

Partner-specific investment strategies: Similarities and differences in couples and associations with sociosexual orientation and attachment dimensions

Tammy Candice Tempelhof, J. Sabura Allen *

School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne 3800, Australia

Received 28 May 2007; received in revised form 8 February 2008; accepted 20 February 2008

Available online 10 April 2008

Abstract

Partner-specific investment (PSI) was explored in a sample of 40 heterosexual couples (mean relationship length = 5.12 years). Analyses of the couples indicated dyad members were moderately accurate in the assessment of each other's PSI. Differences in PSI were found between dyad members and between sexes with men generally investing significantly more in providing safety and trends towards greater provisioning and sexual access. Associations between PSI and sociosexual orientation and adult attachment were investigated in a larger sample of 107 women. Shorter-term sociosexual orientation was associated with being less future oriented, less expressive and nurturing, more honest and socially attentive and holding similar views about romantic partners' PSI. Anxious attachment was associated with being less investing and viewing one's partners as less investing across many strategies. Avoidant attachment moderated the predictive value of anxious attachment and emerged as a strong predictor of investing less in current romantic relationships. Findings are discussed within identified theoretical frameworks.

© 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Partner-specific investment; Adult attachment; Sociosexual orientation; Romantic relationships

1. Partner-specific investment

Ellis (1998) defined partner-specific investment (PSI) as forms of investment that are putatively linked to solving adaptive problems, and which make contributions to a relationship. Ellis conceptualised and measured 10 types of PSI that do not include personal characteristics such as mate value. Each PSI type (*i.e.*, strategy) includes behaviours benefiting the relationship within an immediate time frame that involve effort, external resources, or exposure to risk (*e.g.*, buying a present), or within a future timeframe that convey evidence of commitment to, and

trust in, the relationship (*e.g.*, talking about the future). PSI types were linked to specific adaptive problems associated with mating as follows: *future commitment*: future orientation and public acknowledgment of relationship (future orientation), being honest (honesty), developing a low-conflict relationship between one's partner and one's family (partner's family), not flirting with members of the opposite sex (non-sexualization); *nurturance and commitment*: sharing of feelings, nurturance, and expressions of warmth towards one's partner (expressiveness); *provisioning and safety*: financial generosity directed towards partner (monetary investment), acts of protection and feelings of safety (physical protection); *sexual access*: sexual enthusiasm and desire to please sexually (sexual investment), and *support in social situations*: level of support or attention paid to one's partner in public (social attentiveness). Ellis viewed the allocation of time to one's part-

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 3 9905 4725; fax: +61 3 9905 3948.

E-mail addresses: tam2tempelhof@hotmail.com (T.C. Tempelhof), sabura.allen@med.monash.edu.au (J. Sabura Allen).

ner (time investment) as a diffuse strategy, however, it is viewed here as evidence of nurturance and commitment. The literature using this measure is growing and is discussed below in context of theories of strategic mating and adult attachment.

1.1. Strategic mating

The theory of sexual selection (Trivers, 1972) and sexual strategies theory (Buss & Schmitt, 1993) propose that evolution resulted in a range of mating strategies that organize reproductive effort. Despite much continuity between men's and women's use of mating strategies, gender differences occur due to reproductive opportunities and constraints that confront each sex in pursuit of reproductive success. Women tend towards employing longer-term mating strategies to secure mates who will commit to and invest in a relationship and any offspring. In contrast, men tend towards using shorter-term mating strategies to gain access to more reproductive partners and are less concerned about investment and commitment.

Consistent with these theories, Ellis (1998) found that while men and women invest in all PSI strategy types, men invested more in strategies related to provisioning, safety and sexual access which might signal provision of resources and openness to shorter-term mating opportunities. By contrast, women invested more time into their relationships and were less sexualising of others than men. Research linking sociosexual orientation (SO) (*i.e.*, a bipolar continuum anchored by the terms unrestricted and restricted that ranges from shorter-term mating to longer-term mating, Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) and PSI has been somewhat inconsistent with a longer-term mating orientation being generally associated with more investment for women, and in a more limited way for men, and shorter-term mating orientation being associated with greater sexual access in women (Ellis, 1998).

In contrast, strategic pluralism theory (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000) focuses on within-sex differences, and proposes that both sexes use mixed mating strategies; that is they move between short-term and long-term strategies in response to cues within environmental contexts allowing greater opportunities for reproductive success. A core proposal of SPT is that women must strike a balance between choosing men for their genetic quality (indicating pathogen resistance) and the likelihood men can and will provide resources and safety (indicating parental care to offspring). Time investment has been associated with viewing one's partner as being agreeable, emotionally stable, resourceful, physically attractive and capable, and as being more difficult to replace which may reflect cues of the current mating context (Ellis, Simpson, & Campbell, 2002). Relatedly, an association has been found between women's perceptions of their partners as investing and women's parental readiness (Juda, Campbell, & Crawford, 2004). Greater symmetry in men has been associated with less overall investment,

honesty and time and more sexualising of other women, which may reflect shorter-term strategic mating for men who exhibit higher genetic quality (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000, p. 583).

1.2. Attachment

Developmental attachment theory, also identified as a mid-level evolutionary theory, was pioneered by the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth and later extended and used as a framework for investigating adult relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Adult attachment theory identifies three behavioural systems involved in adult romantic relationships – attachment, caregiving, and sexual mating. The first two systems were co-opted from the infant-parent behavioural systems that fulfilled an evolutionary function of protection. Partners who view each other as both attachment figures and caregivers would form stronger affective bonds ensuring their commitment to safeguard their children until reproductive age, and thereby ensuring their own reproductive success.

Adult attachment has been conceptualised along two orthogonal dimensions. The first is a bipolar continuum anchored by security and avoidance and reflects one's view of others. The second, attachment anxiety, is viewed as a more self-focused dimension that reflects preoccupation with attachment (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). *Securely* attached individuals are likely to develop stable, supportive relationships. Whereas, *insecurely* attached individuals may have less stable relationships in differing ways. Individuals who are *anxious* tend to be more dependent, fear rejection and interpret interpersonal cues more negatively, but are also willing to work to improve their relationships. *Avoidant* individuals tend towards discomfort with closeness, greater self-reliance, less emphasis on nurturance, and also fear rejection. Some individuals are both anxious and avoidant (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney, 1999; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994).

Hazan and Zeifman (1999) have argued that secure adult attachment results in more restrictive and normative reproductive styles that are generally adaptive, whereas insecure attachment can result in less restrictive and maladaptive reproductive styles. Others disagree viewing insecure attachment as resulting in adaptive styles also (see Belsky, 1999). In contrast, Kirkpatrick (1998) has specifically challenged the concept of adult attachment stating attachment styles are reproductive strategies that are facilitated by love as a device that ensures commitment. Secure attachment has been linked with longer-term mating, whereas avoidant insecure attachment has been linked positively to shorter-term mating or negatively to longer-term mating orientation. Although inconsistencies exist, these may reflect the uniqueness of differing contexts. Further, Kirkpatrick (1998) conceptualized attachment anxiety as reflective of one's view of his/her mate value and it has

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/892735>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/892735>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)