



A comparison of two attachment measures in relation to personality factors and facets



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ABSTRACT

There is a large body of literature on attachment styles and personality traits. The purpose of this study was to compare two commonly used instruments of attachment that measure secure, fearful, dismissing, and preoccupied styles. Furthermore, we sought to determine which personality factors and facets were common on both of the attachment measures. Overall, 273 undergraduates completed a demographic measure, two attachment scales (RQ and RSQ), and the NEO-PI-R to measure personality. We found high concordance between the NEO-PI-R factors and facets that predicted RSQ and RQ attachment. On both measures of attachment, a secure style was associated with lower neuroticism and higher extraversion. Fearful attachment was consistently predicted by being female, having higher neuroticism (specifically depression) as well as lower extraversion and agreeableness (specifically trust). Individuals scoring higher on preoccupied attachment had higher neuroticism (specifically depression) and lower agreeableness. Finally, individuals scoring higher on dismissing attachment had lower trust. These results confirm Griffin and Bartholomew's (1994) conceptualization of attachment as falling on the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance. Individuals with higher anxiety had higher neuroticism and lower agreeableness and those with higher avoidance had lower levels of trust.

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1. Introduction

In past decades, a large body of literature has been produced by researchers in the fields of attachment and personality. The two constructs are generally examined separately with attachment researchers focusing on interpersonal bonds and personality researchers focusing on how specific traits affect experiences. Fewer researchers have specifically examined the relation between these two constructs (see Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Nofle & Shaver, 2006; Shaver & Brennan, 1992). There are a number of different measures to assess attachment, each with strengths and weaknesses (Carver, 1997; Fraley & Waller, 1998), thus, the primary purpose of our research was to compare two commonly-used measures of adult attachment. We plan to address the concordance between attachment measures by examining the associations between personality factors and facets, and attachment style.

Based largely on the work of Bowlby (1969/1982), Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a theoretically driven model of adult attachment based on two internal working models of the self and the other. This model led to the conceptualization of four attachment styles (secure, fearful, dismissing, preoccupied). Secure individuals are described as having a positive model of the self and a positive model of others. These individuals are well-balanced, have high self-esteem, feel worthy of love, and are comfortable in relationships. Preoccupied individuals have a positive

view of the other, but a negative view of the self. They depend on others for their self-regard and do not see themselves as worthy of love. Dismissing individuals have a positive view of the self, but a negative view of the other. They regard themselves highly, but see other individuals as untrustworthy. Finally, fearful individuals have a negative view of both the self and other. They feel unworthy of love and, in order to protect themselves from rejection, they avoid relationships.

Based on this four-category conceptualization, the Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) were developed. Although other measures conceptualize attachment in terms of the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) and are popular in the literature, this two dimensional model is different from Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) theoretical model. In spite of the fact that the categorical model has been criticized (Fraley & Waller, 1998), researchers commonly frame attachment using categorical definitions.

1.1. The relation between attachment and personality

The Five Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1985, 1992) is the most popular dimensional theory of personality used to explain individual differences (Digman, 1990; Norman, 1963). In this model, the five basic personality factors are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Costa and McCrae (1985,

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1992) developed the Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness to Experience Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R) that has become the most validated measure of the Big Five model (Fazeli, 2012). The five factor model is hierarchical and each *factor* domain contains six *facets*. Researchers and clinicians can use the Five Factor Model to develop a comprehensive picture of an individual, or group of individuals, and to investigate the relation between personality and other variables of interest.

Shaver and Brennan (1992) examined attachment styles and personality characteristics (using the NEO-PI; Costa & McCrae, 1985) to predict relationship satisfaction. Attachment security was correlated with lower Neuroticism as well as higher Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. When the five factor scores were entered into regression analyses, 20% of the variance in secure attachment was accounted for by lower Neuroticism and higher Extraversion. The anxious/ambivalent style was predicted by higher Neuroticism and the avoidant style was predicted by higher Neuroticism and lower Agreeableness. The Openness factor did not relate to any of the three attachment styles. The authors repeated the regressions using the NEO-PI facets to predict attachment and found that between 9% (anxious/ambivalent) and 23% (avoidant and secure) of the variance was explained by these measures; however, the 1985 version of the NEO-PI did not include any facets for Agreeableness and Openness. Further, attachment was measured using a three factor model rather than the conceptually driven four factor model. Thus, there is a need to replicate the results using the full factor and facet model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and the four category model of attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) also examined the relation between personality and attachment to determine if they were highly similar psychological constructs. To measure personality, they used the NEO-PI factor scores (Costa & McCrae, 1985). The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) were used to measure adult attachment, and the four category model (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) was collapsed into two dimensions (view of self and view of other). Overall, 48% of the variance in the model of the self (anxiety) and 27% of the variance in the model of the other (avoidance) was accounted for by personality factor scores. Specifically, Neuroticism was the best predictor for the view of self (high anxiety) and Extraversion was the best predictor for the view of other (low avoidance). Neuroticism correlated negatively with attachment to parents and peers (Beitel & Cecero, 2003; Wilkinson & Walford, 2001) and Extraversion correlated positively with these variables (Beitel & Cecero, 2003). Again, a better understanding of the relation between personality and attachment would be provided using the personality facet scores.

1.2. Purpose of the current study

Attachment has been conceptualized from various vantage points. For example, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) used a four category model (positive and negative views of self and other), Shaver and Brennan (1992) used three attachment styles (secure, avoidant, and anxious), as did Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert (1997; but they used secure, fearful and preoccupied), and Nofle and Shaver (2006) as well as Gallo, Smith, and Ruiz (2003) used attachment anxiety and avoidance as dimensions. The use of different conceptualizations and measurements is confusing and may account for inconsistencies in the literature (Caron, Lafontaine, Bureau, Levesque, & Johnson, 2012). Given that researchers used different instruments to measure attachment, it is possible that the inconsistent findings surrounding the relation between personality and attachment are due to the instruments used to measure them. Our primary goal was to evaluate longer (30-item RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) and shorter (5-item RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) measures of attachment in order to assess which instrument is most appropriate in specific research contexts.

We were also interested in expanding the literature to examine the relation between personality factors and facets in relation to attachment. To date, no research has examined the full NEO-PI-R personality factors and facets in relation to different categorical attachment styles. Our secondary goal was to inform researchers about the personality characteristics associated with the attachment styles as measured by the longer and shorter attachment measures. Many attachment researchers struggle when deciding which instrument to use in their studies. A large number of inventories exist and, therefore, our overall goal was to help inform this decision. For researchers in the area of attachment, this is an important decision as scores on these inventories are used as primary research variables. Furthermore, when large batteries of tests are administered to participants, the responsible use of shorter measures may prevent participant fatigue.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 273 undergraduate students participated (M age = 20.54 years; $SD = 4.54$). The majority were female (73%), Canadian (89%), single (88%) and living with their parents (64%).

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. NEO PI-R

The NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) consists of 240 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale that cluster into five factors of personality (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness). Each factor includes 6 facet scores that measure specific constructs. The internal consistency on the five major factors range from $\alpha = 0.86$ to 0.92 ; on the facet scores $\alpha = 0.56$ to 0.81 .

2.2.2. RSQ

The RSQ (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) includes 30 items measured on a 5-point Likert Scale. These items cluster into groups representing secure, dismissing, fearful, and preoccupied attachment styles. Participants receive a score on each style. The measure has adequate reliability and convergent validity (see Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994 for details) and is widely used in adult attachment literature.

2.2.3. RQ

The RQ (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) consists of 4 statements representing a prototype of the attachment styles (secure, dismissing, fearful and preoccupied) that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The RQ has adequate convergent validity between self-report, peer ratings and interviewer ratings (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

2.3. Procedure

Students were recruited to attend several group sessions to complete the study. After signing an informed consent, participants received the demographic measure, followed by the questionnaires in random order.

3. Results

There were moderate correlations between the RSQ and RQ scores for each of the attachment styles: secure ($r = 0.55, p < 0.0001$); fearful ($r = 0.59, p < 0.0001$); preoccupied ($r = 0.55, p < 0.0001$); and, dismissing ($r = 0.56, p < 0.0001$). We examined the pattern of relations between attachment and personality in two ways. First, we examined the pattern of statistically significant correlation coefficients between the RQ and RSQ with the NEO-PI-R factor and facet scores. We defined correspondence as occurring when the pattern of correlations between

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