Self-Presentation of Romantic Relationship: Audience, Attachment Anxiety, and the Self-Presentation of Relationship Intimacy
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BACKGROUND

- Individuals are motivated to convey desired identity-images.
- Both situational determinants and individual differences influence self-presentational motivation and behavior (Schlenker, 2003).
- In the realm of romantic relationships, there is work showing that people self-present a fair amount when the potential exists to attract a partner.
- However, it remains to be seen if individuals who are currently involved in romantic relationships self-present desirable, cohesive images of their relationship, and if so, whether their self-presentations differ depending on the relevant audience.
- In addition, surprisingly, little is known about the impression management strategies employed by people with different attachment styles (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

METHOD

- N = 213 (61 males) (in heterosexual romantic relationships for at least 6 months).
- Design: 2 (attachment: anxious or avoidant) X 3 (audience: couple, random others, or anonymous).
- DV: intimacy measure for their current relationship.
- IV: Attachment style: measured by Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire.
- IV: Self-presentation condition: participants believed their responses to the intimacy measure would be shared with, and they would have a brief interaction with, either: a) a romantic couple, b) a pair of unacquainted others, or c) no one (anonymous).
- We regressed intimacy on attachment, self-presentation, and the attachment x self-presentation interaction.

CONCLUSION

- Interaction of avoidance and condition was not significant (p = .89), suggesting that individuals high in avoidance present the same amount of intimacy in their relationship regardless of audience.
- However, interaction of anxiety with condition was significant (F(2, 205) = 4.99, p < .01).
- In couple condition, association between anxiety and intimacy was not significant (p = .14), whereas in anonymous (p < .001, R² = .19) and random conditions (p < .01, R² = .10) it was, such that individuals with higher anxiety reported less intimacy in their relationships.
- In other words, our hypothesis was supported: individuals high in attachment anxiety present a version of their relationship that is more intimate in the couple condition versus the other conditions.