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# Relationship Investment and Unwanted Pursuit: An Experimental Study

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RELATIONSHIP INVESTMENT AND UNWANTED PURSUIT: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

by

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B.S. August 2013, Old Dominion University

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## ABSTRACT

### RELATIONSHIP INVESTMENT AND UNWANTED PURSUIT: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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A significant positive correlation exists between relationship investment and the perpetration of unwanted pursuit among previous romantic partners. However, no experimental research has been conducted to enhance researchers' knowledge of this phenomenon. This study contributed to the literature on unwanted pursuit by making investment an experimentally manipulated variable. Specifically, I employed fictional relationship scenarios with varying levels of investment to assess experimentally the impact of investment on an individual's willingness to engage in unwanted pursuit after a breakup. It was hypothesized that higher investment would increase participants' tendency to engage in unwanted pursuit. In addition, participants' past perpetration of unwanted pursuit would be positively related to their perpetration of unwanted pursuit within the relationship scenario. 194 participants who were undergraduate students enrolled at Old Dominion University completed this anonymous online survey. An independent samples *t*-test revealed that the investment manipulation was successful. There was a significant difference in the scores for the low investment and high investment conditions. However, an independent samples *t*-test revealed that there was not a significant group difference between the high investment and low investment conditions in the extent to which participants engaged in unwanted pursuit within the relationship scenario. Higher investment did not significantly increase participants' tendency to engage in unwanted pursuit within the relationship scenario. Correlational analyses revealed that unwanted pursuit perpetration within the relationship scenario was related to past perpetration of unwanted pursuit and aggression. Implications for understanding the role of relationship investment in unwanted pursuit and for developing relationship scenarios to experimentally observe relationship phenomena are discussed.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Doris Tabb Warman and Troy Joseph Hitson, and to my late grandmother, Doris Tabb Bain. Their committed partnership for success in my life has made all the difference.

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## INTRODUCTION

Following the dissolution of an intimate relationship, one or both of the individuals involved will typically experience feelings of cognitive dissonance and difficulty moving forward. As a result, these individuals may engage in behaviors, including unwanted pursuit behaviors, in an effort to restore the relationship (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). Unwanted pursuit encompasses a wide array of behaviors ranging from nonthreatening, but unwelcomed and annoying acts (e.g., telephone calling, text messaging, or emailing) to stalking, which invokes fear and threatens the target's well being (Davis & Frieze, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

Stalking has disturbed the lives of approximately 19.3 million women and 5.9 million men in the United States (Black et al., 2011). Women and men alike have reported that their stalkers were individuals with whom they had an intimate relationship. Specifically, of those who reported being a target of stalking, 66.2% of women and 41.4% of men were stalked by a current or previous relationship partner (Black et al., 2011). Spitzberg and Cupach (2003) maintain that former relationship partners constitute the most extensive group of pursuers (approximately 50%). Individual characteristics as predictors of unwanted pursuit include anxious attachment and jealousy (Derlega et al., 2011; De Smet et al., 2012; De Smet et al., 2013; De Smet et al., 2014; Dutton & Winstead, 2006; Tassy & Winstead, 2014). Relationship characteristics before a breakup that serve as predictors of unwanted pursuit after a breakup include relationship investment (Derlega et al., 2011; De Smet et al., 2012; Tassy & Winstead, 2014). The purpose of the current study is to extend the literature on unwanted pursuit among previous romantic partners by examining experimentally the influence of investment on unwanted pursuit.

### *The Investment Model*

Rusbult's (1980, 1983) Investment Model was initially created to apply the concept of the Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). This theory suggests that individuals pursue the most



rewards and the least amount of costs in their romantic relationships. When individuals believe that the number of rewards exceeds the costs, persistence in the relationship occurs. However, when individuals believe the opposite, that the number of costs exceeds the rewards, alternative relationships may become more desirable, thus compromising relationship persistence. Rusbult (1980) developed the Investment Model with this concept of rewards and costs in mind. Specifically, Rusbult's model sought to illuminate what drives certain individuals to preserve their relationships and others to abandon them. Rusbult maintained that level of commitment (i.e., high or low) to the relationship influences relationship persistence and abandonment behaviors. Commitment is influenced by satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size (Rusbult et al., 1998). These elements in a romantic relationship are key to its welfare, permanency, and partner contentment (Le & Agnew, 2003).

To facilitate empirical testing of the Investment Model, Rusbult et al. (1998) developed the Investment Model Scale. Using the Investment Model Scale, Rusbult et al. demonstrated that satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size were significant predictors of commitment level. Additionally, Rusbult et al. found that greater commitment (in the form of higher relationship satisfaction, lower quality of alternatives, and higher investment) was related to enhanced relationship functioning (i.e., dyadic adjustment, closeness, and trust).

### *Relationship Investment*

Rusbult's (1980, 1983) Investment Model remains a framework for understanding the role of investment in a relationship. Investment size pertains to the various methods by which an individual becomes immersed in his or her relationship. Individuals who invest more resources into their relationships are more likely to be dependent on their relationships and thus wish to preserve them (Rusbult et al., 1998). Direct investments consist of elements like time or energy (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Personal sacrifice might also be perceived as a direct investment (e.g., moving to live closer to a partner). Indirect investments may include factors that are not intrinsic to a relationship, but come to be connected to it (e.g., mutual memories, strong connections to one another's families and friends, and

shared recreational activities). Both types of investments deepen commitment by expanding the cost of terminating a relationship because parting would suggest forsaking accrued investments. Therefore, individuals may be more likely to carry on in their efforts to reinstate their relationship when they believe that they have contributed a lot to the relationship and that both their investment and relationship are unrecoverable. Investment size particularly has been found to positively predict a number of positive relationship components, such as incorporation of one's partner in one's sense of self, duration of one's relationship, loving one's partner, and relationship closeness (Rusbult et al., 1998).

Impett et al. (2001-2002) assessed the Investment Model in a large and diverse sample of married couples over the course of 18 months. Impett et al.'s results revealed that both husbands' and wives' depth of commitment to their marriage significantly and positively predicted future relationship stability and that the combination of both husbands' and wives' feelings of commitment to their marriage better predicted future relationship stability than either predictor alone. Additionally, relationship satisfaction, quality of alternative relationships, and investment size significantly predicted husbands' and wives' commitments to their marriage.

Lipsey and Wilson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis to examine predictors of breakups among intimate partners. They aggregated data from approximately 38,000 participants from 137 studies conducted over the course of 33 years. Their results provided further support for the suggestion that Rusbult's commitment chiefly predicts stay-leave behavior. Specifically, commitment was found to be significantly and negatively predictive of a breakup.

Rusbult's Investment Model variables are not only predictive of favorable relationship characteristics while an intimate relationship is intact, but also of closeness after an intimate relationship ends. Tan et al. (2015) investigated post breakup closeness (i.e., level of contact ["no relationship," "acquaintances," "friends," "close friends," or "best friends"], frequency of contact, positive emotions experienced when reflecting on ex-partner, and negative emotions experienced when reflecting on ex-partner) among participants who, at Time 1 indicated their involvement in a romantic relationship and at Time 2, indicated the dissolution of their romantic relationship. At Time 1, Tan et al. assessed

participants' relationship satisfaction, quality of alternative relationships, and investment size to explore whether a relationship exists between the quality of the relationship before a breakup and relationship closeness after a breakup. Tan et al. discovered that individuals with more relationship satisfaction, fewer relationship alternatives, and higher investment reported a higher level of commitment to their partners while their relationships were intact at Time 1. Higher levels of commitment at Time 1 significantly and positively mediated the relationships between relationship satisfaction and post breakup closeness, quality of alternative relationships and post breakup closeness, and investment size and post breakup closeness.

Goodfriend and Agnew (2008) tested a number of hypotheses pertaining to various kinds of identified investments using a longitudinal design. "Planned investments" were those resources that an individual expected to eventually supply to his or her relationship. "Tangible investments" were those contributed to a relationship that could be directly observed, such as pets or financial contributions. Goodfriend and Agnew found that the extent of planned tangible investments at Time 1 significantly predicted relationship stability at Time 2. They also found that for those participants who experienced a breakup by Time 2, more planned investments at Time 1 were significantly related to participants' belief of a greater chance of eventually getting back together with their partners and to a lower likelihood of being in a new relationship with someone else by Time 2.

Although these relationship components are positive while the relationship is intact, research suggests that they can contribute to problematic behavior, like unwanted pursuit when the relationship ends.

#### *The Role of Relationship Investment in Unwanted Pursuit*

Insistent efforts to restore an intimate relationship, despite the fact that the pursuer knows his or her former partner desires no contact, has been named Obsessive Relational Intrusion (ORI) by Cupach and Spitzberg (1998). Factor analyses of the ORI measures have produced two factors for victims (Dutton & Winstead, 2006; Spitzberg et al., 1998; Spitzberg & Rhea, 1999) and two factors for pursuers (Dutton & Winstead, 2006), which have been identified as *pursuit* and *aggression* for both samples. The pursuit

items include nonthreatening, but intrusive and bothersome behaviors such as unwanted contact and monitoring, while the aggression items include threatening and disturbing behaviors, such as threats, theft or destruction of property, and confining or physically harming individuals (Dutton & Winstead, 2006).

Several studies have investigated relationship investment as a predictor of unwanted pursuit and aggression. A discriminant function analysis by Tassy and Winstead (2014) revealed that investment differentiated between participants who perpetrated unwanted pursuit and participants who did not perpetrate unwanted pursuit in that those with higher investment pursued their partners more frequently compared to those with lower investment. Tassy and Winstead also performed a correlation analysis of those participants classified as pursuers and found that the extent to which they engaged in pursuit and aggression was positively correlated with investment. To assess the relationship between the group of correlates and unwanted pursuit, Tassy and Winstead performed a multiple regression analysis and discovered that investment was a unique positive predictor of aggression.

Derlega et al. (2011) employed each variable of the Investment Model Scale to predict unwanted pursuit in same-sex couples among individuals who wished to terminate their relationship when their partner wanted their relationship to continue (“disengagers”) and individuals who wished to continue their relationship when their partner wanted it to end (“rejected partners”). There was a significant positive correlation between rejected partners’ investment and their perpetration of pursuit as well as a trend (i.e.,  $p < .10$ ) for a positive correlation between rejected partners’ investment and their perpetration of aggression (Derlega et al., 2011). There was also a significant positive correlation between investment in the relationship and disengagers reporting being a target of pursuit and aggression. Separate multiple regression analyses were performed for the disengagers and the rejected partners. Higher investment was a significant predictor of rejected partners engaging in pursuit and a predictor as a trend for aggression. Higher investment was also a significant predictor of disengagers experiencing pursuit and aggression.

In addition to examining the effects of being a disengager or rejected partner, research has also observed the influence of characteristics of a breakup on unwanted pursuit. De Smet et al. (2012) examined whether the correlation between relationship characteristics (i.e., investment) and the

perpetration of unwanted pursuit is moderated by characteristics of the breakup (i.e., breakup initiator status). There was a significant interaction between investment and breakup initiator status. Participants who invested more in their relationship pursued their former partner more extremely when their former partner wanted to breakup. When both partners mutually wanted to breakup, those participants who invested more in the relationship also pursued their former partner, but in a less extreme way. When participants themselves wanted to breakup, they did not pursue their former partner, regardless of level of relationship investment.

Research concerning relationship investment and unwanted pursuit has concentrated on gaining a better understanding of the influence of relationship characteristics on unwanted pursuit. Investment is a consistent predictor of unwanted pursuit and aggression. Although the aforementioned studies suggest that there is a relationship between unwanted pursuit and investment, researchers cannot determine that investment has a causal influence on unwanted pursuit until experimental research is conducted. Our adaptation of Vicary and Fraley's (2007) "Choose Your Own Adventure" story methodology is one approach to doing this experimental research. Vicary and Fraley observed the influence of attachment on relationship outcomes and satisfaction through a story in which participants acted as the protagonist in a romantic relationship. Participants were given two choices at various points during the course of the story and asked to select one. One of the options was relationship enriching, like apologizing for a transgression, while the other was potentially detrimental to the relationship, like finding fault with one's partner. At the conclusion of the story, the participants were asked to rate their satisfaction level with the simulated relationship. Through their relationship story, Vicary and Fraley discovered that attachment style did have a significant influence on relationship satisfaction and outcomes. Participants who were insecurely attached chose the relationship enhancing option less frequently than participants who were securely attached. Participants who were securely attached felt more satisfied with the relationship compared to those who were insecurely attached (Vicary & Fraley, 2007).

Winstead and Hitson (2014) originally adapted Vicary and Fraley's (2007) story methodology to examine the utility of a relationship scenario as a tool to assess the tendency to perpetrate unwanted

pursuit after a breakup. Two hundred eleven participants read a breakup story concerning the aftermath of a breakup with 25 points at which they chose an unwanted pursuit or a non-pursuit behavior. A sample item includes: “You heard from your best friend that X and her new boyfriend have been looking at apartments to move into. You begin to feel overwhelmed. At the moment, you just want this feeling to stop and the only way you believe it can is if you convince X to reconsider moving in with him. You feel desperate. Would you (a) make an appointment with the college counselor to talk about your feelings or (b) call X and threaten to hurt someone, maybe yourself, if she follows through with moving in with him?” We obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .69. In addition, we asked participants whether they had ever pursued a former partner who did not want to be pursued, and found that the story was positively correlated with self-reported unwanted pursuit,  $r(209) = .29, p < .01$ , and aggression,  $r(209) = .20, p < .01$ . Therefore, the story demonstrated acceptable internal reliability and convergent validity.

In a second study with a sample of all women, the story was used to manipulate Rusbult et al.’s (1998) investment size. Winstead and Hitson (2015) utilized items designed to measure investment size from Rusbult et al.’s Investment Model Scale to create an investment manipulation in the form of relationship histories, which participants read prior to reading the breakup story. For instance, the relationship history with a high level of investment described an exclusive three-year relationship, which entailed the participant and his or her fictional partner seeing one another on a daily basis, calling and texting one another multiple times throughout the day, having many mutual friends and close relationships with one another’s family members, knowing secrets about one another, supporting and participating in one another’s hobbies and recreational activities, sharing many memories, and exchanging expensive gifts on special occasions. According to the relationship history, the participant believed this is the person he or she would marry. The relationship history with a low level of investment described a three-month relationship, which entailed the participant and his or her fictional partner seeing one another on the weekends when their schedules permitted, exchanging text messages with one another throughout the week, getting along with one another’s friends, planning to eventually meet one another’s family

members, and exchanging inexpensive gifts on special occasions. According to the relationship history, the participant hoped to get to know this person better.

This version of the breakup story included 30 points at which participants selected either a pursuit or non-pursuit behavior. It also incorporated reminders to reflect participants' assigned level of investment, which pertained to the length of the relationship, how much time the couple spent together, etc. For example, a high investment reminder read, "Your friends have confirmed that X is dating someone else. You are surprised she/he was able to move on so quickly, especially since you are having trouble letting go of *the last three years* you were together" compared to a low investment reminder, which read, "Your friends have confirmed that X is dating someone else. You are surprised she/he was able to move on so quickly, especially since you are having trouble letting go of *the last three months* you were together." It demonstrated improved internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .80 and remained positively correlated with the perpetration of self-reported unwanted pursuit,  $r(216) = .43, p < .01$ . An independent samples *t*-test revealed that the manipulation was successful. There was a significant group difference between the high investment ( $M = 1.25, SD = .15$ ) and low investment ( $M = 1.21, SD = .13$ ) conditions in the extent to which participants engaged in unwanted pursuit within the break up story;  $t(216) = -2.28, p = .024$ . Higher investment within the relationship history significantly increased participants' tendency to engage in unwanted pursuit within the breakup story.

In a subsequent data collection, which included both women and men and used the same research protocol, there was not a significant group difference between the high investment ( $M = 1.25, SD = .15$ ) and low investment ( $M = 1.25, SD = .16$ ) conditions in the extent to which participants engaged in unwanted pursuit within the breakup story;  $t(165) = -.12, p = .91$ . A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of participant gender and investment level on perpetration of unwanted pursuit within the breakup story. There was a statistically significant interaction between the effects of participant gender and investment level on perpetration of unwanted pursuit within the story,  $F(1, 159) = 10.14, p = .002$ . Specifically, women chose more unwanted pursuit responses in the high investment condition ( $M = 1.26, SD = .16$ ) than in the low investment condition ( $M = 1.20, SD = .15$ ) compared to men, who chose

more unwanted pursuit responses in the low investment condition ( $M = 1.34$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) than in the high investment condition ( $M = 1.23$ ,  $SD = .12$ ). An explanation of these results may be that, as self-reported, 66% of men did not believe the low investment story was realistic.

### *Focus Group Research to Improve Breakup Story*

In an effort to create a breakup story that is realistic, engaging, and suitable for women and men, and short-term and long-term relationships, Winstead and Hitson (2015) conducted 4 focus groups ( $N = 20$ ) to explore male undergraduate students' reactions to their personal breakup experiences and the low investment breakup story. We recruited only those who had experienced a difficult relationship breakup. We first inquired about participants' personal break up experiences using the following questions: (1) How did your relationship end? (2) How did you feel and/or what were you thinking one or two weeks after the relationship ended? (3) What did you think or feel when you saw him/her after you broke up? (4) What did you think or feel when you heard about him/her after you broke up? (5) Might you have responded differently if the relationship had been shorter or longer? And, (6) How do you think the length of the relationship would affect your response to the breakup? Participants were then instructed to read the breakup story and prompted to discuss the measure by responding to questions regarding specific items of the breakup story that were most problematic (i.e., low corrected item-total correlation).

Questions pertaining to items of the breakup story included: (1) Is the item realistic? (2) What about the item is realistic or unrealistic? (3) What would you suggest to make the item more realistic? And, (4) How should the item be the same or different depending on the length of the relationship? Following data collection, our qualitative analysis of participants' responses revealed that participants were able to identify specific behaviors and situations in each item that they regarded as unrealistic and offer suggestions on how to develop more realistic items. We revised the breakup story to reflect their comments and suggestions in an attempt to create a breakup story that resonates with both women and men and is more congruent with an individual's feeling of being emotional after a breakup. The new story was employed within a pilot study of men to examine its feasibility in our intended study. The results



demonstrated observable improvement. 53.9% of participants believed the story was realistic. This version of the breakup story was utilized in the current study.

### *Hypotheses*

I hypothesized that there would be a significant group difference between the high investment and low investment conditions in the extent to which participants engaged in unwanted pursuit within the relationship scenario. Specifically, participants would endorse more unwanted pursuit choices in the high investment breakup story compared to the low investment breakup story. In addition, I hypothesized that participants' past perpetration of unwanted pursuit would be positively related to their perpetration of unwanted pursuit within the relationship scenario.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

A power analysis was conducted to determine the sample size necessary to detect a significant difference between the group means. The minimum sample size required to detect a medium difference ( $d = .50$ ) at  $\alpha = .05$  was 64 participants (Cohen, 1992). Means from prior analyses were also used to determine the sample size necessary to detect a significant difference between the group means. A calculated Cohen's  $d$  of .31 required a minimum sample size of 452 participants. A small effect size requires a large sample size. However, attempts were made through focus group research to improve the story and make the manipulation more effective. I wanted to aim for a method that yielded effect sizes more comparable to the ones I find in correlational studies that include unwanted pursuit and investment. Therefore, I aimed for a medium effect size. Furthermore, it would help to identify factors of a relationship that predict unwanted pursuit that have more than a small effect, especially for intervention purposes.

Participants for the study included undergraduate students enrolled at Old Dominion University. I recruited participants using the university's psychology department research pool. Participants were awarded research credit for their participation. Among the 246 who attempted the questionnaire, 28 participants were excluded because they did not provide enough data for analyses. 24 participants selected a same-sex partner for the breakup story and were excluded. I elected to limit my analyses to participants who chose an opposite sex partner because there are not enough subsamples of Lesbian, Gay, and/or Bisexual participants to make comparisons. The final sample included 194 participants. Overall, the majority of the participants were women (76.8%) between the ages 18 and 22 (67%). The sample was 50.5% White/Caucasian, 32% Black/African American, 9.8% Other/Multi-Racial, 4.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.6% Hispanic, and .5% Native American/Alaska Native. The majority of participants were single/never married (77.8%).

### *Materials*

Participants read a story about a romantic relationship in which they were the main character. They were directed to think of someone they might have had a similar experience with or to imagine themselves in the scenario with a person they care a lot about while moving through the story. They were presented with choices at particular points of the story and they selected the choice they would most likely make in a situation comparable to the one described in the story.

First, participants chose their relationship partner preference (i.e., boyfriend or girlfriend) and were randomly assigned to a relationship history and breakup story that depicted their level of investment in the fictional romantic relationship. Specifically, participants read about either (a) a relationship portraying a high level of investment with a girlfriend or boyfriend or (b) a relationship portraying a low level of investment with a girlfriend or boyfriend.

We employed the items of the Rusbult et al. (1998) Investment Model Scale that are designed to measure investment size to create the relationship history. The relationship history with a high level of investment described an exclusive three-year relationship, which entailed the participant and his or her fictional partner seeing one another on a daily basis, calling and texting one another multiple times throughout the day, having many mutual friends and close relationships with one another's family members, knowing secrets about one another, supporting and participating in one another's hobbies and recreational activities, sharing many memories, and exchanging expensive gifts on special occasions (see Appendix A). According to this relationship history, the participant believed this is the person he or she would marry. The relationship history with a low level of investment described a five-month relationship, which entailed the participant and his or her fictional partner seeing one another on the weekends when their schedules permit, exchanging text messages with one another throughout the week, not knowing each other's friends well, planning to eventually meet his or her family members, and exchanging inexpensive gifts on special occasions (see Appendix B). According to this relationship history, the participant hoped that this relationship would last.

After reading the relationship history, each participant rated his or her perceived level of investment in the relationship as a manipulation check (see Appendix C). The five items from the Rusbult et al. (1998) Investment Model Scale measured investment size (e.g., “You have put a great deal into the relationship that you would lose if the relationship were to end”). Items were scored using a 9-point scale (1 = *Do Not Agree at All*, 9 = *Agree Completely*). Higher scores indicated a higher level of investment. Rusbult et al. (1998) has utilized the investment size items among undergraduate students and has obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .82 to .84. Therefore, the investment size items present in the Investment Model Scale demonstrate good internal consistency. As expected, Rusbult et al. (1998) also discovered that investment is significantly and positively correlated with the incorporation of one’s partner in one’s sense of self,  $r(311) = .55, p < .01$ , duration of one’s relationship,  $r(311) = .26, p < .01$ , loving one’s partner,  $r(311) = .65, p < .01$ , and relationship closeness,  $r(311) = .36, p < .01$ . Thus, the investment size items present in the Investment Model Scale were projected to also demonstrate good convergent validity. In the current study, the investment size items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .84.

Participants then read the revised breakup story, which maintained its purpose of measuring the tendency for participants to respond to a relationship breakup with unwanted pursuit behaviors (see Appendices D and E). Reminders were placed within the story to reinforce participants’ assigned level of investment. The reminders were based on the relationship histories, which are based on Rusbult et al.’s 1998 Investment Model Scale, and pertained to the length of the relationship, how much time the couple spent together, and other similar items. For example, the girlfriend version with a high level of investment read, “Your friends have confirmed that X is dating someone else. You are surprised she was able to move on so quickly, especially since you are having trouble letting go of the last *three years* you were together” compared to girlfriend version with a low level of investment, which read, “Your friends have confirmed that X is dating someone else. You are surprised she was able to move on so quickly, especially since you are having trouble letting go of the last *five months* you were together.”

The breakup story included 30 points at which participants chose either an unwanted pursuit behavior or a non-pursuit behavior. The unwanted pursuit behavior choices were based on the 28

behaviors present in the Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) Relational Pursuit Pursuer Short Form. Winstead and Hitson (2015) obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .77. It also was significantly and positively correlated with unwanted pursuit,  $r(163) = .42, p < .01$ , demonstrating convergent validity. In the current study, the breakup story yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .81.

Participants then completed the Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) Relational Pursuit Pursuer Short Form to assess whether and to what degree participants had ever perpetrated unwanted pursuit behaviors after a breakup. It asked: "keeping in mind a relationship that involved the most difficult breakup, have you ever pursued this relationship partner in any of these ways" and then listed 28 behaviors, such as "Leaving unwanted gifts" or "Threatening others the person cares about." Items were scored using a 5-point scale (0 = *Never*, 4 = *Over 5 Times*). De Smet et al. (2012) obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .88 and Kam and Spitzberg (2005) obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .92. This provides evidence of the measure's good internal consistency. Jealousy and anxious attachment are theoretically associated with scores on the Relational Pursuit Pursuer Short Form; Davis et al. (2000) found unwanted pursuit to be significantly and positively correlated with jealousy,  $r(201) = .28, p < .01$ , and anxious attachment,  $r(201) = .35, p < .01$ , indicating convergent validity. In the current study, a principal component analysis identified two factors: Pursuit and Aggression. Items 1 – 7, 11, and 15 were averaged to create a measure of pursuit (alpha = .85) and items 8 – 10, 12 – 14, and 16 – 28 were averaged to create a measure of aggression (alpha = .97).

For the purpose of exploratory analysis and to conclude the study, participants completed Wie et al.'s (2007) Experiences in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form (ECR-S) and Pfeiffer and Wong's (1989) Multidimensional Jealousy Scale. The Wei et al. (2007) 12-item Experiences in Close Relationships Scale – Short Form was used to assess adult attachment style. Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). Sample items include "I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner" for Anxiety and "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner" for Avoidance. Higher scores represented higher levels of Anxiety or Avoidance. Cronbach's alphas were .73 for Anxiety and .72 for Avoidance. The 24-item multidimensional jealousy scale was used to assess jealousy of a current or previous partner whom the participant care(d) a lot about. The scale

consisted of three subscales that measured distinct types of jealousy: Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral. Sample items include: Cognitive Jealousy, “I suspect that X is secretly seeing someone of the opposite sex” (1 = *Never*, 7 = *All the Time*); Emotional Jealousy, “X comments to you on how great looking a particular member of the opposite sex is” (1 = *Very Pleased*, 7 = *Very Upset*); and Behavioral Jealousy, “I looked through X’s drawers, handbags, or pockets” (1 = *Never*, 7 = *All the Time*). Higher scores indicated higher levels of jealousy. Cronbach’s alphas were .93 for Cognitive Jealousy, .83 for Emotional Jealousy, and .87 for Behavioral Jealousy.

### *Procedure*

Prior to conducting this research, the study was approved by the Old Dominion University College of Sciences Institutional Review Board and received a waiver of informed consent. All questionnaire responses were anonymous. Participants completed the study online using Qualtrics software. Participants were screened to ensure that they were 18 years of age or older. A notification statement was provided to participants explaining the nature of the study and informing them of their rights as participants as well as potential risks that may accompany thinking about past relationship experiences. Participants were also provided with information about how to contact the researchers in case of concern about their involvement in the study and with information about how to contact Old Dominion University’s Office of Counseling Services in case reflecting on past relationships proved to be upsetting.

### *Data Analysis*

I hypothesized that there would be a significant group difference between the high investment and low investment conditions in the extent to which participants engaged in unwanted pursuit within the relationship scenario. Participants would select more unwanted pursuit choices in the high investment condition compared to the low investment condition. To test this hypothesis, I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to compare the means of the two groups (i.e., low investment group and high investment

group). Second, I hypothesized that participants' past perpetration of unwanted pursuit would be positively related to their perpetration of unwanted pursuit within the breakup story. To test this hypothesis, I conducted a correlational analysis to assess the strength of the relationship between past perpetration of unwanted pursuit and unwanted pursuit in the breakup story.

## RESULTS

Missing data were inspected using Little's MCAR test (Little, 1988) to establish whether the data were missing completely at random (MCAR). The Little's MCAR test resulted in  $\chi^2 = 15.52$ ,  $df = 17$ ,  $p = .558$ . Therefore, the missing data were considered MCAR. Missing values were imputed using expectation maximization. Mahalanobis distance was used to detect multivariate outliers. No multivariate outliers were present. Boxplots were used to detect univariate outliers. When extreme univariate outliers (i.e., scores greater than 3 times the interquartile range from a quartile) were present, they were Winsorized to meet the next highest data point.

First, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to determine if the investment manipulation was successful. The independent samples *t*-test revealed that the investment manipulation was successful. There was a significant difference in the scores for the low investment ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) and high investment ( $M = 6.93$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) conditions,  $t(192) = -12.41$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Perceived story realism, which was an issue in prior studies, demonstrated observable improvement. The majority of men (55.6%) and women (65.1%) believed the breakup story was realistic. Because participant gender had also been an influential factor in prior studies, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of participant gender and investment level on perceived story realism. The main effect of investment level was statistically significant,  $F(1, 190) = 5.95$ ,  $p = .016$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .030$ . The unweighted marginal means of perceived story realism were 3.84 ( $SE = .13$ ) for high investment and 3.43 ( $SE = .11$ ) for low investment, a statistically significant mean difference of .41, 95% CI [.079, .749],  $p = .016$ . There was no statistically significant main effect of gender on perceived story realism,  $F(1, 190) = .153$ ,  $p = .697$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ . The interaction effect between participant gender and investment level on perceived story realism was not statistically significant  $F(1, 190) = .04$ ,  $p = .840$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ .

Because story realism differed between the high investment and low investment conditions, an ANCOVA was conducted to determine the effect of investment level on unwanted pursuit perpetration in



the story after controlling for perceived story realism. After adjustment for perceived story realism, there was not a statistically significant difference between the high investment ( $M_{adj} = 1.25, SE = .02$ ) and low investment ( $M_{adj} = 1.23, SE = .01$ ) conditions,  $F(1, 191) = 1.00, p = .318$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ . To test the difference without the covariate, an independent samples  $t$ -test was done. Results confirmed that there was not a significant group difference between the high investment ( $M = 1.26, SD = .13$ ) and low investment ( $M = 1.23, SD = .14$ ) conditions in the extent to which participants engaged in unwanted pursuit within the breakup story,  $t(192) = -1.37, p = .173$ . Higher investment within the relationship history did not significantly increase participants' tendency to engage in unwanted pursuit within the breakup story.

Because gender had impacted results before, an ANCOVA was conducted to determine the effects of participant gender and investment level on unwanted pursuit perpetration in the breakup story after controlling for perceived story realism. After adjustment for perceived story realism, the difference between the high investment ( $M_{adj} = 1.26, SE = .02$ ) and low investment ( $M_{adj} = 1.22, SE = .02$ ) conditions approached statistical significance,  $F(1, 189) = 3.42, p = .066$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .081$ . After adjusting for perceived story realism, the interaction between participant gender and investment level also approached statistical significance,  $F(1, 189) = 3.52, p = .062$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .018$ . Specifically, men selecting more unwanted pursuit choices in the high investment ( $M_{adj} = 1.28, SE = .03$ ) breakup story compared to the low investment ( $M_{adj} = 1.19, SE = .03$ ) breakup story approached statistical significance,  $F(1, 42) = 3.54, p = .067$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .078$ . For women, there was no significant difference between the high investment and low investment conditions in the extent to which they engaged in unwanted pursuit within the breakup story.

These differences were also tested without the covariate using a two-way ANOVA. The main effect for investment level was statistically significant,  $F(1, 190) = 4.61, p = .033$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .024$ . The unweighted marginal means of unwanted pursuit perpetration in the story were 1.27 ( $SE = .02$ ) for high investment and 1.22 ( $SE = .02$ ) for low investment, a statistically significant mean difference of .05, 95% CI [.004, .097],  $p = .033$ . There was no statistically significant main effect of gender on unwanted pursuit

perpetration in the story,  $F(1, 190) = .153, p = .697$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ . The interaction between participant gender and investment level on unwanted pursuit perpetration in the story approached statistical significance,  $F(1, 190) = 3.41, p = .066$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .018$ . Specifically, men selected significantly more unwanted pursuit choices in the high investment ( $M = 1.28, SD = .18$ ) breakup story compared to the low investment ( $M = 1.19, SD = .13$ ) breakup story,  $F(1, 43) = 4.32, p = .044$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .091$ . For women, there was no significant difference between the high investment and low investment conditions in the extent to which they engaged in unwanted pursuit within the breakup story,  $F(1, 147) = .11, p = .747$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ .

Correlational analyses revealed that unwanted pursuit perpetration within the breakup story was not related to story realism, avoidance, or emotional jealousy. It was, however, positively related to anxiety ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ), cognitive jealousy ( $r = .20, p = .005$ ), behavioral jealousy ( $r = .35, p < .001$ ), and past perpetration of unwanted pursuit ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ) and aggression ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ).

Participants were asked five exploratory questions concerning the breakup story. The questions pertained to the likelihood of participants getting back together with X, the likelihood of participants starting a new relationship with someone other than X, how angry participants were at X, how sad participants were about their breakup with X, and how in love participants were with X. Investment was positively related to being angry with X ( $r = .19, p = .008$ ), being sad about the breakup with X ( $r = .16, p = .029$ ), and being in love with X ( $r = .31, p < .001$ ). Unwanted pursuit perpetration in the breakup story was positively related to the likelihood of getting back together with X ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), being angry with X ( $r = .17, p = .021$ ), and being in love with X ( $r = .15, p = .042$ ). It was negatively related to the likelihood of starting a new relationship with someone other than X ( $r = -.20, p = .005$ ).

The original intent was to assess these variables as mediators of the relationship between investment and unwanted pursuit within the breakup story. However, investment (i.e., the designated causal variable) was not statistically significantly correlated with unwanted pursuit in the breakup story (i.e., the designated outcome variable). Because a significant correlation between the causal variable and outcome variable is necessary to explore mediation, mediation analyses were not performed (Baron &

Kenny, 1986). What is interesting is the relationship between investment and anger and investment and love and the relationship between unwanted pursuit in the breakup story and anger and unwanted pursuit in the breakup story and love. These are links that would be worth investigating further in future research.

## DISCUSSION

To date, research on the impact of relationship investment on the perpetration of unwanted pursuit has been strictly correlational. The purpose of the current study was to extend this work by examining experimentally the influence of relationship investment on unwanted pursuit. A breakup story was used to assess how different levels of investment influenced choices people make to pursue or to not pursue former partners after the breakup of a fictional relationship.

To summarize the results, participant gender affected the impact of investment on unwanted pursuit perpetration in the breakup story. For women, investment did not affect their unwanted pursuit choices in the breakup story. For men, investment did affect their unwanted pursuit choices in the breakup story. When participant gender was not in the analysis, there was no overall effect of investment on unwanted pursuit perpetration in the breakup story. Once again, unwanted pursuit perpetration in the breakup story was significantly and positively correlated with self-reported history of unwanted pursuit perpetration as measured by Cupach and Spitzberg's Relational Pursuit Pursuer Short Form, suggesting that the breakup story is a valid measure of unwanted pursuit.

This study supports previous findings, which suggest that an effect for investment is observable, but inconsistently. Curiously, in previous studies the effect of investment was present for women, but not for men. In the current study, the effect of investment was present for men, but not for women. Although it is a struggle to understand why, perhaps it is a consequence of the focus groups consisting of only men. The focus groups found it exceedingly difficult to relate to the negative emotionality that was inherent within the story, so it was reduced. Perhaps by minimizing the negative affect in the story, I created a story that was less relatable to women.

The findings from this study have implications for not only understanding the role of relationship investment in unwanted pursuit, but also for developing tools like the breakup story to experimentally observe relationship phenomena. The results of this study indicate that investment may play a role, albeit small, in increasing the tendency to perpetrate unwanted pursuit after a breakup. When individuals

perceive that they have invested a great deal into a relationship, they may be more likely to engage in behaviors, unwanted by their former partner, to re-establish that relationship. Investment refers to such relationship aspects as the length of the relationship and ties to each other's families and friends.

Although the premise of Rusbult's Investment Model theory (1980, 1983) is that higher investment enriches a relationship by contributing to partners' commitment to one another, higher investment may also be a detriment by increasing an individual's tendency to engage in unwanted pursuit after a relationship ends. Higher investment might lead to unwanted pursuit after a relationship ends because former partners wish to regain not only their relationship, but their accumulated investments as well.

Relationship stories are a creative and valuable technique for exploring relationship behavior in highly specific situations. They are a tool for exploring sensitive topics, like unwanted pursuit, that participants might find challenging to comment on. Because responding to a story is not as personal as reflecting on their unique experiences to guide their responses, individuals typically regard stories as less intimidating (Barter & Renold, 1999). Still, individuals are inclined to respond congruently to actual and theoretical relationship occurrences, which makes relationship stories particularly useful tools to observe relationship phenomena (Fincham & Beach, 1988). Perhaps the biggest advantage of a relationship story is its experimental control and capacity for manipulation: it can be used to examine precisely the sort of relationship scenario researchers are interested in and provides a way of manipulating relationship characteristics (e.g., investment or satisfaction) which is exceedingly challenging, if not impossible in real life.

### *Limitations*

Although the utilization of a story provides researchers with a unique opportunity to increase our awareness of relationship behavior, results from this study highlight the difficulty of creating stories that manipulate relationship characteristics of interest. It is still the case that just over half of women and men agreed or strongly agreed that the story was realistic. The biggest challenge was ensuring that the content of the story (e.g., the events that took place and the feelings and thoughts of the character) was feasible

for relationships with both low and high investment. Attempting to create equally plausible and equally engaging stories for both women and men was also a challenge. It seems as though women and men might have a different schema for romantic relationships. Furthermore, it is conceivable that participants' hypothetical responses in the breakup story might differ from their actual responses in a real relationship. Using a story to study relationship behavior certainly does not supersede naturalistic observations of relationship behavior and a story methodology would ideally compliment correlational research in terms of outcomes.

Assuming that investment may be a small effect, it is possible that the study was under powered. Perhaps having a larger sample size would have yielded different results. In addition, the participants were undergraduate students attempting to earn research credits. Although unwanted pursuit is not an uncommon phenomenon among college – aged samples, the inherent features of a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses resulted in an unbalanced number of women (76.8%).

### *Conclusions and Future Research*

A breakup typically results in a series of choices regarding how to behave (e.g., engaging in unwanted pursuit versus moving on). This study suggests that the unwanted pursuit choices made after a breakup may be somewhat guided by the perceived level of investment in the relationship. Research on unwanted pursuit could be enhanced by using a story methodology to manipulate relationship characteristics other than investment that have been found to be associated with unwanted pursuit, particularly Investment Model variables like commitment and quality of alternative relationships (Tassy & Winstead, 2014). Keeping in mind a story methodology, the inclusion of exploratory questions concerning current feelings toward a former partner (e.g., being angry and/or in love with a former partner) might serve as useful stepping stones toward better understanding what drives the relationship between certain relationship characteristics and unwanted pursuit after a breakup. A story could also be

used to explore potential protective relationship factors (e.g., friendship and respect) that decrease the tendency for individuals to engage in unwanted pursuit after a breakup.

More consideration for risk factors and pursuers' thoughts, beliefs, and emotions could also assist victims and pursuers and prospective victims and pursuers alike. An individual whose former partner feels that he or she has invested a great deal into the relationship may be at risk for experiencing unwanted pursuit after a breakup. It would be beneficial for this individual to be watchful of any unwanted pursuit perpetration by their former partner so that he or she can utilize all necessary resources (e.g., counseling services, law enforcement, friends, or family). Lastly, it is not uncommon for individuals to seek mental health care after a difficult breakup. Therefore, clinicians should be aware of whether or not their client is engaging in any form of unwanted pursuit so they might direct their attention to helping them cope with the loss of their relationship and identify healthier substitutions to unwanted pursuit.

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## APPENDIX A

## HIGH INVESTMENT RELATIONSHIP HISTORY

You and X have been an exclusive couple for 3 years. You two are very close and spend a lot of time together. You do your best to see him on a daily basis, even if it's just to grab a cup of coffee before you head to class. You speak to each other on the phone and send each other text messages multiple times throughout the day. Last month, on his birthday, you gave him a gold watch and threw him a huge party. Your friends are his friends and his friends are your friends and you both have developed close relationships with each other's family members. You feel transparent in the relationship - he knows everything about you, including secrets that nobody else knows. You share an intellectual connection with him that permits meaningful, intriguing, and stimulating conversations. He actively supports and participates in your hobbies and recreational activities. Naturally, most of your memories of the past three years involve him in some way. Although no plans have been made, you really think this is the person you will marry.

## APPENDIX B

## LOW INVESTMENT RELATIONSHIP HISTORY

You and X have been dating for 5 months. You get along great and have a lot in common. You see him at least twice a week, usually on the weekends, when you aren't as busy. You exchange text messages with him throughout the week, usually pertaining to the next time you will see one another. You don't know his friends well. He has met your family, but you have not met his family yet. You are looking forward to eventually meeting them. Last month, on his birthday, you picked up a funny birthday card and bought him a cupcake from the local bakery. Although you haven't dated that long, you really hope that this relationship will last.

## APPENDIX C

## INVESTMENT MANIPULATION CHECK

*Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding the relationship you just read about on the previous page.*

1. You have put a great deal into the relationship that you would lose if the relationship were to end.

- 1) Do Not Agree at All
- 2) Do Not Agree Almost Completely
- 3) Do Not Agree Moderately
- 4) Do Not Agree Somewhat
- 5) Agree Slightly
- 6) Agree Somewhat
- 7) Agree Moderately
- 8) Agree Almost Completely
- 9) Agree Completely

2. Many aspects of your life have become linked to X (recreational activities, etc.), and you would lose all of this if you were to break up.

- 1) Do Not Agree at All
- 2) Do Not Agree Almost Completely
- 3) Do Not Agree Moderately
- 4) Do Not Agree Somewhat
- 5) Agree Slightly
- 6) Agree Somewhat
- 7) Agree Moderately
- 8) Agree Almost Completely

9) Agree Completely

3. You feel very involved in the relationship-like you have put a great deal into it.

1) Do Not Agree at All

2) Do Not Agree Almost Completely

3) Do Not Agree Moderately

4) Do Not Agree Somewhat

5) Agree Slightly

6) Agree Somewhat

7) Agree Moderately

8) Agree Almost Completely

9) Agree Completely

4. Your relationships with friends and family members would be complicated if X and you were to break up (e.g., X is friends with people you care about).

1) Do Not Agree at All

2) Do Not Agree Almost Completely

3) Do Not Agree Moderately

4) Do Not Agree Somewhat

5) Agree Slightly

6) Agree Somewhat

7) Agree Moderately

8) Agree Almost Completely

9) Agree Completely

5. Compared to other people you know, you have invested a great deal in your relationship with X.

1) Do Not Agree at All

2) Do Not Agree Almost Completely

- 3) Do Not Agree Moderately
- 4) Do Not Agree Somewhat
- 5) Agree Slightly
- 6) Agree Somewhat
- 7) Agree Moderately
- 8) Agree Almost Completely
- 9) Agree Completely

## APPENDIX D

## HIGH INVESTMENT BREAKUP STORY

You are going to read a story in which you are the main character. The story is about the end of a romantic relationship and its aftermath. When reading through the story, please keep in mind your most difficult breakup experience. In the story your boyfriend is referred to as X.

1. On Thursday afternoon X sends you a text message to see if you would like to meet him at a local restaurant after work. You agree. When you arrive there, you see him and some of his female friends at a booth. Even though you've been dating for three years, you feel somewhat nervous around these friends, especially the one who grew up with him. She waves to you to approach their table. Would you...
  - A. Join them realizing that this is a good opportunity to get to know all of the people in X's life on a more personal level.
  - B. Ask X if you can speak with him in private so you can let him know that you thought this was a date and didn't expect to be with these other people.
  
2. It's Friday night. You and X are out to dinner having a nice time. X's cell phone keeps beeping. You are familiar with X's cell phone and know that specific beep is to notify him of new text messages in his inbox. You tell him it's OK for him to check his phone. But, he insists on not looking at his phone during your dinner date. At the end of dinner, he pulls his cell phone from his pocket to see who keeps texting him. You're sitting next to him and accidentally see that the texts are from a random number. You wonder who it might be. Would you...
  - A. Forget about it and finish your dessert while continuing your conversation with him.
  - B. Try to get a better look at his phone to see what the texts say.
  
3. The following week, you and X are driving to the movies. During the car ride, X answers a call. His volume is pretty loud and you think the person on the other end of the phone is a female. Before long, X says to the person on the phone, "Hey, I'm in the car. Can I call you back later when I get home?" After X hangs up, would you...
  - A. Ask X if the person he was talking to is the same individual who was texting him the other night at dinner.
  - B. Discuss the movie and some of the reviews you heard about it.
  
4. On Friday, you meet X for lunch at his work. Before leaving for lunch, he grabs his iPad to show you pictures of a dog his sister just adopted. While you are looking through the pictures, a message pops up from someone with a female name. You've been together for three years and never heard X mention that name in any of your conversations. You wonder if this is the individual who is calling and texting X. Would you...
  - A. Ask X what he feels like eating for lunch.
  - B. Memorize the name so you can find out who this is.



5. On Saturday, you and X are at a large party. You both see many mutual friends to speak to and somehow or another lose sight of each other. You realize that it has been a while since you last saw him. You begin to hear people on the back porch using the name you noticed on X's iPad. You presume this is the same woman. Would you...
  - A. End the conversation with your friends to see if he is talking to this woman.
  - B. Keep chatting with your friends assuming you'll eventually find each other.
  
6. Last night while you were at X's place, he announced that he had been feeling confused and not close to you lately. This was unexpected. Everything seemed to be going so well and you really thought you were going to spend the rest of your life with him. You asked X what this was all about and he refused to answer. X asked you to leave and made it very clear that any contact from you would be unwelcome. So, you left. This morning, you feel confused and sad and are wondering why this happened. Would you...
  - A. Contact X to ask why this is happening.
  - B. Try not to think about it and go on with your day.
  
7. You and X share a class together. You often see him in the hall before class to chat and then walk in together. He is not in the hallway and when you enter the class he is already sitting in a section where the two of you do not usually sit. Would you ...
  - A. Sit next to him so that you can talk and ask him what is going on.
  - B. Sit away from him (where you usually sit) so that the two of you won't have to talk.
  
8. After class, X comes up to you to say that it really is over and he is sorry, but he wants to be able to move on. He says it might be best for him to withdraw from the class you both attend and reminds you that he does not want you to contact him. After this, you go to the library to study but you can't help thinking about X and your relationship that has ended. You can't imagine not talking to him every day. You wonder if he knows how much he means to you. Would you...
  - A. Keep these feelings to yourself since he said it's over.
  - B. Contact him to tell him how much he means to you.
  
9. On the weekends you and X would usually go to a movie or out to dinner. Afterwards, you typically would hang out at friends' houses together. You figure that he has talked to those friends to tell them what has happened and probably what his weekend plans are. You are really not sure what you will do this weekend. Would you...
  - A. Check with his friends to find out what X has told them and what his plans are for the weekend.
  - B. Talk to your friends and make plans of your own to do something with some of them.
  
10. It has been two weeks since the breakup. You know X is having a party this Saturday and a lot of people are invited. You remember how much fun you had helping X plan the party. Your friends really want you to go and you know a crowd will be there. Come Saturday, would you...

- A. Go to the party with your friends.
  - B. Figure out something else to do.
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- A. Try X's password and read his email.
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14. While sitting by the window at a restaurant with your friends, you see X get out of his car and head toward the restaurant across the street. He is with a woman. Seeing X with her is upsetting. Would you...
- A. Tell your friends what you saw and continue to eat.
  - B. Tell your friends you'll be right back and follow X and the woman he's with into the restaurant, but keep a low profile so that you can see what they are like together.
15. Your friends have confirmed that X is dating someone else. You are surprised he was able to move on so quickly, especially since you are having trouble letting go of the last three years you were together. You wonder what the new woman is like. You remember you still have X's Facebook password. Would you...
- A. Work-out, go to a movie, read - do something engaging to distract yourself.
  - B. Try to log onto Facebook with his account to get a better idea of what X's new girlfriend is like.

16. You're cleaning your apartment and find stuff that belongs to X. It brings back good times that you and he shared. You begin to wonder if X ever thinks about those good times. Would you...
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  - B. Pack them in a box and drive them over to his house to remind him of what you two had.
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- A. Take the basket to work to share with your coworkers.
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19. You hear from a friend that X seems very serious about his new partner, so serious that there is even talk of moving in together. You dated him for three years. The thought that he could be talking so seriously after only a few weeks is unbelievable. You see them together again on a weekend night. His car is in the parking lot. Would you...
- A. Key his car to let him know you saw them.
  - B. Make sure to go to different places and stay out of their way.
20. It's been over a month and you still feel upset about your broken relationship. You have been out with others, but those dates never seem to amount to anything. You see X all the time on campus with his new girlfriend. Today you feel overwhelmed with feelings and you don't know what to do about them. Would you...
- A. Contact him and tell him all of your thoughts and feelings.
  - B. Call a friend and talk.
21. Your friend invited you to her apartment for dinner. X lives two doors down from your friend in the same apartment building. This is the first time you have been in the apartment building without X since you were always there to either see him or hang out with friends with him. As you're walking down the hall to your friend's apartment, you notice X's door is ajar. Would you...
- A. Look into his apartment to see what he's doing.
  - B. Continue walking to your friend's door.

22. You hear from friends that X has told his family that he and his new girlfriend are thinking about moving in together. You are surprised. How could this happen so quickly? You wonder if his family likes her as much as they liked you. You begin thinking about all of the things he confided in you about. You specifically remember things that he once told you about his previous relationships. You begin to wonder how much his new girlfriend really knows about him. Would you...
- A. Let X know by email/text/call/note that you remember lots of unappealing things that he told you about his behavior in previous relationships.
  - B. Keep wondering about it but not say anything to X.
23. You hear that X is saying really negative things about the relationship that he had with you. Incidents that you remember are being reported back to you in ways that make him sound better and you sound worse than what you would say was the truth in the situation. You believe X is giving friends a biased view of your relationship. Would you...
- A. Make sure friends hear your view of the relationship including the situation in which X behaved in unappealing ways.
  - B. Let it go, assuming your friends know what you are really like.
24. You learn from mutual friends that X's new girlfriend is talking about how happy he is to be out of his old relationship with you and in a new relationship with her. You are certain that she cannot know everything about all of X's previous relationship history. You know all the details about how he has treated partners in the past. Would you...
- A. Make sure her close friends hear all of the unappealing things X has done in previous relationships.
  - B. Keep information about X to yourself.
25. You heard from your best friend that X and his new girlfriend have been looking at apartments to move into. You begin to feel overwhelmed. At the moment, you just want this feeling to stop and the only way you believe it can is if you convince X to reconsider moving in with her. You feel desperate. Would you...
- A. Make an appointment with the college counselor to talk about your feelings.
  - B. Call X and threaten to hurt someone, maybe yourself, if he follows through with moving in with his girlfriend.
26. You see X and his girlfriend at a furniture store at the mall. They appear to be looking at furniture. They see you as you're passing by the store and whisper something to one another and laugh. Suddenly, your sadness is replaced with anger. Would you...
- A. Walk toward them and threaten to hurt them.
  - B. Keep walking and call your friend to vent.

27. It has been a couple of weeks since you last ran into X and his girlfriend. You can't help but wish that things were different. You really liked the person you got to know during those three years. Any relationship with X would be better than no relationship. You look at your phone and wonder what he's doing. You realize he'll leave work in about an hour. You really want to see him and talk about things privately in hopes of rekindling some sort of relationship, even just a friendship. Would you...
- A. Talk to a close friend about how much you miss having X in your life.
  - B. Drive to his work location and sit on the hood of his car until he agrees to talk to you.
28. It's Friday night. You called all of your friends to see if they were available to hang out and they're all out on dates. You really miss going out on dates with X and remember how much fun you both had spending Friday nights in watching movies at his house. You begin to wonder about the types of dates X and his girlfriend enjoy and if they ever spend Friday evenings in watching movies. Would you...
- A. Go to a popular student hangout spot to get your mind off of X and try to meet someone new.
  - B. Drive to X's house and look into the windows to see if he and his girlfriend are watching movies.
29. It's Sunday afternoon and you're relaxing while browsing on Facebook. You come across an old picture of you and X that you had never seen before. It's a great picture of you both and he looks so happy. You hope he has a copy of this picture somewhere to remember you by. You decide to print out the picture to keep for yourself. As you're placing it in a drawer, you come across X's spare car key. You really wish X had this picture as a keepsake and you know he would appreciate having his spare key back. Would you...
- A. Drive to X's house, use the spare key to enter into X's car, and leave the picture and spare key on the passenger seat.
  - B. Call one of your mutual friends to come pick up the spare key to give to X and keep the picture to yourself.
30. The next day, while walking on campus to class, you see X and his girlfriend walking in your direction. She notices you looking at them and begins to laugh. You assume she's laughing at you. This angers you. Would you...
- A. Confront her and threaten to hurt her if she is ever rude to you again.
  - B. Walk away to cool off.

## APPENDIX E

## LOW INVESTMENT BREAKUP STORY

You are going to read a story in which you are the main character. The story is about the end of a romantic relationship and its aftermath. When reading through the story, please keep in mind your most difficult breakup experience. In the story your boyfriend is referred to as X.

1. On Thursday afternoon X sends you a text message to see if you would like to meet him at a local restaurant after work. You agree. When you arrive there, you see him and some of his female friends at a booth. You've only been dating X for five months and you feel somewhat nervous around these friends, especially the one who grew up with him. She waves to you to approach their table. Would you...
  - A. Join them realizing that this is a good opportunity to get to know all of the people in X's life on a more personal level.
  - B. Ask X if you can speak with him in private so you can let him know that you thought this was a date and didn't expect to be with these other people.
  
2. It's Friday night. You and X are out to dinner having a nice time. X's cell phone keeps beeping. You are familiar with X's cell phone and know that specific beep is to notify him of new text messages in his inbox. You tell him it's OK for him to check his phone. But, he insists on not looking at his phone during your dinner date. At the end of dinner, he pulls his cell phone from his pocket to see who keeps texting him. You're sitting next to him and accidentally see that the texts are from a random number. You wonder who it might be. Would you...
  - A. Forget about it and finish your dessert while continuing your conversation with him.
  - B. Try to get a better look at his phone to see what the texts say.
  
3. The following week, you and X are driving to the movies. During the car ride, X answers a call. His volume is pretty loud and you think the person on the other end of the phone is a female. Before long, X says to the person on the phone, "Hey, I'm in the car. Can I call you back later when I get home?" After X hangs up, would you...
  - A. Ask X if the person he was talking to is the same individual who was texting him the other night at dinner.
  - B. Discuss the movie and some of the reviews you heard about it.
  
4. On Friday, you meet X for lunch at his work. Before leaving for lunch, he grabs his iPad to show you pictures of a dog his sister just adopted. While you are looking through the pictures, a message pops up from someone with a female name. You've been together for five months and never heard X mention that name in any of your conversations. You wonder if this is the individual who is calling and texting X. Would you...
  - A. Ask X what he feels like eating for lunch.
  - B. Memorize the name so you can find out who this is.

5. On Saturday, you and X are at a large party. You both see many mutual friends to speak to and somehow or another lose sight of each other. You realize that it has been a while since you last saw him. You begin to hear people on the back porch using the name you noticed on X's iPad. You presume this is the same woman. Would you...
  - A. End the conversation with your friends to see if he is talking to this woman.
  - B. Keep chatting with your friends assuming you'll eventually find each other.
  
6. Last night while you were at X's place, he announced that he had been feeling confused and not close to you lately. This was unexpected. Everything seemed to be going so well and you were excited to see where the relationship would go. You asked X what this was all about and he refused to answer. X asked you to leave and made it very clear that any contact from you would be unwelcome. So, you left. This morning, you feel confused and sad and are wondering why this happened. Would you...
  - A. Contact X to ask why this is happening.
  - B. Try not to think about it and go on with your day.
  
7. You and X share a class together. You often see him in the hall before class to chat and then walk in together. He is not in the hallway and when you enter the class he is already sitting in a section where the two of you do not usually sit. Would you...
  - A. Sit next to him so that you can talk and ask him what is going on.
  - B. Sit away from him (where you usually sit) so that the two of you won't have to talk.
  
8. After class, X comes up to you to say that it really is over and he is sorry, but he wants to be able to move on. He says it might be best for him to withdraw from the class you both attend and reminds you that he does not want you to contact him. After this, you go to the library to study but you can't help thinking about X and your relationship that has ended. You can't imagine not hearing from him before every weekend. You wonder if he knows how much he means to you. Would you...
  - A. Keep these feelings to yourself since he said it's over.
  - B. Contact him to tell him how much he means to you.
  
9. On the weekends you and X would usually go to a movie or out to dinner. Afterwards, you typically would hang out at friends' houses together. You figure that he has talked to those friends to tell them what has happened and probably what his weekend plans are. You are really not sure what you will do this weekend. Would you...
  - A. Check with his friends to find out what X has told them and what his plans are for the weekend.
  - B. Talk to your friends and make plans of your own to do something with some of them.

10. It has been two weeks since the breakup. You know X is having a party this Saturday and a lot of people are invited. You remember how much fun you had helping X plan the party. Your friends really want you to go and you know a crowd will be there. Come Saturday, would you...
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## VITA

Phoebe Tabb Hitson graduated from Old Dominion University with a B.S. in Psychology in August of 2013. Her areas of interest include unwanted pursuit, stalking, and intimate partner violence. She is a member of the Virginia Psychological Association and the Association for Psychological Science.

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