you find repugnant. Do you distance yourself?

29. You are very attracted to someone who is happily married. You have no attachments. Do you explore the possibilities?

30. You separate a rib while renovating the house. To be eligible for workers' compensation, do you pretend the injury took place at work?

31. One of your students has plagiarized and according to university policy should be expelled. He is a member of a disadvantage minority. Do you make an exception?

32. A company manipulates genes and breeds the “churkey”, a larger more succulent chicken. Should new forms of life, like the “churkey”, be privately owned?

33. You are callously and unjustly fired. You could take revenge by erasing valuable information from the company’s database without being traced. Do you?

34. You can avoid a dangerous delay in your kidney transplant operation only by purchasing a kidney from an impoverished Third World donor. Do you buy it?

35. You and your stockbroker have a good rapport. His firm is boycotted for loaning millions to a savage dictatorship. Do you take your business elsewhere?

36. You get an expensive gift that you don’t like. You can return it for useful cash without anyone knowing. Do you?

37. You win a tennis tournament because the umpire rules that your opponent’s final volley was out. You saw that it was in. Do you tell the umpire?

38. As an airline president, you receive a reliable tip that a bomb will be placed on a particular flight. You step up security. Do you also inform the passengers?

39. You are close to finding a cure for leukemia. A prominent researcher offers to share important data. Do you accept it at this point and share the glory?

40. You are canoeing with your son and his friend and capsize in rough water. Your child is holding on to the canoe while his friend is floundering. Do you rescue your son first?

41. You are a student who can’t find a summer job. When you are offered a permanent job, do you take it knowing you will quit in September?

42. A member of your ad agency has AIDS. Your business has suffered as a result and the other staff are very uncomfortable. Do you fire him?
43. You are a high school principal. Parents want you to remove condom dispensers, which they say encourage promiscuity. Do you remove them?

44. A biology professor teaches the superiority of the white race. You believe in academic freedom. Do you support calls for his dismissal?

45. The heart specialist treating your father hints that Medicare payments are inadequate and a gift would be appreciated. Do you give him a gift?

46. Your spouse wants to take an exceptional job in another city. Your career would be harmed. Do you agree to the move?

47. You are writing your will. Two of your children are struggling while the third is affluent. Do you give them equal shares?

48. Your adolescent sons want to decorate their rooms with Nazi memorabilia and swastika flags. Do you forbid it?

49. You're a lawyer. Your client has confessed to murder. Nevertheless, you can get him acquitted because police obtained evidence illegally. Do you spring him?

50. You are getting married. Your divorced mother won't come to the wedding if your father is there. You like both parents. Do you invite your dad?
Appendix B

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule

Adapted from Watson, Clark, & Tellegen (1988)

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers.

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<th></th>
<th>Very slightly or not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>interested</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>distressed</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>excited</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>upset</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>strong</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>guilty</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>scared</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>hostile</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>proud</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>irritable</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>alert</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>ashamed</td>
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<td>determined</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>active</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>afraid</td>
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<td>happy</td>
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Appendix C

Relationship Closeness Inventory

Adapted from Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto (1989)

We are currently investigating the nature of interpersonal relationships. As part of this study, we would like you to answer the following questions about your relationship with your partner. Specifically, we would like you to choose the person with whom you are completing this study, and answer the following questions with regard to this particular person.

With this person in mind, please respond to the following questions:* 

1. Who is this person? (initial of first name only) __________________________
   a. What is this person’s age? ______ What is your age? ______
   b. What is this person’s sex? ______ What is your sex? ______
   c. What is this person’s birth date? ______ What is your birth date? ______
   d. What is this person’s occupation? (e.g. student, working full time, part time) __________________________
      (if you indicate that this person is a student, please indicate their year of study)
      What is your occupation? __________________________ (if you indicate that you are a student, please indicate your year of study)
   e. What is this person’s ethnicity? __________________________ What is your ethnicity? __________________________

2. Which one of the following best describes your relationship with this person? (Check only one)
   ______ married ______ engaged ______ living together
   ______ dating: date only this person
   ______ dating: date this person and others

3. How long have you known this person? Please indicate the number of years and/or months (for example, ___3___ years, ___8___ months)
   ______ years ______ months

We would like you to estimate the amount of time you typically spend alone with this person (referred to below as “X”) during the day. We would like you to make these time estimates by breaking the day into morning, afternoon, and evening, although you should interpret each of these time periods in terms of your own typical daily schedule. (For example, if you work a night shift, “morning” may actually reflect time in the afternoon, but is nevertheless time immediately after waking.) Think back over the past week and write in the average amount of time, per day, that you spent alone with X, with no one else around, during each time period. If you did not spend any time with X in some time...
periods, write ____0__ hour(s) ____0__ minutes.

4. DURING THE PAST WEEK, what is the average amount of time, per day, that you spent alone with X in the MORNING (e.g. between the time you wake and 12 noon)?
   ________ hour(s) _________ minutes

5. DURING THE PAST WEEK, what is the average amount of time, per day, that you spent alone with X in the AFTERNOON (e.g. between 12 noon and 6 pm)?
   ________ hour(s) _________ minutes

6. DURING THE PAST WEEK, what is the average amount of time, per day, that you spent alone with X in the EVENING (e.g. between 6 pm and bedtime)?
   ________ hour(s) _________ minutes

Compared with the "normal" amount of time you usually spend alone with X, how typical was the past week? (Check one) ________typical _________not typical...if so, why? (please explain)

The following is a list of different activities that people may engage in over the course of one week. For each of the activities listed, please check all of those that you have engaged in alone with X in the past week. Check only those activities that were done alone with X and not done with X in the presence of others.

In the past week, I did the following activities alone with X: (Check all that apply)

___ did laundry
___ prepared a meal
___ watched TV
___ went to an auction/antique show
___ attended a non-class lecture or presentation
___ went to a restaurant
___ went to a grocery store
___ went for a walk/drive
___ discussed things of a personal nature
___ went to a museum/art show
___ planned a party/social event
___ attended class
___ went on a trip (e.g., vacation or weekend)
___ cleaned house/apartment
___ went to church/religious function
___ worked on homework
___ engaged in sexual relations
___ discussed things of a non-personal nature
____ went to a clothing store
____ talked on the phone
____ went to a movie
____ ate a meal
____ participated in a sporting activity
____ outdoor recreation (e.g. sailing)
____ went to a play
____ went to a bar
____ visited friends
____ went to a department, book, hardware store, etc.
____ played cards/board game
____ attended a sporting event
____ exercised (e.g., jogging, aerobics)
____ went on an outing (e.g. picnic, beach, zoo, winter carnival)
____ wilderness activity (e.g. hunting, hiking, fishing)
____ went to a concert
____ went dancing
____ went to a party
____ played music/sang

The following questions concern the amount of influence X has on your thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by writing the appropriate number in the space corresponding to each item.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly disagree I strongly agree

1. _____ X will influence my future financial security.
2. _____ X does not influence everyday things in my life.
3. _____ X influences important things in my life.
4. _____ X influences which parties and other social events I attend.
5. _____ X influences the extent to which I accept responsibilities in our relationship
6. _____ X does not influence how much time I spend doing household work.
7. _____ X does not influence how I choose to spend my money.
8. _____ X influences the way I feel about myself.
9. _____ X does not influence my moods.
10. _____ X influences the basic values that I hold.
11. _____ X does not influence the opinions that I have of other important people in my life.
12. _____ X does not influence when I see, and the amount of time I spend with, my family.
13. _____ X influences when I see, and the amount of time I spend with, my friends
14. _____ X does not influence which of my friends I see.
15. _____ X does *not* influence the type of career I have.
16. _____ X influences or will influence how much time I devote to my career.
17. _____ X does *not* influence my chances of getting a good job in the future.
18. _____ X influences the way I feel about the future.
19. _____ X does *not* have the capacity to influence how I act in various situations.
20. _____ X influences and contributes to my overall happiness.
21. _____ X does *not* influence my chances of getting a good job in the future.
22. _____ X influences how I spend my free time.
23. _____ X influences when I see X and the amount of time the two of us spend together.
24. _____ X does *not* influence how I dress.
25. _____ X influences how I decorate my home (e.g., dorm room, apartment, house).
26. _____ X does *not* influence where I live.
27. _____ X influences what I watch on TV.

Now we would like you to tell us how much X affects your future plans and goals. Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate the degree to which you future plans and goals are affected by X by writing the appropriate number in the space corresponding to each item. If an area does not apply to you (e.g., you have no plans or goals in that area), write a 1.

```
1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not at all a great extent
```

1. _____ my vacation plans
2. _____ my marriage plans
3. _____ my plans to have children
4. _____ my plans to make *major* investments (house, car, etc.)
5. _____ my plans to join a club, social organization, church, etc.
6. _____ my school-related plans
7. _____ my plans for achieving a particular financial standard of living

*Question 1 sections c, d, and e were added to the original questionnaire.*
Appendix D

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding

Adapted from Paulhus (1988)

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOT TRUE</td>
<td>SOMEWHAT TRUE</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>VERY TRUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.
2. It would be hard for me to break any of my bad habits.
3. I don’t care to know what other people really think of me.
4. I have not always been honest with myself.
5. I always know why I like things.
6. When my emotions are aroused, it biases my thinking.
7. Once I’ve made up my mind, other people can seldom change my opinion.
8. I am not a safe driver when I exceed the speed limit.
9. I am fully in control of my own fate.
10. It’s hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought.
11. I never regret my decisions.
12. I sometimes lose out on things because I can’t make up my mind soon enough.
13. The reason I vote is because my vote can make a difference.
14. My parents were not always fair when they punished me.
15. I am a completely rational person.
16. I rarely appreciate criticism.
17. I am very confident of my judgments.
18. I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover.
19. It’s all right with me if some people happen to dislike me.
20. I don’t always know the reasons why I do the things I do.
21. I sometimes tells lies if I have to.
22. I never cover up my mistakes.
23. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.
24. I never swear.
25. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
26. I always obey laws, even if I’m unlikely to get caught.
27. I have said something bad about a friend behind his or her back.
28. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.
29. I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her.
30. I always declare everything at customs.
31. When I was young I sometimes stole things.
32. I have never dropped litter on the street.
33. I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit.
34. I never read sexy books or magazines.
35. I have done things that I don’t tell other people about.
36. I never take things that don’t belong to me.
37. I have taken sick leave from work or school even though I wasn’t really sick.
38. I have never damaged a library book or store merchandise without reporting it.
39. I have some pretty awful habits.
40. I don’t gossip about other people’s business.
Appendix E

Relationship Scales Questionnaire

Adapted from Griffin and Bartholomew (1994)

Please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which each describes your feelings about CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS. Think about all of your close relationships, past and present, and respond in terms of how you generally feel in these relationships.

a. Not at all like me
b. A little like me
c. Somewhat like me
d. Quite a bit like me
e. Very much like me

1. I find it difficult to depend on other people.
2. It is very important to me to feel independent.
3. I find it easy to get emotionally close to others.
4. I want to merge completely with another person.
5. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
6. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships.
7. I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.
8. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others.
9. I worry about being alone.
10. I am comfortable depending on other people.
11. I often worry that romantic partners don’t really love me.
12. I find it difficult to trust others completely.
13. I worry about others getting too close to me.
15. I am comfortable having other people depend on me.
16. I worry that others don’t value me as much as I value them.
17. People are never there when you need them.
18. My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away.
19. It is very important to me to feel self-sufficient.
20. I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me.
21. I often worry that romantic partners won’t want to stay with me.
22. I prefer not to have other people depend on me.
23. I worry about being abandoned.
24. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others.
25. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
26. I prefer not to depend on others.
27. I know that others will be there when I need them.
28. I worry about having others not accept me.
29. Romantic partners often want me to be closer than I feel comfortable being.
30. I find it relatively easy to get close to others.