

Relationship functioning following a large-scale sacrifice: Perceived partner prosociality buffers attachment insecurity

Murphy et al. (2022)

For those who make a large-scale sacrifice by moving across the globe for their partner's job, do their fears of abandonment and/or intimacy affect their relationship functioning after the move? If so, can their partner do anything to buffer these fears and protect their relationship?

Method

We asked 229 individuals who had recently relocated for their romantic partner's job or schooling about their:

- Attachment styles: Avoidant insecurity (i.e., fears of intimacy); Anxious insecurity (i.e., fears of abandonment)
- Appreciation and sacrifices they perceived receiving from their partner

Most of these individuals were women and young adults in long-term relationships



We found that, following the move

being high in either attachment avoidance or anxiety predicted lower relationship quality and higher relationship conflict.

But...

When avoidantly attached individuals received gratitude from their partner and/or felt that their partner was willing to sacrifice for them, they reported higher relationship quality.

Meanwhile, among individuals who were high in anxious attachment, those who perceived daily sacrifices from their partner reported higher relationship quality.



In short,

attachment insecurities can make undertaking a large-scale sacrifice (e.g., moving for a partner's job) difficult for relationship functioning; However, if partners engage in behaviours tackling the root of these

attachment insecurities, such as by expressing gratitude and a willingness to sacrifice for avoidant partners, and making daily sacrifices for anxious partners, these relationship challenges may be lessened.

