To investigate these possibilities, Rusbult and colleagues recruited a group of college students who were currently involved in a dating relationship (Rusbult et al., 2000). After indicating how committed they were to their relationship, the participants were asked to compare their relationship with other people’s under one of three conditions: Some participants were given no specific instructions, some were told to be as truthful and accurate as possible, and some were told that the investigators were especially interested in these comparisons because research had shown that romantic relationships in college tend to be somewhat unsatisfying and short-lived. Presumably, this information poses a threat to the relationship. If the relationship superiority bias stems from a motivated tendency to believe one’s relationship is especially wonderful, people who are strongly committed to their relationship should be particularly apt to show the bias when their relationship has been threatened. The data displayed in Figure 11.18 support the motivational interpretation. Participants who were highly committed to their relationship believed that their relationship was much better than other people’s, especially after their relationship had been threatened by the knowledge that it might not last. These findings suggest that people are motivated to see their relationship in highly positive terms as a means of bolstering their commitment.

**Denigrating Alternatives.** Dependency and commitment to a relationship can also be enhanced by denigrating the attractiveness of alternative relationships. After all, if you don’t find other relationship partners to be enticing, you’re likely to stay committed to your current partner (Broemer & Diehl, 2003; Buunk, Oldersma, & de Dreu, 2001). Lydon and colleagues conducted an investigation to determine whether committed partners devalue the attractiveness of alternative relationships (Lydon, Meana, Sepinwall, Richards, & Mayman, 1999). In one experimental condition, college students currently involved in heterosexual dating relationships signed up for an experiment designed to test a campus-based dating service. They were then shown a picture of a person of the opposite sex. In the high-threat condition, participants were told that this person had seen their picture and found them to be highly attractive and desirable as a dating partner. In the low-threat condition, participants were given no information one way or another about the other person’s interest in them. Finally, the participants indicated how desirable they found the person to be.