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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

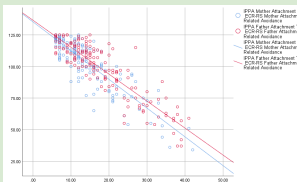
Data from 161 (45 male, 116 female) undergraduate students were collected. The average age of participants was 20.03 years ( $SD = 1.02$ ).

### Measures

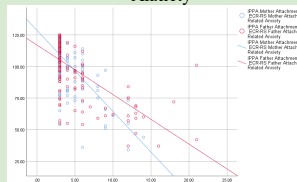
**Relationship Structures Questionnaire** (ECR-RS; Fraley et al., 2006) includes 9 items about each parent rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Two subscales are included: attachment-related avoidance ("I prefer not to show this person how I feel deep 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

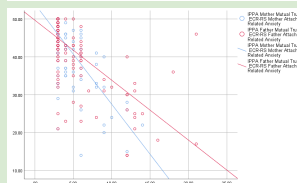
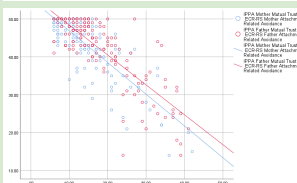
ECR-RS Attachment-Related  
Avoidance



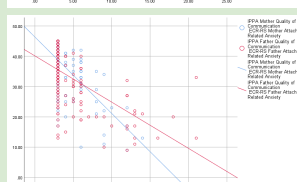
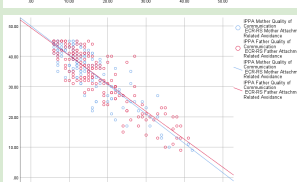
ECR-RS Attachment-Related  
Anxiety



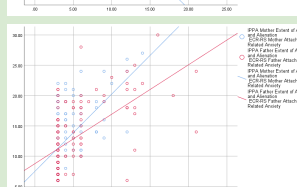
IPPA Degree of  
Mutual Trust



IPPA Quality of  
Communication



IPPA Extent of Anger  
and Alienation



## 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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