

ATTACHMENT, REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY AND DYADIC INTERACTION IN HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES

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Background Assumptions

- Attachment as a lifelong process
- Intimacy endorses (endorsed by) sexuality
- “Multi-method” research

Goals

- Analyze the interconnections between attachment representation, representation of sexual intimacy and dyadic behavior
- Examine the interdependence of dyadic processes

Research Questions

- Is the quality of attachment representation related to the representation of sexual intimacy?
- What's the relation between representation of sexual intimacy and the dyadic interaction behavior?
- What are the specific contributions of attachment representation and representation of sexual intimacy in observed behavior?
- Are the representation of sexual intimacy and the dyadic interaction moderated by partner's intimate representation?

METHOD

Participants

- 40 heterosexual couples
- Aged between 25 – 39 years old
- Relationship length: 2 – 16 years
- Cohabitation length: 7 months - 9½ years
- 31 married; 9 lived together
- Without children from this or other relationship
- With no previous marriages or cohabitations
- Not enrolled in individual or couple psychotherapeutic process

METHOD

Measures

- Attachment
 - *Adult Attachment Interview* (AAI; George, Kaplan & Main, 1985)
 - *Attachment Q-Sort* (Kobak, 1993)
- Intimate Relationship Representation
 - *Intimate Relationship Interview* (IRI; Lima, Soares, Vieira & Collins, 2005)
- Dyadic Interaction Behavior
 - *Couple Interaction Task* (CIT; Collins, Henninghausen, Madsen, & Roisman, 1998)

REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY & ATTACHMENT

Table 1: Attachment pattern and IRI factors for men

AAI Pattern IRI Factor	Secure (N=24) M (SD)	Preoccupied (N=8) M (SD)	Dismissing (N=8) M (SD)	F	Scheffé
Sexual Intimacy	3.79 (.93)	3.13 (1.35)	2.63 (1.06)	4.12*	S>D*

*p<.05

Table 2: Attachment pattern and IRI factors for women

AAI Pattern IRI Factor	Secure (N=25) M (SD)	Preoccupied (N=11) M (SD)	Dismissing (N=4) M (SD)	F	Scheffé
Sexual Intimacy	3.72 (1.1)	2.91 (.83)	2.25 (.50)	5.24*	S>D*

*p<.05

REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY & DYADIC BEHAVIOR

Table 3: Differences on representation of sexual intimacy in terms of CIT clusters in men

CIT Clusters	Enmeshed Interaction (N=15)	Distanced Interaction (N=15)	Balanced Interaction (N=15)	F	Scheffé
IRI Factor	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Sexual Intimacy	3.53 (.99)	2.93 (.91)	3.91 (1.37)	2.63	-----

Table 4: Differences on representation of sexual intimacy in terms of CIT clusters in women

CIT Clusters	Enmeshed Interaction (N=15)	Distanced Interaction (N=15)	Balanced Interaction (N=15)	F	Scheffé
IRI Factor	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Sexual Intimacy	3.4 (.91)	2.79 (1.12)	4.00 (1.00)	4.40*	ID<IB

*p<.05

ATTACHMENT, REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY & DYADIC INTERACTION: INTERDEPENDENCE AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Table 5: Odds Ratio of a lower CIT score in terms of each member of the couple's attachment pattern and IRI score

CIT Scales	Attachment Pattern (secure vs. insecure)		IRI (inferior vs. superior)	
	Women'	Men	Women	Men
	OR''	OR''	OR''	OR''
			Sexual Intimacy	
Dyadic Positive Affect	5	1.6	2.9	1.3
Quality of Interaction	6*	2.9	.7	3.3

*p<.05

' IRI high is the reference " OR – odds ratio adjusted

ATTACHMENT, REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL INTIMACY & DYADIC INTERACTION: INTERDEPENDENCE AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Table 6: Multiple logistic regressions for male IRI score (n=40). Odds Ratio of a low male IRI score, in terms of the attachment pattern and respective female IRI score.

	Attachment Pattern (insecure vs. secure)	Female' IRI (lower vs. higher)
Male IRI Score	OR''	OR''
Sexual Intimacy	4.3	6.2*

*p<.05

*High IRI is the reference category ** OR – adjusted odds ratio

Table 7: Multiple logistic regressions for female IRI score (n=40). Odds Ratio of a low female IRI score, in terms of the attachment pattern and respective male IRI score.

	Attachment Pattern (insecure vs. secure)	Male' IRI (lower vs. higher)
Female IRI Score	OR''	OR''
Sexual Intimacy	6.3*	5.3*

*p<.05

*High IRI is the reference category ** OR – adjusted odds ratio

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

- Attachment security associated to development of sexual intimacy
- Representation of sexual relationship as encompassing positive communication and mutual satisfaction promotes dyadic interaction
- Gender differences regarding the specific impact of attachment and the representation of sexual intimacy on dyadic behavior
- Interdependence Model as a productive one

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

- Dyadic measures of behavior neglect individual contributions to interaction processes
- Clinical samples (psychopathology, sexual disorders) and couples enrolled in therapy.

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