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College Students' Attachments to Their Mothers and Fathers: Comparing Social and Developmental Questionnaires



Elise W. Rogers, Brooke D. Vitulli, Samantha R. Leavey,
Angelina M. DeCapua, and Kelly A. Warmuth, Ph.D.

Introduction

- Although social and developmental attachment measures share the same theoretical framework surrounding them, they tend to tap different aspects of attachment (Roisman et al., 2007).
- The Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley, Niedenthal, Marks, Brumbaugh, & Vicary, 2006) tends to take a more social approach to measuring attachment dimensions.
- The Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Arnsden & Greenberg, 1987) tends to be more developmental by measuring attachment for periods of mid- to late adolescence and early adulthood (Gullone & Robinson, 2005).

Hypothesis

- The ECR-RS and the IPPA will be highly correlated in a predictable fashion.
- Attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance would be positively correlated to extent of anger and alienation, and negatively correlated to overall security, degree of mutual trust, and quality of communication.

Method

Participants

Data from 161 (45 male, 116 female) undergraduate students were collected. The average age of participants was 20.03 years ($SD = 1.02$).

Measures

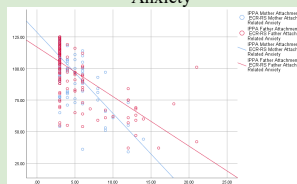
Relationship Structures Questionnaire (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2006) includes 9 items about each parent rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Two subscales are included: attachment-related avoidance ("I prefer not to show this person how I feel deep down") and attachment-related anxiety ("I'm afraid that this person may abandon me"). High scores on each subscale indicate higher levels of attachment-related avoidance or attachment-related anxiety

Revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Arnsden & Greenberg, 1987) includes 25 items about each parent rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*almost never or never true*) to 5 (*almost always or always true*). All items were summed to create a total attachment score (with high scores indicating more attachment security). Three subscales were also computed: degree of mutual trust, quality of communication, and extent of anger and alienation

ECR-RS Attachment-Related
Avoidance



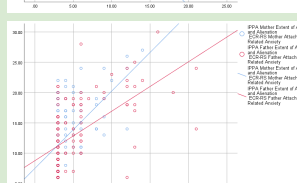
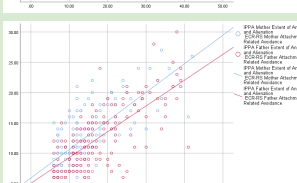
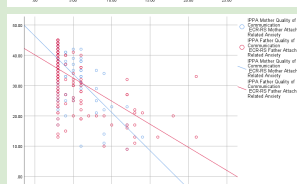
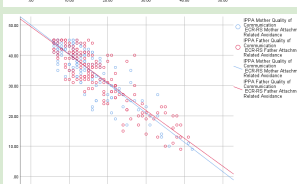
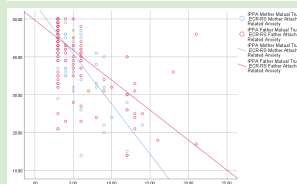
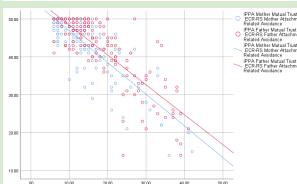
ECR-RS Attachment-Related
Anxiety



IPPA Attachment
Security

IPPA Degree of
Mutual Trust

IPPA Quality of
Communication



Results

As hypothesized, attachment-related avoidance and attachment-related anxiety were significantly negatively correlated to attachment security (Avoidance: $r = -.87/-.89$. Anxiety: $r = -.65/-.66$), degree of mutual trust (Avoidance: $r = -.82/-.82$. Anxiety: $r = -.69/-.66$), and quality of communication (Avoidance: $r = -.88/-.88$. Anxiety: $r = -.60/-.58$), and significantly positively correlated to feelings of anger and alienation (Avoidance: $r = .74/.75$. Anxiety: $r = .52/.57$). Therefore, the results suggest that although social and developmental measures may tap different parts of the attachment relationship, these approaches are significantly correlated.

Discussion

By using both the ECR-RS and IPPA, a more comprehensive understanding of attachment can be established. Our results showed a significant negative correlation between attachment-related avoidance and attachment-related anxiety (ECR-RS) to attachment security, degree of mutual trust, and quality of communication (IPPA).

Our results also showed a significant positive correlation between attachment-related avoidance and attachment-related anxiety (ECR-RS) to feelings of anger and alienation (IPPA). From this study—though limited in generalizability due to a homogeneous sample—we conclude that social and developmental attachment measures appear to overlap while viewing attachment from different lenses.

Contact Information

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Presented at the 2020 Eastern Psychological Association Conference, Boston MA, USA.