Attachment Styles Affect Our Experience of Hindrance, Not of Social Support

Individuals' attachment styles can shape the quality of their relationships with others (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Specifically, the way in which individuals view both themselves and their romantic partner may influence how they interpret their interpersonal interactions with this partner (Collins, 1996; Bartholomew, 1991). Two of the most relevant types of interactions in a dyadic relationship are social support and its more recently studied "evil twin," the parallel construct of social hindrance. In our study, we examined both support and hindrance as enacted events in daily life. Forty cohabiting couples (80 individuals) participated in a 3-week diary study, reporting daily moods and relationship events. Results indicate that individuals with higher relationship anxiety and avoidance reported fewer positive feelings within their relationships and more exposure to hindrance enacted by their partners, but were not more reactive to the hindrance they experienced. The results also suggest that attachment style is unrelated to both experience of, and reactivity to, social support. These findings shed light on the complexity of hindrance, its precursors and its effects, as well as broaden the scope of what we already know to be a fundamental element of interpersonal relationships: attachment style.