Separation Anxiety, Perceived Controllability, and Homesickness

Gordon L. Flett and Norman S. Endler
York University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Avi Besser
Sapir Academic College
Sderot, Israel

The present study examined the multidimensional interactionism model of anxiety, stress, and coping by investigating trait separation anxiety, controllability, and homesickness in 152 university students living away from home. Participants completed measures of trait separation anxiety, state anxiety, perceived controllability of the situation, and homesickness. Correlational tests confirmed that trait separation anxiety and homesickness were associated. Also, low perceived controllability was associated with state anxiety and homesickness. Finally, tests of a mediational model confirmed that both perceived controllability of the situation and state anxiety are significant mediators of the association between trait separation anxiety and homesickness. The findings provide support for models of homesickness that focus on diminished sense of personal control and proximity to attachment figures.

Homesickness is a phenomenon that is experienced by many people. Although research has tended to focus on homesickness in university and college students (Fisher & Hood, 1987, 1988; Lu, 1990), homesickness has been studied in a variety of populations and contexts, including military recruits (Eurelings-Bontekoe, Vingerhoets, & Fontijn, 1994), foreign employees of multinational corporations (Eurelings-Bontekoe, Brouwers, & Verschuur, 2000), prison inmates (Ireland & Archer, 2000), and children attending summer camp (Thurber, 1999).

Homesickness was defined by Thurber (2005) as the distress or impairment caused by actual or anticipated separation from home. Extensive

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2Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Gordon L. Flett, Department of Psychology, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3. E-mail: gflett@yorku.ca or to Avi Besser, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Sapir Academic College, D. N. Hof Ashkelon, Israel 79165. E-mail: besser@mail.sapir.ac.il

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research has indicated that homesick individuals can experience extreme
distress and are at increased risk for a range of health problems, in terms
of physical and psychological functioning and well-being (Thurber &
Walton, 2007; Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996; Van Tilburg,
Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum, 1999). Research on the nature of
homesickness is important in its own right, given the fact that a substantial
proportion of people are debilitated by homesickness (Carden & Feicht,
found that approximately half of the Dutch students and 80% of the students
at a British university reported feelings of homesickness (Stroebe, van Vliet,
Hewstone, & Willis, 2002). Given that homesickness is believed to reflect a
highly stressful experience, research on homesickness is a particularly viable
way of testing the predictions derived from models of stress, coping, and
distress (Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990).

The purpose of the current research is to investigate the respective roles of
separation anxiety and low perceived controllability in homesickness.
Various authors have posited models of homesickness that involve the pos-
sibility of loss of proximity to attachment figures (Brewin, Furnham, &
Howes, 1989; Fisher, 1984, 1986, 1989) and a diminished sense of controlla-
bility in a challenging situation (Fisher, 1984, 1989). Research has provided
extensive empirical evidence for the role of perceived lack of control in
homesickness (e.g., Burt, 1993; Fisher, 1989; Thurber, 1999; Thurber &
Weisz, 1997a, 1997b), but there is a relative paucity of research that has tested
directly the role of separation anxiety in homesickness, despite the fact that
homesickness is often regarded as a manifestation of separation anxiety. The
similarities of these constructs have often been noted (e.g., Vingerhoets,
2005), but it is also recognized that these constructs have unique features
(for a discussion, see Van Tilburg, 2005).

Why has there been little empirical investigation of separation anxiety and
homesickness? One likely explanation is that a substantial proportion of the
research on homesickness is based on adults, but it is only recently that
research on separation anxiety has become a central focus in the literature as
a result of the prevailing and misguided belief that separation anxiety is
something that is experienced mostly by children. Accordingly, measures to
assess separation anxiety in adults are now beginning to appear in the litera-
ture (e.g., Manicavasagar, Silove, Wagner, & Drobny, 2003).

Regarding separation anxiety, it has been suggested that the trait anxiety
construct needs to be expanded to include facets of social anxiety that
reflect stable responses to a variety of interpersonal threats (Endler, Flett,
Macrodimitrinis, Corace, & Kocovski, 2002). Additional facets of trait anxiety
involve concerns about social evaluation, separation from significant others,
and self-disclosure, as a supplement to other facets of trait anxiety (Endler,
Parker, Bagby, & Cox, 1991). Implicit in this expansion is the notion that there are various forms of trait interpersonal anxiety that merit additional consideration.

This expanded conceptualization of trait anxiety was incorporated into a modified version of the Endler Multidimensional Anxiety Scales (Endler & Flett, 2002), which focuses on different facets of social anxiety. These facets include a measure of trait social evaluation anxiety, as well as new measures of trait separation anxiety and trait self-disclosure anxiety. Initial findings with this new measure confirmed the multidimensional nature of trait social anxiety in two separate studies (Endler et al., 2002).

Numerous issues involving the dimensions of trait social anxiety remain to be investigated. As noted previously, the current study was conducted to examine the link between trait separation anxiety and homesickness in university students living away from home. In addition, we explored the possibility that the perceived controllability of the situation of attending university (transition to university as a stressful context) is a factor that mediates the perceived link between trait separation anxiety and homesickness.

As suggested earlier, the transition to university and separation from home are regarded as significant stressors that not only can result in feelings of homesickness, but can also contribute to health problems (including decreased immune system functioning), reduced psychological well-being, and other maladaptive outcomes (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck et al., 1999). The relevance of both personality factors and situational appraisal factors is suggested by the fact that only a portion of the students who are separated from their homes and families develop severe problems with homesickness.

In the current study, trait separation anxiety is regarded as a personality factor associated with vulnerability to homesickness. It is expected that homesickness will be especially likely among students who (a) are high in trait separation anxiety; (b) suffer an actual separation; and (c) perceive the school setting in general as an uncontrollable, stressful situation. Our emphasis on controllability follows from the results of studies testing the multidimensional interaction model of anxiety, stress, and coping (Endler, 1997, 2002). An important aspect of this model is the investigation of anxiety, stress, and coping in specific situations with specific properties (e.g., Endler, Crooks, & Parker, 1992; Flett, Endler, & Fairlie, 1999).

The importance of perceived control in coping with challenging situations has been documented extensively in research on cognitive appraisal and stress (Fleming, Baum, & Singer, 1984; Litt, 1988; Zakowski, Hall, Klein, & Baum, 2001). A series of investigations has confirmed the role of perceived control in stress, anxiety, and coping (Endler, Speer, Johnson, & Flett, 2000, 2001; Macrodimitris & Endler, 2001), including situations that varied in
levels of controllability (Endler, Macrodimitris, & Kocovski, 2000; Endler, Speer et al., 2000). This focus on perceived controllability stems from transactional, process-oriented theories and the premise that adaptation to stress cannot be defined as effective, independent of its context (Folkman, 1984; Forsythe & Compas, 1987).

Three main hypotheses are tested in the present research:

**Hypothesis 1.** Trait separation anxiety and state anxiety will both be associated with homesickness in university students living away from home. This is in keeping with interpretations of homesickness that afford a central role to separation anxiety.

**Hypothesis 2.** Low perceived control of the university situation will be associated with homesickness.

**Hypothesis 3.** Perceived controllability and associated feelings of state anxiety will mediate the association between trait separation anxiety and homesickness.

That is, trait separation anxiety will have an impact on homesickness to the extent that the person characterized by high separation anxiety is experiencing a situation that is deemed to be beyond his or her control and is experiencing state anxiety. The meditational role of state anxiety reflects how current affective state contributes to the experience of homesickness.

**Method**

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 152 students (95 male, 57 female) living away from home. Their mean age was 22.6 years ($SD = 4.8$). Students were enrolled in a first-year psychology course and volunteered to take part in the study on “college student adjustment.” Students received one course credit for their participation.

**Measures and Procedure**

Study participants completed a questionnaire package that included the following measures:

**EMAS-SAS Trait Separation Anxiety Scale.** The EMAS-SAS Trait Separation Anxiety Scale is a 15-item measure that assesses typical symptoms of anxiety when a person is in a situation that involves a loss of contact with
initial evidence (Endler & Flett, 2002) suggested that this subscale has a high level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .91 or greater. Note that other EMAS-SAS Trait scales were also administered in this study, but the results are specific to this subscale, so this is our primary focus.

The measure of trait separation anxiety was developed by adapting the original subscales of the EMAS-T (Endler, Edwards, & Vitelli, 1991). The EMAS-T consists of four subscales measuring trait anxiety for social evaluation, physical danger, ambiguous, and daily routines. Each subscale is made up of the same 15 items, but participants are instructed to respond based on their experience with the specific situation. Sample items are “Seek experiences like this,” “Feel comfortable,” and “Feel nervous.” Participants indicated their responses on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Thus, in the current study, participants indicated their usual levels of anxiety in a situation involving separation from significant others.

**Perceived Control Scale.** The Perceived Control Scale is a six-item measure developed by Jimmieson and Terry (1997). We have used this measure previously to assess perceived control in a task situation (Endler, Speer et al., 2000). The scale was used in the current study to assess perceived control associated with being exposed to the university environment. Respondents rated their responses on a 5-point scale, with higher scores reflecting greater perceived control. The scale has adequate internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .79 (Endler, Speer et al., 2000).

**Endler Multidimensional Anxiety Scales—State Anxiety (EMAS-S).** The EMAS-S (Endler, Edwards et al., 1991) is a 20-item measure that asks participants to indicate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) how they feel “at this particular moment.” Items are summed to produce an overall measure of state anxiety, and factor analysis has also yielded two independent factors measured by this scale: Autonomic–Emotional (10 items) and Cognitive–Worry (10 items; Endler, Edwards et al., 1991). Only the total scale was used in analysis for the present study. Internal consistency was high for the total scale (α = .89–.94) and for each of the two subscales (α = .82–.91; Endler, Edwards, Vitelli, & Parker, 1989).

**Homesickness Questionnaire.** The Homesickness Questionnaire is a 33-item measure that was developed for use with university and college students. This questionnaire assesses a variety of themes derived from models of grief reactions, including cognitive preoccupation (e.g., “I can’t help thinking about my new home”), distress related to missed attachment (e.g., “I get really upset when I think about home”), seeking to maintain attachment (e.g., “I visit home as often as I can”), dreams related to home (e.g., “I dream about my friends at home”), restlessness (e.g., “I can’t seem to settle here at the university”), anger/blame (e.g., “I hate this place”), guilt (e.g., “I wish I had
never come to the university"), loss of self (e.g., “I feel as if I’ve left part of me at home”), identification (e.g., “I am drawn toward people who come from my hometown”), and avoidance (e.g., “I avoid going home because it would be too upsetting”).

Factor analyses determined that the Homesickness Questionnaire (HQ) consists of two subscales that assess attachment to the home and disliking the university (Archer, Ireland, Amos, Broad, & Currid, 1998). A study by Beck, Taylor, and Robbins (2003) found that the two subscales were highly correlated ($r = .57$). The respective internal consistency alphas were .88 and .89 for the subscales of attachment to home and disliking the university. Because it is possible for students to dislike the university for reasons that reflect the transition to university in general, without necessarily being homesick, certain analyses described later are based on a construct that includes both components of attachment to home and disliking the university.

### Results

Initially, a MANOVA was conducted to explore possible gender differences in levels of trait separation anxiety, state anxiety, controllability, and measures of homesickness (HQ–Attach and HQ–Dislike). Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the variables. No significant gender differences were obtained.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Women ($N = 57$)</th>
<th>Men ($N = 95$)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trait separation anxiety</td>
<td>49.65</td>
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<td>Controllability</td>
<td>21.28</td>
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<td>State anxiety</td>
<td>33.17</td>
<td>14.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>HQ–Attach</td>
<td>28.53</td>
<td>9.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>HQ–Dislike</td>
<td>24.77</td>
<td>6.57</td>
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*Note.* HQ = Homesickness Questionnaire; Attach = attachment to home; Dislike = disliking the university.
Mediational Analyses

We used structural equation modeling (SEM; Hoyle & Smith, 1994) to test the role of controllability and state anxiety in the association between separation anxiety and homesickness. We evaluated the variance–covariance matrix using AMOS 4.0 (Arbuckle, 1999). We tested the fit of the direct and mediational models, using maximum likelihood estimations.

In evaluating the overall goodness of fit for the SEM models, the following criteria were used: (a) chi square $p$ value, when statistically nonsignificant, traditionally indicates that there are no statistically significant discrepancies between the observed data and the hypothesized model; (b) normed fit index (NFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), which specifies the amount of covariation in the data that is accounted for by the hypothesized model, relative to a null model that assumes independence among factors; (c) robust comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and adjusted GFI (AGFI; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984)—indexes similar to the NFI that adjust for the sample size (for the NFI, CFI, GFI, and AGFI, a cutoff of .90 is generally accepted as indicating a good fit, where 1.00 indicates a perfect fit); and (d) root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993), which should be less than .05. Although a nonsignificant $p$ value has traditionally been used as a criterion for not rejecting on SEM, this criterion is overly strict and sensitive for models. Therefore, we also used alternate criteria that reflect the real-world conditions of clinical research. We have chosen to accept a model in which the chi square divided by the degrees of freedom ratio is greater than or equal to 2 or in which the CFI, GFI, AGFI, and NFI are greater than .90. These moderately stringent acceptance criteria will clearly reject inadequate or poorly specified models, while accepting consideration models that meet real-world criteria for reasonable fit and representation of the data (Kelloway, 1998).

Correlational Analyses

The correlation matrix of the observed variables used in the SEM analysis is presented in Table 2. These data were provided to depict the first-order correlations among the separate observed indicator variables of homesickness and trait separation anxiety, state anxiety, and controllability that are not available through the assessment of relations among the variables examined in the direct and mediational models.

It can be seen in Table 2 that trait separation anxiety was associated significantly with lower levels of controllability and higher levels of homesickness in terms of both homesickness factors. Similarly, lower levels of
controllability were associated with higher levels of state anxiety and homesickness. Finally, state anxiety was correlated significantly with greater homesickness.

Structural Model Specification

We followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria for mediation. First, there must be a significant association between the observed predictor separation anxiety and criterion homesickness latent variables. Second, in an equation including both controllability and state anxiety mediator factors and the composite homesickness factor, there must be a significant association between separation anxiety and both controllability and state anxiety. Also, controllability and state anxiety must be significant predictors of the homesickness latent variable. Next, if there is a decline in the significant direct association between the separation anxiety predictor and the homesickness criterion latent variable in the equation (including both the controllability, state anxiety mediators and the separation anxiety predictor variable), then the obtained pattern is consistent with the mediation hypothesis. If the direct effect approaches zero, the controllability and state anxiety mediators can be said to account fully (though not necessarily exclusively) for the relation between separation anxiety (predictor) and homesickness (outcome; Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Analysis of the direct-effect model. In the first model, we estimated the direct effects of the separation anxiety observed variable on the composite homesickness factor. The homesickness latent criterion was defined by two indicators (i.e., HQ–Attach and HQ–Dislike). Because the specified direct-effect model did not fit the data well, we proceeded to test the full mediation model.
Effect model (see Figure 1) had zero degrees of freedom, fit indexes could not be estimated and reported. As can be seen in Figure 1, separation anxiety was found to be associated with high levels of homesickness (path coefficient $= .28$), $t(151) = 2.77$, $p = .006$; and this model explained 8% of the variance in homesickness levels.

**Analysis of the mediation model.** We assumed that the observed variables representing controllability and state anxiety would mediate the effect of separation anxiety on homesickness. In order to estimate the effect of separation anxiety on controllability (which is free of state anxiety) and on state anxiety (which is free of controllability), we controlled for the association between controllability and state anxiety. This correlation also allowed estimating the effect of controllability and state anxiety on homesickness, while controlling for their shared variance. The specified mediational model (see Figure 2) fit the observed data very well: RMSEA = .000; $\chi^2(2, N = 152) = 1.33$, $\chi^2/df = 0.71$, $p = .51$ (GFI = 1.00; AGFI = .97; CFI = 1.00; NFI = .99).

As can be seen in Figure 2, trait separation anxiety was found to be associated with low levels of controllability (path coefficient $= -.29$), $t(151) = -3.71$, $p = .0001$; and high levels of state anxiety (path

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**Figure 1.** Direct effect models: Trait separation anxiety effects on homesickness. Rectangles indicate measured variables, large circles represent the latent construct, and small circles reflect residual (e) or disturbance (d) variances. Numbers on paths from the latent construct to its indicators represent factors loading coefficients, while numbers above the indicators and exogenous variables represent the amount of variance explained ($R^2$). Unidirectional arrows depict hypothesized directional (or “causal”) links. Standardized maximum likelihood parameters are used. Estimates in boldface are statistically significant, as determined by critical ratios.
coefficient = .21), $t(151) = 2.57$, $p = .01$, which, in turn, were found to be associated with high levels of homesickness: controllability (path coefficient = -.56), $t(151) = -8.30$, $p = .0001$; and state anxiety (path coefficient = .35), $t(151) = 5.33$, $p = .0001$. This model explained 8% of the variance in controllability, 4% of the variance in state anxiety, and 56% of the variance in homesickness.

Mediation has occurred when the indirect effect of a predictor through a mediator significantly reduces the predictor’s direct effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986). As can be seen in Figure 1, the direct path from trait separation anxiety effects on homesickness. Figure 2. Mediation of anxiety effects on homesickness. Figure depicts the mediating roles of uncontrollability over the situation and state anxiety. Rectangles indicate measured variables, large circles represent the latent construct, and small circles reflect residual (e) or disturbance (d) variances. Numbers on paths from the latent construct to its indicators represent factors loading coefficients, while numbers above the indicators and exogenous variables represent the amount of variance explained ($R^2$). Unidirectional arrows depict hypothesized directional (or “causal”) links. Standardized maximum likelihood parameters are used. Estimates in boldface are statistically significant, as determined by critical ratios.
anxiety to homesickness was significant (path coefficient = .28), \( t(151) = 2.77, p = .006 \). In Figure 2, however, this path approached 0 (path coefficient = .01), \( t(151) = 0.17, p = .89 \). The drop in the coefficients of the direct paths from trait separation anxiety to homesickness, once the controllability and state anxiety mediators were taken into account, was significant, according to Sobel’s test (Baron & Kenny, 1986): controllability, \( Z = 3.19, p < .001 \); state anxiety, \( Z = 2.24, p < .02 \). Thus, low controllability scores and high state anxiety scores were almost full (though not necessarily exclusive) mediators of the association between trait separation anxiety of students living away from home and their high homesickness scores. Statistical comparisons of the effect of trait separation on controllability confirm that it was significantly stronger than the effect of trait separation anxiety on state anxiety, \( t(151) = -3.28, p < .01 \). In addition, the effect of controllability on homesickness was significantly stronger than the effect of state anxiety on homesickness, \( t(151) = -10.33, p < .001 \). Thus both mediators accounted, in part, for the association between trait separation anxiety and homesickness, but the effects of trait separation anxiety on homesickness through controllability was significantly stronger.

**Discussion**

The current study examined the associations among trait separation anxiety, state anxiety, perceived controllability of the situation, and homesickness in a sample of university students. As expected, the results confirm that trait separation anxiety was positively associated with homesickness. Thus, our findings are in keeping with models of homesickness that focus on insecure attachment and the need to stay in close proximity to attachment figures. These models focus on a homesickness disposition that sets the stage for subsequent homesickness (for an overview, see Thurber & Sigman, 1998), and trait separation anxiety may be a central aspect of this disposition.

In the current study, trait separation anxiety was associated with a dislike of the university and with expressed attachment to the home, as well as with the overall homesickness construct. We felt that it was important to focus subsequent mediational tests on the overall homesickness construct (which combines disliking the university with the factor of attachment to home) because students can develop a dislike of the school environment without necessarily being homesick and overly attached to their home environments. Various authors (e.g., Fisher, 1989; Vingerhoets, 2005) have discussed the need to distinguish homesickness per se from stress reactions to the transition to a challenging environment.

At this point, it is important to reiterate that we focused on trait separation anxiety in the current study. Thus, our findings indicate that people are
prone to experience homesickness if they typically have elevated levels of separation anxiety. Although we did not assess the duration and persistence of homesickness, it is entirely plausible that individuals with high levels of trait separation anxiety are likely to experience chronic problems with homesickness. This could be exacerbated if they are in circumstances that involve prolonged lack of contact with significant others.

At the same time, although the expected link between trait separation anxiety and homesickness was detected, it should be noted that the magnitude of the association between trait separation anxiety and homesickness was only modest in the current study. This result confirms past observations about the importance of not equating separation anxiety and homesickness (Baier & Welch, 1992; Thurber, 1999). Vingerhoets, Van Tilburg, and Van Heck (1995) found that there are four different types of homesickness, only one of which involves homesickness for other people; so this is but one reason why separation anxiety and homesickness are constructs that overlap but are not redundant with each other.

Although our main focus was on trait separation anxiety and homesickness as theoretical constructs of substantive importance, it is clear that the current findings have implications in terms of the psychometric properties of our new measure of separation anxiety. That is, one interpretation of the current findings is that they attest to the validity of the EMAS-T-S measure of trait separation anxiety that is related in a meaningful way with indexes of homesickness in students living away from home.

Perhaps the most noteworthy results of the current investigation involve the measure of perceived controllability. Consistent with expectations, situational perceptions of reduced controllability were associated with greater dislike of the university and greater attachment to the home. This finding provides additional support for explanations of homesickness that focus on a diminished sense of personal control (Fisher, 1984, 1986, 1989). Past research on perceived controllability and homesickness has focused primarily on the link between perceived control and homesickness in children (Thurber & Weisz, 1997a, 1997b). The current findings extend this research by demonstrating the relevance of low perceived control in the homesickness experience of university students living away from home.

The structural equation analyses were particularly revealing in terms of linking the variables of anxiety, control, and homesickness. Our analyses provide strong support for a mediational model whereby the association between trait separation anxiety and homesickness is mediated by perceived control and by state anxiety. This result is in keeping with research demonstrating the need to include perceived controllability as part of Endler’s (e.g., Endler et al., 2000; Endler, Speer, Johnson, & Flett, 2001) interactionism model of anxiety, stress, and coping.
The mediational role of state anxiety highlights the importance of current negative affect as a contributor to homesickness. Past research on moods experienced during holiday trips has illustrated the potential significance of a temporal focus on negative affect that includes the moods of the homesick individual as the absence is being experienced (see Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum, 1996). Future investigations should examine other negative emotional states in addition to state anxiety that arise from the stressful experiences of individuals who are prone to homesickness.

Although our main focus has been on the theoretical implications of these data, it is evident that some practical theoretical considerations follow from our findings. Students living away from home with elevated levels of trait separation anxiety are at risk for experiencing homesickness and would benefit from preventive efforts, as well as therapeutic and counseling interventions. Given that trait separation anxiety is involved, the distress experienced by these students may persist and may not be simply an initial response to the transition to university or college. Accordingly, exposure to the stressful situation (i.e., separation) in and of itself is not likely to be an effective means of alleviating the distress experienced by these students. Intervention efforts should include cognitive–behavioral techniques that focus on enhancing vulnerable students’ sense of perceived controllability of the situation that might decrease their levels of anxiety.

Recent results reported by Thurber (2005) point to the usefulness of a multimodal intervention and prevention approach that includes a psychoeducational component and attempts to increase levels of social support. The social support component may be especially critical because students living away from home who are suffering from homesickness may lack extensive social networks, especially if they are in a relatively new environment.

The current findings should be interpreted within the context of some limitations. First, the current research is cross-sectional in nature, so causal statements are not warranted. Clearly, longitudinal research is needed to evaluate the associations among trait separation anxiety, state anxiety, perceived control, and homesickness. Second, it is evident that the generalizability of these findings has yet to be established. Future research should explore this issue in other samples of university students drawn from a variety of cultures, and in both younger and older respondents. In addition, longitudinal investigation would allow for the examination of possible changes in controllability and the role of increased controllability over the stressful situation in reducing anxiety levels and homesickness. Such information would be beneficial for the development of prevention programs and in determining whether the focus of treatment should be directed to deal with students’ levels of anxiety, controllability, or homesickness and their sequence of effects.
Third, it is important to examine the comparative ability of perceived controllability as well as state and trait anxiety to predict homesickness versus other known predictors of homesickness. The need to examine this issue is underscored by research linking homesickness with neuroticism (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1999), and with a temperament characterized by high levels of harm avoidance (Verschuuren, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijven, 2003).

Finally, in keeping with the multidimensional interactionism model outlined by Endler (1997, 2002), it will be important in future research to explore the role of dispositional and situation-specific coping factors, as well as coping resources (i.e., sources of social support). Given that research on the goodness-of-fit model has linked low perceived control with emotion-focused coping (Endler et al., 2000), it follows that coping variables should be explored in future investigations that assess trait anxiety, state anxiety, perceived control, and homesickness. As alluded to earlier, examination of coping variables should include an explicit focus on related individual differences in social support, in light of evidence linking low social support and high psychological distress with homesickness (Newland & Furnham, 1999).

In summary, our findings confirm that homesickness for students away from home was elevated among individuals high in trait separation anxiety and who appraised their university situation as relatively uncontrollable. The current results illustrate the need to focus on specific facets of trait anxiety, and they support previous attempts to focus on the perceived controllability of the situation when testing the interaction model of anxiety, stress, and coping. Thus, these findings further illustrate the need to consider personality effects within their situational context.

References


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