Attachment in Relationships: A Meta-Analysis on Actor and Partner Effects

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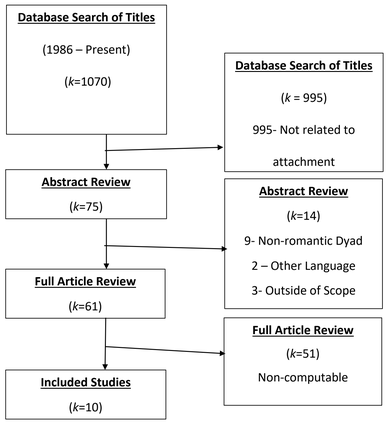
Key Points

- Attachment avoidance appears to be more problematic in relationships than attachment anxiety. Particularly for partner effects.
- APIM meta-analysis has the potential to be an innovative technique that increases understanding of relationships.

Introduction

- Previous romantic attachment meta-analyses have focused on sex differences (Giudice, 2011), how anxious and avoidant attachment affect romantic relationship quality differently (Li &Chan, 2012), and how relationship duration moderates the influence of attachment (Hadden, et al., 2014).
- Additionally, multiple meta-analyses have attempted to integrate a more dyadic approach to relationships by assessing partner affects ().
- However, no meta-analysis has utilized the APIM to simultaneously evaluated actor and partner effects. A problem for attachment research which is inherently relational.

Method



Method (Continued)

- Decided to include anxiety and avoidance simultaneously in order to avoid confounding bias.
- Manually inserted correlation matrix for variables of interest, and evaluated all variables simultaneously in APIM SEM.
- After contacting authors and gaining additional studies, we hope to test moderation by type of publication, study design, sample type, age, relationship duration, relationship status, and attachment scale used.
- Relationship quality was an aggregate of relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction and connectedness (e.g., trust, intimacy, etc.)
- List of 10 included studies available upon request.

Discussion

- Over 70% of peer reviewed studies of relationships in major journals are based on individual rather than couple data (Kashy, et al., 2006).
  - Without getting both partners' perspectives it becomes challenging to fully understand the development of healthy relationships.
- Overall, avoidance appears to be more problematic than anxiety for satisfaction in close romantic relationships, supporting previous research (Li & Chan, 2012).
  - New contribution is showing this is also true for partner effects.
- Partner effects matter. Particularly for avoidance.
- APIM researchers report statistics in a way that is challenging to utilize for meta-analysis.
  - Partner effects should be reported for correlations.
  - Consider running the APIM originally without controls
  - Even if results for gender are not significant, consider reporting them anyways. They may be important in the cumulative effect sizes of meta-analysis.
- With improved reporting of APIM studies, meta-analysis with simultaneous evaluation of actor and partner effects can bring innovative insight into the social sciences.

Results

Relationship Quality (mixed effects)		
Anxiety	Estimate	95% CI
actor effect male	.002	[-.105, .110]
actor effect female	-.056	[-.147, .036]
partner effect to male	.004	[-.044, .052]
partner effect to female	-.087	[-.204, .032]
Avoidance		
actor effect male	-.285	[-.419, -.138]*
actor effect female	-.120	[-.389, .169]
partner effect to male	-.119	[-.187, -.049]*
partner effect to female	-.081	[-.135, -.025]*

Relationship Satisfaction (fixed effects)		
Anxiety	Estimate	95% CI
actor effect male	-.126	[-.200, -.050]*
actor effect female	-.127	[-.202, .052]
partner effect to male	-.011	[-.087, .066]
partner effect to female	-.078	[-.153, -.002]*
Avoidance		
actor effect male	-.299	[-.367, -.228]*
actor effect female	-.426	[-.486, -.361]*
partner effect to male	-.215	[-.287, -.142]*
partner effect to female	-.140	[-.214, -.065]*

Sexual Satisfaction (fixed effects)		
Anxiety	Estimate	95% CI
actor effect male	-.081	[-.175, .014]
actor effect female	.023	[-.072, .117]
partner effect to male	.114	[.019, .207]*
partner effect to female	.006	[-.089, .101]
Avoidance		
actor effect male	-.142	[-.234, -.047]*
actor effect female	.018	[-.077, .113]
partner effect to male	-.175	[-.265, -.081]*
partner effect to female	-.152	[-.244, -.058]*

Connectedness (mixed effects)		
Anxiety	Estimate	95% CI
actor effect male	.002	[-.142, .147]
actor effect female	-.097	[-.194, .002]
partner effect to male	.015	[-.039, .070]
partner effect to female	-.027	[-.089, .037]
Avoidance		
actor effect male	-.311	[-.447, -.161]*
actor effect female	-.280	[-.366, -.189]*
partner effect to male	-.088	[-.175, .001]
partner effect to female	-.072	[-.161, .017]