SITUATIONAL CONTINGENCIES OF ANXIETY:
WHAT ANXIETIES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH EACH OF THE BIG FIVE?

BY

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SITUATIONAL CONTINGENCIES OF ANXIETY:
WHAT ANXIETIES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH EACH OF THE BIG FIVE?

Thesis under the direction of Eric Stone, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Wake Forest University.

In an if...then pattern, the “if” represents a feature of the situation and the “then” represents a behavior that occurs in that situation. The present study investigated if...then patterns of anxiety that are associated with each of the Big Five personality traits. To form hypotheses, I turned to the literature on the link between goals and the Big Five. Goals may lead to anxiety when they are threatened or unfulfilled in specific situations. The specific features, or “ifs,” of situations that may provoke anxiety that were coded in the situations were drawn from the literature on goals and were: social conflict with friends, social conflict with a romantic partner, social conflict with family, potential embarrassment or rejection, academic impact and financial impact. I hypothesized that each of the Big Five would have a distinct pattern of relationships with the situational determinants of anxiety. For example, I hypothesized that conscientious individuals are expected to be more anxious in situations with high levels of the feature financial impact, because conscientious people report having the goal of saving money. A list of anxiety-provoking situations was developed by having participants of the pre-study provide recent situations in which they felt anxious and by having members of the research lab generate situations. These situations were cleaned up and made into the situational anxiety inventory. Lab members coded the six features in all of the situations. Participants rated their anxiety level in each situation and completed trait scales. The results showed that agreeable individuals were more anxious in situations that involved conflict with friends or conflict with family, conscientious people were more anxious in situations with high academic impact and less anxious in situations with high conflict with friends, individuals high on neuroticism were more anxious in situations with high academic impact or high financial impact, but openness to experience and extraversion were unrelated to anxieties about any of the features.
INTRODUCTION

Situational contingencies of behavior are if...then behavioral signatures such that if the situation has “x” feature, then the individual will respond by acting in “y” manner (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Thus, the “if” represents a feature of the situation and the “then” represents a behavior that occurs in that situation. A single feature of a situation may or may not influence the behavior of any given person. The present study investigated if...then patterns of anxiety and how they are related to the Big Five personality traits - openness to experience, conscientious, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. In other words, this study investigated the situational determinants of anxiety for people with different Big Five trait levels.

In this introduction to this paper I will discuss anxiety as stable if...then behavioral signatures and review research on the link between anxiety and the Big Five personality traits. I will then hypothesize patterns of anxiety that are associated with each of the Big Five, using the goals literature to identify potential anxieties of individuals with different trait levels of the Big Five. I will also how a list of anxiety-provoking situations was obtained.

Anxiety is an emotional state characterized by feelings of apprehension, tension, nervousness, and worry (Spielberger, 2010). Anxiety exists both within individual situations and as a general trend in behavior; these are respectively called state anxiety and trait anxiety (Spielberger & Sydeman, 1994). State anxiety exists within a particular moment as a fleeting emotion. However, if state anxiety is elicited multiple times by similar situations, then the state anxiety forms a pattern, specifically, an if...then behavioral signature. An example of an if...then behavioral signature for anxiety is if
there is a spider present, then a given individual feels anxious. This pattern might also be expanded so that the individual feels anxious just thinking about the presence of a spider. In this case the “if” is abstract and can occur regardless of the physical setting of the individual. Thus the “if’s” of a physical spider or thinking about the presence of a spider are psychologically active features, and therefore important for determining the anxiety of the individual.

The existence of if…then patterns, also called behavioral signatures or situational contingencies, has been demonstrated by examining within person variability and its causes. Fleeson (2001) found that an individual’s mean trait level is stable, but that there is a large amount of within-person variability. Thus, an individual may exhibit many different levels of a trait depending on the situation. This within-person variability was found to be related to the individual’s sensitivity to psychologically active features of the situation. For example, individuals’ sensitivity to time of day and the number of other people present in situations predicted within-person variability of extraversion (Fleeson, 2001). People who were more sensitive to situational features exhibited greater variability in their behaviors. This may be taken as empirical evidence supporting the existence of if…then behavioral signatures.

Why Study If…Then Patterns?

If…then patterns allow an entire pattern of behavior to be examined, rather than just the trait level. Stable if…then patterns create a distribution of behavior, called a density-distribution (Fleeson, 2001). The frequency with which an individual exhibits any given level of a behavior is recorded. The mean of this distribution represents an individual’s trait level. Describing a person in terms of their trait level only takes into
account their average behavior. All of the other characteristics of the distribution, such as the variability, are disregarded. Trait levels, or the mean of the distribution for different individuals, have been found to be stable over time (Fleeson, 2001). This stability, however, is caused by the stable if...then patterns that make up the distribution.

**If...then** patterns are highly predictive of behavior. Fleeson (2011), for example, found that individuals’ sensitivity to time of day and the number of other people present in situations predicted within-person variability of extraversion.

**If...then** patterns provide information that is useful beyond the information that trait levels provide in interpersonal interactions. Friesen and Kammrath (2011), for example, show that knowledge of an individual’s traits may be useful for selecting individuals to get to know, but that if...then behavioral signatures may be more useful for avoiding conflict in established relationships. They found that accurate knowledge of a friend’s if...then patterns was associated with less conflict and a deeper relationship (Friesen & Kammrath, 2011).

### Anxiety and the Big Five

The Big Five are considered foundational and universal personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 2008; Jian-Feng, 2010; Kallasmaa, Allik, Realo, McCrae, 2000; Norman, 1963). The Big Five are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (OCEAN model of personality). The relationship between the Big Five personality traits and anxiety has often been investigated in research; however, this relationship has been examined primarily in terms of trait correlates of distinct anxiety disorders such as phobias, generalized anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Bienvenu et al., 2004; Kotov, Gamez, Schmidt, & Watson,
2010). Many studies examine the Big Five trait standings of individuals with anxiety disorders and compare them to the trait standings of individuals with other disorders and non-clinical samples. For example, a meta-analysis of 175 studies showed that individuals diagnosed with social phobia, agoraphobia, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder had significantly higher mean neuroticism scores than average control samples, but significantly lower extraversion and conscientiousness scores than average control samples (Kotov, Gamez, Schmidt, & Watson, 2010).

Facets of the Big Five also exhibit unique relationships with individual anxiety disorders. For example, low trust, a facet of agreeableness, was associated with social phobia and agoraphobia, but low competence and achievement striving, facets of conscientiousness, were related to social phobia but not agoraphobia (Bienvenu et al., 2004).

Research on a specific anxiety and its components has shown links to the Big Five personality traits in a non-clinical sample. Harris and Dollinger (2003) showed that aging anxiety, and the sub-components that compose that anxiety, are related to the Big Five in a sample of undergraduates. Specifically, Harris and Dollinger (2003) found a positive relationship between overall anxiety about aging and neuroticism, but negative relationships with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion. Aging anxiety was found to be unrelated to openness to experience. They also found that the sub-components of aging anxiety, specifically anxiety about changes in physical appearance, fear of old people, psychological concerns, and anxiety about age-related losses, were differentially related to each of the Big Five, excluding openness to experience.
Specifically, all four facets of aging anxiety were negatively and significantly related to agreeableness, although the other traits showed different patterns of relationships for the four facets of aging anxiety.

**Importance of the Current Study**

Anxiety is a strong motivational force on behavior and has been associated with negative outcomes like alcohol use disorders (Burns & Teesson, 2002), marital dissatisfaction (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Terman, Buttenwieser, Ferguson, Johnson, & Wilson, 1938), job dissatisfaction (Zalewska, 2011) and depression (Kessler, Chiu, Demler, & Walters, 2005). This implies that anxiety may play an important role in healthy psychological functioning.

The link between anxiety and the Big Five has been examined by past research primarily by comparing and contrasting the Big Five trait levels of individuals with various anxiety disorders to each other and to control samples. Few studies have investigated the link between anxiety in the Big Five in non-clinical samples and of those that have, most tested the relationship between an individual’s general level of anxiety in an area and their traits.

A disadvantage to studying the mean levels of anxiety is that knowing this information does not provide information about how that anxiety is experienced in everyday life. For example, an individual may be anxious about aging in general, but what does that mean in terms of their everyday life? What triggers cause an individual to experience anxiety about aging? These questions cannot be answered by looking at an individual’s mean level of anxiety about aging.
The contribution of the current study is that it investigated the situational features that cause multiple types of anxiety for people with particular trait levels by integrating the research on anxiety with the theoretical approach of if... then behavioral signatures. This approach can answer questions about when, and potentially why, an individual feels anxious as well as how those patterns of anxiety are related to their traits.

**The Role of Goals in Investigating Anxiety Patterns and the Big Five**

The relationship between anxiety and the Big Five has not been studied in terms of if...then patterns for many types of anxiety and therefore I turned to other areas of the psychological literature to guide my hypotheses. One area of study that seemed relevant to the link between anxiety and the Big Five was the link between goals and the Big Five.

A goal is the aim or desired outcome of an action (Locke & Latham, 2002). It is possible that the goals held by an individual lead to anxiety because obstacles to those goals in particular situations are perceived as threatening to the achievement of that goal, therefore increasing anxiety. Thus, frustration of goals comes from the situation that an individual finds themselves in and may lead to an increase in anxiety. Supporting the idea that working towards particular goals can lead to anxiety in goal-relevant situations, Thai college students who had the goal of succeeding in academic, English-speaking environments felt more anxiety about learning the English language than individuals who had the goal of experiencing a new culture (Koul, Roy, Kaewkuekool, & Ploisawaschai, 2009).

According to this idea, individuals should exhibit anxiety in situations in which they have goals. For example, an individual who is vying for a promotion at work may
feel more anxious about being late to work than an individual who is not competing for a promotion because being late might hurt his chances at achieving his goal, a promotion.

Table 1 provides a hypothetical data set to show how goals’ influence on anxieties might manifest in data. Here, both Alice has the goal of attaining a promotion, but Ben does not. Notice that Alice has higher anxiety about being late for work than does Ben. Ben is no more anxious when he is late for work than he is in an average situation because he does not have the goal of attaining a promotion. Thus, the important feature of the situation is career impact. In Alice’s case, this feature’s presence in a situation leads to increased anxiety, but in Ben’s case it does not.

**Table 1. Example of How Situational Anxiety is influenced by Goals, Average Anxiety, and Conscientiousness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anxiety when late for work</th>
<th>Extent to which the person has the goal of getting a promotion?</th>
<th>Average anxiety in situations</th>
<th>Conscientiousness score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chip</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table provides a hypothetical example representing relationships between goals, anxiety, and traits.

Individuals with similar Big Five trait levels should have goals and anxieties in similar areas. Looking at Table 1 again, note that Alice and Chip, scoring an 8 and a 10 on conscientiousness, respectively, have strong goals of obtaining a promotion, but Ben, scoring a 3 on conscientiousness, does not have the goal of getting a promotion. Thus, the
more conscientious a person is, the more likely they are to have the goal of getting a promotion, and the more likely they are to be anxious when they are late for work.

Theoretically then, the relationship between an individual’s if...then patterns of anxiety and their traits could be explained by the goals that they have (Figure 1). For example, individuals high on conscientiousness might only be anxious about getting good grades because of the academic goals that they have. In this study I investigated the partial correlation between if...then patterns and each trait, controlling for an individual’s goals. I expected that these partial correlations would be non-significant, indicating that if...then patterns of anxiety are only related to traits because of the goals that an individual has.

**Figure 1. Mediation Model**

![Diagram](image)

*Note.* This figure shows the expected mediation model for the current study.

**The Goals of the Big Five and Anxiety-Provoking Features**

In the following sections I will discuss the goals associated with high and low levels of each Big Five trait as well as the hypotheses I derived from these goals. Some of
the goals that were often reported by participants of a study by Reisz and Ozer (2011) had to do with friends, romantic partners, family members, confidence, academics, and finances. Thus, the features, or “ifs,” coded in the situations of the current study were directly related to those goal areas. The specific features coded, in order, were potential social conflict with friends, potential social conflict with a romantic partner or potential romantic partner, potential social conflict with family members, potential for embarrassment or rejection, academic impact, and financial impact. Therefore, I will be talking about anxiety due to each of these features. For example, anxiety due to high levels of academic impact in the situation. The following section will be organized by traits and in each section the hypotheses will be presented in the order of the features, unless there is no hypothesis for a specific feature, in which case it will be skipped.

**Openness to experience.** Openness to experience is characterized by strong intellectual curiosity and the enjoyment of a variety of new experiences. The facets of openness to experience are aesthetics, openness to ideas, fantasy, actions, and openness to values (Costa & McCrae, 1995). An individual high in openness to experience may enjoy all kinds of art, regularly go to new restaurants, and enjoy using their imagination, but an individual low in openness to experience may go through the same routine each day, decline experiencing new things, and rarely consider ideas outside of those that they endorse. Openness to experience has been positively associated with outcomes like marijuana use (Terracciano, Löckenhoff, Crum, Bienvenu, & Costa, 2008), social activism at young ages (Curtin, Stewart, & Duncan, 2010), flexibility of identity at work and with family (Whitbourne, 1986), and successful aging (Gregory, Nettelbeck, & Wilson, 2010).
Individuals high in openness to experience tend to have goals of making progress towards long-term goals in the areas of health/appearance, career, engaging in recreational activities more, learning new things or improving their skills, organizing their life, travelling, finding a romantic partner, decreasing negative affect, improving their long-term financial situation, being independent, and helping their friends (Table 2). Individuals low in openness to experience tend to have goals of improving relationships with family members, completing their education, losing weight, managing their time more effectively, reducing stress, completing minimum performance requirements, saving money, being more active in the social community, sleeping a proper amount, and being more talkative (Reisz & Ozer, 2011).

Individuals high in openness to new experiences frequently reported that finding a romantic partner was a goal of theirs, so I hypothesize that open individuals will be more anxious in situations that have high potential for conflict with a romantic partner or a potential romantic partner (Table 2; see Table 3 for hypotheses).

Individuals low in openness to new experiences frequently reported that maintaining or improving relationships with specific family members was a goal of theirs (Table 2). Thus, I hypothesize that individuals low on openness will be more anxious than other individuals in situations that have high potential for conflict with a family member (see Table 3 for hypotheses). In other words, openness to experience is expected to be negatively related to anxiety from conflict with family members.

Individuals low in openness reported having the goal of graduating or completing their education, so I hypothesize that openness will be negatively correlated with anxiety about academic concerns.
Table 2. Goals Associated with Each of the Big Five from Reisz & Ozer (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Openness- high</th>
<th>Conscientiousness- high</th>
<th>Extraversion- high</th>
<th>Agreeableness- high</th>
<th>Neuroticism- high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain or improve health, appearance or hygiene (417)</td>
<td>Graduate or complete education (373)</td>
<td>Maintain or improve romantic relationship (315)</td>
<td>Maintain or improve relations with family or specific family member(s) (897)</td>
<td>Maintain or improve relations with family or specific family member(s) (897)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve meaningful career goal (306)</td>
<td>Maintain or improve romantic relationship (315)</td>
<td>Save money (211)</td>
<td>Be more assertive, self-confident (177)</td>
<td>Lose weight (288)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation or improvement in recreation, fine arts, hobbies (229)</td>
<td>Achieve meaningful career goal (306)</td>
<td>Achieve meaningful career goal (210)</td>
<td>Be less shy, more talkative (125)</td>
<td>Alter a social personality trait to get along better with others (262)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new skill or gain knowledge for personal satisfaction (182)</td>
<td>Afford to purchase a desired item for self (261)</td>
<td>Clean-up or get organized (176)</td>
<td>Assist family member(s) (89)</td>
<td>Reduce stress (260)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean-up or get organized (176)</td>
<td>Reduce stress (260)</td>
<td>Family of origin concerns (89)</td>
<td>Family of origin concerns (89)</td>
<td>Be more assertive, self-confident (177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel (172)</td>
<td>Pursue advanced degree (200)</td>
<td>Increase income (72)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decrease negative affect (83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a romantic partner (132)</td>
<td>Improve longer-term financial situation (49)</td>
<td>Improve long-term financial situation (49)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Control temper or anger (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make progress on long-term plans (84)</td>
<td>Maintain or improve relations with family or specific family member(s) (26)</td>
<td>Transfer to other campus (45)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not worry so much (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease negative affect (83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organization (35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness- high</td>
<td>Conscientiousness- high</td>
<td>Extraversion- high</td>
<td>Agreeableness- high</td>
<td>Neuroticism- high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be self- sufficient (78)</td>
<td>Feel better about self (32)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation or language (61)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve longer-term financial situation (49)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence (40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist friend(s) (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness- low</td>
<td>Conscientiousness- low</td>
<td>Extraversion- low</td>
<td>Agreeableness- low</td>
<td>Neuroticism- low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain or improve relations with family or specific family member(s) (897)</td>
<td>Lose weight (288) Make new friends (238) Alter a social personality trait to get along better with others (262)</td>
<td>Get in shape or exercise (465)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or complete education (373)</td>
<td>Use time more effectively (includes “stop procrastinating”) (281) Be more assertive, self-confident (177)</td>
<td>Attain a virtue: courage, honesty, dutifulness, not be selfish,… (120)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or complete education (373)</td>
<td>Lose weight (288) Alter a social personality trait to get along better with others (262)</td>
<td>Be more assertive, self-confident (177)</td>
<td>Attain a virtue: courage, honesty, dutifulness, not be selfish,… (120)</td>
<td>Get in shape or exercise (465)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose weight (288)</td>
<td>Use time more effectively (includes “stop procrastinating”) (281) Make new friends (238) Be less shy, more talkative (125) Decrease negative affect (83)</td>
<td>Religious (102)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use time more effectively (includes “stop procrastinating”) (281)</td>
<td>Make new friends (238) Be less shy, more talkative (125) Decrease negative affect (83)</td>
<td>Assist family member(s) (89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce stress (260)</td>
<td>Participate or improvement in recreation, fine arts, hobbies (229)</td>
<td>Control temper or anger (44)</td>
<td>Improve longer-term financial situation (49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet minimal performance standard (230)</td>
<td>Clean-up or get organized (176)</td>
<td>Attain a minimal moral standard (7)</td>
<td>Meta-goals (goals to set or achieve goals, content-free achievement goals) (36)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness-low</td>
<td>Conscientiousness-low</td>
<td>Extraversion-low</td>
<td>Agreeableness-low</td>
<td>Neuroticism-low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save money (211)</td>
<td>Improve sleep schedule (147)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have children (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in larger social community (180)</td>
<td>Social relationships (130)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve sleep schedule (147)</td>
<td>Peer relations (81)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be less shy, more talkative (125)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Goals associated with high/low trait levels for each of the Big Five with the frequency of that goal being reported in parenthesis, N=1,439. Reprinted from “Personality traits and the predictions of personal goals,” by Z. Reisz and D. J. Ozer, 2011. University of California, Riverside. Unpublished poster.

### Table 3. Hypothesized Relationships between Anxieties and the Big Five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety about…</th>
<th>Openness</th>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with romantic partner</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with family</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(weak)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for embarrassment or rejection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic impact</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial impact</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The hypothesized relationships between specific anxieties and the Big Five personality traits.
Individuals low on openness frequently reported that saving money was a goal of theirs (Table 2). Individuals high on openness also had a financial goal, specifically to improve their long-term financial situation; however, the frequency of reporting financial goals was much higher for individuals low in openness than it was for individuals high in openness. Open individuals, since they seek novelty, might also value new experiences more than financial stability, making them less anxious about financial matters. I hypothesize that openness to experience will be negatively related to financial concerns.

**Conscientiousness.** Conscientiousness is characterized by being self-controlled, organized, and desiring high levels of achievement. The facets of conscientiousness are self-discipline, achievement striving, dutifulness, competence, order, and deliberation (Costa & McCrae, 1995). An individual high in conscientiousness may show up on time, complete all their work as early as possible, and accomplish a lot each day, but an individual low in conscientiousness may be consistently late, set low standards of achievement for their self, and turn in work of poor quality.

Individuals high in conscientiousness tend to have goals of completing their education, improving their relationship with their romantic partner, achieving a career goal, saving money to purchase a particular item, reducing stress, pursuing an advanced degree, improving their long-term financial situation, and improving relationships with family members (Table 2). Individuals low in conscientiousness tend to have goals of losing weight, managing their time more effectively, getting along better with others, making new friends, engaging in recreational activities more, organizing their life, sleeping a proper amount, and improving social relationships and peer relations (Table 2, Reisz & Ozer, 2011).
Individuals low on conscientiousness report having goals of making new friends and having good social relationships (Table 2, Reisz & Ozer, 2011). Thus, I hypothesize that conscientiousness will be negatively related to anxiety about social conflict with friends.

Highly conscientious individuals also reported that maintaining or improving their romantic relationships was a frequent goal of theirs. Thus, I hypothesize that conscientiousness will be positively related to anxiety from social conflict with a romantic partner.

Individuals high on conscientiousness sometimes reported that maintaining or improving their relationships with specific family members was a goal of theirs. However, this goal was only reported by 26 individuals. Thus, I expect there will be a weak, positive relationship between conscientiousness and anxiety about social conflict with family members.

The most frequently reported goal of conscientious individuals was graduating or completing their education, so I hypothesize that conscientiousness will be positively related to anxiety about academic matters (Table 2).

Individuals high on conscientiousness reported that they aimed to save money to purchase a desired item for themselves or improve their long-term financial situation. I hypothesize that conscientiousness will be positively related to financial concerns.

**Extraversion.** Extraversion is characterized by being outgoing and sociable. The facets of extraversion are warmth, positive emotions, gregariousness, excitement seeking, activity, and assertiveness (Costa & McCrae, 1995). An individual high in extraversion may enjoy meeting a lot of new people, be very active on a daily basis, and pursue risky
but fun experiences, but an individual low in extraversion may avoid meeting new people, talk less, and be less active.

Individuals high in extraversion tend to have goals of improving their romantic relationships, achieving career goals, saving money, organizing their life, resolving family concerns, increasing their income and improving their long-term financial situation, transferring to another school, organizing their life, and feeling better about themselves (Table 2). Individuals low in extraversion tend to have goals of making new friends and improving social relationships, and being more assertive and less shy (Reisz & Ozer, 2011).

Individuals low in extraversion reported having goals of making new friends or having good social relationships (Table 2). Thus, I hypothesize that extraversion will be negatively related to anxiety from social conflict with friends.

Highly extraverted individuals most frequently reported the goal of maintaining or improving their romantic relationship, so I hypothesize that anxiety regarding social conflict with a romantic partner will be higher for extraverts.

Individuals low on extraversion report having goals of being more confident and less shy. They also report wanting to make new friends and have good social relationships. Individuals low on extraversion seem to be very concerned about having social relationships and the skills required to form and maintain those relationships so they might be particularly anxious in situations in which there is potential for embarrassment or rejection. Therefore, I hypothesize that extraversion will be negatively associated with experiencing anxiety caused by potential for embarrassment or rejection.
Extraverts frequently reported financial goals like saving money, increasing their income, and improving their long-term financial situation. I hypothesize that anxiety about finances will be positively related to extraversion.

**Agreeableness.** Agreeableness is characterized by being helpful, polite, friendly and sympathetic. The facets of agreeableness are compliance, straightforwardness, altruism, tender-mindedness, modesty, and trust (Costa & McCrae, 1995). An individual high in agreeableness may have positive feelings towards other people and therefore be friendly, polite, and sympathetic to them, but an individual low in agreeableness may be less concerned for the welfare of others and more concerned for the welfare of themselves, leading to rude behavior.

Individuals high in agreeableness tend to have goals of improving relationships with family members, being more assertive and less shy, helping family members and resolving family concerns (Table 2). Individuals low in agreeableness tend to have goals of getting along better with others, attaining a virtue, being more religious, decreasing negative affect, controlling their temper, and attaining a minimal moral standard (Reisz & Ozer, 2011).

Agreeable individuals were very concerned about maintaining good family relations so I hypothesize that anxiety about social conflict with family members will be positively related to agreeableness.

Agreeable individuals also reported goals of being more extraverted such as being more assertive, confident, and talkative. Therefore, I hypothesize that agreeable individuals may be more anxious than other individuals in potentially embarrassing situations or in situations in which they could potentially be rejected.
Neuroticism. Neuroticism is characterized by being anxious and emotionally unstable. The facets of neuroticism are depression, anxiety, vulnerability, self-consciousness, anger/hostility, and impulsiveness (Costa & McCrae, 1995). An individual high in neuroticism may worry a lot and experience emotions very strongly, but an individual low in neuroticism may react calmly to surprises.

Individuals high in neuroticism tend to have goals of improving relationships with family members, losing weight, getting along with others better, reducing stress, being more assertive, decreasing negative affect, controlling their temper, and decreasing the amount of worrying they do (Reisz & Ozer, 2011). Individuals low in neuroticism tend to have goals of getting in shape, completing their education, saving money to purchase a specific item, helping family members, improving their long-term financial status, setting more goals, and having children (Reisz & Ozer, 2011).

Highly neurotic individuals frequently reported being concerned about maintaining good family relations so I hypothesize that anxiety about social conflict with family members will be positively related to neuroticism.

Individuals high in neuroticism had the goal of being more self-confident so I hypothesize that neuroticism will be positively related to anxiety from embarrassment.

Individuals low in neuroticism reported having the goal of graduating or completing their education, so I hypothesize that neuroticism will be negatively correlated with academic anxiety.

People low in neuroticism had goals of affording to purchase a desired item and improving their long-term financial situation. Thus, I hypothesize that neuroticism will be negatively correlated with financial anxiety.
The correlations for which there are not hypotheses in Table 3 will be examined in an exploratory fashion.

**Developing a List of Anxiety-Provoking Situations**

Assessing *if...then* patterns requires that an individual be observed in a large number of situations. This would be quite a daunting task if the situations were enacted in a laboratory setting. However, gathering a large number of descriptions of anxiety-provoking situations and making them into a survey that assesses anxiety in each situation, as was done in the current study, allows *if...then* patterns for many individuals to be computed in a limited amount of time.

Despite the prevalence of research in psychology on anxiety, few studies have developed lists of anxiety-provoking situations. The few lists of anxiety-provoking situations that do exist cannot be used for the current study because they represent particular target populations or are not accessible. For example, Ciliberti, Gould, Smith, Chorney and Edelstein (2011) gathered a list of anxiety-provoking situations for older adults using focus group sessions. This list of anxiety-provoking situations is not relevant for college-age individuals and is therefore not useful for the current study. Another study gathered 1,000 anxiety-provoking or threatening events described by 12, 15, and 18 year olds, but then used the situations that were reported by all three ages of participants, leaving only 11 situations (Stattin & Magnusson, 1984). This exemplifies a weakness of research that does use lists of situations. Studies that gather these lists often condense the large number of responses gathered to a much smaller number, losing many of the details and the specific context of each situation that made the list desirable in the first place. Thus, in developing a list of anxiety-provoking situations for the current study, I aim to
preserve as many details of the situations as possible and as many unique situations as possible, rather than condensing them down to a much smaller number. As for the representative list of 1,000 anxiety-provoking situations gathered by Stattin and Magnusson (1984), these were gathered in the mid-1980s and are therefore not computerized, not easily accessible, and potentially out of date. Even if this list were accessible, many of these situations would not be relevant for the college students in the present study since they were described by 12 and 15 year olds. A third study gathered anxiety-provoking situations provided by 21 patients with social phobias (Mäntynen, Happonen & Toskala, 2000). The participants described the anxiety-provoking situation, others’ imagined reactions to this person in the situation, the worst possible threat in the situation, and the individuals experience after the event. These situations are not relevant for the current study because it will examine situational anxiety in college students, most of whom do not have social phobias. Thus, for the present study, a list of anxiety-provoking situations for college students was developed.

One way to develop a list of anxiety-provoking situations is to come up with a comprehensive list of all situations that cause anxiety and either use this entire list or take a representative sample from it. It would be nearly impossible to create a comprehensive list of all anxiety-provoking situations, so gathering a list of anxiety-provoking situations that sufficiently represents anxiety-provoking situations that individuals experience in their daily lives is the next best thing for identifying naturalistic situational features that influence anxiety. This can be accomplished by having participants provide anxiety-provoking situations that they have recently experienced. Gathering a list of situations in order to create an inventory of anxiety in this way has many advantages over other
methods of gathering stimuli. In many studies, researchers generate the stimuli themselves, which can limit the breadth and scope of the situational forces. The creation of a list of anxiety-provoking situations from daily life allows for the identification of naturalistic situational features that influence anxiety. Thus, even if there were more relevant features than the features I coded in the situations, I could determine those additional features.

One problem with using participant-provided situations that occur in daily life is that the features can be correlated, masking the influence of each feature on the outcome. To overcome this obstacle, members of the research lab generated anxiety-provoking situations that exemplified one feature, but not the others, making the features independent of the others. Thus, the list of anxiety-provoking situations was composed of both participant-provided situations and lab-generated situations.
PRE-STUDY TO GENERATE ANXIETY-PROVOKING SITUATIONS
AND CREATE AN INVENTORY

The purpose of the pre-study was to create a list of anxiety-provoking situations to serve as items on the situational anxiety inventory. These situations were developed in two ways: (a) by having participants of the pre-study list recent anxiety-provoking situations that they or someone they knew had experienced and (b) by giving members of the research lab a list of features that I developed and asking them to come up with situations that exemplified one feature, but not the others. The goal of having participant-provided situations was to develop a sample of situations that represented anxiety-provoking situations in daily life. The goal of the lab-generated situations was to have independent features so that I could isolate the impact of each feature on anxiety. The procedures for the generation and editing of both types of items are described in the following paragraphs. The situational anxiety inventory was used in the main study for assessing participants’ patterns of anxiety across many different situations and can be viewed in Appendix A.

Generation of Participant Provided Anxiety-Provoking Situations

Participants of the pre-study were research methods students at Wake Forest University, N = 73. They were sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Participants did not receive course credit or any other direct benefit for their participation. The pre-study was introduced at the end of each of five research methods lab classes after the lab instructor left the room. A member of the research team who was uninvolved with the course gave a brief introduction to the pre-study and then provided the students with the survey’s website address. The research team member assured participants that their responses were
anonymous and that they could choose not to answer any question. Once participants logged onto the study’s website, they were shown an informed consent form and were given the choice to continue to the survey. Participants then completed a single item, responding to the prompt for generation of anxiety-provoking situations, described in the paragraph below. No data was gathered that could connect a participant’s identity to the answers they provided. The data were collected and recorded through a secure website.

Participants responded to the prompt for generation of anxiety-provoking situations that read:

Please list two situations in which you or someone you know has felt anxious in the last few days. Be as specific as you can. These situations can occur in academic or non-academic situations. Here are some examples: “I took my car through the car wash and I felt anxious because I didn’t know if I should tip the attendant even though he didn’t do anything except ask me which wash I wanted. He didn’t wipe down my car after the wash or put my antennae back in which made it even more unclear if I should tip.” and “I called one of my friends several times and he/she didn’t answer. I was going to ask him/her an important question about our dinner plans and I felt anxious and angry when he/she didn’t answer.”

The prompt asked for two specific and recent situations, rather than asking for any anxiety-provoking situation participants could recall, to encourage individuals to provide a few detailed responses, rather than writing many short responses. This prompt included the option to list anxiety-provoking situations for someone the participant knew so that sensitive information in responses like “getting tested at student health” or “when yelled at by their significant other” seemed more acceptable and would not be necessarily attributed to the individual. This was designed to increase the number of non-socially desirable responses obtained from this prompt. The timeline given for these situations
was set for the past few days to encourage participants to report everyday situations rather than major life events like final exams. The request to be as specific as possible was included to reduce ambiguities and to allow the researcher to understand the situation accurately. The prompt clearly stated that both academic and non-academic situations were appropriate responses to encourage a wide variety of situations. The examples were provided to give participants an idea of how much detail to provide and to illustrate that non-academic and somewhat unimportant situations were acceptable responses.

**Editing of Participant-Provided Situations**

After the anxiety-provoking situations were generated, the situations were analyzed for redundancy, cleaned up, and made more general if needed.

Many of the situations provided by participants were redundant. Thus, similarities between situations were evaluated and the situations were combined into a single situation if they appeared to be redundant. An example of two redundant situations, before editing, is “I have a really busy next two weeks, thinking about all of the assignments I have to do makes me anxious.” and “At the beginning of the week I became really anxious after looking over my calendar for the last few weeks of the semester. Realizing I had so much to do made me anxious.” These situations were redundant and therefore consolidated into the situation “You are making a list of things to do and you realize you are going to be very busy for the next two weeks.” Some responses were subtly different, however, and were not consolidated. For example, the unedited situations “I got a midterm grade back in history and it was not what I expected. I felt anxious because I wasn't sure if I should approach the professor that same day and question him about what I left out in my essays since all he did was give the amount of
points we received. I ended up leaving class and then going back to his office to ask him, and I felt angry when he said there was more I could do and that was it.” and “I received a C as my lit midterm grade. I've never gotten a C in my life, let alone in English, so I started crying and had to meet with the professor.” remained two separate items. These items remained distinct because getting a grade that is worse than expected and getting a C might be very different for some people and also because first situation has more unique details about the visit to the professor.

The situations were cleaned up by editing them to eliminate misspelled words, incomplete sentences, and improper grammar. Situations were also reorganized if they were difficult to understand because of their structure. This ensured that the situations were understandable to the participants of the main study.

The situations were made more general, if necessary, by recoding specific places or people into general terms. The purpose of this step was to ensure that the situations were applicable to a wide range of participants. For example “French class” was recoded to “class” because the general item was applicable to most individuals, but the specific item was not.

Situations that might not be applicable to everyone in our intended sample were removed. There were a total of 65 final participant-generated situations after editing.

**Generation of Lab-Provided Anxiety Provoking Situations**

In addition to the participant-provided anxiety provoking situations, five members of the lab generated anxiety provoking situations. Lab members were given the six features (conflict with friends, conflict with a romantic partner, conflict with family, embarrassment/rejection, academic impact, and financial impact) and the coding rubric
for those features (Appendix B) and were asked to generate situations that exhibited one feature, but not the others. Each lab member generated one to three situations for each feature. The lab-generated situations were edited in the same way as the participant-provided situations described in the previous section. Situations that might not be applicable to our intended sample were removed. There were 40 final lab-generated situations after editing.

**Constructing the Situational Anxiety Inventory**

All the situations, both participant-generated and lab-generated, were put on the same response scale and paired with instructions to create the situational anxiety inventory (Appendix A).

The situations were evaluated by participants on the question “How anxious would you be in this situation?” The response scale was: 1 (*Not at all anxious*), 2 (*Slightly anxious*), 3 (*Moderately anxious*), 4 (*Very anxious*), and 5 (*Extremely anxious*).

The anxiety-provoking situations were paired with the instructions “For this task you will be asked to imagine that you are in a particular situation. Please read each situation carefully and then evaluate how anxious you would feel in the situation. For situations that you have experienced in the past, try to indicate how you have acted in these types of situations in the past. For situations that you have not been in, indicate what you would probably do in this situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will remain confidential.” The list of anxiety-provoking situations became a complete survey, the situational anxiety inventory, after the completion of the above steps.
METHOD

Participants

Participants were 112 introductory psychology students (61 Female, 48 Male, and 3 Unreported) from Wake Forest University’s subject pool who participated for 1.5 hours of credit towards the completion of a course requirement for their introductory psychology course. The average age of participants was 19.1 years old. There were 92 Caucasians, 6 Hispanics, 6 African Americans, 5 mixed ethnicity and 3 individuals of unreported race in our sample. The average college GPA of the participants was 3.15. Eight of the participants had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. The average anxiety for individuals who were never diagnosed with an anxiety disorder was right around the midpoint of the scale ($M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 2.85$). The average anxiety for individuals who had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives had slightly higher anxiety ratings in general than individuals who had never been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder ($M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 3.22$).

Six participants provided more than one response to the survey. These six participants completed the survey once and also had an additional incomplete response. In all cases, the incomplete responses were deleted and the complete responses were retained and used in the analyses.

Exclusion Criteria

Three participants were excluded because they did not complete the second half of the survey, leaving 109 participants. Participants would also have been excluded if they spent less than 15 minutes on the survey, but all of the participants spent more than 15 minutes on the survey, making this criterion unnecessary in the present study.
Participants were also excluded if they appeared to answer randomly. I assessed random answering by correlating each individual’s responses on a section of the survey with the normative response profile; this is called an item-total correlation. Individuals with low item-total correlations could be answering randomly or simply have very non-normative responses. Thus, I correlated each individual’s responses with the normative profile of two different sections of the survey in the hopes that individuals with low item-total correlations on both sections were those who answered randomly, but individuals with non-normative responses would only have a low item-total correlation on one section of the survey. Thus, if an individual’s responses correlated at less than .25 with the average responses on the two sections of the survey, they were excluded from the analyses. Three participants were removed because they failed to meet this criterion. Thus, the total sample after exclusion consisted of 106 participants.

**Measures**

**Situational anxiety inventory (SAI).** The situational anxiety inventory that was developed in the pre-study was used to assess the if...then patterns of anxiety for participants (Appendix A). Participants were instructed to “Please read each situation carefully and rate how anxious you would be in each situation on the scale below.” Each situation was then presented individually and participants read each situation and responded to the question “How anxious would you be in this situation?” The response scale was: 1 (Not at all anxious), 2 (Slightly anxious), 3 (Moderately anxious), 4 (Very anxious), and 5 (Extremely anxious).

**Assessing the “ifs” of the SAI.** Situations on the SAI were independently coded by members of the lab on the features, or “ifs,” that influence anxiety. The features coded
in the present study were potential social conflict with friends, potential social conflict with family members, potential social conflict with a romantic partner, potential financial impact, potential academic impact, and the potential for embarrassment or rejection. These six dimensions were identified as features of situations that might be related to the anxieties of individuals with differing trait levels because of the goals they possess. Each feature was coded on a continuous scale from “1” to “5” for each situation (see Appendix B). The final feature codings were the average of all of the coders’ ratings of each feature in every situation. Thus, the feature codings used in the analyses were the same for all participants.

The situation with the highest average feature coding for conflict with friends involved being told a secret that could hurt a friend and planning to divulge this information to your friend (#94, M_{Conflict with friends} = 4.50). There were multiple situations with the lowest average feature coding possible for conflict with friends, many of which did not involve friends at all. For example, one situation involved not understanding an assignment from a class and the teacher calling on people to answer questions from it in the next class (#2, M_{Conflict with friends} = 1.00).

One of the situations with the highest average feature coding for conflict with a romantic partner or potential romantic partner involved going to talk to a romantic partner after a recent argument (#31, M_{Conflict with a romantic partner} = 4.33). The situations with the lowest average feature coding for conflict with a romantic partner or potential romantic partner did not involve a romantic partner at all. For example, telling your mother what you want to major in (#15, M_{Conflict with a romantic partner} = 1.00).
The situation with the highest average feature coding for conflict with family involved accidentally almost letting a secret of your mother’s slip to your father and being unsure if he can figure out the secret from what you said (#100, $M_{Conflict with family} = 4.17$). An example of a situation with a low feature coding on conflict with family involved losing your dorm keys and potentially being charged for new keys if you don’t find them (#17, $M_{Conflict with family} = 1.00$).

One of the situations with the highest on potential for embarrassment or rejection involved spilling a drink on the front of your pants at a social gathering (#88, $M_{Embarrassment or rejection} = 4.17$). An example of a situation with a low feature coding on potential embarrassment or rejection involved having a busy schedule and just starting a paper that is due in two days (#104, $M_{Embarrassment or rejection} = 1.00$).

The situation with the highest academic impact involved being sick and being denied a request to reschedule an exam, thus having to take the exam without preparing much (#48, $M_{Academic impact} = 4.67$). A situation with a low feature coding on academic impact involved walking in to a room and seeing your romantic partner quickly get off the phone without an explanation (#91, $M_{Academic impact} = 1.00$).

The situation with the highest financial impact involved being at the mall and realizing you left your money in the dressing room but not being able to find it when you go back to look for it (#70, $M_{Financial impact} = 4.33$). A situation with a low feature coding on financial impact involved your parents asking you to come to an event but you already make plans with a friend who will be in town for one night (#96, $M_{Financial impact} = 1.00$).

**Anagram Distractor Task.** The purpose of this task was to prevent the answers to the SAI from influencing the BFI and other personality measures as much as possible.
For instance, when answering the BFI item “Gets nervous easily” I did not want participants to base their responses on their answers to the SAI, but on their general behavior. The five minute distractor task consisted of 20 anagrams, which are scrambled up words for the participants to unscramble (Appendix C). The anagrams were obtained from Novick and Sherman (2008). An example of an anagram is “SINUM,” which once unscrambled, spells “MINUS.”

**Big Five Inventory (BFI).** The BFI was used to assess openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). This scale is composed of 44 items (see Appendix D). The instructions for the BFI read “Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. How do you see yourself in general? I see myself as someone who....” One item on the scale reads “Is talkative.” The response scale was 1 (Disagree Strongly), 2 (Disagree a Little), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 4 (Agree a Little), and 5 (Agree Strongly). Each of the five traits was measured by 8-10 items that composed five different subscales. Items were reverse coded if they were negatively-keyed and then all of the items for each subscale were averaged together to get a trait score. Cronbach’s alphas for the BFI subscales in this study ranged from $\alpha = .77$ to $\alpha = .88$, indicating that the subscales were sufficiently reliable.

**Goal Scale.** The Goal Scale was developed specifically for this study and was used to assess how much participants had the goals of succeeding in the areas related to the six features. These areas were: making or maintaining friendships, having or beginning a meaningful romantic relationship, having meaningful relationships with
family members, being confident, achieving academically, and having adequate financial resources. There were 12 items, two for each feature-related goal (Appendix E). Participants were asked “How much do you see yourself as having goals in the following areas?” An example of an item is “Making new friends.” The response scale was 1 (Not at all), 2 (A little), 3 (Somewhat), 4 (Considerably), and 5 (Very much). The two items for each subscale assessing a goal were averaged together to get a total goal score for that area. Cronbach’s alphas for the goal subscales in this study ranged from $\alpha = .48$ to $\alpha = .85$, with friendship goals, family goals, and confidence goals exhibiting low reliability (under $\alpha = .70$).

**Demographic questions.** Participants indicated their gender, ethnicity, age, high school and college GPA, and whether or not they had ever been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. If a participant had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder they were asked to indicate which anxiety disorder.

**Procedure**

All participants completed the study materials online survey at a time of their choosing. A digital informed consent form was presented at the beginning of the survey. Consent was required to begin the survey. Participants then completed the SAI, the 5 minute distractor task composed of anagrams, the Big Five Inventory, the Inventory of Individual Differences in the Lexicon (IIDL) (Wood, Nye, & Saucier, 2010), the Goal Scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), the Feature Importance Scale, and the demographic information questions. The IIDL, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Feature Importance scales were given to participants for purposes unrelated to the present study, so they are not described or discussed.
Computing *If…Then* Patterns

*If…then* patterns represent the relationship between a feature and an outcome, in this case anxiety, for an individual. To compute *if…then* patterns, I first constructed a data set with each *situation* as the unit of analysis (see Table 4 for an example).

**Table 4. Example Data Set**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of situation 1: A new acquaintance invited you to have lunch with them. Halfway through you realize you accidentally left your purse/wallet at home.</th>
<th>Feature: Potential for Embarrassment</th>
<th>Feature: Financial Concerns</th>
<th>How anxious would you be? Alice</th>
<th>How anxious would you be? Ben</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of situation 2: A friend loaned you money and you agreed to pay them back by a certain date. As the date approached, however, you realized you really could not afford to pay them back unless you waited a few weeks for your paycheck to come in, which would make you break your promise.</th>
<th>Feature: Potential for Embarrassment</th>
<th>Feature: Financial Concerns</th>
<th>How anxious would you be? Alice</th>
<th>How anxious would you be? Ben</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of situation 3: You have been paying bills when you realize that your checking account is getting low. You know that you could get back to your normal balance by drawing from your savings but you were saving up to buy something special.</th>
<th>Feature: Potential for Embarrassment</th>
<th>Feature: Financial Concerns</th>
<th>How anxious would you be? Alice</th>
<th>How anxious would you be? Ben</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This example shows how features are related to anxiety ratings to compute qid$s.
For each participant, I then correlated the participant’s self-reported anxiety scores across situations with the coders’ average rating on the relevant feature, using a similar methodology to that developed by Wood and Brumbaugh (2009) and Rogers and Wood (2010). Each correlation was specific to an individual and showed how much their ratings were influenced by a given feature, representing the if…then pattern for that individual. For example, in Table 4, correlating the “Feature: Potential for Embarrassment” column and Alice’s ratings of her anxiety in those three situations produces a strong correlation, $r = .88$. The correlation is positive such that as potential for embarrassment increases, so does Alice’s anxiety. This suggests that potential for embarrassment is a strong determinant of Alice’s anxiety. If I correlate financial concerns with Alice’s anxiety ratings, however, I get a small correlation, $r = -.02$. Thus, Alice’s anxiety is unrelated to financial concerns. Ben’s anxiety, however, is strongly related to financial concerns, $r = .92$.

Another way to look at this correlation is graphically. Suppose an individual has a correlation of $r = .45$ between their ratings of anxiety in the situations and a feature that represents how possible embarrassment in a situation is across a large number of situations (see Figure 2). This individual is more likely to feel anxious in situations in which there is greater potential for embarrassment than they are in situations in which they are unlikely to be embarrassed. Within-person correlations have been labeled as Q-correlations in the psychometric literature (Stephenson, 1952); thus, I call these correlations $q_{id}$, with id standing for the participant’s identification number. Each participant has one $q_{id}$ for each feature. These were labeled $q_{id}$ for feature x, such as $q_{id}$ for potential for embarrassment.
Figure 2. Example Correlation between a Behavior and a Feature of a Situation

Figure 2. This individual has a correlation between their feelings of anxiety (response) and the degree to which embarrassment is possible (a situational feature) of .45. Each dot represents a single situation.

The $q_{id}$s for each feature could have been computed by correlating an individual’s ratings of anxiety in all of the situations with the average feature coding of one feature for all the situations, controlling for the average feature coding of all of the other features in the situations. However, if the features share variance, computing the $q_{id}$ as a partial correlation could mask the influence of each feature on anxiety because it controls for the other features. In the participant-generated situations, which are the majority of situations used in this study, it is expected that the features will have some relationships, and
therefore shared variance, with the other features. Thus, for the purposes of the current study, \( q_{id} \)s were computed using zero-order correlations rather than partial correlations.

**Descriptive Analyses for If...Then Patterns**

The first analyses were descriptive analyses to investigate the distributions of \( q_{id} \)s. Specifically, the minimum, maximum, median, significance test of the median, and percent of \( q_{id} \)s above zero were calculated and interpreted for each \( q_{id} \). The median was used instead of the mean in this study, because the distributions for \( q_{id} \)s were skewed. The median and significance test of the median show the direction, strength, and significance of the \( q_{id} \) for each feature for the typical participant of the study. For example, a positive and significant median indicates that the typical participant of the study experiences more anxiety when that feature in present in situations than when it is not. An exploratory factor analysis, for the purpose of identifying additional situational features, was also run.

**Inter-feature Correlations**

Inter-feature correlations for participant-generated situations only and then lab-generated situations only were run to investigate the relationships among features in each of the two types of situations.

**The Relationships of the Situational Features to Anxiety**

The partial correlations of each feature to the average anxiety rating for each situation, controlling for the other features was computed and interpreted in order to understand the independent influence that situational features have on anxiety. A multiple regression was then run to determine if the six situational features coded in this study explained a significant portion of anxiety.
Relating If…Then Patterns to the Big Five

To test my hypotheses, the qids for each feature were added into a data file with the participant as the unit of analysis and then correlated with Big Five trait scores. A significant correlation between a qid for a feature and a personality trait indicated that high or low levels of that trait were characterized by high or low levels of anxiety related to that feature. For example, if the relationship between conscientiousness and the qid between academic impact and anxiety was positive and significant, it would mean that the more conscientious an individual is, the more anxious they are in situations with high academic impact. If the correlation was negative, it would mean that the more conscientious an individual is, the less anxious they are in situations with high academic impact. I compared my hypotheses (Table 3) to the obtained correlations to see which were supported and which were not.

Testing the Role of Goals in the Relationships between If…Then Patterns and the Big Five

First the correlations between goals and traits and the correlations between goals and qids were computed and interpreted. I then investigated the partial correlation between the qid for each feature and each trait, controlling for the feature-relevant goal. I expected that these partial correlations would be non-significant, indicating that if…then patterns of anxiety are only related to traits because of the goals that an individual has. For example, the partial correlation between the qid for financial impact and conscientiousness should be non-significant controlling for financial goals if an individual’s goals determine anxiety rather than an individual’s traits.
RESULTS

Situations with the Highest and Lowest Amount of Anxiety across People

The situations with the highest ratings of anxiety across people involved realizing you studied the wrong material during a test (#74, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 4.25$), leaving your wallet/purse somewhere and not finding it when you go back to look for it (#70, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 4.15$), accidentally denting your father’s new car (#67, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 4.02$), and having to do well on a final in order to get a B+ in a course (#32, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 3.82$). These situations all seem to involve accidentally doing something that has important potential consequences and most of them have academic or financial repercussions. The situations with the lowest ratings of anxiety across people involved telling your mother what you want to major in (#15, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 1.55$), trying to get together with a friend who has been complaining that you haven’t been keeping in touch (#8, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 1.94$), being stuck in a long traffic jam on a weekend (#13, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 1.94$), and realizing someone is in your seat on an airplane (#42, $M_{\text{Anxiety}} = 2.05$). These situations do not involve academic or financial matters, but instead seem to involve interpersonal communication.

Variability and Consensus of Qid$s for Each Feature in the Sample

Remember that a correlation between each participant’s anxiety in each situation and the average coding of one feature in each situation is called a $q_{id}$. These $q_{id}$s represent the strength of the link between a coded situational feature and the individual’s anxiety rating across situations. Looking at the distribution of individuals’ association between a feature and their anxiety across situations can give us an idea of how much $q_{id}$s vary.
between people and how much consensus there is. The only inferential statistics reported in this section will be one-sample Wilcoxon signed rank tests comparing the median qid for each feature to zero.

The qid$ for social conflict with friends ranged from $r = -.44$ to $r = .12$ (see Table 5 and Figure 3). The median qid for social conflict with friends was negative and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Percentage &gt; 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with friends</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with a romantic partner</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.04*</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with family</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-.05*</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential embarrassment or rejection</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic impact</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial impact</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table shows the percentage of qid$ above zero, the minimum qid and the maximum qid for each feature. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$ A significant p-value means the median is significantly different from zero using one-sample Wilcoxon signed rank tests.

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1 The median qid$ for participants were computed once with only participant-generated situations and again with only lab-generated situations. The differences in the medians ranged from .01 - .14 and the average difference was .04. These differences were considered negligible and therefore, the median qid$ which were computed using all the situations are reported.
Figure 3. This figure shows the frequency distribution of the q\textsubscript{id}s for each feature.
significantly different from zero, \( Mdn = -0.11, \ p < .001 \). This is the most negative median of any of the features, indicating that most people are less likely to be anxious in situations that involve conflict with friends than they are in situations that do not involve conflict with friends on the SAI. This finding will be interpreted further in the inter-feature correlation section.

The \( q_{id} \)s for social conflict with a romantic partner ranged from \( r = -0.21 \) to \( r = 0.35 \) (Table 5 and Figure 3). The median \( q_{id} \) for social conflict with a romantic partner was positive and significantly different from zero, \( Mdn = 0.04, \ p = .001 \). Fifty-nine percent of participants in this study had a positive \( q_{id} \) for social conflict with a romantic partner. These results indicate that most people are more likely to be anxious in situations that involve conflict with a romantic partner than in situations that do not involve conflict with a romantic partner on the SAI.

The \( q_{id} \)s for social conflict with family ranged from \( r = -0.27 \) to \( r = 0.30 \) (Table 5 and Figure 3). The median \( q_{id} \) for social conflict with family was negative and significantly different from zero, \( Mdn = -0.05, \ p = .003 \), indicating that people are less likely to be anxious in situations that involve conflict with family than in situations that do not involve conflict with family members on the SAI. This finding will be further interpreted in the discussion section.

The \( q_{id} \)s for potential embarrassment or rejection ranged from \( r = -0.29 \) to \( r = 0.30 \) (Table 5 and Figure 3). Fifty-seven percent of participants had a positive \( q_{id} \) for potential embarrassment or rejection, but the median \( q_{id} \) for this feature was not significantly different from zero, \( Mdn = 0.03, \ p = .11 \). Thus, situations with high potential for
embarrassment or rejection did not induce more or less anxiety than other situations on the SAI.

The $q_{id}$s for academic impact ranged from $r = -.32$ to $r = .48$ (Table 5 and Figure 3). This is the largest range of $q_{id}$s for any feature and also the most positive range. Seventy-four percent of participants had a positive $q_{id}$ for academic impact, and the median was positive and significantly different from zero, $Mdn = .12$, $p < .001$, indicating that most people are more likely to be anxious in situations with high academic impact than in situations with low academic impact on the SAI.

The $q_{id}$s for financial impact ranged from $r = -.24$ to $r = .47$ (Table 5 and Figure 3). Eighty-eight percent of participants had a positive $q_{id}$ for financial impact and the median was positive and significantly different from zero, $Mdn = .15$, $p < .001$. This shows that a large majority of people are more likely to be anxious in situations with high financial impact than in situations with low financial impact on the SAI.

There is clearly substantial variation in the strength and direction of the link between the features of a situation and anxiety for individuals. These differences may reflect individual differences in a meaningful way.

**Search for Additional Features Generally Underlying Anxiety**

To search for additional features in the data, the situations were factor analyzed as an exploratory analysis. No additional interpretable features were found and therefore no features were added to the data.

**Inter-Feature Correlations**

The inter-feature correlations are reported for both participant-generated and lab-generated situations, because the lab-generated situations were intended to have
independent features but the features of the participant-generated situations were free to relate to one another. The degrees of freedom for all inter-feature correlations for participant-provided situations was 63, but the degrees of freedom for all inter-feature correlations for lab-generated situations was 38.

**Participant-Generated Situations.** Conflict with friends and academic impact were the most strongly correlated features, $r = -0.38, p = 0.002$. The correlation was negative, implying that in the participant-generated situations, high conflict with friends was accompanied by low academic impact or vice versa. Remember that in the section on variability and consensus of qids the median qid for social conflict with friends was negative and significant, indicating that most people are less likely to be anxious in situations that involve conflict with friends than they are in situations that do not involve conflict with friends. This might not seem to make sense, but can be explained by inter-feature correlations. There was a negative and significant inter-feature correlation between conflict with friends and academic impact in the participant-generated situations. The relationship between conflict with friends and academic in the lab-generated situations was negative and marginally significant, $r(38) = -0.30, p = 0.06$. Thus, in all situations there was a trend for situations high in conflict with friends to be low in academic impact. Because the students at Wake Forest University are very academically minded individuals, the negative inter-feature correlations are a possible explanation for why our participants reported being less anxious in situations with high conflict with friends than in situations with low conflict with friends.

The next highest inter-feature correlation was the relationship between academic impact and financial impact, $r = -0.30, p = 0.02$. This correlation was also negative,
indicating that high academic impact in the participant-provided situations was typically accompanied by low financial impact or vice versa.

The next highest inter-feature correlation for participant-generated situations was between potential for embarrassment or rejection and academic impact, $r = -0.29, p = 0.02$. This correlation indicates that high academic impact in the participant-provided situations was typically accompanied by low potential for embarrassment or rejection or vice versa.

The next and last significant inter-feature correlation for participant-generated situations was between academic impact and conflict with a romantic partner, $r = -0.28, p = 0.03$. This correlation was also negative, indicating that high academic impact in situations was typically accompanied by low conflict with a romantic partner or vice versa. None of the other inter-feature correlations were significant (all $|r_s| < 0.13, ps > 0.32$).

**Lab-Generated Situations.** In the lab-generated situations, none of the inter-feature correlations were significant (all $|r_s| < 0.30, ps > 0.06$), indicating that our lab was successful in creating situations with independent features.

**What Features of Situations Influence Anxiety Controlling for the Other Features?**

To assess which features influenced anxiety levels independent of the other features, partial correlations between average anxiety in the situations and the rating of each feature in the situations controlling for all of the other features were computed. Conflict with friends was not significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features, partial $r(98) = 0.03, p = 0.80$ Conflict with a romantic partner was positively and significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features, partial $r(98) = 0.27, p = 0.006$. Conflict with family members was not significantly related to anxiety controlling
for the other features, partial $r(98) = .08, p = .43$. Potential for embarrassment or rejection was positively and significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features, partial $r(98) = .21, p = .04$. Academic impact was positively and significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features, partial $r(98) = .39, p < .001$. Financial impact was also positively and significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features, partial $r(98) = .41, p < .001$. In sum, every feature was positively and significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features, except for social conflict with friends and social conflict with family which were positively but non-significantly related to anxiety controlling for the other features.

**Do the Situational Features Explain a Significant Portion of Anxiety?**

The results of a multiple regression showed that the six features accounted for twenty-seven percent of the variance in average anxiety across participants, $R^2 = .27, F(6, 104) = 5.96, p < .001$. Thus, the six features accounted for a significant portion of anxiety in this study; however, much of the variance in anxiety is still unexplained.

**Associations between the Big Five and Situational Contingencies of Anxiety**

Hypothesized and observed correlations can be compared in Table 6. Openness to experience was hypothesized to be positively correlated with anxiety about social conflict with a romantic partner and negatively correlated with anxiety about social conflict with family, anxiety about matters with academic impact, and anxiety about matters with financial impact. The results showed no significant relationships between openness to experience and any of the $q_{id}$s for the features (all $|rs| < .05, ps > .58$).
Conscientiousness was hypothesized to be negatively related to anxiety about social conflict with friends and positively related to anxiety about social conflict with a romantic partner and family, anxiety about academic impact, and anxiety about financial impact. Of these hypothesized relationships, two were significant. The relationship between conscientiousness and anxiety about social conflict with friends was indeed
negative and significant, $r(104) = -.26, p = .007$, indicating that the more conscientious an individual is, the less anxiety they have about social conflict with friends. The relationship between conscientiousness and anxiety about academic impact was, as hypothesized, positive and significant, $r(104) = .20, p = .04$, indicating that the more conscientious an individual is, the more anxiety they feel about matters with high academic impact. All the other correlations between conscientiousness and $q_{id}$s for features were non-significant (all $|r_s| < .13, ps > .18$).

Extraversion was hypothesized to be negatively related to anxiety about social conflict with friends and anxiety about potential embarrassment or rejection but positively related to anxiety about social conflict with a romantic partner. None of the correlations between extraversion and the $q_{id}$s for the features were significant (all $|r_s| < .17, ps > .08$). There was, however a marginally significant, positive correlation between extraversion and social conflict with friends, $r(104) = .17, p = .08$. I hypothesized that this link would be negative because individuals low on extraversion reported friendship goals but individuals high on extraversion did not. However, it seems that the more extraverted a person is the more anxious they are in situations with high conflict with friends. This may be because extroverts place more value on maintaining friendships.

It was hypothesized that agreeableness would be positively related to anxiety about social conflict with family and anxiety about potential embarrassment or rejection. Contrary to what the goal literature suggested, agreeableness was not positively related to anxiety about social conflict with family, but was negatively and significantly related to anxiety about social conflict with family, $r(104) = -.21, p = .04$. This indicates that the more agreeable a person is the less anxious they are about social conflict with their
family members. Although it was not hypothesized, there was a positive and significant relationship between agreeableness and anxiety about social conflict with friends, $r(104) = .28, p = .004$, indicating that the more agreeable an individual is, the more anxious they are about social conflict with their friends. All the other correlations between agreeableness and $q_{ids}$ for features were non-significant (all $|r| < .12, ps > .21$).

Neuroticism was hypothesized to be negatively related to anxiety about academic impact and anxiety about financial impact but positively related to anxiety about social conflict with family members and anxiety about potential embarrassment or rejection. In contrast with my hypothesis, neuroticism was positively and significantly associated with anxiety about academic impact rather than negatively, $r(104) = .24, p = .02$. The higher an individual is in neuroticism the more they worry about matters that have academic impact. The hypothesis that neuroticism would be negatively and significantly related to anxiety about matters of financial impact was supported by the data, $r(104) = -.19, p = .05$. Individuals high in neuroticism are less anxious about financial matters than other individuals and vice versa. The correlation between neuroticism and anxiety about social conflict with family was not positive, as hypothesized, but was negative and marginally significant, $r(104) = -.17, p = .085$. The relationship between neuroticism and anxiety about potential embarrassment or rejection was negative, rather than positive as I hypothesized, but non-significant, $r(104) = -.11, p = .26$. An unexpected, marginally significant, negative correlation between neuroticism and anxiety about social conflict with friends surfaced in the analyses also, $r(104) = -.17, p = .089$. No relationship was hypothesized between neuroticism and social conflict with a romantic partner and none was found, $r(104) = -.15, p = .13$. 
In sum, conscientious individuals are less anxious about social conflict with friends but more anxious about academic matters than other people, agreeable individuals are more anxious about social conflict with friends but less anxious about social conflict with family than others, and individuals high on neuroticism are more anxious about academic matters but less anxious about financial matters than other individuals. Openness to experience and extraversion were not significantly correlated with anxiety due to any of the features. The results above are based on q\textsubscript{id}s that were computed by correlating an individual’s ratings of anxiety in all of the situations with the average feature coding for all the situations. The reasons for using this type of q\textsubscript{id} are presented in the Computing If...Then Patterns section of the Analyses. The results of the analyses of the relationships between the Big Five and if...then patterns using q\textsubscript{id}s which were computed by correlating an individual’s ratings of anxiety in all of the situations with the average feature coding for all the situations controlling for the average feature coding of all of the other features are presented in Table 7.

The differences between Table 6 and Table 7 exist because any shared variance among the features was removed while computing the q\textsubscript{id}s in Table 7, but the shared variance was retained while computing the q\textsubscript{id}s in Table 6. Thus, the inter-feature correlations can explain these differences. Table 8 shows the inter-feature correlations across all situations because the analyses in Table 6 and Table 7 include all situations. An example of how Table 8 can be used to explain differences in Table 6 and Table 7 is that conscientiousness was significantly and negatively related to anxiety about social conflict with friends in Table 6, but not significantly related to anxiety about social conflict with friends in Table 7. Table 8 shows that there was a significant, negative inter-feature
correlation between academic impact and social conflict with friends. Thus, academic impact drove the relationship between conscientiousness and anxiety about conflict with friends and once academic impact is controlled for this correlation was non-significant.

Table 7. Main Results with Partial Correlation Based $Q_{id}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety about…</th>
<th>Openness</th>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with friends</td>
<td>(NH) .02</td>
<td>(-) - .09</td>
<td>(-) .26*</td>
<td>(NH) .33***</td>
<td>(NH) -.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with a romantic partner</td>
<td>(+) .02</td>
<td>(+) .10</td>
<td>(+) .11</td>
<td>(NH) .19*</td>
<td>(NH) -.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with a family</td>
<td>(-) .00</td>
<td>(+) - .03</td>
<td>(NH) - .02</td>
<td>(+) -.09</td>
<td>(+) -.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential embarrassment or rejection</td>
<td>(NH) -.02</td>
<td>(NH) .20</td>
<td>(-) -.01</td>
<td>(+) .05</td>
<td>(+) -.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic impact</td>
<td>(-) .00</td>
<td>(+) .23*</td>
<td>(NH) .08</td>
<td>(NH) .11</td>
<td>(-) .08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial impact</td>
<td>(-) .03</td>
<td>(+) .06</td>
<td>(+) .11</td>
<td>(NH) .01</td>
<td>(-) -.17†</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table displays the relationships between the Big Five and $Q_{id}$s for each feature computed while controlling for the other features. Hypotheses appear bolded and in parentheses in the left of each cell. For cells without a relevant hypothesis, NH is written in place of the hypothesis. Observed correlations appear in the right of each cell. A green correlation indicates the correlation was significant in the predicted direction but a red correlation indicates that the correlation was significant in the opposite direction to the hypothesis. † = $.05 ≤ p ≤ .10$; $*= p < .05$; $**= p < .01$; $***= p < .001$.

**Correlations to Test the Role of Goals in the Relationships between If…Then Patterns and the Big Five Personality Traits**
Before I examine the partial correlations between the q\textsubscript{id}s for each feature and each trait, controlling for the feature-relevant goal, I will explore the relationships between the goals and the Big Five and goals and the q\textsubscript{id}s for each feature (Table 9 and Table 10, respectively).

**Table 8. Inter-Feature Correlations Across All Situations for Interpreting Differences between Table 6 and Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social conflict with friends</th>
<th>Social conflict with a romantic partner</th>
<th>Social conflict with family</th>
<th>Potential embarrassment or rejection</th>
<th>Academic impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with a romantic partner</td>
<td>- .11</td>
<td>- .11</td>
<td>- .12</td>
<td>- .10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with family</td>
<td>- .11</td>
<td>- .11</td>
<td>- .12</td>
<td>- .10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential embarrassment or rejection</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .12</td>
<td>- .10</td>
<td>- .17†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic impact</td>
<td>- .36***</td>
<td>- .25*</td>
<td>- .17†</td>
<td>- .29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial impact</td>
<td>- .12</td>
<td>- .11</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*. This table displays the relationships the six features for all situations. † = .05 ≤ p ≤ .10; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001.

**The Relationships between the Big Five and Goals.** Openness to experience was not related to any goals (all |r|s| < .12, ps > .21; see Table 9). Thus, the goals for openness to experience from Table 2 that I based my hypotheses on were not significantly related to openness in my study. The results of this study showed that
Table 9. Correlations between the Big Five and Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Friend Goals</th>
<th>Romantic Partner Goals</th>
<th>Family Goals</th>
<th>Confidence Goals</th>
<th>Academic Goals</th>
<th>Financial Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.17†</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.19†</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.19†</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table displays the relationships between the six goals and the Big Five. † = .05 ≤ p ≤ .10; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001.

individuals high on openness to experience did not have more romantic partner goals, less family goals, less academic goals, or less financial goals than other individuals as I originally believed.

Conscientiousness was positively related to romantic partner goals, academic goals, and financial goals, $r(104) = .25$, $p = .01$, $r(104) = .41$, $p < .001$, and $r(104) = .22$, $p = .03$, respectively. These results support the findings of Reisz and Ozer (2011) who reported that individuals high on conscientiousness held goals in these areas (Table 2). However, the results of the current study did not show that individuals high on conscientiousness have less friend goals or slightly more family goals than other individuals as the findings of Reisz and Ozer (2011) suggested.

Extraversion was not related to any of the six goals (all $|rs| < .14$, $ps > .16$). Thus, the idea that individuals high on extraversion would have less friend goals, more
romantic partner goals, less confidence goals, and more financial goals was not supported by the data.

**Table 10. Correlations between Goals and the Qids for Each Feature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety about…</th>
<th>Friend Goals</th>
<th>Romantic Partner Goals</th>
<th>Family Goals</th>
<th>Confidence Goals</th>
<th>Academic Goals</th>
<th>Financial Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with friends</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with romantic partner</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social conflict with family</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>-.17†</td>
<td>-.41***</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>-.34***</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for embarrassment or rejection</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic impact</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial impact</td>
<td>-.17†</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. This table displays the relationships between the six goals and the qids for each feature. † = .05 ≤ p ≤ .10; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001.*

Agreeableness was significantly related to friend goals and financial goals, $r(104) = .26$, $p = .008$ and $r(104) = -.20$, $p = .04$, respectively. I originally expected that individuals high on agreeableness would have more family goals and more confidence goals than other individuals. However, the results show that agreeable individuals did not
have more family or confidence goals, but had more friend goals and less financial goals than other people.

Neuroticism was significantly and positively related to romantic partner goals, $r(104) = .31, p = .001$. Neuroticism was not associated with more family goals, more confidence goals, less academic goals, and less financial goals as I expected from the results of Reisz and Ozer (2011). The results instead showed that individuals high on neuroticism were more likely to have romantic partner goals than other individuals and that neuroticism was not significantly related to any other goals.

In sum, conscientious individuals had more goals pertaining to romantic partners, academics, and finances than other individuals, agreeable individuals had more friend goals and less financial goals than other people, and individuals high on neuroticism had more romantic partner goals than others. Openness to experience and extraversion were not related to any of the six goals. Many of the findings of this study did not support the work of Reisz and Ozer (2011) on the goals that individuals with certain Big Five trait levels possess.

**The Relationships between the Qids for Each Feature and Goals.** Turning to the correlations between qids for each feature and the goals (Table 10), I expected goals related to a feature to be associated with increased anxiety due to that feature.

Individuals with friend goals were not more anxious about conflict with friends as I hypothesized, $r(104) = .11, p = .28$.

Individuals with romantic relationship goals were not more anxious about conflict with a romantic partner as I hypothesized, $r(104) = .15, p = .12$. Romantic relationship
goals were not significantly related to anxiety about any other features either, (all $|r| < .17, ps > .08$).

Individuals with family goals were not significantly more anxious about conflict with family members as I hypothesized but were significantly less anxious about conflict with family members than other people, $r(104) = -.41, p < .001$. This result was unexpected and will be discussed further in the discussion section.

People who had more confidence goals were not significantly more anxious in situations with high potential for embarrassment or rejection as I hypothesized, $r(104) = .10, p = .29$.

Individuals with academic goals were significantly more anxious than other people in situations with high academic impact, as predicted, $r(104) = .36, p < .001$.

Contrary to my expectations, individuals with financial goals were not significantly more anxious than other people in situations with high financial impact, $r(104) = .01, p = .90$.

The results showed that for most features, having goals in an area is not associated with increased anxiety in that area. One relationship between anxiety due to a feature and the feature-relevant goals was actually negative. Thus, having goals in an area did not lead to increased anxiety as I expected.

**Mediation of the Link between Qids and Traits by Goals.** I then investigated the partial correlations between the Qid for each feature and each trait, controlling for the specific feature-relevant goal, in order to test the potential mediating role of goals in the relationships between if…then patterns and traits. Of the five significant correlations in Table 6, two were non-significant when controlling for the feature-relevant goal. The
partial correlation between agreeableness and the q_{ID} for conflict with family, controlling for family related goals was non-significant, partial r(103) = -.14, \( p = .14 \), as was the partial correlation between conscientiousness and the q_{ID} for academic impact, controlling for academic goals, partial r(103) = .06, \( p = .53 \).

The model for the mediation of the relationship between agreeableness and anxiety due to conflict with family members shows a mediation in which the path between agreeableness and anxiety due to conflict with family went from significant to non-significant once family goals were included in the model (Figure 4). As a side note, the path predicting family goals from agreeableness is only marginally significant. However, the overall relationship between agreeableness and increased anxiety about conflict with family did decrease from significant to non-significant when family goals were in the model. Thus, the relationship between agreeableness and decreased anxiety about conflict with family members can be explained by the goal of having good relationships with family members.

The model for the mediation of the relationship between conscientiousness and anxiety due to academic matters by academic goals shows a successful mediation in which the path between conscientiousness and anxiety due to academic matters went from significant to non-significant once academic goals were in the model. Thus, the relationship between conscientiousness and increased anxiety about academic matters can be explained by academic goals.

All other significant correlations in Table 6 remained significant when controlling for the feature-relevant goal. However, conscientious individuals experience less anxiety in situations with high conflict with friends regardless of their goals, agreeable
individuals experience more anxiety in situations with high levels of conflict with friends regardless of their goals, and individuals high on neuroticism experience less anxiety in situations with high academic and financial impact, regardless of their goals. Thus, the relationship between a $q_{id}$ and a trait can exist regardless of an individual’s goals.

**Figure 4.** Mediation of the Relationship between Agreeableness and $Q_{id}$ for Conflict with Family Members by Family Goals

![Diagram](image)

*Note.* Mediation of the relationship between agreeableness and $q_{id}$ for conflict with family members by family goals using the method from Baron and Kenny (1986).

**Figure 5.** Mediation of the Relationship between Conscientiousness and $Q_{id}$ for Academic Impact by Academic Goals

![Diagram](image)

*Note.* Mediation of the relationship between conscientiousness and $q_{id}$ for academic impact by academic goals using the method from Baron and Kenny (1986).
DISCUSSION

The present study investigated when college students were anxious in everyday-type situations for the purpose of understanding the situational determinants of anxiety for individuals with certain Big Five trait levels. The results showed that agreeable individuals were more anxious in situations that involved conflict with friends and less anxious in situations that involved conflict with family, conscientious people were more anxious in situations with high academic impact and less anxious in situations with high conflict with friends, and individuals high on neuroticism were more anxious in situations with high academic impact or high financial impact. Openness to experience and extraversion were unrelated to anxieties about any of the features.

The mediating role of goals on the relationships between if...then patterns and traits was also tested in this study. The results showed that agreeable individuals experienced less anxiety about conflict with family members, which was explained by family goals and conscientious individuals experience more anxiety about academic matters, which was explained by academic goals. Thus, mediation did occur in these cases. However, conscientious individuals experienced less anxiety due to conflict with friends regardless of their goals, agreeable individuals experience more anxiety due to conflict with friends regardless of their goals, and individuals high on neuroticism experienced less anxiety due to academic and financial matters, regardless of their goals. Thus, the relationship between a qid and a trait can exist regardless of an individual’s goals.
Why Didn’t the Results Show the Same Goals for Individuals with Different Big Five Trait Levels as Previous Research?

The research of Reisz and Ozer (2011) identified the goals most frequently reported by individuals high and low on each Big Five trait. Some of their findings were supported by this study but many others were not. For instance, the results of this study showed that conscientious individuals had more goals pertaining to romantic partners, academics, and finances than other individuals and agreeable individuals had more friend goals and less financial goals than other people, which were all expected relationships from Reisz and Ozer (2011). Some relationships between traits and goals that were expected given the findings of Reisz and Ozer (2011) were not found in this study. For example, Reisz and Ozer (2011) found that the most frequently reported goal of individuals high in extraversion was to maintain or improve a romantic relationship. However, the results of the current study showed no correlation between extraversion and romantic partner goals. Some of the expected relationships from Reisz and Ozer (2011) may not have been found because of low reliability (friend goals, family goals, confidence goals) or goal subscale validity issues in the current study. Another explanation is that the participants of Reisz and Ozer’s study (2011) are somehow different from the current study.

Reisz and Ozer’s (2011) sample of college students was 45% Asian, 24% Hispanic, 15% Caucasian, 9% other, and 7% African American but the sample of college students in the current study was 82% Caucasian college students, 5% Hispanic, 5% African American, 5% mixed ethnicity, and 3% unreported. It may be that individuals of different ethnicities have different goals and these differences in ethnicity between the
two samples might explain why many goals were not associated with traits as expected from Reisz and Ozer (2011).

Why Didn’t the Results Show a Consistently Positive Relationship between Having Goals in an Area and Anxiety in that Area?

The relationships between goals and anxieties due to each feature were investigated also. It was expected that having goals in an area would be associated with increased anxiety in that area. However, the results showed that for every feature except academic impact, having goals in an area was not significantly associated with increased anxiety in that area. Family goals were even found to be negatively related to anxiety in situations with high levels of conflict with family.

Rather than individuals with family goals experiencing high amounts of anxiety when social conflict with family members arises, it seems that individuals with family goals experienced less anxiety when social conflict with the family arises. This could be because individuals who have the goals of having good relationships with their family actually have good relationships with their family, causing conflict with family members to be less threatening and less anxiety-provoking than it would be to individuals who do not have good relationships with their family. Alternatively, it could be that individuals who report having goals of having good family relationships are those that do not have good family relationships or aren’t close to their family, making conflict with family members less anxiety-provoking because they are accustomed to not being close with their family. Either way, the theory that having goals in an area is associated with experiencing increased anxiety in that area is not true for family goals and social conflict due to family. That being said, each hypothesis for the relationships between anxiety due
to social conflict with family and the Big Five traits should be reversed, because the hypotheses were developed under the belief that having goals in an area is associated with experiencing increased anxiety in that area. Thus, it makes sense that most of the correlations with anxiety due to social conflict with family were found to be in the opposite direction of the hypotheses (see Table 6). It also makes sense that the median $q_{id}$ for social conflict with family was negative and significant, indicating that people are less likely to be anxious in situations that involve conflict with family than in situations that do not involve conflict with family members, given the negative relationship between family goals and anxiety due to conflict with family. One final finding that is explained by the negative correlation between family goals and anxiety due to social conflict with family is that agreeableness was negatively and significantly related to anxiety about social conflict with family rather than positively, indicating that the more agreeable a person is the less anxious they are about social conflict with their family members.

Many of my hypotheses might not be supported by the data because they were based on the assumption that having goals in an area was associated with increased anxiety in that area. I believe that there are relationships between goals in an area and anxiety in that area, but they are not consistently positive and some positive relationships were not found due to specific limitations of this study that prevented those relationships from being significant.

One reason that anxiety due to each feature in this study might not have been associated with the feature-relevant goal is because of low reliability for the scales measuring friendship goals, family goals, and confidence goals. These scales had Cronbach’s alphas of $\alpha = .48$, $\alpha = .65$, and $\alpha = .65$, respectively. Three of the six
correlations between goals in an area and anxiety in that area were positive but non-significant (see diagonal of Table 10). Of these three, the subscales for friend goals and confidence goals exhibited low reliability, so if the reliability were higher, perhaps the correlation between friend goals and anxiety due to social conflict with friends and the correlation between confidence goals and anxiety due to potential embarrassment or rejection would be significant. The correlation between romantic partner goals and anxiety due to conflict with romantic partners was also found to be positive but non-significant. This may be because for most freshmen, having a good romantic relationship is a distal goal with a small effect size and not a proximal goal with a larger effect size.

There was no relationship between financial goals and anxiety due to financial matters in this study. This may be because being in a place financially is a very distal goal for college students, who are currently more worried about doing well in school. Thus, it may be that having goals in an area is generally associated with anxiety but that the poor reliability of some of my goal subscales prevented significant correlations from being found and that certain relationships were not found because the goals are distal goals to the participants of this study.

It is also possible that the goal subscales created for the current study may not actually measure the specific goals I intended to measure, but may instead measure other things. Asking a person whether or not they have the goal of being connected with their family members may be accessing their values and not necessarily their goals. Participants may also answer according to their ideal self or their ought self as described in self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1999). This might explain why goals were often not related to anxieties in the findings of the current study.
There could be a relationship between anxiety and goals such that goals increase anxiety, but anxiety in turn decreases goals. For example, having the goal of succeeding financially may increase an individual’s anxiety when they are spending money. This anxiety may in turn lead the individual to decrease the extent to which they have the goal of saving money. If this relationship does exist, it would explain why many of the correlations between goals and situational contingencies of anxiety had non-significant correlations, because a positive and negative relationship exists between the variables simultaneously. It could also be that one link is stronger than the other. For instance, goals may increase anxiety more than having that anxiety decreases goals or vice versa.

Conclusions from the Results of the Current Study

Supported hypotheses. I hypothesized that conscientiousness would be positively correlated with anxiety due to academic impact. The results showed that this relationship was significant in both Table 6 and Table 7. Thus, it seems that high academic impact leads to increased anxiety in conscientious individuals.

I hypothesized that neuroticism would be negatively related to anxiety about financial impact. The results showed that that this relationship was significant in Table 6 and marginally significant in Table 7. Thus, high financial impact leads to less anxiety due to financial matters in individuals high on neuroticism.

I hypothesized that individuals high on conscientiousness would be less anxious about social conflict with friends. The results showed that this was indeed the case (see Table 6). However, when the q_{id}s were computed for one feature controlling for the other features, this correlation was non-significant (see Table 7). Thus, the significant, negative inter-feature correlation between social conflict with friends and academic impact may
drive this finding. Thus, I cannot say with certainty that social conflict with friends leads to less anxiety for conscientious individuals than other individuals because of the influence of academic impact on this relationship.

**Findings opposite to my hypotheses.** I hypothesized that neuroticism would be positively related to anxiety due to social conflict with family. The results showed that this relationship was actually negative and marginally significant in Table 6 and negative and significant in Table 7. Thus, it seems that there is an overall trend such that high social conflict with family leads to less anxiety for individuals high on neuroticism than other individuals.

I hypothesized that agreeableness would be positively related to anxiety about social conflict with family. The results showed that this relationship was actually negative and significant (Table 6). However, this relationship was negative, but not significant in Table 7. There is a marginally significant, negative inter-feature correlation between social conflict with family and academic impact that may drive this finding. Thus, I cannot say with certainty that social conflict with family leads to less anxiety for agreeable individuals than other individuals because of the influence of academic impact on this relationship.

Remember that having family goals was associated with experiencing decreased anxiety due to social conflict with family. That being said, each hypothesis for the relationships between anxiety due to social conflict with family and the Big Five traits should be reversed, because the hypotheses were developed under the belief that having goals in an area is associated with experiencing increased anxiety in that area. Thus, it
makes sense that most of the correlations with anxiety due to social conflict with family were found to be in the opposite direction of the hypotheses.

I hypothesized that neuroticism would be negatively related to anxiety due to academic impact. The results showed that this relationship was actually positive and significant (Table 6) but positive and non-significant when using qids that were computed controlling for the other features (Table 7). There was a negative, marginally significant inter-feature correlation between academic impact and social conflict with family that may explain why this relationship was non-significant in Table 7. Thus, I cannot say with certainty that high academic impact leads to increased anxiety for individuals high in neuroticism.

I hypothesized that extraversion would be negatively related to anxiety due to social conflict with friends because participants low in extraversion in Reisz and Ozer’s study (2011) more frequently reported friendship goals than individuals high in extraversion. However, the results showed a marginally significant, positive correlation between extraversion and anxiety due to social conflict with friends in Table 6 and a significant, positive relationship between those variables in Table 7. Thus, it seems that social conflict with friends leads to increased anxiety for extraverted individuals. This is in line with the findings of Roberts, O’Donnell, and Robins (2004) which showed that there was a positive relationship between social goals and extraversion in freshmen college students.

**Unexpected relationships.** I did not form a hypothesis about the relationship between agreeableness and social conflict with friends. The results showed that agreeable individuals were more anxious about social conflict with friends than other people (Table
Thus, it seems that social conflict with friends leads to increased anxiety for agreeable individuals.

**Hypotheses unsupported by the data.** Many hypothesized relationships between traits and qid$s were non-significant. This may be caused by the combination of finding goals for high and low levels of the Big Five different than Reisz and Ozer (2011) and not finding a consistently positive link between goals and anxiety.

In some cases, like in the relationship between openness and anxiety due to academic impact, the positive link between the goal in that area and anxiety in that area existed, but the trait was not significantly related to the goal. Thus, the hypothesis was unsupported by the data.

In other cases the relationship between having a goal in an area and experiencing increased anxiety in that area was missing. For instance, the current study found no significant relationship and no positive or negative trend between financial goals and anxiety due to financial matters. The hypotheses were based on the assumption that having a goal in this area would be significantly associated with increased anxiety in this area. This explains why most of the hypotheses having to do with anxiety due to financial impact were not supported by the data as hypothesized.

There were also non-significant relationships between romantic partner goals and anxiety due to conflict with a romantic partner, which may explain why none of the hypotheses having to do with anxiety due to social conflict with a romantic partner were supported by the data as hypothesized. The same is true for the relationship between confidence goals and anxiety due to potential embarrassment or rejection and the same results are obtained.
**Results and type one error.** A risk of running many correlational analyses, as is often done in personality research and was done in the current study, is obtaining significant correlations caused by type one error. In the current study, six of the 30 correlations between traits and qidS in Table 6 were found to be significant. To test if this number of significant correlations is different from what would be expected from type 1 error with an alpha of .05, I ran a binomial test. The one-tailed binomial test showed that the number of significant correlations obtained was significantly greater from what would be expected from type one error with an alpha of .05, $p(6|30, .05) = .003$. Thus, the significant results of this study represent more than just type one errors.

**Implications of These Findings for Counselors**

This study’s results show that conscientious individuals are more anxious than others in situations with high academic impact and highly neurotic individuals are more anxious than others in situations with high financial impact. Thus, maybe academic institutions like high schools, colleges, and universities should provide more training for students in coping with stress due to academic matters, particularly for individuals high on conscientiousness, and money management, particularly for individuals high on neuroticism.

This study also identifies normal patterns of anxiety across situations for college students. This knowledge could help identify individuals who do not exhibit a normal pattern of anxiety. Individuals with extreme non-normal patterns of anxiety may have an anxiety disorder. Thus, knowing the normal patterns of anxiety may help identify individuals with non-normal patterns of anxiety and anxiety disorders.
**Strengths and Weaknesses of the General Method of the Current Study for Investigating *If…Then* Patterns**

This paper has implications beyond the reach of the findings regarding anxiety. The methodology in this paper is valuable because it can be applied to many research topics aside from anxiety. This method can be used to study multiple units of analysis including a person, a situation, situational features, and traits. This method can aid researchers in identifying basic features underlying any phenomena and the *if…then* patterns for any trait. One data set can be used to answer numerous research questions; thus, use of this method can contribute much knowledge to a field or topic.

I think this method will become much more widespread because of its versatility and the small learning curve that accompanies it. Most research questions can be tested using basic correlations using this methodology. These basic correlations are familiar to most researchers and are accompanied by significance tests that are easy to interpret. Thus, using only basic statistics very complicated questions can be answered. The fact that only basic statistics are used enables researchers to easily share statistical results across studies and fields.

**Implications of using this method to generate items.** A potential weakness of this method is that the situations were written stimuli and not naturally occurring situations. Thus, the combinations of features in situations might not reflect how the features interact in everyday situations relevant to anxiety. There may be some difference between the situations in the real world and the ones in this study. The lab-generated situations were generated to have independent features, thus they weren’t meant to have realistic feature interactions but the participant-generated studies were designed to
represent day to day anxiety-provoking situations. The inter-feature correlations for participant provided studies may be unique to this study and not generalize to the outside world. However, having participants of the pre-study provide the situations is a good step towards making sure that the situations are representative of daily anxiety-provoking situations for college students and that the results of this study are applicable to the external world.

The relationships between features in the situations that were generated for this study affect the generalizability of the obtained results. Specifically, the correlations in Table 6 represent the relationships between traits and qids given the way that the situational features relate to each other in this study but the correlations in Table 7, on the other hand, represent the relationships between traits and qids controlling for the inter-feature correlations specific to this study. Thus, the correlations in Table 7 might generalize more broadly than the correlations in Table 6 because they can be applied to populations for which the situational features do not relate to each other the same way that they do in this study. However, the purpose of this study was to investigate situational contingencies of anxiety specifically in college students. For that reason, the situations in this study were generated by asking college students to report real life anxiety-provoking experiences, so they probably represent realistic combinations of the situational features for people of this age. Thus, I believe that for the purposes of this study, the results in Table 6 best represent the relationships between traits and qids given the situations that college students are likely to encounter. Using this general method to generate situations can lead to results that are based on the inter-feature correlations specific to the study which might not generalize to other populations.
Implications of using self-report data. A weakness of the present study is that the anxiety ratings in this study were self-report data. How well do people know themselves? Participants may be unable to accurately report how anxious they would be in the given hypothetical situations. Indeed, affective forecasting research shows that individuals systematically err when estimating how they will emotionally react to a situation (Baron, 1992). Instead of reporting their emotions accurately, individuals are biased and report their affective states in line with their normative beliefs (Baron, 1992). However, individuals are usually correct in the valence of their affective forecasting, but err in rating the extent to which an event will affect their mood, with most people overestimating the duration of the emotional impact of an event. In the present study, I decided to use self-report situations only because constructing contrived situations and placing participants in them would have been too time consuming and impractical given my current resources. However, self-report data still shows meaningful differences and can be very useful. Participants of this study probably used their anxiety ratings in previous situations to rate their anxiety in other situations; for instance, they might think “this situation would definitely make me more anxious than the one I just answered” and rate their anxiety accordingly. Thus, although the participants might not rate the situations in a way that is absolutely accurate, their ratings for one situation should be accurate relative to their ratings for other situations. Because the main analyses of this study are correlational, and therefore based on relative score differences, whether or not participants’ ratings of their anxiety is absolutely accurate is irrelevant and has no impact on the conclusions of this study. I could have simply asked participants the extent to which they are anxious about each of the features; however, the results of such a study
might be inaccurate because of people’s inability to estimate their own responses to situational features in an absolute sense. The method used in this study has been used successfully in previous research by Wood and Brumbaugh (2009), Rogers and Wood (2010), and by Wood and Thomas and Wood (2011) to identify relative differences in ratings.

**Limitations of the Current Study that are Unrelated to the General Method**

The participants of this study were mostly Caucasian females and all were college students. I expect that some of the results might be different if this study were repeated in a sample with different demographics. For example, academic impact was a strong motivator in this study but in a study of non-college students, career or professional impact would probably be more influential. Also, if the results were divided by gender the relationship in Table 6 might be different. For example, neuroticism might be more strongly related to conflict with friends, a romantic partner, and family in females than in males. The results might also differ by ethnic group.

Another potential shortcoming of the current study is that the anxiety-provoking situations were generated by sophomores, juniors, and seniors but then given as an inventory to freshmen. If the situations were not relevant to freshmen, their anxiety ratings might not reflect how they would actually feel in those situations because they would be guessing their emotional state in a situation unlike a situation they have ever experienced. However, the situations were not major life events, but everyday situations, so they seemed applicable to freshmen.

**Directions for Future Research**
Future research in this area would benefit from using observational or experimental methods rather than solely relying on self-report methods. This would allow researchers to investigate the potential disconnect between reported anxiety and actual anxiety in a situation. An experiment could investigate the idea that potential obstacles to goals cause anxiety within individual situations.

Future studies should also investigate the interactions between situational features. This will allow for a more complex understanding of situational forces and how they influence anxiety.

Openness to experience and extraversion were not related to anxieties about any of the features coded in this study. Future research should identify situational features that explain additional variance in anxiety and investigate the profile of anxiety for individuals with high or low on openness to experience and extraversion.
REFERENCES


Appendix A- Situational Anxiety Inventory

Instructions: For this task you will be asked to imagine that you are in a particular situation. Please read each situation carefully and then evaluate how anxious you would feel in the situation. For situations that you have experienced in the past, try to indicate how you have acted in these types of situations in the past. For situations that you have not been in, indicate what you would probably do in this situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will remain confidential.

How anxious would you feel in this situation?

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<th>1 Not at all anxious</th>
<th>2 Slightly anxious</th>
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Participant-Generated Situations from the Pre-Study:

1. You are very busy and are going out of town this weekend, but one of your best friends has family members visiting and wants you to go out to dinner with him/her. You are going to tell your friend that you can't go.
2. You did not understand the last homework for a class. In class the teacher is going to call on people to answer questions from the homework.
3. You are spending time with your significant other and although they want to cuddle you are feeling a bit smothered. You are not sure if you should bring it up or spare his/her feelings.
4. You get a midterm grade back that is worse than you expected. You ask the professor what you got points off for and he tells you that you could have had more information in your answers and then dismisses you. Since you think the grading was unfair, you are going to ask him to meet with you again.
5. You are going to pick up your friend from the airport after driving back to school after spring break. You are driving back and are going to be late.
6. You have an important appointment early in the morning and although you went to bed early, it is almost 3 am and you still have not been able to fall asleep.
7. You go to bed later than you meant to and you are lying in bed thinking about your classes tomorrow and dreading getting up early.
8. Your best friend from home messaged you, complaining that you haven't been keeping in touch at all. You messaged him/her back to try to arrange a get-together next time you are home and you are waiting to hear back.
9. You have a phone interview scheduled and are waiting to receive the call. You really want the position you are being interviewed for.
10. You receive a voicemail that you have been invited to complete the interview process for a position which you applied for. You are in class for the next few hours and are going to have to wait to call them back until after class.

11. You get back from a run and the showers in your dorm are not working. You have class soon and you are going to have to go without taking a shower.

12. You are taking a take home exam and some of the questions are worded vaguely. You emailed the professor with your questions and are waiting on a response.

13. It is the weekend and you are coming back from a trip. You have been stuck in traffic for two and a half hours, but you don't need to be back until much later tonight.

14. There is a friend of the opposite sex that you are attracted to and are trying to get to know better. He/she texted you and you texted him/her back and you are waiting on a response.

15. You are going to call your mother and tell her what you want to major in.

16. Your friends had agreed to reimburse you for gas money on a road trip, but after you have paid for the gas a couple times, they haven’t reimbursed you yet. You are going to ask them for gas money.

17. You cannot find the key to your dorm anywhere. If you cannot find it you will be charged for new keys.

18. Your friends invited you to an event but you have a lot of work to do. You have to purchase your ticket for the event by tonight if you decide to go.

19. You go out to eat for your birthday with your significant other. Usually you each pay separately, but you are not sure if he/she is paying since it is your birthday. You are going up to the cashier to pay and you still haven't discussed if you will split the bill.

20. You have a lot of classes with a friend. Your friend is always talking with you about school, even when you want to talk about other things. You are going to try to talk about this with them.

21. You and a friend signed up for a class together. You find that studying with this person is really helpful. Your friend decides to drop the course. You really want to make a good grade in this course so you are going to have to find some other people to study with.

22. You are going to get your test back, and you didn’t feel that you did great on the test when you took it. Before giving your test to you, the teacher says that the average was a C- and several people failed.

23. Your friend and his/her significant other recently broke up. You continued to hang out with your friend, but not his/her ex. Your friend has become friends with his/her ex and you are going to go over to his/her house when his/her ex will be there.

24. You finished your homework and turned it in but after discussing the assignment with others in your class you think you might have done poorly. You are going to class to pick up your graded homework.

25. You recently went on a date. The date went well and you both really enjoyed it but you haven't spoken to this person since the date. You see them on campus and you are approaching them to talk to them.
26. You send out an email to a large organization that you are a part of with a link attached but you soon realize the link won't open correctly for anyone and you don't know how to fix it but you are going to try to figure it out.
27. Your significant other has not responded to your calls or messages for a few days and you don't know why. You are going over to their house to try to talk to them.
28. You are in line to get coffee and when it is time to pay you can't find your credit card. You cannot find it and are going to have to cancel your order.
29. You are making a list of things to do and you realize you are going to be very busy for the next two weeks.
30. You are trying to do some homework and it is taking a long time but you have a lot of other assignments to complete. You are going to have to stop working on the homework to do other work.
31. You recently got into an argument with your significant other and you are going to talk about it with them.
32. You received a C on your midterm in a class that is required for your major. Coming into the final, you now have to get an A on the test to get at least a B+ in the class.
33. You dislike your roommate. They have asked you to live with them next year but you don't want to. You are going to tell them that you don't want to live with them.
34. You have a lot of work to do but you promised to hang out with friends all night. You are going to put off your work until tomorrow to hang out with your friends.
35. You are looking over your calendar for the last few weeks of the semester and you realize that all of your classes have large assignments due then.
36. You lost track of time and you are leaving for class a little late. You get stuck behind a large group of people who are walking really slowly. You are going to be late if you stay behind them.
37. You are studying on campus late at night. You leave to get food and when you return the building is locked. You are going to call campus officials to try to get back into the building.
38. You have filled out an application and you think you are ready to submit it. You cannot edit the application once it is submitted, so any errors are permanent. You are going to click submit.
39. Your friend invited you out to dinner to celebrate his/her birthday. You couldn't go out to dinner because you were really busy. Your friend calls you to tell you that he/she is annoyed with you and wants to talk next time you see him/her in person. You are going to talk to him/her today.
40. You are driving in a really bad storm and you are unable to see more than about 30 feet in front of you because of the pouring rain.
41. You will be giving a short presentation in class. The person who just presented had a really good presentation. You are going to give your presentation next.
42. You are going to your seat on a plane when you realize that someone is in your seat.
43. You are meeting up with a friend that you haven't seen in a long time and you aren't sure what to talk about. There is a pause in the conversation and you are trying to think of something to say.
44. One of your classes consistently gets out late and causes you to be late for your next class. You are sitting in class and it is almost time for the class to end. You are going to have to rush to your next class and you might be late even if you hurry.

45. You lost your wallet/purse and keys and you are going to go back to look for them in the last few places you have been. You have class in 15 minutes.

46. You did not check your email at all over spring break. You returned to school and you are going to check your email and you suspect that you will have lots of important messages and new assignments.

47. You are walking to lunch with a friend when your friend stops to talk to a group of six members of the opposite sex that he/she knows. You don't know these people.

48. You have been sick so you asked the professor if you could reschedule your exam but he/she denied your request. You haven't studied much and you are going to take the exam.

49. You just realized that you didn't pay a bill on time. You are going to contact the company and see if you can avoid the late fee.

50. Your friend is not responding to your texts. You are going to have dinner with them tonight and need to know where to go.

51. You are at the airport in a long security line and your flight will be boarding soon. You are going to be late if the line doesn't move quickly.

52. You forgot to do the homework for class and you are going to class and wondering if the teacher will collect the homework.

53. You just got off a flight and the hotel said that a shuttle will be there to pick you up. It has been half an hour and the shuttle hasn't arrived yet.

54. You messaged your friend who is abroad but you haven't heard from him/her and neither had anyone else for over a week. You are considering calling their parents.

55. You are going out of town for the weekend but you have to turn in a paper before you leave. You are not sure if you will have it done on time but you are going to leave regardless.

56. You and a friend have a test tomorrow and you are studying together in the library because you are both behind in the material. You are going to take a break because you are feeling really tired.

57. You have two tests and a paper due this week but your parents are visiting, leaving you limited time to complete your work. The tests and paper are major portions of your grades and you are going to tell your parents that you won't have much time to spend with them.

58. You have a paper due tomorrow and you don't think you will be able to finish it on time. You asked the teacher for an extension earlier today and are waiting on a response. You are not sure if you should try to complete the paper tonight or hope you can get the extension.

59. You have to write a paper this weekend but your friend is having a birthday party. You are not sure you will have time to attend, but you do not want your friend to be upset. You are going to tell your friend that you might not make it.
60. You are working on a major paper for a class but you don't know where you start and you do not have a topic. You begin writing but aren't quite sure that you are on the right track. You are going to keep writing and hope for the best.

61. You come home from spring break to realize that you have two papers due within a week and another paper and a test the next week. You are going to start working right away.

62. You are planning a trip to the beach but you have a test and paper to complete before you leave. You are going to have to put off packing until right before you leave.

63. You are planning out your class schedule for the next few semesters. You are going to have to wake up early to register for classes soon and you might not get into the classes that you have picked.

64. You have a test in every class within the next two weeks. You have been doing well in classes up to this point. You are going to have to study almost every day until the two weeks is up if you want to cover all the material.

65. You have a paper due in a week and you haven't started or looked at the requirements. You are going to start it a few days before it is due because you have so much other work to do before then.

Lab-Generated Situations:

66. A friend from out of town calls saying that they are coming to town to visit in a couple weeks and you agree to pick them up at the airport. When that day arrives, they call you upon landing and you realize that you forgot about their arrival.

67. Your dad just bought a new car and he agrees to let you drive it around the block. The road is wet and while turning the first corner the car slides off the road and into a mailbox. You are not injured, but there is a dent in the side of the car.

68. You have to give a speech in class and you don’t have time to change out of your gym clothes.

69. You have not been keeping up with class reading and when you get to class the teacher announces that you will all take a pop quiz.

70. You have recently gotten paid and decide to go shopping for new clothes at the mall. Upon arriving at the counter, you realize you left your wallet/purse in the dressing room, but after going back to get it, it is nowhere to be seen.

71. You accidentally take both sets of keys for your dorm and leave your cell phone in the room. Your roommate calls you angry because he/she couldn't get into the room to get his/her homework for their next class.

72. Your romantic partner made a reservation at a fancy restaurant. The last time you talked with your partner you promised you would be on time. You are in a meeting with a teacher that is running very late.

73. You were planning to go to the post office to mail some letters. Your mom asked you to take a time-sensitive letter with you but you forgot it.

74. You have a test on Monday. You studied a long time for the test and believe you are prepared. You get the test on Monday and realize you studied the wrong chapters.
75. There is a boy/girl in one of your classes that you find very cute. You decided to ask him/her out on a dinner date. Upon telling your friend about your upcoming date, you find out that your friend once dated him/her and was dumped.

76. Your mom is constantly asking you to do your chores around the house but you just feel like the amount of responsibility put on you is too much. You ask both her and your dad to lighten the load, but they don’t have any sympathy because they both have full-time jobs and take care of things around the house.

77. You have a really good friend of the opposite sex with whom you make weekly plans and he/she knows that you are currently in a relationship. Your romantic partner, however, is not okay with you hanging out with this friend and would like you to cut down on the amount of time you spend with your friend.

78. You have gone through about half your day when you realize that there is a piece of food stuck in the middle of your two front teeth. You can’t seem to get it out without looking in a mirror. On your way to the bathroom, your date from the other night stops to greet you.

79. You have the first exam of a class tomorrow morning and earlier today everyone was discussing the large amount of material and how it has taken them several days to get organized and start studying. You, on the other hand, are just starting to study the night before.

80. You have two close groups of friends who do not know each other. You made plans to go out with one group this weekend, but the other group has been having trouble getting everyone together and is really pushing you to come out with them during this weekend because it is the first time in a long time that everyone can attend.

81. Your mom really wants you to come home for the holidays but you want to take a trip to relax and relieve stress. She has been making you feel bad because you have not seen your family in quite some time.

82. You feel as though you and your partner argue too often about silly little things, but he/she doesn’t see it. You have asked him/her for some space, and he/she didn’t take it very well.

83. You are walking on a busy street with a group of people when you realize that your fly is down; for how long, you don’t know. You don’t want to zip it back up at the moment because it would be very obvious and somewhat awkward. You are going to try to zip it up without anyone seeing in the next few minutes.

84. You have a big paper due tomorrow, but you can’t seem to come up with a good topic to write about. You begin writing for tomorrow’s deadline, but you come to a standstill and experience writer’s block. This paper is a major component of your final grade and you are not sure what to do.

85. Some of your friends are going to try taking an illegal drug and they are pressuring you to try it with them.

86. Your significant other told you that one of their old friends of the opposite sex is going to be in town, and that he/she would like to go see them. Your significant other told you that he/she would be home by 10PM, but it is now 2AM and you have not heard from them.

87. While home one weekend, you accidentally scratch the paint on your parents' car.

88. At a social gathering, you spill a drink on the front of your pants.
89. While signing up for courses, you fail to get a seat in a class you need for your major.
90. You are driving with your friends to a picnic. Halfway there you realize that you forgot to bring the food you had agreed to bring.
91. You walk into the room where your romantic partner is and they hurriedly get off the phone and act like nothing was happening.
92. While in a fairly crowded food court in a mall, you stumble while carrying a tray of food. It spills to the ground.
93. You misplace a moderate amount of cash you had saved up to treat yourself to a night on the town.
94. A close friend asks you to keep a secret that could hurt another friend of yours if they knew. You think that your friend should know and plan to tell them.
95. Your anniversary is coming up, but you realize that it will fall on the day before you take a huge exam. Your partner wants to go out to celebrate, but you're really worried about this exam and want to spend that night studying and preparing.
96. Your parents ask you to come to an event, but you made plans with a friend who will only be in town for one night.
97. You make lunch plans with a friend and decide to meet each other at the restaurant. When you get there you see them from the back, sitting alone at a table. It's not until you actually sit down at the table that you realize that it's not your friend, just someone who looked like them from behind.
98. You ask a friend to pick you up from the airport, forgetting that a mutual friend's birthday party is that same night. Shortly before you're supposed to get picked up from the airport, the mutual friend finds out, demands you make other arrangements, and calls you inconsiderate for taking the other friend away from their party.
99. You make plans to go out with your partner one evening, but some important errands you're running that day take much longer than you expected. While you are out your phone dies, so you can't call your partner. When you get home it's too late to go out and they're very upset.
100. Your mother tells you a secret, but asks you not to tell your father. You are calling home when you almost accidentally let the secret slip to your father. You are not sure if your father can figure out the secret from what you said.
101. You promised a friend that you would pick her up from the airport and could not at the last minute.
102. A family friend is getting married but you have a previous commitment on the day of the wedding. Your mom has been assuming you would go, so you are going to tell her that you cannot attend.
103. You run into an ex-significant other unexpectedly while on a date with your current partner.
104. You have a very busy schedule and have just begun a large paper that is due in two days.
105. You bought an expensive ticket for an event but when it is the day of the event you realize you have lost your ticket and are not able to go.
Appendix B- Feature Coding Rubric

1. How much potential for conflict with friends is in this situation?
   a. 1 No potential for conflict
   b. 2 Very little potential for conflict
   c. 3 Some potential for conflict
   d. 4 Considerable potential for conflict
   e. 5 Extreme potential for conflict

2. How much potential for conflict with a romantic partner is in this situation?
   a. 1 No potential for conflict
   b. 2 Very little potential for conflict
   c. 3 Some potential for conflict
   d. 4 Considerable potential for conflict
   e. 5 Extreme potential for conflict

3. How much potential for conflict with family member(s) is in this situation?
   a. 1 No potential for conflict
   b. 2 Very little potential for conflict
   c. 3 Some potential for conflict
   d. 4 Considerable potential for conflict
   e. 5 Extreme potential for conflict

4. How much potential for embarrassment or rejection is in this situation?
   a. 1 No potential for embarrassment/rejection
   b. 2 Very little potential for embarrassment/rejection
   c. 3 Some potential for embarrassment/rejection
   d. 4 Considerable potential for embarrassment/rejection
   e. 5 Extreme potential for embarrassment/rejection

5. How much impact could this situation have on academic success?
   a. 1 No academic impact
   b. 2 Very little academic impact
   c. 3 Some academic impact
   d. 4 Considerable academic impact
   e. 5 Extreme academic impact

6. How much impact could this situation have financially?
   a. 1 No financial impact
   b. 2 Very little financial impact
   c. 3 Some financial impact
   d. 4 Considerable financial impact
   e. 5 Extreme financial impact
Appendix C- Distractor Task

INSTRUCTIONS: BELOW ARE SOME ANAGRAMS (SCRAMBLED WORDS). PLEASE REORDER THE ANAGRAMS INTO REAL WORDS IN THE SPACES PROVIDED. YOU MAY SKIP AROUND IF YOU WISH. YOU WILL HAVE 10 MINUTES FOR THIS TASK. PLEASE SOLVE AS MANY ANAGRAMS AS POSSIBLE IN THE TIME ALLOTTED. PLEASE NOTE IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO SOLVE ALL OF THESE WITHIN 10 MINUTES, BUT DO AS MANY AS YOU CAN!

1) SINUM __________
2) LIMYK __________
3) WROPE __________
4) WATEK __________
5) MYKOS __________
6) MYLAD __________
7) DOEPT __________
8) BROEP __________
9) AEHCB __________
10) UCTSR __________
11) UDNHO __________
12) KCTOS __________
13) IDLCH __________
14) LYAID __________
15) NSMOA __________
16) EAKLB __________
17) WHETI __________
18) NAOLG __________
19) WLROE __________
20) IAVTL __________
21) UCVRE __________
22) AXTCE __________
23) OJAMR __________
24) ERJKO __________
25) DNSUO __________
26) LAVEG __________
27) AERNV __________
28) OGRCA __________
29) IREFG __________
30) NAFTIN __________
Appendix D-BFI items

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. How do you see yourself in general? I see myself as someone who...

1. Is talkative
2. Tends to find fault with others
3. Does a thorough job
4. Is depressed, blue
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. Is reserved
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. Can be somewhat careless
9. Is relaxed, handles stress well
10. Is curious about many different things
11. Is full of energy
12. Starts quarrels with others
13. Is a reliable worker
14. Can be tense
15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker
16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm
17. Has a forgiving nature
18. Tends to be disorganized
19. Worries a lot
20. Has an active imagination
21. Tends to be quiet
22. Is generally trusting
23. Tends to be lazy
24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset
25. Is inventive
26. Has an assertive personality
27. Can be cold and aloof
28. Perseveres until the task is finished
29. Can be moody
30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences
31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited
32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone
33. Does things efficiently
34. Remains calm in tense situations
35. Prefers work that is routine
36. Is outgoing, sociable
37. Is sometimes rude to others
38. Makes plans and follows through with them
39. Gets nervous easily
40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. Has few artistic interests
42. Likes to cooperate with others
43. Is easily distracted
44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature
Appendix E- Goal Scale

Instructions: How much do you see yourself as having goals in the following areas?

1. Making new friends
2. Beginning or maintaining a romantic relationship
3. Being connected with your family members
4. Being a confident person
5. Achieving academically
6. Making or saving money
7. Maintaining your existing friendships
8. Having a deep, meaningful romantic relationship (regardless of whether you currently have one or not)
9. Having good relationships with family members
10. Appearing composed and “put together”
11. Keeping up with your school work
12. Having adequate financial resources
Curriculum Vitae
Sarah L. Thomas

Education

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC
Fall 2010- present
M.A. in Psychology Candidate, August 2012
  • GPA 3.67

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
Fall 2008- Spring 2010
B.S. in Psychology; Minor in Biology, May 2010
  • GPA: 3.44; Psychology GPA 4.00
  • Combined Overall Undergraduate GPA: 3.74

Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC
Fall 2006- Summer 2008

Cleveland Community College, Shelby, NC
Fall 2007- Spring 2008

Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, NC
Fall 2005- Spring 2006

Research Experience

Wake Forest University, Department of Psychology August 2010-August 2012
Dr. Dustin Wood and Eric Stone, Supervisors
  • Collaborated with a faculty advisor to collect and analyze survey data on participants’ emotions, behavior, and personality traits.
  • Developed a coding rubric for features of situations and coordinated a coding team of five lab members to code features in situations.

University of North Carolina, Department of Psychology August 2009-May 2010
Dr. Donald Baucom, Supervisor
  • Coded videotaped interactions of couples dealing with a diagnosis of breast cancer.
  • Conducted a literature review on how breast cancer surgery affects sexual functioning.

Gardner-Webb University, Department of Psychology January 2008- May 2008
Dr. David Carscaddon, Supervisor
Psychological Test Development Project
Project Manager
  • Organized a student group that developed, pilot tested, and assessed the effectiveness of a test measuring how people respond to academic failure.

Presentations, Posters, and Papers
Thomas, S. L. (2011, May). *Situational and dispositional correlates of information disclosure*. Presentation given as a colloquium at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC.


Thomas, S.L. (2012, January). *Finding a link between personality and residential mobility: The importance of movement related experiences*. Poster session was presented at the meeting of SPSP, San Diego, CA.


**Honors**
- Fall 2008, Spring 2009, and Spring 2010 UNC Dean’s List
- Member of Tau Sigma National Honor Society at UNC
- Fall 2006, Spring 2007, Fall 2007, Spring 2008 GWU Dean’s List
- Gardner-Webb University’s One-Year Scholastic Award 2006-2007
- Gardner-Webb University’s Presidential Scholarship Fall 2006-Spring 2008
- Gardner-Webb University’s Director’s Choice Award Fall 2006- Spring 2008

**Work Experience**

**Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC**

*Teacher’s Assistant/Lab Instructor for Research Methods I*

Conducted lab once or twice a week, generated exam questions, graded research reports and exams, and guided students through several research projects.

**Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC**

*Tutor and Note Taker for Western Civilization and Personality Psychology*

Met with students once a week or more to go over their notes for the class, create study guides, discuss confusing concepts, and complete practice questions. Took and distributed thorough notes to students through the learning assistance program.

**Volunteer Work**

**CanThrive Research Lab, Chapel Hill, NC**

*Coder*

Coded videotapes of couples’ interactions.

**Abuse Prevention Council, Shelby, NC**

*Volunteer*

Answered calls to a rape hotline and volunteered at a local women’s shelter.