Verbal expression, criticism, intimacy & attachment styles in close relationships

Maria-Ioanna G. Argiropoulou
Vassilis G. Pavlopoulos

Department of Psychology, University of Athens

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Verbal expression
the degree to which a person uses language to express one’s feelings and thoughts

- Man-more-inhibited couples (man’s score on verbal expression is significantly lower than that of his mate’s)
- Woman-more-inhibited couples (woman’s score on verbal expression is significantly lower than that of her mate’s)
- Partners-equal couples (both man and woman have similar scores in verbal expression).
Criticalness
tendency to be critical and judgmental

Intimacy
interpersonal closeness among romantic partners

Adult attachment classification
- Anxiously ambivalent
- Avoidant
- Securely attached
Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. **Verbal expression & Intimacy**: it is expected that the degree of intimacy would be lower in man-more-inhibited couples than in both woman-more-inhibited and in partners-equal couples.

2. **Verbal expression, Intimacy & Criticism**: it is expected that intimacy would be lower in the condition of man-more-inhibited couples with high criticalness than in any other condition.
3. Bond type, Verbal expression, Intimacy & Criticism: it is expected that securely attached individuals will report more intimacy, less criticalness and more verbal disinhibition than avoidant or anxiously attached individuals.
Participants (N = 254) (snowball sampling method)

- 39.8% men
- 60.2% women
- 47.2% singles
- 12.6% cohabitation
- 33.9% married
- 6.3% divorced/other

Mean rel. dur. = 7.2 yrs

- 47.2% Athens
- 52.8% Province
- 33.5% college graduates
- 21.7% currently in college
- 41.7% highschool/professional school graduates
Mean age = 31.8 yrs
Measures

- **Verbal expression**
  Brief Loquaciousness and Interpersonal Responsiveness Test (Swann & Rentfrow, 2001)

- **Intimacy**
  Swann, De La Ronde & Hixon’s (1994) measure of Intimacy

- **Criticalness**
  Interpersonal Qualities Scale (Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996)

- **Attachment style**
  Hazan & Shaver’s (1987) descriptive categories of the three bond types
  - All scales were translated in greek using back translation method
Mean intimacy scores across different verbal expression groups

$F (2, 244) = 3.83, p < 0.05$
Mean Intimacy scores across different levels of criticalness

\[ F(1, 244) = 1.20, p > 0.05 \]
Mean Intimacy scores across different verbal expression groups in different levels of criticalness

\[ F(2, 244) = 1.18, \ p > 0.05 \]
Mean Verbal expression scores across different bond types

\[ F(2, 246) = 3.83, p < 0.05 \]
Mean criticalness scores across different bond types

$\alpha, \beta$

$F (2, 245) = 9.38, p < 0.01$
Mean Intimacy scores across different bond types

$F(2, 244) = 12.18, p < 0.01$
Means of desired and expected relationship outcome scores across different bond types

Desired: $F (2, 245) = 19.61, p < 0.01$

Expected: $F (2, 245) = 11.19, p < 0.01$
Conclusions

- **Intimacy** was lower in man-more-inhibited couples.

- **Securely attached** individuals reported:
  - less criticalness than avoidant individuals,
  - more verbal disinhibition than anxiously attached individuals, and finally,
  - more intimacy, more desire, and more positive expectation for the future of the relationship than both avoidant and anxiously attached individuals.
Conclusions

- The role of **criticalness** as further diminishing intimacy in man-more-inhibited couples was not established.

- Higher scores on verbal expression were related to more positive attitudes regarding relationship’s future.
Limitations and suggestions for future research

- The research design focused on individuals, not couples.
- The role of other mediators, such as trust and satisfaction should also be examined.
- It would be useful to study couples in counseling programs as compared to non-referred couples.
Thank you !!!