

The Effects of Self- and Partner Reported Attachment Orientations and Mate Retention Behaviors: Actor and Partner Effects in Romantic Couples

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Abstract : The aim of this study was to examine the effects of self- and partner reported attachment orientations on self-reported mate retention behaviors in romantic couples using the actor-partner interdependence model. The study was carried out on 187 heterosexual couples aged from 18 to 35 years, with an average relationship length of 4.5 years. Participants were asked to complete the revised scale of adult attachment and short form of mate retention inventory. Actor and partner effects of self- and partner reported anxious and avoidant attachment orientations on mate retention categories (direct guarding, intersexual negative inducements, positive inducements, public signals of possession and intrasexual negative inducements) and domains (cost-inflicting and benefit-provisioning), as well on overall mate retention were examined. Actor effects for women estimate whether their attachment orientations predict their own mate retention behaviors, whereas men's actor effects estimate whether their attachment orientations predict their own mate retention behaviors. Women's partner effects estimate whether their attachment orientations predict their partner's mate retention behaviors, whereas men's partner effects estimate whether their attachment orientations predict their partner's mate retention behaviors. The use of two data sources, self- and partner reports, allow the control of the effects of common method variance when exploring actor and partner effects. Positive actor and partner effects of anxious attachment, as well as negative actor and partner effects of avoidant attachment on mate retention, were expected. In other words, it was expected that more anxiously attached individuals themselves, as well as their partners, will use mate retention behaviors more frequently. On the other hand, more avoidantly attached individuals themselves, as well as their partners, will use mate retention behaviors less frequently. These hypotheses were partially confirmed. The results showed that the strongest and most consistent effects across both data sources were men's actor effects on the cost-inflicting mate retention domain, and especially on two mate retention categories, direct guarding, and intersexual negative inducements. Additionally, a consistent positive partner effect of men's anxious attachment orientations on direct guarding was also obtained. Avoidant attachment orientation exerted few and inconsistent actor and partner effects on mate retention domains and categories. The results are explained by theoretical propositions addressing the effects of attachment orientations on an interpersonal romantic relationship in early adulthood.

Keywords : actor and partner effects, attachment orientations, dyadic analysis, mate retention behavior

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