



# International Study and Attachment

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## Is student interest in travel and study abroad programs associated with adult attachment status?

### BACKGROUND

#### Attachment

❖ Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory states children form strong affectionate bonds with their primary caregiver. Ainsworth & Wittig (1969) first categorized children's attachment status.

❖ Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) proposed a model of adult attachment status and developed a measure of romantic attachment: The *Relationship Questionnaire* (RQ). They identified 4 attachment categories:

**Secure:** Comfortable with closeness and interdependence

**Preoccupied:** Anxious and ambivalent about relationships

**Dismissing:** Self-reliant and do not need closeness

**Fearful:** Want closeness but afraid of getting hurt

Using these categories, but a different measurement approach, Griffin and Bartholomew (1991) developed the *Relationship Scales Questionnaire* (RSQ).

#### Interest in Travel and Study Abroad

❖ Offerdahl conceived the idea that adult attachment status might be associated with student interest in (a) travel and (b) study abroad programs and that formed the basis of our study.

### METHODS

Participants (n = 92, 12% male, 88% female) completed an 81-item online questionnaire which included the RQ, RSQ, and Offerdahl's original measure of study abroad and travel interest.

### REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Wittig, B. A. (1969). Attachment and the exploratory behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. In B.M. Foss (Ed.), *Determinants of infant behavior Vol. 4*. (pp. 113-136). London: Methuen.
- Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 226-244.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss, Vol. 2. Loss*. New York: Basic Books.
- Griffin, D., & Bartholomew, K. (1994). Models of the self and other: Fundamental dimensions underlying measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 430-445.

Table 1. Pearson's Correlations

		Interest in Study Abroad		
Measure	Attachment	r	p	sig
RQ	Secure	-.068	.536	
	<b>Fearful</b>	<b>-.273</b>	<b>.012</b>	*
	Preoccupied	.048	.663	
	Dismissing	.104	.345	
RSQ	<b>Secure</b>	<b>.286</b>	<b>.008</b>	**
	<b>Fearful</b>	<b>-.215</b>	<b>.049</b>	*
	Preoccupied	-.057	.606	
	Dismissing	.104	.346	
		Interest in Travel Abroad		
Measure	Attachment	r	p	sig
RQ	Secure	-.029	.793	
	<b>Fearful</b>	<b>-.254</b>	<b>.020</b>	*
	Preoccupied	.064	.562	
	Dismissing	.091	.411	
RSQ	<b>Secure</b>	<b>.307</b>	<b>.004</b>	**
	Fearful	.194	.077	trend
	Preoccupied	.155	.159	
	Dismissing	.106	.339	

### RESULTS

We used two strategies, Pearson product-moment correlation and Multiple Regression, to investigate the relationship between attachment status as measured by the (1) RQ and as measured by the (2) RSQ for (a) interest in travel and (b) interest in study abroad.

The correlation analyses (see Table 1) revealed that interest in travel and study abroad was significantly correlated with secure (RSQ) and fearful (RQ) attachment. The former in a positive direction, the latter in a negative direction. The RSQ measure also yielded a significant correlation and a near significant trend indicating a negative relationship between fearful attachment and interest in study and travel abroad, respectively.

To determine whether these were linear relationships, we ran four separate multiple regressions

### RESULTS (continued)

#### Interest in Study Abroad

Our analyses revealed a significant linear relationship between interest in study abroad and attachment status as measured on both the RQ and the RSQ. ( $R^2 = .125$ ,  $F(4,81) = 2.891$ ,  $p = .027$  and  $R^2 = .140$ ,  $F(4,81) = 3.305$ ,  $p = .015$ , respectively). This was driven by the tendency of those who were fearful, as measured by the RQ, to show little or no interest in study abroad.

#### Interest in Travel Abroad

We also found a significant linear relationship between interest in travel abroad and attachment status using the RSQ measure ( $R^2 = .128$ ,  $F(4,81) = 2.979$ ,  $p = .024$ ), but not when using the RQ measure. The latter only revealed a near significant trend ( $R^2 = .098$ ,  $F(4,81) = 2.196$ ,  $p = .077$ ) and, like the study abroad result, was driven by the tendency of those who were fearful to show little or no interest in travel abroad. The findings based on the RSQ measure, in contrast, was driven by the near significant ( $p = .054$ ) tendency of those who were secure to be interested in travel abroad.

### DISCUSSION

The measures of adult romantic attachment we employed produced dissimilar results. This suggests that although they are based on the same construct, they measure different aspects of attachment as relates to interest in travel and study abroad. In future studies, we intend to employ an adult attachment measure that is closer to Ainsworth's original construct. We also intend to explore the psychometric properties of our travel and study abroad interest measure.

In conclusion, our results provide moderate support for Offerdahl's idea that attachment status relates to travel and study abroad interest; but only a little support for our hypothesis that such interest was associated specifically with secure romantic attachment. Nevertheless, we found that those with fearful attachment status have little interest in travel and study abroad. This finding leads to a larger question about the relationship between adult attachment status and travel as it relates to career choice and will be a component of our future studies.