

**Utility of Downward Social Comparison Theory for Understanding Interaction
Preferences of Socially Anxious Individuals**

By

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**Utility of Downward Social Comparison Theory for Understanding Interaction Preferences of
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Abstract

Individuals high in social anxiety often react negatively to situations calling for interaction with others. How can the negative effects of social anxiety be reduced? Using the framework provided by social comparison theory, this research examined what type of interaction partner would foster positive affective consequences and improved social functioning in socially anxious individuals. Two alternatives were considered, one being that socially anxious individuals prefer and benefit more from interactions with those who are low in social anxiety and the other being that socially anxious individuals prefer and benefit more from interactions with fellow socially anxious people. The findings indicated that, regardless of their own anxiety level, participants felt better about themselves when paired with anxious partners but had negative evaluations of these partners. When paired with an anxious partner, participants were more likely to appraise their social skills favorably and to use self-enhancing and self-evaluative social comparisons. Overall, the findings were highly consistent with the clinical literature on socially anxious individuals. Participants high in social anxiety had more negative cognitions, lower self-esteem, and felt rejected by their partners. Behaviorally, socially anxious participants felt that they acted in a socially awkward fashion and were perceived by their partners as behaving in an anxious fashion. These results corroborate previous research indicating that a negative self-image significantly overshadows social interaction for socially anxious individuals.

Utility of Social Comparison Theory for Understanding Interaction Preferences Of Socially Anxious Individuals

Although neglected for many years, social anxiety is a condition that has been the focus of much research in the past few decades, and rightly so. Social anxiety is one of the most prevalent types of anxiety. It is estimated that there are close to 2.4 million untreated sufferers of clinical levels of social anxiety in the United States alone (Westenberg, 1998). Among the major mental disorders, only alcohol and drug abuse have lower rates of treatment (Olfson et al., 2000). Social anxiety is characterized by a fear or apprehension of social and/or performance situations. When in these situations, socially anxious individuals usually experience physical symptoms of anxiety (blushing, sweating, tremors) as well as negative cognitive interpretations of events (believing that they will be judged boring or inadequate). An acute awareness of their physical arousal often leads socially anxious individuals to believe that others will also notice their anxiety. This belief reinforces their negative cognitions, which results in increased anxiety levels. Essentially, the person becomes anxious about being seen as anxious.

It is necessary at this point to differentiate between state and trait social anxiety. A tendency for researchers to neglect this distinction when writing about social anxiety has led to a lack of conceptual clarity (Leary, 1986). Social anxiety as a trait “may be viewed as a generalized negative expectancy concerning social encounters which is more or less characteristic of the individual” (Morris, Harris, & Robbins, 1981, p. 303). Almost everyone experiences the state of social anxiety at one time or another, whether it is because it’s the first day on a new job or having to give a speech in front of a room full of peers. It is when

individuals become preoccupied with how others view them and have enduring negative beliefs about their own worth in the eyes of others that social anxiety becomes problematic.

The following sections will review the existing research on functional impairment associated with social anxiety, the physiological, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms of social anxiety, and on how social interaction can trigger these symptoms. One specific precipitating factor of social anxiety that has received little attention in previous research is the characteristics of the other person with whom the socially anxious individual is interacting. Although there has not been much research that concerns the interaction partners of the socially anxious, this is likely to be important both theoretically (delineating a situational trigger of social anxiety) and practically (allowing greater understanding of how to utilize group-oriented therapy in social phobia). Social comparison theory will provide a framework for the prediction that socially anxious individuals will prefer and respond positively to interactions with similarly anxious others. This hypothesis, and alternative possible patterns, are tested in the study.

Functional Impairment in Social Anxiety

The difference between normal anxiety and dysfunctional anxiety is that normal anxiety peaks shortly after exposure to the feared stimulus and then soon subsides, whereas in dysfunctional anxiety (such as high levels of social anxiety) this intense anxiety does not subside and can impair the functional ability of the sufferer (Ballenger et al., 1998). When socially anxious individuals seek psychotherapy, the most frequent complaints relate to feelings of discomfort in social interactions along with avoidance of social situations (Clark & Arkowitz, 1975). High levels of social anxiety often do result in the individual avoiding feared situations. This aversion can dramatically affect the individual's quality of life due to

restricted social networks, unfulfilled opportunities for meaningful relationships, and hampered occupational performance.

Olfason et al. (2000) reported that, in a large community-based screening effort in the United States, 42% of the approximately 14,000 people surveyed endorsed both items relating to social anxiety symptoms (avoidance of social situations and fear of evaluation by others). Examination of the background characteristics of these individuals revealed that, compared to controls, a higher proportion of the socially anxious group had never been married or were divorced or separated. In addition, individuals exhibiting symptoms of social anxiety had a lower level of education and were more likely to be unemployed. In this sample social anxiety was strongly associated with feelings of isolation, and almost one in four socially anxious individuals reported suicidal ideation in the last month. This association remained significant even after controlling for confounding factors, such as non-social anxiety and depressive symptoms. The conclusions drawn from this sample are not novel; other epidemiological studies have found comparable results. For example, in a paper describing the impact that social anxiety has on both its sufferers and the health care system, Lecrubier (1998) reported that, compared to controls, individuals with clinical levels of social anxiety have been found to miss work between two and four times more and are more likely to be unmarried, unemployed, and dependent on alcohol. Similarly, Wittchen and Beloch (1996) found that individuals with clinical levels of social anxiety had a significantly impaired quality of life, especially in the domains of social functioning, mental health, vitality, and role limitations. Impairment was most severe with regards to partner and family relationships, education and career development, and household or work management.

These results are clear evidence of the pervasive negative impact social anxiety can have on its sufferers.

Similar findings have emerged from the non-clinical literature on social anxiety. Jones and Carpenter (1986) found social reticence to be correlated significantly with loneliness in each type of relationship examined (romantic/sexual, friendship, family, community/group) and correlated inversely with measures of social provisions (e.g., guidance, reassurance of worth). Social anxiety was associated with having family members as a greater proportion of significant others and having known significant others for more than five years (demonstrating inability to make new meaningful relationships). These people indicated that they had fewer people they could count on for social support and were less satisfied with the support they received. Social anxiety was inversely related to number of current friends, satisfaction with friends and size of social networks. The data above seem to suggest that socially anxious individuals feel that they lack intimacy and esteem in their friendships.

The socially anxious not only have trouble initiating friendships, but their social difficulties also carry over into the realm of dating and relations with the opposite sex. Dodge, Heimberg, Nyman, and O'Brien (1987) conducted a diary assessment of the effects of social anxiety on heterosexual interactions. It was revealed that high social anxiety participants engaged in fewer interactions with the opposite sex, reported greater anxiety, rated their performance more negatively, and reported less satisfaction with their performance than low anxiety participants. By the same token, most studies have found that socially anxious college students report dating less frequently, participate less in social and

extracurricular events, and are less fond of others in general (e.g., Jones & Briggs, 1984; Jones & Russell, 1982).

Maladaptive social anxiety often does not meet the DSM criteria for social anxiety disorder because of the requirement of avoidance of certain social situations. Individuals who fall into this category of being sub-clinically socially anxious still experience significant distress in social situations but endure, rather than avoid, the settings that precipitate their anxiety. Turner, Beidel, and Larkin (1986) attempted to delineate some of the differences between individuals with clinical and sub-clinical levels of social anxiety and found that both groups responded similarly during social interactions in terms of positive cognitions (or lack thereof) and in physiological response (heart rate, systolic and diastolic blood pressure). Surprisingly, compared to the group of clinically diagnosed social phobics, individuals with sub-clinical levels of social anxiety reported more negative cognitions during an opposite sex interaction. Apparently, the biggest difference between these two groups is in the behavioral manifestations of their anxiety, with the clinically assessed social phobics demonstrating more inhibited and avoidant behavior. Although the research reviewed below primarily focuses on individuals with sub-clinical levels of social anxiety, it is important to realize that social anxiety, even at sub-clinical levels, can have a profound negative impact on the sufferer.

The Anxiety-Inhibition Cycle

An issue that often complicates research on social anxiety is the inter-relatedness of the construct's different components. The central symptoms of social anxiety (physiological, cognitive and behavioral) can each, either directly or indirectly, exacerbate the others creating what has been labeled the anxiety-inhibition cycle (Leary 1986). For example,

imagine an individual who becomes anxious in interactions with the opposite sex. This individual, likely aware of his or her own heterosexual anxiety, would feel somewhat inadequate in this domain and want to remedy the situation. Although the individual may try to appear confident, he/she still experiences anxiety-related arousal when interacting with the opposite sex. When aroused, socially anxious individuals often believe others will notice this arousal and evaluate them harshly because of it. This belief of imminent negative evaluation from others is likely to cause the socially anxious individual to try to distance him/herself from the threatening stimulus, either passively through inhibited behavior or actively through avoidant behavior. Although in this example the physiological component influenced the cognitive component which influenced the behavioral component, one specific component is not necessarily a precursor for another. In another case, negative cognitions may give rise to physiological arousal leading to inhibited behavior. This ineffective social behavior will likely be remembered by the individual next time he or she enters into an interaction, hence exacerbating his or her fear of future social situations. Thus, the anxiety-inhibition cycle acts as a positive feedback loop, in which one symptom will seemingly intensify the next. In the following sections the individual components of social anxiety are examined in more detail.

Physiological Arousal in Social Anxiety

Common anxiety-related physiological symptoms include blushing, sweating, tremors, and increased heart rate. Socially anxious individuals not only experience these symptoms but believe that their arousal is apparent to others. Elevated somatic symptoms are often associated with beliefs that one's anxiety is more salient to others than is actually the case (McEwan & Devins, 1983). Beidel, Turner, and Dancu (1985) conducted a study

assessing the physiological reactions of a sample of socially anxious participants in different social tasks. They found that, compared to their non-socially anxious counterparts, socially anxious participants exhibited significantly higher heart rate and blood pressure during an opposite-sex role play task and an impromptu speech. Interestingly, the two groups did not differ in physiological measures during a same-sex interaction, suggesting that socially anxious individuals become more aroused in heterosexual interactions and public speaking situations than in the context of same-sex interactions. The interpretation suggested by the authors was that “the repertoire of the socially anxious is not extremely inadequate, but high levels of arousal interfere with their performance” (Beidel et al., 1985, p. 110).

Negative Cognitions in Social Anxiety

The cognitive component of anxiety includes an individual's beliefs, assumptions, and expectancies about themselves and how the world works (Sarason & Sarason, 1986). Specifically, social fears often focus on the response of others (Shear & Beidel, 1998). One of the central features of social anxiety is the fear of being scrutinized by others with the expectation that the reaction will be negative (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [Fourth Edition; DSM-IV] American Psychiatric Association, 1994). This fear of negative evaluations by others is a habitual response of the socially anxious, leading them to become overly preoccupied with self-evaluative thoughts, usually assessing their personal capabilities in a negative fashion (Sarason & Sarason, 1986).

In one of the first studies that evaluated the cognitions of socially anxious individuals, Clark and Arkowitz (1975) had socially anxious men briefly interact with female confederates. They found that high socially anxious participants rated themselves as more socially anxious and less socially skilled. Anxious participants overestimated the

negative aspects and underestimated the positive aspects of their social performance.

Compared with judges' ratings, high socially anxious participants underestimated the social skill they exhibited in heterosexual interactions, whereas low socially anxious participants did not. Interestingly, both high and low socially anxious participants' ratings of others were consistent with judges' ratings of others, suggesting that anxious individuals' critical stance is specific to judgments about themselves. High and low socially anxious participants seem to use similar standards when evaluating the social performance of others, but different standards when evaluating themselves (socially anxious individuals may have employed more critical standards when judging themselves). Alternatively, socially anxious individuals may have selectively attended to/remembered negative aspects of their performance.

Subsequent research in this area has yielded comparable results in regard to the cognitions of socially anxious individuals. Beidel et al. (1985) assessed the cognitive style of socially anxious and non-socially anxious participants across three different tasks (opposite-sex interaction, same-sex interaction and impromptu speech). They found that the socially anxious participants had significantly more negative and fewer positive cognitions than those in the non-socially anxious group. In each of the three tasks socially anxious participants rated themselves as more anxious than non-socially anxious participants. They also perceived themselves as less skillful in the opposite sex interactions. In addition, the two groups differed in attributional style. Whereas socially anxious participants attributed their perceived failures to their lack of social skill, their non-socially anxious counterparts were more likely to attribute awkward behavior to the situation, rather than themselves, reflecting more developed coping skills. Similarly, Jones and Briggs (1986) found that

socially anxious participants rated themselves and expected to be rated less positively (e.g., less friendly, less warm) when taking part in group or dyadic activities. For socially anxious participants, the correlation between expected and actual ratings by group members was .01, implying that these individuals are not especially accurate in predicting how others view them (the average correlation between expected and actual ratings was .45). Assuming accurate feedback is needed for adequate social performance, this study indicates that socially anxious people are a disadvantage.

Why do socially anxious individuals have so much trouble estimating others' reactions to them? As mentioned above, the answer likely lies in these individuals' high levels of self-focused attention. The self-preoccupation that accompanies social anxiety interferes with the range of complex social responses required for meaningful interaction and hinders individuals' ability to fully attend to subtle social cues in the ongoing interaction (Leary, 1986; Pozo, Carver, Wellens & Scheier, 1991).

Inhibited and Avoidant Behavior in Social Anxiety

In general, socially anxious individuals report feeling clumsy and inadequate in social situations (Jones & Carpenter, 1986). Although socially anxious people do not invariably avoid social situations, the vast majority do report feelings of incompetence in social encounters (Beidel et al., 1985). Studies involving dyadic conversations and videotaped monologues show that, when compared to their non-socially anxious counterparts, socially anxious participants initiate fewer conversations, talk less, smile less, give less eye contact, and look into the camera less (e.g., Beidel et al.; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Pilkonis, 1977). In a recent study, Creed and Funder (1998) discerned how socially anxious individuals' behavior is viewed by others. By gathering data from socially anxious

participants' interaction partners and friends the researchers came up with a list of behaviors that were significantly correlated ($p < .001$) with social anxiety. This list included behaviors such as exhibiting an awkward interpersonal style, behaving in a fearful or timid manner, keeping his or her partner at a distance, expressing insecurity, seeming detached from the interaction, being reserved and unexpressive, and showing physical signs of tension and anxiety. Other researchers have consistently found that socially anxious individuals demonstrate reticence, withdrawal, and less responsiveness in interpersonal behaviors, and that this ineffective interactional style is especially prevalent when interacting with strangers (e.g., Jones & Carpenter, 1986; Leary, 1986). These behaviors are of the type that could alienate an interaction partner, especially a new acquaintance. It would not be difficult to interpret this behavior as disinterest in the interaction or dislike for the interaction partner. Indeed, Jones and Carpenter (1986) found that across studies observers not only notice the social anxiety of others, but also label them unfriendly and lacking in conversational skills.

In addition, there seems to be a component of avoidance learning present for many socially anxious individuals, whereby they learn to combat intolerable anxiety symptoms by simply escaping from the situation (Nutt, Bell, & Malizia, 1998). This type of behavior often successfully combats anxiety symptoms but gives rise to social isolation when the individual avoids similar types of situations in the future. Taken together, the research in this area suggests that socially anxious persons "behave less effectively with strangers and specifically in ways that would seem to reduce the likelihood that a mutually satisfying relationship will develop from any given interaction" (Jones & Carpenter, 1986, p. 230).

Triggers of State Social Anxiety

The research reviewed above reveals that socially anxious individuals often suffer from a host of problematic physiological, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. When placed in social situations, socially anxious individuals frequently become highly aroused, experience negative cognitions concerning their social competence and how they are viewed by others, and behave in ways that are not conducive to successful social interaction (i.e., they exhibit inhibited and avoidant behavior). There is also an acute sensitivity to situational factors involved in social anxiety. The acute experience of social anxiety is elicited by three factors (Buss, 1980). The first factor is novelty, which includes unfamiliar physical settings, social novelty (e.g., meeting strangers), and role novelty. The second factor, presence of others, is influenced by the formality of the situation as well by the status of others present (i.e., high status others foster more anxiety). The third factor is the actions of others, which includes excessive attention (e.g., being stared at), insufficient attention (e.g., being ignored) and intrusiveness (e.g., being asked personal questions). Any one or a combination of these factors will likely elicit situational anxiety.

This study will consider an additional potentially important situational factor in triggering more positive (or negative) reactions in socially anxious individuals, the social anxiety of the person with whom they are interacting. Two possibilities seem plausible. The first is that, regardless of their level of social anxiety, people will prefer interacting with non-anxious individuals. Non-anxious interaction partners are likely to convey more positivity and their adequate social skills should result in a smoother, more comfortable interaction. Social comparison theory, which outlines how individuals process social information in an effort to evaluate their abilities, provides a second framework for considering the effects of an interaction partner's anxiety. Research in this area has

established people's sensitivity to social evaluative information. Given socially anxious people's pervasive evaluative concerns, social comparison theory seems likely to be quite applicable to them. Interacting with individuals who are also socially anxious should ease these evaluative concerns and lead to more favorable comparisons than interacting with someone who is socially skilled.

Understanding the interaction partners to whom socially anxious people have the most positive reactions will illuminate a possible "trigger" of the experience of social anxiety, and also indicate the types of interactions that are apt to be the most positive and encouraging for socially anxious individuals. Two alternatives will be considered, one being that socially anxious individuals will prefer to interact with someone who is low in social anxiety and the other being that they would rather interact with someone who is high in social anxiety.

Why Might Socially Anxious Individuals Prefer to Interact with Non-Anxious Others? The Role of Social Skills

In determining the impact that a low social anxiety interaction partner will have on the affective and behavioral reactions of socially anxious individuals, it seems useful to consider the effects of interacting with a socially skilled individual. Common sense indicates that it would be more enjoyable to have a conversation with someone who has ample social skills (i.e., low social anxiety) compared to interacting with someone who is overly reserved, nervous, or lacking in conversational skills (i.e., high social anxiety). Many social psychological studies have yielded results that support this common sense logic: Socially skilled individuals tend to elicit more positive reactions from their conversational partners (e.g., Meleshko & Alden, 1993). Spivey and Wilson (1973) found that participants

rated a hypothetical stranger most favorably when they believed that this stranger was warm, confident, and enthusiastic, all traits likely to be apparent in low social anxiety. When Lott, Lott, Reed, and Crow (1970) asked individuals what traits are characteristic of people they like, many of the adjectives provided by participants tapped the dimension of social competence (e.g., friendly relaxed, warm, sociable). Compared to socially anxious people, non-anxious individuals are viewed as more likeable, more sympathetic, and easier to talk to by friends and families (Jones & Carpenter, 1986). Non-socially anxious college students are described by their peers as skilled in social techniques, humorous, assertive, and socially poised (Creed & Funder, 1998). The picture painted of socially anxious college students is much different. They tend to be viewed by their peers as moody, defensive and negative (Creed & Funder, 1998). Similarly, when rated by their college dorm mates, individuals who scored high on affectionate sociability were more often considered accepted and those lower in sociability were often rejected (Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975).

This rejection effect is also found in first meeting situations, as demonstrated in a number of laboratory studies of interactions with strangers. In a short dyadic interaction non-anxious participants were rated as more likeable than anxious ones and conversation partners felt more comfortable interacting with non-anxious, compared to socially anxious participants (Meleshko & Alden, 1993). Comparable findings were reported by Creed and Funder (1998), in that people who interacted with a partner low in social anxiety seemed more interested in their partner, seemed to like their partner more, and enjoyed the interaction more.

As early as kindergarten, liking among peers is often best predicted by a child's social competence, with the most socially skilled children being the most popular

(Mendelson, Aboud, & Lanthier, 1994). Other researchers have found analogous results with first, third and fifth grade children (Dekovic & Gerris, 1994). Indeed, a meta-analytic review (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993) showed that the children who are most liked or accepted by their peers demonstrate above average sociability (based on indices of communication skill, friendship skill, and positive social action).

From the literature reviewed above it would be easy to conclude that interacting with a socially skilled partner would be beneficial for socially anxious individuals. Non-anxious people seem to promote enjoyable interactions and induce positive mood in their conversation partners. However, I hypothesized that this social fluency has an opposite effect on socially anxious individuals. That is, I anticipated that individuals' own level of social anxiety moderates how they are affected by their interaction partner's anxiety. Socially anxious people appear to be primarily motivated to avoid social disapproval and show a strong desire to avoid interacting with others who are likely to disapprove of or dislike them (Smith, 1972). Given that two core features of social anxiety are a persistent fear of negative evaluation (Beidel et al., 1985; Clark & Arkowitz, 1975; Shear & Beidel, 1998) and a tendency to interpret one's social performance negatively (Clark & Arkowitz; Leary, 1986; Pozo et al., 1991), interacting with a socially competent partner would make it quite easy for one's own social skills to be cast in a negative light. This notion will be more fully described in the next section.

Why Might Socially Anxious Individuals Prefer to Interact with Anxious Others? The Role of Social Comparison

The basic tenet of social comparison theory is that many psychological characteristics (e.g., abilities, feelings) are not easily referenced against an objective

standard. Festinger (1954) posited that people gain understanding of their psychological characteristics by comparison with other people. In Festinger's (1954) original postulation of social comparison processes he referred to a drive that individuals possess to compare their abilities to a similar, yet superior, other. Festinger noted that these upward comparisons were a result of Western culture's emphasis on achievement and self-improvement. It is possible that socially anxious individuals would aspire to remedy their deficient social skills and that the best way to accomplish this would be to interact with others who possess a more polished social repertoire. By preferring to interact with (and hence comparing themselves to) socially adept individuals, socially anxious people may be able to learn and internalize more desirable interactional behaviors. Modeling these individuals' behaviors would likely lead to more social provisions for socially anxious individuals. However, it seems likely that self-enhancement or self-evaluative concerns will overwhelm these individuals' desire for self-improvement.

Social interaction is likely to be a negative experience for those who are socially anxious. These individuals believe that their social skills are lacking and that because of their deficient social skills they will be evaluated harshly by others (Beidel et al., 1985; Shear & Beidel, 1998; Stopa & Clark, 2000). Upward comparisons (i.e., to superior others) on self-relevant dimensions can be very threatening to an individual's self-esteem if the comparer is deficient in the comparison attribute (Gibbons, 1986). People often attempt to avoid comparing themselves to superior others when the comparison may provide unfavorable information about them (Gibbons, 1986), and this is particularly true for individuals who have a negative self-view (Brickman & Bullman, 1977). Thus, the smooth interaction that is a consequence of interacting with a socially skilled partner may force the

socially anxious individual into an ego-damaging comparison, especially given their evaluative, self-critical tendencies. A socially anxious person's lack of social skills will become all that much more apparent if they are sitting across the table from a great conversationalist.

One way that these people may try to alleviate the negative affect that social interaction arouses in them would be to engage in downward comparison. Downward comparison theory (Wills, 1981, 1985) addresses how stressed or threatened individuals may make comparisons with similar or worse off others in an effort to gain a favorable view of the self. In his review of downward comparison principles, Wills (1981, 1985, 1991) presented evidence that individuals often enhance their subjective well-being by comparing themselves with equally unfortunate or worse off others, and that this process is evoked by the experience of negative affect. His original postulation of the theory (Wills, 1981) suggested that individuals with negative self-views are more likely to engage in downward comparison because they possess a greater need for self-enhancement. "Downward comparison processes are most prevalent in those who are the most unhappy..." (Wills, 1984; p. 264). Similarly, Taylor et al. (1996) speculated that downward comparisons will have the greatest self-enhancing impact when the comparer has somewhat negative beliefs about his or her competence in the domain in question. It seems that, in social situations, socially anxious individuals will be especially likely to make these self-enhancing comparisons, given that they are often unhappy with their current social relationships (Jones & Carpenter, 1986; Segrin & Kinney, 1995) and hold negative beliefs about their social skill (Clark & Arkowitz 1975; Creed & Funder, 1998; Segrin & Kinney, 1995).

Comparison to, and affiliation with, others who share the same source of threat/discomfort will help to reduce anxiety and physiological arousal (Wills, 1981, 1985), as well as provide a source of comfort and give rise to positive affect (Helgeson & Taylor, 1993). Distressed individuals can find it encouraging to compare themselves to others in a similar situation, even if they perceive the other to be somewhat better off (Gibbons & Gerrard, 1989). "When the dimension (under evaluation) is undesirable, such as difficulty making friends, comparisons with others who are similar may be self-enhancing, although the ideal comparison target would be someone who has even more difficulty making friends" (Wood & Taylor, 1991; p. 30). From a downward comparison perspective, it seems likely that socially anxious people would prefer to interact with those who share a similar level of anxiety, given the self-enhancing results of such a comparison. Interacting with a person who is more socially fluent than oneself would be a much more threatening comparison to one's ego than comparing oneself to a partner who shares the same flaws.

Support for this hypothesis can be found in the experimental literature on downward comparison. Gibbons (1986) found that participants who chronically experienced a low level of subjective well-being indicated improved mood after learning that their experimental partner was experiencing difficulties similar to their own. In a longitudinal study of women with breast cancer (Bogart & Helgeson, 2001), participants reported that downward comparisons resulted in positive affect more than twice as often as any other type of comparison. Similarly, Wheeler and Miyake (1992) had college students record the social comparisons they made in their daily lives and the affective consequences of these comparisons. These authors found that downward comparisons were associated with

increases in subjective well-being, whereas upward comparisons were associated with decreases in subjective well-being.

In their review, Miller and Suls (1977) noted that although participants sometimes indicate that they would prefer to interact with a high ability other as a potential partner, post-interaction ratings indicate that participants are usually most satisfied with partners who are judged as similar. In an especially relevant study by Heimberg, Acerra, and Holstein (1985), socially anxious and non-anxious participants were told that they would be interacting with attitudinally similar or dissimilar partners. The results showed that participants high in social anxiety expected a similar partner would evaluate them much less negatively. Parallel results have been reported by Papsdorf and Alden (1998). In this research anxious and non-anxious participants engaged in short dyadic interactions with an experimental confederate. With regard to interactions involving socially anxious participants, perceived similarity (which was often based on the overt signs of anxiety a partner displayed) exerted the strongest effect on liking for an interaction partner. Thus, it appears that allowing socially anxious individuals to interact with similar others can serve to ease some of their fear of negative evaluation.

Present Study

In the present study, a preliminary screening assessed participants' level of social anxiety (Interaction Anxiousness Scale; Leary, 1983b) for inclusion into the study. Participants scoring in the top and bottom third were selected. Once they arrived for the study participants' current level of self-esteem (State Self-Esteem Scale; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) was determined. Following this, participants high or low in social anxiety engaged in a fifteen-minute dyadic interaction with a partner who was high or low in social

anxiety. Once finished the interaction task, participants completed a post-discussion questionnaire assessing the affective consequences of the interaction, their self-perceptions, and perceptions of their partner. This questionnaire also included manipulation checks in the form of scales assessing felt similarity to their partner and recognition of their partners' level of social anxiety.

My first hypothesis was that the downward comparisons provided by pairing anxious individuals with fellow socially anxious interaction partners would yield more benefits in terms of self-evaluations than pairing them with more socially competent interaction partners, which were expected to give rise to ego-deflating upward comparisons. Specifically, I expected that socially anxious participants paired with socially anxious (compared to non-socially anxious) interaction partners would experience positive affective reactions, in terms of self-esteem and mood, and evaluate their own social skills more positively. Additionally, I expected that they would like and feel more liked by their partners, and have a greater desire for future interaction with their partners.

The rationale for expecting these results for socially anxious participants follows from the social comparisons that they are inclined to make. It was anticipated that when participants high in social anxiety are matched with similarly anxious interaction partners they will frequently engage in (self-enhancing) downward comparisons. Conversely, high social anxiety participants matched with interaction partners who are lower in social anxiety should be forced into making less favorable upward comparisons. It was expected that the interaction preferences of participants low in social anxiety would likely be directly influenced by the positivity of their partner's behavior, the prediction being that these individuals would prefer to interact with friendlier, non-anxious interaction partners.

Method

Participants

Participants were selected for the current study on the basis of their scores on a pre-screening for social anxiety. One hundred and fourteen participants (50 males, 64 females) from introductory psychology classes at the University of Manitoba were contacted by telephone to recruit them for the study. Participants received course credit in exchange for their participation. There were no restrictions as to age ($M = 19.1$) or gender and all selected participants were white to facilitate social comparisons (i.e., similarity between target and judge).

Procedure

An initial mass testing session was conducted prior to recruiting participants to identify individuals' level of social anxiety (Interaction Anxiousness Scale, Leary, 1983b; Appendix A). This was undertaken in an effort to assign individuals who score in the top and bottom thirds on the Interaction Anxiousness Scale to the high and low social anxiety groups, respectively. After being recruited by telephone, two same-sex participants were scheduled for each session. Participants arrived at separate waiting rooms at their scheduled time so that they did not have a chance to become acquainted before the session. The male experimenter greeted the participants and took them to the laboratory where they were given a description of what their participation would entail. Participants read and signed an informed consent form (Appendix B) that again outlined the procedures that would be used. Following this, participants will completed a preliminary questionnaire (Appendix C) assessing their level of state self-esteem, as well as two filler measures.

After completion of the preliminary questionnaire the two participants were given a list of conversation topics and instructed by the experimenter that both participants should take a turn talking about each topic on the list. The conversation topics (Appendix D) were drawn from a list of non-intimate topics created by Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone, and Bator, (1997) for generating small-talk (e.g., Do you read a newspaper often and which one do you prefer?). The experimenter informed the participants that they had fifteen minutes to get to know each other and, if necessary, answer any questions. He then turned on a tape recorder located in the corner of the room and left the room, allowing the participants to interact for fifteen minutes. Once fifteen minutes had passed the experimenter returned, separated the participants, and administered the post-discussion questionnaires to both of them. The post-discussion questionnaires included questions assessing a broad range of reactions to the interaction as well as impressions of their partner. One participant received Order A (self-perception measures appear first, Appendix E) and the other participant received Order B (partner-perception measures appear first, Appendix F). After both participants completed the questionnaire they received an oral debriefing (Appendix G) from the experimenter, who described the purpose of the study and how their participation had helped serve this purpose. Participants were invited to ask any questions they had and, once any questions had been answered, they were thanked and the session concluded.

Measures

Preliminary Screening Measure for Social Anxiety

Interaction Anxiousness Scale. The Interaction Anxiousness Scale (IAS; Leary, 1983b) is a 15-item measure of self-reported social anxiousness (e.g., I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers). In contrast to most measures commonly used to assess

dispositional social anxiety, the IAS measures only the test taker's subjective feelings of anxiety in social interactions. The advantage of this is that the measurement of social anxiousness is not confounded with the measurement of behaviors that often accompany social anxiety. When employing scales that use anxious behaviors as an index of social anxiety "highly anxious individuals who interact fully in interpersonal encounters despite their distress might not be classified as high in social anxiety, no matter how frequently or intensely they experience anxiety in social interactions" (Leary, 1983b, p.47). The IAS is scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true*, 5 = *very true*) and shows strong construct validity, correlating well with other proven measures of social anxiety (see Table 1 for descriptives and reliabilities of all measures).

Preliminary Questionnaire

State Self-Esteem Scale. The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) is designed to assess temporary (i.e., state) changes in self-esteem (e.g., I feel inferior to others at this moment). The 20-item scale consists of items adapted from the widely used Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale (Janis & Field, 1959). Responses for these items are scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). This measure was included in both the preliminary questionnaire and the post-discussion questionnaire in an effort to assess fluctuations in participants' self-esteem resulting from the interaction.

Filler Measures. Two additional scales were included as filler measures so to reduce any self-evaluative focus induced by the SSES. The Boredom Proneness Scale (Famer & Sundberg, 1986) is designed to assess a tendency or predisposition to boredom (e.g., It takes more stimulation to get me going than most people). Test takers indicate whether the

statements are true or false of their experiences. The Hardiness Scale (Bartone, Ursamo, Wright, & Ingraham, 1989) is designed to measure dispositional resiliency to stress and how one approaches and interprets experiences (e.g., Tried and true ways are always the best). The Hardiness Scale consists of 15 items scored on a five point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true*, 5 = *completely true*). These measures were selected because the constructs they assess are fundamentally different than those of interest in the hypotheses of this study. The SSES appeared between the Boredom Proneness Scale (presented first) and the Hardiness Scale (presented last).

Post-Discussion Questionnaire

State Self-Esteem Scale. Participants again responded to the SSES (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) to determine if the interaction had produced any variation in self-esteem from pre-interaction levels.

Mood Scale. A 24-item mood scale was developed to assess participants' mood following the interaction. This scale consists of 3 subscales: positive feelings, negative feelings toward self, negative feelings toward others. The items indicating positive feelings (e.g., interested, inspired, strong) were based on the Positive Affect subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Items indicating negative feelings toward self (e.g., annoyed with myself, guilty, disappointed with myself) and negative feelings toward others (e.g., hostile, resentful, upset at others) were based on research by Devine, Montieth, Zuernik, and Elliot (1991). Items are scored on a five point Likert scale with higher scores representing more intense mood states.

Self-Rated Competency Scale. Developed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), the Self-Rated Competency Scale is an index of social skills exhibited during the interaction. The

scale includes 27 statements that describe one's effectiveness and skill during a conversation (e.g., I was assertive, I was a good listener). Items are scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale. An adapted version of the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983a) assessed participants' concerns with being evaluated unfavourably by his/her interaction partner. The changes between this adapted version and the original scale reflect an emphasis on the experimental interaction rather than the respondents' general disposition (e.g., I was afraid my partner would find fault in me). Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true*, 5 = *very true*).

Interaction Anxiousness Scale – Partner. Participants responded to a version of the IAS (Leary, 1983b) reworded to assess their perceptions of their interaction partner's social anxiety (e.g., My partner would feel nervous even in casual get-togethers). Response format and scoring will be identical to the original version of the IAS.

Similarity. The target's perceived similarity to his/her interaction partner was assessed by five items tapping the domains of participants' general outlook, behavior, personal qualities, attitudes, and values. Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale anchored by opposing statements (e.g., 1 = *I don't think like my partner does*, 5 = *I think like my partner does*). Higher scores indicate greater perceived similarity.

Rating of Alter Competency. Developed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), the Rating of Alter Competency Scale indicates respondents' impressions of their interaction partner's social skills. This 31-item measure is scored on a five-point Likert scale and includes items such as "My partner expressed him/herself clearly" and "My partner ignored my feelings".

Social Comparison Measure. A global statement asking participants to estimate how often they compared themselves to their partner during the interaction was followed by six items based on the Motives for Social Comparison Scale (Helgeson & Mickelson, 1995), a measure developed in the health and illness domain to measure the comparison tendencies of those suffering from physical problems. These items classified respondents' reasons for comparing themselves to their interaction partner into three categories: self-evaluation (To evaluate how I was doing, To provide insight into myself), self-improvement (To improve my performance in the interaction, To get information on how to better handle the interaction), and self-enhancement (So I could make myself feel better about my performance, To reassure myself that my performance in the interaction was fine). For each item, participants' endorsement of the motives were scored on a five point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*).

Liking. Targets' feelings of liking toward his/her interaction partner were measured by using a nine-item version of Rubin's Liking Scale (1973). Items reflect areas such as respect, admiration, and maturity (e.g., Most people would react favourably to my partner after a brief acquaintance). Responses are scored on a nine-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Desire for Future Interaction. The seven-item Desire for Future Interaction scale (Coyne, 1976) measured participants' willingness to engage in future interactions with his/her interaction partner (e.g., Would you like to meet this person outside the experiment?). Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*).

Liking – Metaperception. Participants' metaperceptions of how much they were liked by their interaction partner were measured by using an adapted version of Rubin's Liking Scale (1973). The only differences between this version of the Liking Scale and the version discussed above are changes in the wording (e.g., My partner thinks most people would react favourably to me after a brief acquaintance). Response format and scoring are identical to the aforementioned version.

Desire for Future Interaction – Metaperception. A reworded version of the Desire for Future Interaction scale (Coyne, 1976) assessed participants' perceptions of how inclined their partner would be to interact with them in future situations (e.g., Would this person be willing to work with you on a job?). Responses will be scored on a five point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*).

Order A presented the scales in the order listed above. Order B presented the partner-perception measures first (IAS-Partner, similarity, Rating of Alter Competency), followed by the social comparison measure, the self-perception measures (SSES, mood, Self-Rated Competency Scale), the standard versions of the liking and Desire for Future Interaction scales, and finally, the metaperception forms of the liking and Desire for Future Interaction scales.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Analyses of participants' perceptions of their partners' social anxiety and competence were undertaken in an attempt to confirm that participants could accurately recognize the social anxiety of their experimental partner. Each measure (Alter Competency Scale, IAS-P) was analyzed in a regression with participants' own anxiety, their partner's anxiety, and the

interaction between these two variables as predictors. Results revealed that As' ratings of their partner's anxiety and social competence were influenced as expected by their partner's anxiety, main effect $b = .33$, $\beta = .39$, $t(54) = 3.14$, $p < .01$, and $b = -.36$, $\beta = -.28$, $t(54) = -2.15$, $p < .05$, respectively. That is, As rated anxious Bs as more anxious and less competent. The manipulation checks completed by Bs did not follow the same pattern, in that these participants were not able to accurately differentiate between higher and lower social anxiety partners in terms of social anxiety or social competence, all $ps > .1$. These results indicate that the data for As and Bs (i.e., participants receiving the different questionnaire orders) were not consistent enough to be collapsed together. Thus, the results for As and Bs will be examined separately. I first present the results for As and then those for Bs. All dependent measures were analyzed in a regression where participants' own anxiety, their partner's anxiety, and the interaction between these variables were predictors (see Tables 2 and 3 for intercorrelations of predictors and dependent measures). It was hypothesized that anxious participants would evaluate themselves less negatively and their partner more positively when their partner was high in social anxiety. Although no significant interactions were obtained on any measure for As or Bs, there were a number of significant main effects for participants' social anxiety (see Table 4).

In presenting the results for As, I first discuss effects of their own anxiety level, followed by those of their partner's anxiety level. All significant and marginal ($p < .10$) effects are presented.

Results for Participants Receiving Order A: Effects Associated with Own Anxiety Level

State Self-Esteem Scale. Participants' current level of self-esteem was evaluated by administering the state self-esteem scale twice, both before and after the interaction. When

results indicated that there were no significant pre/post interaction differences the scale totals were averaged to create an average state self-esteem variable. The analysis revealed that anxious As had lower state self-esteem than less anxious As, $b = -.56$, $\beta = -.55$, $t(54) = -4.83$, $p < .001$.

Mood Scales. Analyses of the three mood scales (positive, negative-self, negative-other) revealed that anxious As tended to have more negative thoughts about themselves, $b = .53$, $\beta = .25$, $t(54) = 1.90$, $p < .10$.

Self-Evaluations. The self-evaluations section of the questionnaire contained the Self Rated Social Competency scale, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale, and the similarity measure. . Anxious As rated themselves as less competent, $b = -.64$, $\beta = -.52$, $t(54) = -4.49$, $p < .001$, and were also more concerned with negative evaluation from their partner than less anxious As, $b = .20$, $\beta = .40$, $t(54) = 3.23$, $p < .001$.

Social Comparison. The social comparison section of the post discussion questionnaire contained the global social comparison item and the adapted Motives for Social Comparison scale. As hypothesized, As high in social anxiety engaged in more social comparison for self-enhancement (i.e., downward comparisons) than As low in social anxiety, $b = .07$, $\beta = .41$, $t(54) = 3.40$, $p = .01$. Similarly, it was revealed that high social anxiety As also engaged in more social comparison for self-evaluation than As low in social anxiety, $b = .04$, $\beta = .26$, $t(54) = 2.00$, $p = .05$. Additionally, there were a number of significant effects of partners' anxiety on the social comparison measures. These results will be addressed in the section on effects of partner's anxiety.

Liking and Desire for Future Interaction. Participants responded to a number of measures that assessed how much they liked their interaction partner and their desire for

future interaction with that partner, as well as versions of these scales reworded to assess their metaperceptions of their partner's liking and desire for future interaction with them. The results demonstrate that greater social anxiety is associated with greater liking for one's partner and also with feeling less liked by one's partner. High social anxiety As reported more liking for partners than did low social anxiety As, $b = .19$, $\beta = .35$, $t(54) = 2.77$, $p < .01$. As with high levels of social anxiety tended to feel less liked by their partners than As low in social anxiety, $b = -.16$, $\beta = -.23$, $t(54) = -1.70$, $p < .10$. There were no significant results concerning either Desire for Future Interaction scale.

Effects Concerning As' Partner's Anxiety

Mood Scales. What effects, if any, were associated with the social anxiety of participants' partners? As previously mentioned, high social anxiety As had more negative self thoughts. A related result was that As paired with a high social anxiety partner reported more other-directed negative affect than when they were paired with a lower anxiety partner, $b = .05$, $\beta = .30$, $t(54) = 2.37$, $p < .05$. It appears that socially anxious participants not only experienced negative moods but elicited hostility in their interaction partners.

Social Comparison. All As reported engaging in more self-enhancing social comparisons when paired with a high rather than low anxious partner, $b = .04$, $\beta = .24$, $t(54) = 2.04$, $p < .05$. Similarly, all As tended to report engaging in more social comparisons for self-evaluation when paired with an anxious partner, $b = .03$, $\beta = .22$, $t(54) = 1.69$, $p < .10$.

Results for Participants Receiving Order B: Effects Associated with Own Anxiety Level

State Self-Esteem. The analysis of Bs state self-esteem yielded results parallel to those found with As. Socially anxious Bs reported lower state self-esteem than low anxious Bs, $b = -.58$, $\beta = -.63$, $t(54) = -5.91$, $p < .05$.

Mood Scales. The only mood subscale that produced significant results for Bs was the positive mood scale. The analysis demonstrated that anxious Bs were less likely to have positive moods than low anxiety Bs, $b = -.20$, $\beta = -.32$, $t(54) = -2.51$, $p < .02$.

Self Evaluations. As mentioned above, the self-evaluations section of the questionnaire contained the Self Rated Social Competency scale, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation scale, and the similarity measure. The results on these scales for Bs demonstrated a similar pattern to the results found for As. Anxious Bs rated themselves as less socially competent, $b = -.84$, $\beta = -.70$, $t(54) = -7.69$, $p < .001$, and indicated that they were more concerned with negative evaluation from their partner, $b = .23$, $\beta = .53$, $t(54) = 4.57$, $p < .001$, than low anxious Bs. One result for Bs that did not occur for As related to judgments of similarity. Bs tended to feel less similar to anxious partners, $b = -.01$, $\beta = -.23$, $t(54) = 1.73$, $p < .10$.

Social Comparison. The social comparison section of the questionnaire for Bs was identical to the one completed by As (described above). The results demonstrated that high social anxiety Bs engaged in more frequent social comparison than low social anxiety Bs, $b = .02$, $\beta = .29$, $t(54) = 2.22$, $p < .05$. The hypothesis that anxious participants would engage in more social comparison for enhancement (i.e., downward comparison) was confirmed for Bs (as it was for As), $b = .05$, $\beta = .29$, $t(54) = 2.20$, $p < .05$. Similarly, it was found that socially anxious Bs also engaged in more self-evaluative social comparison than low social anxiety Bs, $b = .06$, $\beta = .35$, $t(54) = 2.71$, $p < .01$. Interestingly, high social anxiety Bs also engaged in more social comparison for self-improvement than less anxious Bs, $b = .04$, $\beta = .28$, $t(54) = 2.11$, $p < .05$. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive since self-improvement can be regarded as a motive for upward comparison and it was hypothesized that high social

anxiety participants would not be inclined to make these potentially derogatory comparisons.

Liking and Desire for Future Interaction. Bs also responded to a number of measures that assessed how much they liked their interaction partner and their desire for future interaction with that partner, as well as reworded metaperception versions. Again, these results confirmed that greater social anxiety is associated with feeling less liked by one's partner, $b = -.54$, $\beta = -.54$, $t(54) = -4.79$, $p < .001$. There were no significant results for either Desire for Future Interaction scale.

Effects Concerning Bs' Partner's Anxiety

Self-Evaluations. As with As, the effects of Bs' partner's anxiety on Bs' responses is of central interest to this study. These results were explored even though the explicit measure indicated that these participants did not accurately discern the anxiety level of their partners. The only self-evaluation measure that demonstrated effects for Bs partner's anxiety was the Self Rated Social Competency scale. Consistent with downward comparison theory, it was found that Bs rated themselves as more socially competent when they were paired with socially anxious, rather than non-anxious, interaction partners, $b = .39$, $\beta = .29$, $t(54) = 3.14$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the type of interaction partner (high vs. low socially anxious) that would yield the most beneficial effects for individuals high in social anxiety, in terms of affective and behavioral reactions. Overall, the findings were highly consistent with the clinical literature on socially anxious individuals (e.g., Beidel et al., 1985; Jones & Carpenter, 1986). Participants high in social anxiety had more negative

cognitions (i.e., dysphoric mood, elevated fear of negative evaluation from others), lower self-esteem, and felt rejected by their partners. Behaviorally, socially anxious participants felt that they acted in a socially awkward fashion and were perceived by their partners as behaving in an anxious fashion (although this latter result was evident for Order A only). These results corroborate previous research indicating that a negative self-image significantly overshadows social interaction for socially anxious individuals.

Partner Perception & Order Effects.

It was predicted that there would be a matching effect, whereby socially anxious individuals would benefit most from being paired with fellow socially anxious partners (due to the self-enhancing downward comparisons afforded) and non-anxious individuals would prefer non-anxious interaction partners (due to non-anxious individuals' positive social behavior). The results do not support this matching hypothesis. None of the measures revealed any interaction effects between participants' own anxiety and the level of their partner's anxiety.

Instead, most of the significant effects were linked to participants' own anxiety level. However, there were some significant findings related to partner anxiety which did point in the expected direction. The findings did indicate that, regardless of their own anxiety level, participants felt better about themselves when paired with anxious partners but had negative evaluations of these partners. When paired with an anxious partner, participants were more likely to appraise their social skills favorably and to use self-enhancing and self-evaluative social comparisons (a more complete analysis of this issue appears below). Yet, socially anxious participants led their partners to experience negative other-directed affect and to perceive dissimilarity.

However, the effects for partner anxiety more evident for pairs in the Order A condition. This order effect was not anticipated, especially the fact that effects related to one's partner were clearer for Order A than for Order B. One potential reason for the observed order effect may be linked to the difference in the order in which the specific scales appeared between the two versions of the questionnaire. Specifically, participants who received Order B responded to scales asking them to evaluate their partners' social anxiety and social competence in the first section of the questionnaire. This may have primed these participants' sense of metaevaluation of their social skills. Because participants receiving Order B were aware that their partners were likely rating them on the same measures and that the preceding social interaction was somewhat awkward (as laboratory based social interaction often is) it is possible that participants receiving Order B may have realized that their own social behavior in the interaction was not indicative of their social skill and taken this factor into account when rating their partners' social competence. Essentially, participants receiving Order B may have been using their own behavior in the interaction as a reference when rating their partners. Because participants receiving Order A rated their partners' anxiety and social competence after a number of other scales, their own evaluation apprehension had an opportunity to subside. Thus, allowing them to use a less personally based judgment of their partners. Of course, this account for the unanticipated order effect is highly speculative.

Does this absence of a matching phenomenon mean that anxious and non-anxious individuals were indifferent to the characteristics of their interaction partners? Not necessarily. One potential reason for the lack of interaction effects concerning partners' social anxiety could be traced to the failure of the manipulation check for individuals

receiving Order B. These individuals were apparently not able to accurately discern the social anxiety of their partners. It would be impossible for the anxiety of one's interaction partner to have an effect if their anxiety is not accurately perceived. However, this explanation does not seem especially likely given that such effects were obtained.

Participants receiving Order B rated themselves as more socially competent when paired with socially anxious interaction partners. Additionally, participants receiving Order A who were paired with a high social anxiety partner reported more other-directed negative affect than when they were paired with a lower anxiety partner.

At this point, it should be mentioned that the hypotheses of this study neglected the comparison – affiliation distinction (see Taylor & Lobel, 1989). Individuals may like and prefer to associate with more fortunate others in an effort to motivate themselves and improve their performance. Simultaneously, these same individuals may prefer to compare their performances against a less fortunate target for the purposes of favorable self-evaluation. In this study, it was assumed that individuals with positive self-evaluations would be preferred for interaction because they would likely be more warm and encouraging during social contact, but the findings do not support this assertion.

Effects of Self-focused Attention.

How can the lack of matching effects be understood? One possible explanation for not finding a strong consistent partner preference by anxious participants involves elevated levels of self-focused attention leading to inaccurate perceptions of others' anxiety. When socially anxious people enter a social situation, they tend to focus attention on themselves as a social object instead of focusing outwardly on the social environment (Mansell, Clark & Ehlers, 2003). An individual's thoughts, feeling and bodily sensations are used to construct

an impression of how they appear to others. This impression has been labeled the "observer perspective", where individuals attempt to see themselves through another's viewpoint (Clark & Wells, 1995). This image is usually negatively skewed but, because the image is created from the perspective of an observer, individuals believe this is the actual image seen by others (McEwans & Devins, 1983). Anxiety is maintained by the negative self-information provided by the observer perspective and the accompanying self-focus reduces the likelihood of receiving any accurate information from the social environment.

This conceptualization lends itself well to analysis of anxious individuals but how could this account explain the distorted perception of nonanxious participants? Clark and Wells' (1995) concept of the construction of the self as a social object (and the resulting observer perspective) is consistent with Carver and Scheier's (1981) notion of self-focused attention, which more readily applies to non-anxious individuals and would seem to explain some of the results of the present study. Self-focused attention is triggered when individuals feel they may be evaluated on a salient dimension. In this case, participants in an experimental setting having their social skills evaluated. According to Carver and Scheier, self-focused attention can lead to negative affect, especially in social contexts. "The extent to which people experience unpleasant affect depends on their perception of their ability to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and desired social performance. If individuals believe they have the power to reduce the discrepancy, no further negative evaluation or negative affect will result" (Spurr & Stopa, 2003; p 1011). It is reasonable to suppose that people high in social anxiety would have lower expectancies of their ability to reduce the negative discrepancy between their actual social performance and desired goal, as these individuals tend to have negative beliefs about their social skill. On the other hand, "low

socially anxious people have more positive beliefs about their social ability and are more likely to believe that they can reduce this negative discrepancy. As a result, low socially anxious individuals are less likely to be negatively affected by self-focused attention (in terms of emotions or cognitions)" (Spurr & Stopa, 2003; p 1011).

If the evaluative nature of this study induced high levels of self-focused attention then it is likely that most participants would have been too cognitively busy to actively discern their partners' level of anxiety and hence, not have a clear preference for a partner with a certain level of social anxiety. Self-focused attention causes cognitive interference in both socially anxious and non-anxious populations, the difference being that it does not result in negative self-evaluation in non-anxious individuals (Mellings & Alden, 2000). Given this finding, previous research has shown that high levels of self-focused attention could yield results similar to those found in the current study (i.e., negative evaluations of social skill, feeling less liked, negative mood, low self-esteem). For example, Hope and Heimberg (1988) found that participants high in self focused attention reported more negative self-thoughts than controls. Similarly, Daly, Vangelisti, and Lawrence (1989) found self-focus related to negative self-assessment of performance and poorer performance as assessed by independent raters for anxious but not non-anxious individuals. Compared with non-anxious individuals, socially anxious individuals' memories for social events are biased toward negative, self-related information as opposed to accurate external information. In a recent study, Spurr and Stopa (2003) suggested that an increased frequency of negative thoughts is an inevitable result of increased self-focused attention but because low socially anxious individuals are less likely to believe these thoughts they will have few negative consequences.

Considering these results as a byproduct of self-focused attention and the resulting observer perspective offers considerable clarity in interpretation. Given this, there are still some unresolved questions regarding the effects of self-focused attention in the current study. For example, there is still the problem of accounting for the order effects. Experimentally induced self-focus should be relatively similar between the two orders since they are both comprised of similar numbers of anxious and non-anxious participants. Although, as mentioned earlier, the nature of the differences between questionnaire orders may play a role in differentially priming participants.

Social Comparison as a Coping Mechanism.

The major hypotheses of this study were based in social comparison theory. It was thought that socially anxious individuals would make use of the available downward comparisons to elevate their self-image. This prediction was partially correct: High social anxiety participants did make more social comparisons, but not just downward comparisons. Anxious participants made more social comparisons of all types (self-enhancement, self-evaluation, self-improvement), although they did not seem to have any positive consequences. This seems at odds with Wills' (1981) original postulation of downward comparison theory where threatened individuals may make comparisons with similar or worse off others in an effort to gain a favorable view of the self. This study definitely had an element of threat as socially anxious people will feel threatened in social evaluative situations and these individuals surely could stand to elevate their self-image. So the question remains, why were the socially anxious participants motivated to make potentially ego-damaging social comparisons (i.e., self-evaluation, self-improvement)? In a reformulation of his theory, Wills (1985) conceptualizes downward comparison as a coping

mechanism. Under everyday circumstances the majority of social comparisons should be self-evaluative and, as negative life events increase, so should the frequency of self-enhancing comparisons. He posits that pure self-evaluation and pure self-enhancement are endpoints on a comparison continuum, and at a given time individuals are concurrently pursuing comparison goals that represent different points on this continuum. When interpreted using this framework, it is not surprising that socially anxious individuals were found to use both self-enhancing and self-evaluative comparisons more frequently as these comparisons reflect an attempt at coping with what was probably construed as a novel, negative situation. Although Wills (1985) makes no mention of self-improvement motivated comparisons, it logically follows that these comparisons too represent an attempt at coping with an adverse situation.

Social Comparison & Hostility Toward Anxious Individuals.

The literature on social anxiety has documented that anxious individuals often elicit negativity from their interaction partners (e.g., Jones & Carpenter, 1986). This was also true of the present study; participants in Order A had significantly more negative thoughts about anxious partners. Given the theoretical focus of this study, it will be useful to consider these results from a social comparison perspective.

Previous research has found that even though people find it reassuring to compare themselves against others who are performing worse than they are (Wills, 1981), they usually prefer to avoid contact with struggling individuals (Taylor & Lobel, 1989). In their work on *outperformance related distress*, Exline and Lobel (1999, 2001) go beyond social comparison theory's emphasis on the comparer to consider the consequences of being a comparison target. They note that it can often be aversive to be a target of upward

comparisons. "Outperformers experience distress when they believe that others are making envious or deflating upward comparisons against the self." (Exline & Lobel, 1999; p 308)

The term outperformer simply refers to an individual whose performance is superior to their comparison target. Outperformance related distress seems to stem from a belief that outperformed persons feel threatened by upward comparisons. These authors believe that outperformed individuals focus on the gap between their status and the outperformer's status and interpret this discrepancy as a threat to self-esteem, leading them to respond with negative affect such as envy, discouragement, or anxiety. This interpretation lends itself well to the current study. Given the fact that outperformance can be made salient by face to face interaction and that outperformers may become frustrated if they are unable to say or do anything that helps the struggling person, it is not surprising that participants in Order A indicated more hostility toward anxious individuals. If a comparer believes they are outperforming their partner and that the outperformed person is experiencing negative affect the outperformer will likely experience elevated levels of strain or tension. This discomfort will likely manifest itself as hostility or negative affect towards the outperformed person. Responses to outperforming others depend in part on the type of relationship between interaction partners. Relative to stable relationships, those that are new or ambiguous are likely to be strained by outperformance. The discomfort arising from sensitivity about being the target of an upward comparison is largely independent of and can occur simultaneously with private pleasure about outperforming others (Exline & Lobel, 1999, 2001).

Alternative Theoretical Interpretation.

Although these results have been examined using the framework from social comparison theory, there are certain results that lend themselves better to alternative

theoretical interpretations. For example, why (given the certainty of unfavorable upward comparisons) would socially anxious participants indicate more liking for low social anxiety partners? Research on the concept of cognitive clarity may provide some answers.

Essentially, cognitive clarity is having a good idea what will happen in a certain situation. It allows an individual to control the situation or (if control is not possible) have a sense of predictability in the outcomes. Having cognitive clarity is like having a plan of action. Desire for cognitive clarity about a situation has been shown to be a determining factor of affiliation under stress. Kulik, Mahler, and Earnest (1994) demonstrated that after an experimental threat induction, anxious participants showed more verbal and nonverbal affiliation with individuals who could provide them with information about the impending task. In other words, those who provided cognitive clarity to the participant about the anxiety provoking event were preferred affiliation targets. This finding could be seen as an analog to the aforementioned result in the present study where anxious participants indicated more liking for low social anxiety partners. It is possible that anxious participants liked having non-anxious partners more because these non-anxious partners were better able to control the interaction, thus allowing socially anxious participants to have a better sense of predictability in the interaction (i.e., to know their role in the interaction). It is logical to assume the comforting effect of knowing one's partner will take the lead in the interaction, especially if one does not have the requisite social skills to do so themselves.

Cognitive clarity can be linked to coping efforts/adaptation (Kulik, et al., 1994; Kulik, Mahler, & Moore, 1996). Individuals often learn how to deal with an adverse situation by seeking information from an experienced individual. For example, Kulik and colleagues (1996) found that pre-operative patients engaged in more cognitive clarity

motivated affiliation (e.g., expectations after surgery) with someone who could provide helpful information (i.e., post-operative patient) than with someone who was in the same position (i.e., pre-operative). People facing novel threat may be more inclined to affiliate with others to get information relevant to primary appraisal processes (i.e., to help them interpret the situation) and to facilitate basic coping processes. "When anxious, individuals may view threat relevant affiliation with an experienced partner as likely to ameliorate anxiety, but avoid such affiliation with an inexperienced partner for fear of increasing anxiety." (Kulik et al., 1994; p 307) It seems quite possible that even though low social anxiety partners offer unfavorable upward comparisons, socially anxious participants liked these partners more because of the predictability and cognitive clarity afforded by them.

Conclusions.

The results of this study suggest that the treatment of socially anxious individuals should first focus on lessening self-focused attention. Group therapy (often used in treatment of social anxiety) is likely a negative event for these individuals. Instead of drawing comfort and support from people in similar circumstances, the findings of the current study suggest that group therapy for socially anxious individuals may promote negative affect and perceptions of dissimilarity. This is surely an area that warrants further study. One potentially useful way to approach this research is by attempting to shift these individuals out of the observer perspective. The observer perspective (Clark & Wells, 1995) is often adopted by anxious people in social situations, and the resulting self-focused attention often prevents socially anxious individuals from receiving accurate social information and perpetuates a negative self-view. "A substantial element of the cognitive therapy of social phobia involves reducing self-focus and its negative consequences, and

promoting external attention to allow access to corrective information from the environment" (Mansell et al., 2003, p 570). Therapists should focus on the specific factors that are acting to maintain individuals' inaccurate beliefs (e.g., overestimations of visible anxiety) through appropriate techniques (e.g., videotaped feedback). Indeed, studies that have used techniques that reconfigure socially anxious individuals' attention away from the self and toward the social environment have been shown to reduce both anxiety and negative cognitions (Spurr & Stopa, 2003; Wells & Papageorgiou, 1998). Although individual treatment sessions are the method of choice to reduce self-focused attention, group treatment is also valuable. Socially anxious individuals can benefit from the exposure of simply being in a group, greater ease in simulating social situations, and vicarious learning (Stangier, Heidenreich, Peitz, Lauterbach, & Clark, 2003). In addition, the present study demonstrated that socially anxious individuals readily engage in social comparisons. This could be a very important tool in the restructuring of these individuals' maladaptive beliefs as long as therapists take care to make sure these facilitated social comparisons are accurate and beneficial.

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Table 1.

Descriptives & Reliabilities

	<u>M</u>	<u>Order A</u> <u>SD</u>	<u>α</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>Order B</u> <u>SD</u>	<u>α</u>
<u>Predictors</u>						
IAS	41.65	10.73	.87	43.11	12.19	.87
<u>Manipulation Checks</u>						
Alter Comp	125.74	15.46	.94	125.74	14.17	.91
IAS-P	33.96	10.21	.91	38.05	9.15	.88
<u>Mood Scales</u>						
Positive Mood	31.28	6.96	.86	30.47	7.43	.85
Negative Mood (self)	11.98	4.38	.84	11.92	4.71	.88
Negative Mood (other)	8.09	1.97	.69	8.04	2.42	.79
<u>Self Evaluations</u>						
Self Rated Social Comp	117.84	13.35	.90	123.74	14.62	.91
BFNE	15.41	5.41	.85	15.59	5.19	.82
Similarity	16.23	3.91	.86	15.28	4.19	.87
Global Social Comparison	3.16	1.01	n/a	2.95	1.03	n/a
<u>Motives for Social Comp</u>						
Self Enhancement	5.79	1.78	.70	5.41	1.97	.57
Self Improvement	6.44	1.85	.66	6.07	1.85	.43
Self Evaluation	5.56	1.65	.30	5.61	1.95	.73
<u>0</u>						
Liking	31.02	5.68	.89	29.37	5.73	.88
DFI	23.79	5.51	.90	23.74	6.31	.93
<u>Liking & DFI - MP</u>						
Liking - MP	30.29	8.74	.36	29.12	4.51	.85
DFI - MP	22.17	4.56	.87	22.01	4.92	.88
<u>State Self Esteem</u>						
State Self Esteem (pre)	70.86	11.94	.91	71.72	11.79	.90
State Self Esteem (post)	74.75	10.91	.91	75.67	77.96	.90

Note. IAS = Interaction Anxiousness Scale; Alter Comp = Ratings of Alter Competency; IAS-P = Interaction Anxiousness Scale - Partner; BFNE = Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale; DFI = Desire for Future Interaction; Liking-MP = Liking Metaperception Scale; DFI-MP = Desire for Future Interaction-Metaperception

Table 2

Order A: Intercorrelations of Predictors and Dependent Measures

	IAS	Alter Comp	IAS-P	Neg Mood (self)	Neg Mood (other)	SRSC	BFNE
IAS	--	.048	-.097	.255	.084	-.533**	.404**
Alter Comp		--	-.694**	.002	-.168	.390**	-.131
IAS-P			--	.063	-.070	-.165*	-.025
Negative Mood (self)				--	.408**	-.344*	.345**
Negative Mood (other)					--	.030	-.035
SRSC						--	-.505**
BFNE							--
Similarity							
Self Enhancement							
Self Evaluation							
Liking							
Liking-MP							
State Self-Esteem Avg.							
	Similarity	Self Enhancement	Self Evaluation	Liking	Liking-MP	State Self-Esteem	
IAS	.174	.418	.268*	.344**	-.066	-.551**	
Alter Comp	.522**	-.092	-.061	.603**	.301*	.044	
IAS-P	-.560**	.270*	.144	-.515**	-.179	.043	
Negative Mood (self)	.032	.325*	.226	-.005	-.161	-.421	
Negative Mood (other)	-.131	.107	.133	-.139	.078	.012	
SRSC	.017	-.409**	-.337*	-.054	.448**	.623**	
BFNE	.156	.423**	.281*	.130	-.214	-.534**	
Similarity	--	.048	.096	.526**	.081	-.162	
Self Enhancement		--	.565**	.041	-.007	-.406**	
Self Evaluation			--	.204	-.082	-.266**	
Liking				--	.081	-.151	
Liking-MP					--	.163	
State Self-Esteem Avg.						--	

Note. IAS = Interaction Anxiousness Scale; Alter Comp = Ratings of Alter Competency; IAS-P = Interaction Anxiousness Scale - Partner; SRSC = Self Rated Social Competency; BFNE = Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale; Liking-MP = Liking Metaperception Scale. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 3

Order B: Intercorrelations of Predictors and Dependent Measures

IAS	IAS	Pos Mood	SRSC	BFNE	Global Soc Comp
Pos Mood	--	.315*	-.686**	.524**	.276*
SRSC		--	.301*	-.184	-.224
BFNE			--	-.603**	.001
Global Social Comp				--	.130
Self Enhancement					--
Self-Improvement					
Self Evaluation					
Liking-MP					
State Self-Esteem Avg.					
	Self Enhancement	Self Improvement	Self-Evaluation	Liking-MP	State Self-Esteem
IAS	.286*	.276*	.349*	-.534**	-.620**
Pos Mood	-.122	-.208	-.194	.382	.357**
SRSC	-.320*	-.226	-.211	.723**	.708**
BFNE	.330*	.300*	.189	-.493**	-.635**
Global Social Comp	.143	.237	.231	.106	-.063
Self Enhancement	--	.555**	.635**	-.343**	.343**
Self-Improvement		--	.497**	-.222	-.222
Self Evaluation			--	-.216	-.216
Liking-MP				--	.645**
State Self-Esteem Avg.					--

Note. IAS = Interaction Anxiousness Scale; SRSC = Self Rated Social Competency; BFNE = Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale; Global Social Comp = Global Social Comparison Item; Liking-MP = Liking Metaperception. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 4

Summary of Results

MEASURES	ORDER A	ORDER B
Manipulation Checks		
Alter Comp	B-IAS $\beta = -.28, t = 2.15, p = .036$	all ns
IAS-P	B-IAS $\beta = .391, t = 3.14, p = .003$	all ns
Mood Scales		
Positive Mood	all ns	B-IAS $\beta = -.322, t = 2.51, p = .015$
Negative Mood (self)	A-IAS $\beta = .245, t = 1.90, p = .063$	all ns
Negative Mood (other)	B-IAS $\beta = .307, t = 2.37, p = .021$	all ns
Self Evaluations		
Self Rated Social Comp	A-IAS $\beta = -.523, t = 4.48, p = .000$	B-IAS $\beta = -.701, t = 7.69, p = .000$
		A-IAS $\beta = .286, t = 3.14, p = .003$
BFNE	A-IAS $\beta = .404, t = 3.23, p = .002$	B-IAS $\beta = .528, t = 4.57, p = .000$
Similarity	B-IAS $\beta = -.228, t = 1.73, p = .089$	all ns
Global Social Comparison	all ns	B-IAS $\beta = .285, t = 2.22, p = .031$
Motives for Soc Comp		
Self Enhancement	A-IAS $\beta = .405, t = 3.40, p = .001$	B-IAS $\beta = .287, t = 2.20, p = .032$
	B-IAS $\beta = .243, t = 2.04, p = .046$	
Self Improvement	all ns	B-IAS $\beta = .276, t = 2.11, p = .040$
Self Evaluation	A-IAS $\beta = .257, t = 2.00, p = .050$	B-IAS $\beta = .345, t = 2.71, p = .009$
	B-IAS $\beta = .216, t = 1.69, p = .098$	
Liking & DFI		
Liking	A-IAS $\beta = .351, t = 2.77, p = .008$	all ns
DFI	all ns	all ns
Liking & DFI - MP		
Liking - MP	A-IAS $\beta = -.226, t = 1.70, p = .094$	B-IAS $\beta = -.542, t = -4.79, p = .000$
DFI - MP	all ns	all ns
State Self Esteem		
State Self Esteem Average	A-IAS $\beta = -.550, t = 4.83, p = .000$	B-IAS $\beta = -.625, t = -5.91, p = .000$

Note. Alter Comp = Ratings of Alter Competency; IAS-P = Interaction Anxiousness Scale - Partner; SRSC = Self Rated Social Competency; BFNE = Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale; DFI = Desire for Future Interaction; Liking-MP = Liking Metaperception Scale; DFI-MP = Desire for Future Interaction-Metaperception

Appendix A

Please complete the following scale with respect to how you usually feel in social situations.

- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------|---|---------|---|-----------|
| Not at all true | | Neutral | | Very true |
- ___ 1. I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers.
- ___ 2. I usually feel uncomfortable when I am in a group of people I don't know.
- ___ 3. I am usually at ease when speaking to a member of the opposite sex.
- ___ 4. I get nervous when I must talk to a teacher or boss.
- ___ 5. Parties often make me feel anxious and uncomfortable.
- ___ 6. I am probably less shy in social interactions than most other people.
- ___ 7. I sometimes feel tense when talking to people of my own sex if I don't know them very well.
- ___ 8. I would be nervous if I was being interviewed for a job.
- ___ 9. I wish I had more confidence in social situations.
- ___ 10. I seldom feel anxious in social situations.
- ___ 11. In general, I am a shy person.
- ___ 12. I often feel nervous when talking to an attractive member of the opposite sex.
- ___ 13. I often feel nervous when calling someone I don't know very well on the telephone.
- ___ 14. I get nervous when I speak to someone in a position of authority.
- ___ 15. I usually feel relaxed around other people, even people who are quite different from me.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Social perceptions in a First Meeting Situation

Thank-you for taking the time to participate in our investigation. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. J. Vorauer (Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba).

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be paired with another individual with whom you will have a conversation. You will begin the session by filling out a short questionnaire asking you about yourself. You will then have a 15-minute conversation with your partner. The conversation will be controlled in that you will each have a turn to speak about different topics. This conversation will be tape recorded. You will fill out another questionnaire following the conversation. At the end of the study, you will be given an explanation of our hypotheses and the methods that we used.

We would like to emphasize the fact that your identity will be kept confidential. Your responses on all measures will be coded by participant number only.

This session should take approximately an hour. Please feel free to ask any questions you might have about the experimental procedures. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish to continue participating, you are free to stop (and you will still receive credit).

This study has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Ethics Review Board, and any complaints regarding procedures may be reported to Dr. Bruce Tefft, Chair, PSREB (474-8259) or Dr. Gerry Sande, Head, Department of Psychology (474-9360). Dr. J. Vorauer can be reached at 474-8250.

Your signature indicates that you have read the above statement and have given you informed consent to participate in this study.

(Your signature)

(Date)

(Printed name)

Appendix C

Preliminary Questionnaire

Thank-you for taking the time to participate in this research. Your responses will provide us with valuable and important information. The following questions ask you about yourself—your feelings, attitudes, and personal qualities. Please answer the questions carefully, and as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Questionnaires will be coded by participant number rather than name.

Follow the instructions provided at the beginning of each new set of questions when making your responses.

Thank-you. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Attitudes & Self-Perceptions

This section contains questions about your attitudes and perceptions of yourself.

Indicate whether each item is true or false of your experience by circling the T (true) of F (false) to the left of each item.

- T F 1. It is easy for me to concentrate on my activities.
- T F 2. Frequently when I am working I find myself worrying about other things.
- T F 3. Time always seems to be passing slowly.
- T F 4. I often find myself at "loose ends", not knowing what to do.
- T F 5. I am often trapped in situations where I have to do meaningless things.
- T F 6. Having to look at someone's home movies or travel slides bores me tremendously.
- T F 7. I have projects in mind all the time, things to do.
- T F 8. I find it easy to entertain myself.
- T F 9. Many things I have to do are repetitive and monotonous.
- T F 10. It takes more stimulation to get me going than most people.
- T F 11. I get a kick out of most things I do.
- T F 12. I am seldom excited about my work.
- T F 13. In any situation I can usually find something to do or see to keep me interested.
- T F 14. Much of the time I just sit around doing nothing.
- T F 15. I am good at waiting patiently.
- T F 16. I often find myself with nothing to do – time on my hands.
- T F 17. It would be very hard for me to find a job that is exciting enough.
- T F 18. I would like more challenging things to do in life.
- T F 19. Many people would say I am an imaginative or creative person.
- T F 20. Amongst my friends, I am the one who keeps doing something the longest.

Please indicate the extent you agree with the following statements by writing the appropriate number next to the corresponding item. Answer according to how you feel right now, at the present moment.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly disagree Neutral Strongly agree

- ___ 1. I feel confident in my abilities.
- ___ 2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or a failure.
- ___ 3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.
- ___ 4. I feel frustrated or rattled with my performance.
- ___ 5. I feel I am having trouble understanding the things that I read.
- ___ 6. I feel others respect and admire me.
- ___ 7. I am dissatisfied with my weight.
- ___ 8. I feel self-conscious.
- ___ 9. I feel as smart as others.
- ___ 10. I feel displeased with myself.
- ___ 11. I feel good about myself.
- ___ 12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.
- ___ 13. I am worried what other people might think of me.
- ___ 14. I feel confident that I understand things.
- ___ 15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.
- ___ 16. I feel unattractive.
- ___ 17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.
- ___ 18. I feel I have less scholastic ability right now than others.
- ___ 19. I feel like I'm not doing well.
- ___ 20. I am worried about looking foolish.

Below are statements about life that people often feel quite differently about. Read the items carefully and, using the following scale, indicate how much you think each one is true in general.

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not at all true | | Somewhat true | | Completely true |
-
- ___ 1. Most of my life gets spent doing things that are worthwhile.
- ___ 2. No matter how hard I try, my efforts usually accomplish nothing.
- ___ 3. The tried and true ways are always the best.
- ___ 4. Most of what happens in life is just meant to be.
- ___ 5. When I make plans, I'm certain I can make them work.
- ___ 6. People who never change their minds usually have good judgement.
- ___ 7. If I'm working on a difficult task, I know when to seek help.
- ___ 8. Most of the time, people listen carefully to what I say.
- ___ 9. My mistakes are usually difficult to correct.
- ___ 10. Lots of times, I really don't know my own mind.
- ___ 11. I like it when things are uncertain or unpredictable.
- ___ 12. People who do their best should get full support from society.
- ___ 13. I have no use for theories that are not closely tied to facts.
- ___ 14. Most days, life is really interesting and exciting for me.
- ___ 15. What happens to me tomorrow depends on what I do today.

Appendix D

Topics

1. What was your impression of the U of M the first time you ever came here?
2. Where are you from? Name all of the places you've ever lived.
3. What was the best gift you ever received and why?
4. If you had to move from Winnipeg where would you go and what would you miss about Winnipeg?
5. Do you read a newspaper often and which one do you prefer? Why?
6. What is your favorite holiday? Why?
7. Where did you go to high school? What was your high school like?
8. What is your favorite class at the U of M so far? Why?
9. What is the best restaurant you've been to in the last month that your partner hasn't been to? Tell your partner about it.
10. What foreign country would you most like to visit? What attracts you to this place?

Appendix E

Post-Discussion Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks you a variety of questions about yourself and the interaction you just had.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. We are simply interested in learning about your thoughts and feelings, whatever they may be.

Follow the instructions provided at the beginning of each new set of questions when making your responses. Please take your time and answer carefully. Your responses will be kept entirely confidential, they will never be shown to your partner.

Important: *Please complete the questions in the order in which they appear. Do not look ahead to upcoming questions, or go back and change answers to previous questions.*

Self-Perceptions

This section contains questions about your own perceptions of yourself.

Please indicate the extent you agree with the following statements by filling in the appropriate space next to each question. Answer according to how you feel right now, at the present moment. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

- ___ 1. I feel confident in my abilities.
- ___ 2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or a failure.
- ___ 3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.
- ___ 4. I feel frustrated or rattled with my performance.
- ___ 5. I feel I am having trouble understanding the things that I read.
- ___ 6. I feel others respect and admire me.
- ___ 7. I am dissatisfied with my weight.
- ___ 8. I feel self-conscious.
- ___ 9. I feel as smart as others.
- ___ 10. I feel displeased with myself.
- ___ 11. I feel good about myself.
- ___ 12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.
- ___ 13. I am worried what other people might think of me.
- ___ 14. I feel confident that I understand things.
- ___ 15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.
- ___ 16. I feel unattractive.
- ___ 17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.
- ___ 18. I feel I have less scholastic ability right now than others.
- ___ 19. I feel like I'm not doing well.
- ___ 20. I am worried about looking foolish.

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

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

<p>_____ interested</p> <p>_____ self-critical</p> <p>_____ excited</p> <p>_____ remorseful</p> <p>_____ strong</p> <p>_____ angry at myself</p> <p>_____ guilty</p> <p>_____ hostile</p> <p>_____ enthusiastic</p> <p>_____ proud</p> <p>_____ irritated with others</p> <p>_____ upset at myself</p>	<p>_____ annoyed with myself</p> <p>_____ alert</p> <p>_____ angry at others</p> <p>_____ inspired</p> <p>_____ resentful</p> <p>_____ determined</p> <p>_____ attentive</p> <p>_____ disappointed with myself</p> <p>_____ active</p> <p>_____ upset at others</p> <p>_____ ashamed</p>
--	--

Please respond to the following statements regarding your performance in the conversation. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

_____ 1. I was relaxed and comfortable when speaking.

_____ 2. I was a likable person.

_____ 3. I expressed myself clearly.

_____ 4. I gave positive feedback.

_____ 5. I was trustworthy.

- ___ 6. I was assertive.
- ___ 7. I was a good listener.
- ___ 8. I was supportive.
- ___ 9. I showed interest in the conversation.
- ___ 10. I was sarcastic.
- ___ 11. I was awkward in the conversation.
- ___ 12. I was socially skilled.
- ___ 13. I was confident.
- ___ 14. I found it difficult to express my true feelings.
- ___ 15. I ignored the other person's feelings.
- ___ 16. I lacked self-confidence.
- ___ 17. I was an effective communicator.
- ___ 18. I talked too much about myself.
- ___ 19. I pretended to listen when I actually didn't.
- ___ 20. I was shy.
- ___ 21. I was nervous during the conversation.
- ___ 22. My facial expressions were abnormally blank and restrained.
- ___ 23. I was a competent communicator.
- ___ 24. I was respectful.
- ___ 25. I interrupted too much.
- ___ 26. I understood the other person.
- ___ 27. I was sensitive to the needs and feelings of the other person.
- ___ 28. I was cooperative.
- ___ 29. I made frequent eye contact.
- ___ 30. I made mistakes when speaking (stuttering, omissions, etc.).
- ___ 33. I engaged in self-manipulation (fidgeting, touching myself).

Please respond to each of the following statements regarding your thoughts in the interaction you have just had. Use the scale below.

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not at all true | | Neutral | | Very true |
- ___ 1. I was frequently afraid my partner would notice my shortcomings.
- ___ 2. I would be unconcerned even if my partner formed an unfavourable impression of me.
- ___ 3. I was afraid that my partner did not approve of me.
- ___ 4. I did not worry about the impression I was making on my partner.
- ___ 5. I was afraid my partner would find fault in me.
- ___ 6. When I was talking to my partner I was worried that he/she may be thinking about me.
- ___ 7. I was worried I would say or do the wrong things.

Your Impressions of Your Partner

In this section of the questionnaire, we ask you to describe your impression of the person with whom you just interacted.

Please indicate the extent that you think your *interaction partner* would agree with the following statements. Write the appropriate number in the blank next to the statement. Use the scale below.

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not at all true | | Neutral | | Very true |
- ___ 1. My partner often feels nervous even in casual get-togethers.
- ___ 2. My partner usually feels uncomfortable when he/she is in a group of people they don't know.

- ___ 3. He/she is usually at ease when speaking to a member of the opposite sex.
- ___ 4. My partner gets nervous when he/she must talk to a teacher or boss.
- ___ 5. Parties often make my partner feel anxious and uncomfortable.
- ___ 6. My partner is probably less shy in social interactions than most other people.
- ___ 7. My partner sometimes feels tense when talking to people of their own sex if he/she doesn't know them very well.
- ___ 8. My partner would be nervous if he/she were being interviewed for a job.
- ___ 9. My partner wishes he/she had more confidence in social situations.
- ___ 10. My partner seldom feels anxious in social situations.
- ___ 11. In general, my partner is a shy person.
- ___ 12. My partner often feels nervous when talking to an attractive member of the opposite sex.
- ___ 13. My partner often feels nervous when calling someone he/she doesn't know very well on the telephone.
- ___ 14. My partner gets nervous when he/she speaks to someone in a position of authority.
- ___ 15. My partner usually feels relaxed around other people, even people who are quite different from him/her.

For the next five items, circle the number that best describes your beliefs about the person you just interacted with.

1	2	3	4	5
I don't behave like partner does			I behave like my partner does	

1	2	3	4	5
I don't think like partner does			I think like my partner does	

1	2	3	4	5
I have personal qualities different from those of my partner			I have personal qualities similar to those of my partner	

1	2	3	4	5
I have attitudes different from those of my partner			I have attitudes similar to those of my partner	

1	2	3	4	5
I hold values that differ from those of my partner			I hold values that are similar to those of my partner	

Please respond to the following statements regarding *your partner's* performance in the conversation. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

- ___ 1. My partner was relaxed and comfortable when speaking.
- ___ 2. My partner was a likable person.
- ___ 3. My partner expressed themselves clearly.
- ___ 4. My partner gave positive feedback.
- ___ 5. My partner was trustworthy.
- ___ 6. My partner was assertive.
- ___ 7. My partner was a good listener.
- ___ 8. My partner was supportive.
- ___ 9. My partner showed interest in the conversation.

- ___ 10. My partner was sarcastic.
- ___ 11. My partner was awkward in the conversation.
- ___ 12. My partner was socially skilled.
- ___ 13. My partner was confident.
- ___ 14. My partner found it difficult to express their true feelings.
- ___ 15. My partner ignored my feelings.
- ___ 16. My partner lacked self-confidence.
- ___ 17. My partner was an effective communicator.
- ___ 18. My partner talked too much about themselves.
- ___ 19. My partner pretended to listen when he/she actually wasn't.
- ___ 20. My partner was shy.
- ___ 21. My partner was nervous during the conversation.
- ___ 22. My partner's facial expressions were abnormally blank and restrained.
- ___ 23. My partner was a competent communicator.
- ___ 24. My partner was respectful.
- ___ 25. My partner interrupted too much.
- ___ 26. My partner understood me.
- ___ 27. My partner was sensitive to my needs and feelings.
- ___ 28. My partner was cooperative.
- ___ 29. My partner made frequent eye contact.
- ___ 30. My partner made mistakes when speaking (stuttering, omissions, etc.).
- ___ 31. My partner engaged in self-manipulation (fidgeting, touching themselves).

In general, how much do you believe you compared yourself to your partner during the interaction? Circle the appropriate number using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very much

Below are a number of reasons why a person might choose to compare him/herself to others. Think about the interaction you have just completed and indicate the extent that you feel you compared yourself to your partner, and how much you did so, for these reach of these reasons. Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral		Very much

- ___ 1. To improve my performance in the interaction.
- ___ 2. To reassure myself that my performance in the interaction was fine.
- ___ 3. To evaluate how I was doing.
- ___ 4. So I could make myself feel better about my performance.
- ___ 5. To get information about how to better handle the interaction.
- ___ 6. To provide insight into myself.

For each of the statements below, indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by writing the appropriate number in the blank beside the item. Use the following 5-point scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

- ___ 1. I think that my partner is unusually well adjusted.
- ___ 2. I would recommend my partner for a responsible job.
- ___ 3. In my opinion, my partner is an exceptionally mature person.
- ___ 4. I have great confidence in my partner's good judgement.
- ___ 5. Most people would react favorably to my partner after a brief acquaintance.
- ___ 6. I think that my partner is one of those people who quickly win respect.
- ___ 7. My partner is one of the most likable people I know.
- ___ 8. My partner is the sort of person I myself would like to be.
- ___ 9. It seems to me that it is very easy for my partner to gain admiration.

Please think about the person you just interacted with and answer the following questions.

Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral		Very much

- ___ 1. Would you like to meet this person outside the experiment?
- ___ 2. Would you ask this person for advice?
- ___ 3. Would you consider sitting next to this person on a 3-hour bus trip?
- ___ 4. Would you consider inviting this person to your house?
- ___ 5. Would you approve of a friend/relative dating him/her?
- ___ 6. Would you be willing to work with this person on a job?
- ___ 7. Would you consider admitting this person to your circle of friends?

In this section of the questionnaire we ask about your impressions of your partner's feelings toward you.

For each of the statements below, indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by writing the appropriate number in the blank beside the item. Use the following 5-point scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

- ___ 1. My partner thinks that I am unusually well adjusted.
- ___ 2. My partner would recommend me for a responsible job.
- ___ 3. In my partner's opinion, I am an exceptionally mature person.
- ___ 4. My partner has great confidence in my good judgment.
- ___ 5. My partner thinks most people would react favourably to me after a brief acquaintance.
- ___ 6. My partner thinks that I am one of those people who quickly win respect.
- ___ 7. My partner thinks I am one of the most likable people he/she knows.

___ 8. I am the sort of person my partner would like to be.

___ 9. It would seem to my partner that it is very easy for me to gain admiration.

Please think about the person you just interacted with and answer the following questions according to how you think they would react to you.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral		Very much

___ 1. Would this person like to meet you outside the experiment?

___ 2. Would this person ask you for advice?

___ 3. Would this person consider sitting next to you on a 3-hour bus trip?

___ 4. Would this person consider inviting you to their house?

___ 5. Would this person approve of a friend/relative dating you?

___ 6. Would this person be willing to work with you on a job?

___ 7. Would this person consider admitting you to their circle of friends?

Do you have any additional comments about the interaction or any questions in the questionnaire?

Demographic Information

Age: _____

Sex (circle one): Male Female

Ethnic Group (check one):

____ White

____ Black

____ Asian

____ East Indian

____ West Indian

____ Aboriginal

____ Other (please describe): _____

Is English your first language? (circle one) Yes No

Appendix F

Post-Discussion Questionnaire

This questionnaire asks you a variety of questions about yourself and the interaction you just had. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. We are simply interested in learning about your thoughts and feelings, whatever they may be.

Follow the instructions provided at the beginning of each new set of questions when making your responses. Please take your time and answer carefully. Your responses will be kept entirely confidential, they will never be shown to your partner.

Important: *Please complete the questions in the order in which they appear. Do not look ahead to upcoming questions, or go back and change answers to previous questions.*

Your Impressions of Your Partner

In this section of the questionnaire, we ask you to describe your impression of the person with whom you just interacted.

Please indicate the extent that you think your *interaction partner* would agree with the following statements. Write the appropriate number in the blank next to the statement. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all true		Neutral		Very true

- ___ 1. My partner often feels nervous even in casual get-togethers.
- ___ 2. My partner usually feels uncomfortable when he/she is in a group of people they don't know.
- ___ 3. He/she is usually at ease when speaking to a member of the opposite sex.
- ___ 4. My partner gets nervous when he/she must talk to a teacher or boss.
- ___ 5. Parties often make my partner feel anxious and uncomfortable.
- ___ 6. My partner is probably less shy in social interactions than most other people.
- ___ 7. My partner sometimes feels tense when talking to people of their own sex if he/she doesn't know them very well.
- ___ 8. My partner would be nervous if he/she were being interviewed for a job.
- ___ 9. My partner wishes he/she had more confidence in social situations.
- ___ 10. My partner seldom feels anxious in social situations.
- ___ 11. In general, my partner is a shy person.
- ___ 12. My partner often feels nervous when talking to an attractive member of the opposite sex.
- ___ 13. My partner often feels nervous when calling someone he/she doesn't know very well on the telephone.
- ___ 14. My partner gets nervous when he/she speaks to someone in a position of authority.
- ___ 15. My partner usually feels relaxed around other people, even people who are quite different from him/her.

For the next five items, circle the number that best describes your beliefs about the person you just interacted with.

1	2	3	4	5
I don't behave like partner does				I behave like my partner does

1	2	3	4	5
I don't think like partner does				I think like my partner does

1	2	3	4	5
I have personal qualities different from those of my partner				I have personal qualities similar to those of my partner

1	2	3	4	5
I have attitudes different from those of my partner				I have attitudes similar to those of my partner

1	2	3	4	5
I hold values that differ from those of my partner				I hold values that are similar to those of my partner

Please respond to the following statements regarding *your partner's* performance in the conversation. Use the scale below.

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---------|---|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | | Neutral | | Strongly agree |
-
- ___ 1. My partner was relaxed and comfortable when speaking.
- ___ 2. My partner was a likable person.
- ___ 3. My partner expressed themselves clearly.
- ___ 4. My partner gave positive feedback.
- ___ 5. My partner was trustworthy.
- ___ 6. My partner was assertive.
- ___ 7. My partner was a good listener.
- ___ 8. My partner was supportive.
- ___ 9. My partner showed interest in the conversation.
- ___ 10. My partner was sarcastic.
- ___ 11. My partner was awkward in the conversation.
- ___ 12. My partner was socially skilled.
- ___ 13. My partner was confident.
- ___ 14. My partner found it difficult to express their true feelings.
- ___ 15. My partner ignored my feelings.
- ___ 16. My partner lacked self-confidence.
- ___ 17. My partner was an effective communicator.
- ___ 18. My partner talked too much about themselves.
- ___ 19. My partner pretended to listen when he/she actually wasn't.
- ___ 20. My partner was shy.
- ___ 21. My partner was nervous during the conversation.
- ___ 22. My partner's facial expressions were abnormally blank and restrained.
- ___ 23. My partner was a competent communicator.
- ___ 24. My partner was respectful.
- ___ 25. My partner interrupted too much.
- ___ 26. My partner understood me.

- ___ 27. My partner was sensitive to my needs and feelings.
- ___ 28. My partner was cooperative.
- ___ 29. My partner made frequent eye contact.
- ___ 30. My partner made mistakes when speaking (stuttering, omissions, etc.).
- ___ 31. My partner engaged in self-manipulation (fidgeting, touching themselves).

In general, how much do you believe you compared yourself to your partner during the interaction? Circle the appropriate number using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Somewhat		Very much

Below are a number of reasons why a person might choose to compare him/herself to others. Think about the interaction you have just completed and indicate the extent that you feel you compared yourself to your partner, and how much you did so, for these reach of these reasons. Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Neutral		Very much

- ___ 1. To improve my performance in the interaction.
- ___ 2. To reassure myself that my performance in the interaction was fine.
- ___ 3. To evaluate how I was doing.
- ___ 4. So I could make myself feel better about my performance.
- ___ 5. To get information about how to better handle the interaction.
- ___ 6. To provide insight into myself.

Self-Perceptions

This section contains questions about your own perceptions of yourself.

Please indicate the extent you agree with the following statements by filling in the appropriate space next to each question. Answer according to how you feel right now, at the present moment. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

- ___ 1. I feel confident in my abilities.
- ___ 2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or a failure.
- ___ 3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.
- ___ 4. I feel frustrated or rattled with my performance.
- ___ 5. I feel I am having trouble understanding the things that I read.
- ___ 6. I feel others respect and admire me.
- ___ 7. I am dissatisfied with my weight.
- ___ 8. I feel self-conscious.
- ___ 9. I feel as smart as others.
- ___ 10. I feel displeased with myself.
- ___ 11. I feel good about myself.
- ___ 12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.
- ___ 13. I am worried what other people might think of me.
- ___ 14. I feel confident that I understand things.
- ___ 15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.
- ___ 16. I feel unattractive.
- ___ 17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.
- ___ 18. I feel I have less scholastic ability right now than others.
- ___ 19. I feel like I'm not doing well.
- ___ 20. I am worried about looking foolish.

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

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>_____ interested</p> <p>_____ self-critical</p> <p>_____ excited</p> <p>_____ remorseful</p> <p>_____ strong</p> <p>_____ angry at myself</p> <p>_____ guilty</p> <p>_____ hostile</p> <p>_____ enthusiastic</p> <p>_____ proud</p> <p>_____ irritated with others</p> <p>_____ upset at myself</p> | <p>_____ annoyed with myself</p> <p>_____ alert</p> <p>_____ angry at others</p> <p>_____ inspired</p> <p>_____ resentful</p> <p>_____ determined</p> <p>_____ attentive</p> <p>_____ disappointed with myself</p> <p>_____ active</p> <p>_____ upset at others</p> <p>_____ ashamed</p> |
|--|--|

Please respond to the following statements regarding your performance in the conversation. Use the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

- _____ 1. I was relaxed and comfortable when speaking.
- _____ 2. I was a likable person.
- _____ 3. I expressed myself clearly.
- _____ 4. I gave positive feedback.
- _____ 5. I was trustworthy.

- ___ 6. I was assertive.
- ___ 7. I was a good listener.
- ___ 8. I was supportive.
- ___ 9. I showed interest in the conversation.
- ___ 10. I was sarcastic.
- ___ 11. I was awkward in the conversation.
- ___ 12. I was socially skilled.
- ___ 13. I was confident.
- ___ 14. I found it difficult to express my true feelings.
- ___ 15. I ignored the other person's feelings.
- ___ 16. I lacked self-confidence.
- ___ 17. I was an effective communicator.
- ___ 18. I talked too much about myself.
- ___ 19. I pretended to listen when I actually didn't.
- ___ 20. I was shy.
- ___ 21. I was nervous during the conversation.
- ___ 22. My facial expressions were abnormally blank and restrained.
- ___ 23. I was a competent communicator.
- ___ 24. I was respectful.
- ___ 25. I interrupted too much.
- ___ 26. I understood the other person.
- ___ 27. I was sensitive to the needs and feelings of the other person.
- ___ 28. I was cooperative.
- ___ 29. I made frequent eye contact.
- ___ 30. I made mistakes when speaking (stuttering, omissions, etc.).
- ___ 33. I engaged in self-manipulation (fidgeting, touching myself).

For each of the statements below, indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by writing the appropriate number in the blank beside the item. Use the following 5-point scale.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | | | | Strongly agree |
- ___ 1. I think that my partner is unusually well adjusted.
- ___ 2. I would recommend my partner for a responsible job.
- ___ 3. In my opinion, my partner is an exceptionally mature person.
- ___ 4. I have great confidence in my partner's good judgment.
- ___ 5. Most people would react favorably to my partner after a brief acquaintance.
- ___ 6. I think that my partner is one of those people who quickly win respect.
- ___ 7. My partner is one of the most likable people I know.
- ___ 8. My partner is the sort of person I myself would like to be.
- ___ 9. It seems to me that it is very easy for my partner to gain admiration.

Please think about the person you just interacted with and answer the following questions.

Use the scale below.

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not at all | | Neutral | | Very much |
- ___ 1. Would you like to meet this person outside the experiment?
- ___ 2. Would you ask this person for advice?
- ___ 3. Would you consider sitting next to this person on a 3-hour bus trip?
- ___ 4. Would you consider inviting this person to your house?
- ___ 5. Would you approve of a friend/relative dating him/her?
- ___ 6. Would you be willing to work with this person on a job?
- ___ 7. Would you consider admitting this person to your circle of friends?

In this section of the questionnaire we ask about your impressions of your partner's feelings toward you.

For each of the statements below, indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement by writing the appropriate number in the blank beside the item. Use the following 5-point scale.

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly disagree**Strongly agree**

- ___ 1. My partner thinks that I am unusually well adjusted.
- ___ 2. My partner would recommend me for a responsible job.
- ___ 3. In my partner's opinion, I am an exceptionally mature person.
- ___ 4. My partner has great confidence in my good judgement.
- ___ 5. My partner thinks most people would react favourably to me after a brief acquaintance.
- ___ 6. My partner thinks that I am one of those people who quickly win respect.
- ___ 7. My partner thinks I am one of the most likable people he/she knows.
- ___ 8. I am the sort of person my partner would like to be.
- ___ 9. It would seem to my partner that it is very easy for me to gain admiration.

Please think about the person you just interacted with and answer the following questions according to how you think they would react to you.

1

2

3

4

5

Not at all**Neutral****Very much**

- ___ 1. Would this person like to meet you outside the experiment?
- ___ 2. Would this person ask you for advice?
- ___ 3. Would this person consider sitting next to you on a 3-hour bus trip?
- ___ 4. Would this person consider inviting you to their house?
- ___ 5. Would this person approve of a friend/relative dating you?
- ___ 6. Would this person be willing to work with you on a job?
- ___ 7. Would this person consider admitting you to their circle of friends?

Do you have any additional comments about the interaction or any questions in the questionnaire?

Demographic Information

Age: _____

Sex (circle one): Male Female

Ethnic Group (check one):

- White
- Black
- Asian
- East Indian
- West Indian
- Aboriginal
- Other (please describe): _____

Appendix G

Debriefing Script for Participants

Social Anxiety and Social Comparison

- First I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study
- You have provided us with valuable information about your opinions and perceptions

Probe for Participants' Speculations about the Research Questions

- Before I launch into an explanation of the specific issues that we are looking at in this study, I'd like to ask you whether there were any steps in the procedure or items in the questionnaire that you found unclear or confusing
- Do you have any questions at this point?
- Is there anything you'd like to ask about right now?
- Sometimes when students take part in studies, they form ideas about what the researchers might be looking at. Did you have any ideas about what we might be interested in, aside from what has already been explained to you. Even if it's just a vague idea, please describe it to me.

Inform Participants about the Specific Research Question

- O.K., now I'll launch into a fuller explanation of the kinds of issues we're interested in
- you probably got a bit of a sense of our focus from the kinds of questions included in the questionnaire
- We are interested in the way that people compare themselves to other people in social situations
- previous research has shown that the way we compare ourselves to others can have important effects on the way we feel about ourselves
- comparing ourselves to those who do worse than us can make us feel better about our own performance
- comparing ourselves to those who do better than us can inspire and motivate us to do better and achieve more but this can also make us feel badly about our own performance
- so, one thing we want to do is see how people feel after interacting with someone who is more or less anxious than they are

- basically what we're trying to do in this study is to investigate what types of interaction partners are most beneficial for people of varying levels of social anxiety
- this information may be used to help socially anxious people feel more comfortable when interacting with others

Final Points to Emphasize

- there are a few final points I'd like to mention:
 1. you were selected to participate in this study based on responses you gave during an in-class experiment at the beginning of the year. In this experiment you indicated that you would be willing to be contacted for future experiments, of which this is one.
 2. We hope you can understand why we didn't tell you about our hypotheses ahead of time -
- if you had known what our specific interest was, your responses might not have represented your "natural" reactions
 3. Finally, we want to ask you a favor. Please understand how important it is to this research that you don't tell anyone in your class or any other potential participants its specific purpose. If they were to come in knowing what the study was about, their responses could lead to inaccurate conclusions about the processes that we are trying to understand. If someone asks you about the study please tell them something along the lines of what we told you in class (e.g., that it focuses on social perception in a first meeting situation). Thanks very much for helping us with this.