Do Attachments Predict How You Describe Your Romantic Partner?

Megan Dini  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Alexis Atkins  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

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Do Attachments Impact How You Describe Your Romantic Partner?
Brenda Lundy, Megan Dini, Alexis Atkins & Danielle Witt
Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne

Abstract
Whether adults’ abilities to represent their current romantic partner in terms of their mental characteristics is related to secure attachments has yet to be determined. We found that individuals who held secure attachment representations were more likely to describe their romantic partner in terms of their mental characteristics (compared to behavioral and physical). These findings contribute to the understanding of the influences of attachments, and mind-mindedness.

Introduction
In the child developmental literature, parental mind-mindedness (or parents’ tendency to represent their child in terms of their mental processes) has been found to predict differences in attachment security (e.g., Laranjo, Bernier & Meins, 2008; Lundy, 2003). Secure infant attachment relationships appear to be associated with their parents’ ability to consider their child’s mental processes. Research looking at adults use of mind-mindedness in relation to their attachment representations of their significant other has not yet been conducted. It is plausible that, secure attachment representations in adults may be similarly linked to their ability to describe their significant others in terms of mental characteristics (compared to behavioral or physical characteristics).

Methods
The sample consisted of 123 undergraduate students (80 males and 43 females). Participants completed the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994), and participated in a mind-mindedness task where they were asked to provide five descriptors of their current romantic partner. Descriptors were classified as mental, behavioral or physical modeled after the Meins et al. (1999) coding manual.

Results
Adults’ descriptions of romantic partners (mental versus behavioral or physical attributes) are significantly associated with attachment representations. Analyses revealed a significant association between secure representations and use of mental attributes to describe participant’s current romantic partner ($r = .23, p = .003$). Adults with fearful representations provided fewer mental ($r = -.19, p = .002$) and more behavioral ($r = .30, p = .007$) descriptors. Preoccupied representations also provided fewer mental descriptors ($r = -.20, p = .02$).

Conclusion
Adults’ descriptions of romantic partners (mental versus behavioral or physical attributes) was significantly associated with attachment representations. The findings suggest that adults’ ability to connect with their romantic partner’s mental processes may facilitate or be facilitated by their attachment representations. Adult’s relationships with their current romantic could be influenced by attachment relationships which relate to levels of engagement in mind-mindedness. These findings help contribute to the understanding of mind-mindedness and how it relates to adult’s attachments and relationships. Further research should be conducted exploring adults’ attachments and mind-mindedness engagement, as mind-mindedness is related to successful social interactions and relationships.