

**The delusion of the disappearing self? Attachment avoidance and the experience of
externally invisible self-loss in romantic relationships**

Supplementals

Study 1

Hypothesis 1: For Study 1, H1, without anxiety in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experience self-loss remains significant, $B = .351$, $SE = .091$, $t(195) = 3.851$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .171, .530.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 1, H1, with avoidance, anxiety, age, gender, and relationship length included in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $B = .290$, $SE = .095$, $t(195) = 3.068$, $p = .002$, 95% CI: .104, .477.

Hypothesis 2: For Study 1, H2, without anxiety as a covariate, the indirect effect is still significant ($B = -.063$, $SE = .031$, 95% CI: -.137, -.014).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 1, H2, with anxiety, age, gender, and relationship length as covariates, the indirect effect is still significant ($B = -.050$, $SE = .028$, 95% CI: -.114, -.007).

Study 2

Hypothesis 1: For Study 2, H1, without anxiety in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $b = .258$, $SE = .068$, $t(156.986) = 3.785$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .123, .392.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 2, H1, with avoidance, anxiety, gender, age, and relationship length in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $b = .206$, $SE = .072$, $t(151.440) = 2.872$, $p = .005$, 95% CI: .064, .347.

Hypothesis 2: For Study 2, H2, without anxiety as a covariate, while still controlling for intake commitment, the indirect effect is still significant (95% CI: -.062, -.014).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 2, H2, with anxiety, age, gender, and relationship length in the model, while still controlling for intake commitment, the indirect effect remains significant (95% CI: -.066, -.015).

Hypothesis 3: For Study 2, H3, with anxiety as a covariate, the interaction between avoidance and loss type remains significant, $b = .304$, $t(157.501) = 2.757$, $p = .007$.

Hypothesis 3: For Study 2, H3, with anxiety, age, gender, and relationship length as covariates, the interaction between avoidance and loss type remains significant, $b = .108$, $t(150.839) = 1.797$, $p = .016$.

Study 3 - Intake

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1, without anxiety in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experience self-loss remains significant, $b = .478$, $SE = .090$, $t(205.440) = 5.288$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .300, .656.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem as covariates, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $b = .303$, $SE = .094$, $t(199.954) = 3.225$, $p = .001$, 95% CI: .118, .488.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1, without anxiety in the model, the association with avoidance and self-contraction remains significant, $b = .510$, $SE = .076$, $t(211.671) = 6.711$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .360, .660.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem as covariates, the association with avoidance and self-contraction remains significant, $b = .332$, $SE = .079$, $t(200.999) = 3.225$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .177, .487.

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3, H2, without anxiety as a covariate, while controlling for trust, and using reported experienced self-loss as the mediator, the indirect effect remains non-significant (95% CI: -.033, .010).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem, while controlling for trust, and using reported experienced self-loss, the indirect effect remains non-significant, (95% CI -.048, .014).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2, without anxiety as a covariate, while controlling for trust, and using self-contraction as the mediator, the indirect effect remains significant (95% CI: -.103, -.023).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem, while controlling for trust, and using self-contraction, the indirect effect remains significant, (95% CI -.107, -.023).

Hypothesis 3: For Study 3, H3, with anxiety as a covariate, the interaction between avoidance and loss type remains significant, $b = .401$, $t(390.966) = 4.109$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 3: For Study 3, H3, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem, the interaction between avoidance and loss type remains significant, $b = .379$, $t(367.367) = 3.900$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 3 using the partner's report:

To test our third hypothesis, we examined whether attachment avoidance was associated with the partner's report of trying to change or succeeding in changing the actor. To do so, we

used actor's attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety at intake as our predictor variables and the partner's report of trying to change the actor as the outcome variable. Neither attachment avoidance, ($b = .112$, $SE = .120$, $t(207.972) = 0.934$, $p = .351$, 95% CI = $-.125, .349$) nor attachment anxiety ($b = .129$, $SE = .096$, $t(198.887) = 1.355$, $p = .177$, 95% CI = $-.059, .318$) was associated with the partner's report of attempting to change the actor. We also ran the analysis using the partner's report of succeeding in changing their partner as the outcome variable. Again, we did not find an association for attachment avoidance, ($b = .072$, $SE = .132$, $t(207.925) = .547$, $p = .585$, 95% CI = $-.188, .333$), nor for attachment anxiety, ($b = -.033$, $SE = .104$, $t(196.169) = -.32$, $p = .751$, 95% CI = $-.239, .173$).

Thus far, we found that attachment avoidance was associated with greater *subjective* loss of self but not associated with *objective* loss of self, which in Study 4, was operationalized as the romantic partner's report of succeeding in changing the actor. Next, we tested whether those two effects differ significantly from each other by examining the Avoidance x Loss Type interaction effect.

We used multilevel modeling to test this interaction effect. To do so, we restructured the dataset and standardized our measures to coincide with the same analyses done in Studies 2 and 3. Again, to remain consistent with Studies 2 and 3, we used subjective loss of self, as compared to self-contraction. We used succeeding in changing the actor for the measure of objective loss of self. Testing the interaction involved specifying a three-level multilevel model in which observations (one for objective and one for subjective) were nested within individual and individuals were nested within couples. The model predicted loss of self from attachment avoidance, loss type, and their interaction. As predicted, the interaction was significant, such that the association of attachment avoidance with subjective loss of self was significantly more positive than the association of avoidance with objective loss of self ($b = .315$, $SE = .094$, $t(417.941) = 3.350$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $.13, .50$).

Study 3 – Follow-ups

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1 longitudinally, without anxiety, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $b = .412$, $SE = .079$, $t(205.623) = 5.227$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: $.257, .568$.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1 longitudinally, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem as covariates, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $b = .219$, $SE = .079$, $t(187.268) = 2.763$, $p = .006$, 95% CI: $.063, .375$.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1 longitudinally, without anxiety, the association with avoidance and self-contraction remains significant, $b = .457$, $SE = .065$, $t(186.672) = 7.014$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: $.328, .585$.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 3, H1 longitudinally, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem as covariates, the association with avoidance and self-contraction remains significant, $b = .277$, $SE = .062$, $t(169.530) = 4.482$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .155, .399.

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2 longitudinally, without anxiety, while controlling for trust, and using reported experienced self-loss, the indirect effect remains non-significant, (95% CI -.039, .0002).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2 longitudinally, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem, while controlling for trust, and using reported experienced self-loss, the indirect effect remains non-significant, (95% CI -.017, .003).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2 longitudinally, without anxiety, while controlling for trust, and using self-contraction, the indirect effect remains significant, (95% CI -.049, -.004).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 3 H2 longitudinally, with anxiety, age, gender, relationship length, and self-esteem, while controlling for trust, and using self-contraction, the indirect effect remains significant, (95% CI -.028, -.003).

Study 4

Table 1

The results from the pilot of traits for Study 4

Trait	Changeability (<i>M, SD</i>)	Likelihood asked to change (<i>M, SD</i>)
Deliberate	3.66, 1.61	3.83, 1.71
Passive	4.36, 1.59	3.89, 1.77
Loud	4.77, 1.48	5.19, 1.77
Rebellious	4.34, 1.58	4.47, 1.74
Wordy	4.36, 1.51	4.09, 1.53
Mediocre	3.94, 1.79	3.55, 2.01
Skeptical	3.83, 1.79	3.96, 1.93
Sarcastic	4.72, 1.41	4.77, 1.76
Self-righteous	4.15, 1.66	4.89, 1.83
Clumsy	2.98, 1.62	2.91, 1.84
Blunt	4.55, 1.50	4.83, 1.59
Impulsive	4.21, 1.49	4.91, 1.56
Tough	4.04, 1.62	3.77, 1.76
Self-conscious	4.04, 1.89	3.74, 1.97
Opinionated	3.70, 1.78	3.79, 1.84
Unpredictable	4.00, 1.68	4.17, 1.81
Impressionable	3.91, 1.76	3.83, 1.96
Perfectionist	3.68, 1.66	4.04, 1.82
Shy	3.57, 1.41	3.47, 1.95
Intense	3.89, 1.67	4.17, 1.72
Thrifty	4.06, 1.48	3.68, 1.60
Extravagant	4.45, 1.68	4.45, 1.83
Peppy	3.53, 1.79	3.04, 1.67
Daydreamer	3.45, 1.67	3.47, 1.83
Inquiring	3.79, 1.71	3.87, 1.97

Note: The bolded traits were used in Study 4. We replaced four of the words that we did not use from the pilot with the following in Study 4: reserved, uncertain, workaholic, and defensive. From a 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely), participants in our pilot study responded to “How changeable is this trait” and “how realistic would it be for someone to ask their romantic partner to change this trait?”

Study 4 Script

*Note: In brackets would be either the partner’s name, partner’s pronouns, or the focal trait. For the appendices, we’ve used the name Jay, the pronouns he/him/his, and the focal trait sarcastic.

*Note: #6 is dependent on the choice in #5. We considered 6 a change response if participants had chosen to act less sarcastic in #5 and then chose proud of how they acted in #6.

1. It's a Thursday night and you've just sat down on the couch. [Jay] walks in and says, "There's something I want to talk to you about. It is about a change I've wanted you to make for a while now." How do you respond?
 - a. Sure – let's talk about it.
 - b. I'm not really interested in talking about this right now.
2. [Jay] sits down on the couch with you and says, "I've been thinking about how [sarcastic] you are, and I think it would be better for me and for our relationship if you could be less [sarcastic]." [He] begins to explain why [he] would like you to change. What are you most likely to be thinking?
 - a. Wow, there's no way I would want to change myself like that.
 - b. I guess this change must be important to [Jay] if [he] is bringing this up.
3. [Jay] finishes speaking and looks at you to respond. After thinking for a bit, what are you most likely to say to [Jay] in response to how you're feeling?
 - a. I'd be open to exploring making that change.
 - b. I can't believe you'd want me to change myself like that.
4. It is the next day and you're eating breakfast, thinking about the change [Jay] asked you to make. You recount exactly what [he] said and how [he] would like for you to be less [sarcastic]. How are you most likely to be feeling about it?
 - a. I'd be losing a part of myself if I changed myself.
 - b. I'd have the change to do something [Jay] asked of me.
5. Later that day, you are with [Jay] doing different errands. When you get to the first store you have the opportunity to act less [sarcastic]. What are you most likely to do?
 - a. Act less [sarcastic] to show [Jay].
 - b. Act as [sarcastic] as you normally would.
6. You and [Jay] are leaving the store to start walking home. You can tell something is on [his] mind. You decide to ask [Jay] what is on [his] mind. [Jay] says, "I noticed how you acted in the store, in regard to the change I asked you to make." How do you feel when your partner brings up your actions?
 - a. Proud of how you acted.
 - b. Wish you had acted differently.
7. Later that day, just you and a friend go out for dinner. As you are catching up and eating your dinner, you have the chance to act less [sarcastic] than you normally would. [Jay] is not here to see your actions. What are you most likely to do?
 - a. Act as [sarcastic] as you normally would.
 - b. Act less [sarcastic] than you normally would.
8. It has now been a week since [Jay] brought up being less [sarcastic]. You and [Jay] are sitting down to watch TV when [he] acts in a way that gives you the chance to be less [sarcastic]. This makes you feel like [Jay] may be trying to see what you'll do. How does this make you feel?
 - a. Feel like this is an opportunity for you to show [Jay] that you've listened to [him].
 - b. Feel like this is a bit of a set-up to see if you will lose parts of yourself for [Jay].

9. [Jay] asks if you could do [him] a favor next week. You are thinking it may have to do with the change [he] has asked you to make. How are you likely to respond?
 - a. Sure – what do you need?
 - b. It depends what it is.
10. At the end of the week, [Jay] comes home from being out and puts [his] stuff down. [Jay] looks at you and says, “I want you to know I’ve seen the efforts you’ve been doing regarding being less [sarcastic]. I appreciate what you’ve done so far.” How do you feel about [Jay] noting what you’ve done so far?
 - a. Feel like this means [Jay] expects you to change more than you already have.
 - b. Feel like this means [Jay] is expressing gratitude for what you’ve done.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 4, H1, without anxiety in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $B = .614$, $SE = .076$, $t(277) = 8.104$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .465, .763.

Hypothesis 1: For Study 4, H1, with avoidance, anxiety, gender, age, and relationship length in the model, the association with avoidance and reported experienced self-loss remains significant, $B = .415$, $SE = .079$, $t(258) = 5.230$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .259, .571.

Hypothesis 2: For Study 4, H2, without anxiety as a covariate, the indirect effect is still significant ($B = -.167$, $SE = .040$, 95% CI: -.253, -.097).

Hypothesis 2: For Study 4, H2, with anxiety, age, gender, and relationship length as covariates, the indirect effect is still significant ($B = -.084$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI: -.152, -.032)

Hypothesis 3: For Study 4, H3, with anxiety as a covariate, the interaction between avoidance and loss type remains significant, $b = .742$, $t(277.003) = 7.613$, $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 3: For Study 2, H3, with anxiety, age, gender, and relationship length as covariates, the interaction between avoidance and loss type remains significant, $b = .769$, $t(262.031) = 7.644$, $p < .001$.