

## Project 2: Self Reported Attachment Styles, Affect and Loneliness

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- Research Purpose:** This project examines the relationship between self-reported attachment styles and self-reports of loneliness and affect in a university undergraduate population.
- Research Description:** Attachment theory is one of the most researched areas in psychology. Self-rating questionnaires of attachment styles in close relationships has in particular generated considerable research. For example, secure attachment has been found to be strongly related to recall of being positively parented. However, in an integrative overview of self-report measures of romantic attachments, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) found that attachment was more accurately conceptualised as consisting of current dimensions of anxiety and avoidance. In the process, they developed the Experiences in Close Relationships questionnaire to measure these dimensions. A revised version (ECR-R) was then developed by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) and its validity examined by Fairchild and Finney (2006). Part of that extensive research used the UCLA Loneliness Scale-Version 3 (Russell, 1996), and found that participants' perceived degree of social support moderately correlated with avoidant attachment. Attachment theorists have also posited that self-ratings of insecure avoidant attachment reflect current affective state (Wearden, Peters, Berry, Barrowclough & Liversidge, 2008), rather than a steady trait.
- This project will examine whether correlations between self-ratings of insecure avoidant attachment style and loneliness are mediated by self-ratings on a measure of affective state. The DASS (Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale) has been widely used in non-clinical and clinical populations and several studies have examined its construct validity.
- This project will examine the relationships between the above three measures among undergraduate psychology students at this university. Participation will be voluntary and contribute to the students' credit.
- Participants:** Participants will be recruited from the USQ Psychology Dept undergraduate cohort, via the On Line Survey site. It is anticipated that approx. 100-150 participants are required. The student will need to put the questionnaires into a format that is on-line user-friendly, collate the data collected and be relatively independent in deciding on relevant statistical analyses. The student will be expected to read extensively, understand and debate the conflicting theories, and to keep a log of their research activity, meeting deadlines outlined by the Honours thesis examiner and supervisor.
- Methodology:** The following questionnaires will be used:
1. UCLA Loneliness Scale-Version 3
  2. DASS (Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale)
  3. Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised

Data collection will be via the On Line Survey site (OLS). OLS will include consent form, demographic variables e.g. age, sex, number of 'serious' relationships (6mths or more), and whether or not in a current relationship. Data from this project will be shared with another Honours project.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative analyses will include descriptive, simple correlations and multivariate statistics and will require data screening, checking psychometric properties of questionnaires, and separating participants into particular groups based on questionnaire responses.

**Student friendliness:** This project could be managed either externally or internally. No travel is required for data collection. Weekly supervision is required initially and then fortnightly depending on progress. The format of supervision will be determined in negotiation with supervisor and supervisee (e.g., face-to-face, phone).

**Expected research outcomes:** Poster at 2010 APS conference.

**Further reading:**

Crawford, JR & Henry, JD. (2003). The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS): Normative data and latent structure in a large non-clinical sample. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 42(2), 111-131.

DiTommaso, E. & Spinner, B. (1997). Social and Emotional Loneliness: A Re-examination of Weiss' Typology of Loneliness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 22(3), 412-427.

Fairchild, AJ & Finney, SJ. (2006). Investigating Validity Evidence for the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66; 116-135.

Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. G. (2000). Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised; An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 350-365.

Hanken, BL., Kassel, JD. & Abela, JRZ. (2005). Adult Attachment Dimensions and Specificity of Emotional Distress Symptoms: Prospective Investigations of Cognitive Risk and Interpersonal Stress Generation as Mediating Mechanisms. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(1), 136-151.

Mikulincer, M & Shaver, PR. (2007). *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics and Change*. The Guilford Press.

Russell, DW. (1996). UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3): Reliability, Validity and Factor Structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 66(1), 20-40.

Wearden, A., Peters, I., Berry, K., Barrowclough, C. & Liversidge, T. (2008). Adult attachment, parenting experiences, and core beliefs about self and others. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44, 1246-1257.

**Ethics:**

- Ethical approval will be sought by supervisor; or
- Ethics approved – number

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**Resources:**

- Project able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit
- Project not able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit – additional funds will come from:

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