

ATTACHMENT STYLE AND JEALOUSY

A Brief Report on the Relationship between Attachment Style, Self-Esteem, and Multidimensional Romantic Jealousy

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Abstract

Previous research has found strong relationships between attachment style, self-esteem multidimensional jealousy. As a result, we explored the role of attachment style and self-esteem in participants' experience of cognitive, jealousy and emotional jealousy, with an aim to replicate previous findings in the field. Our findings show that closeness predicted cognitive jealousy, however, attachment style, and self-esteem did not predict emotional, cognitive and behavioural jealousy, thus failing to replicate previous research exploring the role of attachment style, and self-esteem in relation to multidimensional romantic jealousy.

Keywords: attachment style, self-esteem, multidimensional romantic jealousy

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The Relationship between Attachment Style, Self-Esteem, and Multidimensional Romantic Jealousy

Scholars have long been interested in exploring jealousy in interpersonal romantic relationships. Jealousy is conceptualized as being multidimensional (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989). Cognitive jealousy refers to suspicious thoughts about a partner, behavioural jealousy refers to actively searching for signs of betrayal, and emotional jealousy refers to emotions experienced when one suspects their partner is romantically involved with another person (Karakurt, 2001).

Although attachment style traditionally focuses on the child-parent relationship, the framework has been applied to adult romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, see Dillow, Goodboy & Bolkan, 2014). For example, Knobloch et al. (2001) found that those who experienced attachment anxiety were more likely to experience emotional jealousy. Furthermore, Simpson (1990) found that those with secure attachment had greater relationship interdependence, commitment and trust than those with anxious/avoidance attachment styles. Attachment style have also been explored in relation to negative relational behaviours. For example, Goodboy et al. (2010) found that jealousy partners tend to use negative relational maintenance behaviours. In addition, from an interpersonal communication perspective, we should expect a relationship between attachment style and behavioural jealousy, as previous research has found that those who have an avoidant attachment style are more likely to engage in the induction of jealousy (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011).

As well as attachment style, we explored the relationship between self-esteem and romantic jealousy. Self-esteem is described as positive/negative feelings we have about ourselves (Brown, 1993). Guerrero (1998) found that those have negative beliefs about themselves experienced higher cognitive jealousy than those with positive self-beliefs. Furthermore, low self-esteem is strongly linked to romantic jealousy (Bunnk 1982; DeSteno et

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al 2006). Those with a secure attachment display higher levels of self-esteem compared to those who are avoidant and anxious (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Secure attachment style has been associated with greater relationship satisfaction compared to those who with an anxious or avoidant attachment style (Marshall et al. 2012).

We conducted a replication study to explore whether our findings would replicate the strong findings in the field suggesting strong associations between attachment style, self-esteem, and romantic jealousy. Replication studies have been particularly important in recent years due to lack of replicable findings in the social sciences (see Earp & Trafimow, 2015). As a result, the aim of our study was to attempt a replication of previous research exploring attachment style, self-esteem, and romantic jealousy.

There were three hypotheses:

H1: Avoidant and anxious attachment styles would be positively associated with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral jealousy.

H2: Low self-esteem, avoidant, and anxious attachment styles would be positively associated with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral jealousy.

H3: High self-esteem and secure attachment would be negatively associated with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral jealousy.

Method

Participants and design

One hundred and two heterosexual participants took part via opportunity sampling (80 women, 22 men, mean age=19.98 years, SD=1.99). Participants took part online, recruited via the Psychology departments' research participation scheme. A multiple regression model was

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adopted to explore whether attachment styles and self-esteem were related to multidimensional jealousy. Participants were currently in romantic relationships.

Materials and procedure

First, participants were asked to state their age and gender. Participants then completed the Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990), which measures close (extent to which a person is comfortable with closeness with their partner), anxiety (the extent to which one is fearful of abandonment), and dependency (extent to which one feels they can depend on their partner) attachment styles. The scale consists of 18 items. An example of an item measuring avoidant attachment styles is *'I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others'*, an example of an item measuring secure attachment styles is *'I am comfortable depending on others'*, and an example of anxious attachment style questions is, *'I often worry that my partner does not really love me'*. All items are measured on a 1 (low) to 5 (high) Likert scale. The scale was reliable; Anxious ($\alpha=.71$), depend ($\alpha=.74$), and close ($\alpha=.70$).

Participants completed Rosenberg's Self-esteem scale (1965). The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1=totally disagree to 4=totally agree). An example is 'I feel that I have a number of good qualities'. This scale was reliable ($\alpha=.79$).

Participants completed Pfeiffer and Wong's (1987) multidimensional jealousy scale, which consists of three subscales measuring behavioural, cognitive, and emotional jealousy. Cognitive and behavioral subscales ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (all the time) and the emotional subscale ranged from 1 (very pleased) to 7 (very upset). For the cognitive subscale, participants were asked to think about how often they had jealous thoughts about their partner. For example, 'I suspect that X is secretly seeing someone of the opposite sex'. The emotional subscale

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required participants to answer according to how they would react to certain situations. For example, 'X shows a great deal of interest or excitement in talking to someone of the opposite sex'. The behavioural subscale required participants to answer questions based on how often they engage in certain behaviors; for example, 'I call X unexpectedly, just to see if s/he is there'. Each subscale was reliable; cognitive ($\alpha=.88$), emotional ($\alpha=.72$), and behavioural jealousy ($\alpha=.79$). All participants provided informed consent prior to taking part. This study was approved by the Coventry University research ethics committee.

Results

Three multiple regression analyses were conducted to measure the relationship between attachment styles, self-esteem and cognitive (regression 1), emotional (regression 2), and behavioural jealousy (regression 3). Descriptive statistics, and Collinearity statistics (Tolerance/VIF values) are presented in Table 1, and correlations are presented in Table 2.

Cognitive jealousy

The total variance (r^2) explained by the model was 24.2% (Adjusted $r^2=.211$, Durbin Watson=2.07), $F(4, 98)=7.819$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $f^2=.319$ (suggesting a medium effect size). The model significantly predicted cognitive jealousy. Beta values suggest that the only significant predictor of cognitive jealousy was the depend attachment style ($\beta=.45$, $p<.001$, explaining 17.6% of the variance¹). The following predictors were non-significant: close ($\beta=-.08$, $p=.374$, explaining 0.6% of the variance), anxious ($\beta=-.17$, $p=.061$, explaining 2.9% of the variance), and self-esteem ($\beta=-.05$, $p=.619$, explaining 0.7% of the variance).

¹ Unique contributions were calculated using part correlations (Pallant, 2016).

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Emotional jealousy

The total variance (r^2) explained by the model was 11.1% (Adjusted $r^2=.075$, Durbin Watson=1.83), $F(4, 98)=3.064$, $p<.05$, Cohen's $f^2=.125$ (suggesting a small to medium effect size). The model was non-significant: close ($\beta=.20$, $p=.058$, explaining 3.2% of the variance), anxious ($\beta=.152$, $p=.119$, explaining 2.3% of the variance), depend ($\beta=-.169$, $p=.107$, explaining 2.6% of the variance), and self-esteem ($\beta=.192$, $p=.060$, explaining 3.2% of the variance).

Behavioural jealousy

The total variance (r^2) explained by the model was 4.8% (Adjusted $r^2=.009$, Durbin-Watson=1.92), $F(4, 98)=1.238$, $p=.300$, Cohen's $f^2=.050$ (suggesting a small effect size). The model was non-significantly: close ($\beta=-.12$, $p=.271$, explaining 1.2% of the variance), anxious ($\beta=-.08$, $p=.412$, explaining 0.6% of the variance), depend ($\beta=-.16$, $p=.143$, explaining 2.3% of the variance), and self-esteem ($\beta=-.10$, $p=.348$, explaining 0.8% of the variance).

Table 1. Descriptive/Collinearity Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	Tolerance	VIF
Cognitive Jealousy	40.04	10.04	-----	-----
Behavioural Jealousy	42.02	5.19	-----	-----
Emotional Jealousy	18.93	7.09	-----	-----
Close	17.58	3.06	.88	1.14
Depend	17.80	4.50	.84	1.19
Anxious	17.15	3.31	.96	1.04
Self-esteem	12.87	3.31	.90	1.12

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Table 2. Correlational matrix for all variables.

	1. Cognitive Jealousy	2. Behavioral Jealousy	3. Emotional Jealousy	4. Close	5. Depend	6. Anxious	8. Self-esteem
1	-----						
2	$r=-.23^*$	-----					
3	$r=-.26^{**}$	$r=.34^{**}$	-----				
4	$r=.10$	$r=-.06$	$r=.04$	-----			
5	$r=.47^{**}$	$r=-.13$	$r=-.13$	$r=.30^{**}$	-----		
6	$r=-.21^*$	$r=-.05$	$r=.06$	$r=-.20$	$r=-.12$	-----	
7	$r=.29^{**}$	$r=-.03$	$r=-.18^*$	$r=.19$	$r=.33^{**}$	$r=-.25^*$	-----

* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore whether attachment style, and self-esteem were associated with cognitive, emotional and behavioural jealousy. All three hypotheses were rejected, as attachment style, and self-esteem did not predict jealousy, unable to replicate previous research. We found, inconsistent with the literature, that a depend attachment style was positively associated to cognitive jealousy.

High scores on the close measure suggest that individuals are comfortable with closeness and intimacy (Collins & Reed, 1990). We found that securely attached individuals who scored highly on the close attachment style predicted cognitive jealousy. Barelds and Dijkstra (2006) consider jealousy to be a positive factor in relationships which could explain this finding. Therefore, perhaps securely attached individuals display cognitively jealous thoughts to find a healthy balance in the relationship, viewing jealousy as a positive emotion (Guerrero, 1998). In support, Mathes (1992) suggest that those who reported high jealous

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scores had more stable and successful relationships than those who reported low jealousy. We found that self-esteem was not related romantic jealousy, inconsistent with previous literature (Buunk 1982; DeSteno et al 2006).

There are limitations of this replication paper. First, our findings should be replicated with larger samples. Second, a more varied age range of participants should be included to add further applicability and validity to our findings. Third, our study involved self-report data, which can often be influenced by social desirability. Forth, future research should also control for relationship satisfaction when assessing the relationship between attachment style and romantic jealousy (see Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011).

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