Reviewer's report

Title: Standard values and relationship specific validity of the Bielefeld Relationship Expectations Questionnaire (BFPE)

Version: 3 Date: 13 May 2010

Reviewer: Angelo Picardi

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describing the psychometric properties and the convergent validity of a new adult attachment measure, the Bielefeld Relationship Expectations Questionnaire (BFPE), has distinctly improved from the previous version. I have only a few suggestions to further improve it.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) This is listed as first, despite regarding the end of the manuscript, because it is the more important point to be addressed. In the Conclusions section, the authors state that the BFPE ‘is able to assess a novel attachment pattern’, called ‘partially secure attachment’. While in the Introduction they have mentioned that a cluster analysis of BFPE scores yielded five clusters and that these clusters remained stable throughout different methods and samples, it should be acknowledged that if someone was to truly discover a ‘novel’ attachment pattern, this would be a very remarkable finding that would find its way to the leading personality journals. Most attachment theorists would likely regard this ‘partially secure’ cluster as a sub-category of another established pattern (possibly the secure one, of which there are sub-categories both in infant and adult classifications), or as a byproduct of the specific instrument used to measure individuals’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in close relationships. Therefore, talking about a ‘novel attachment pattern’ carries a severe risk to be seen as an overstatement. Possibly, the authors may refer to this pattern as a lower-order construct (e.g., a sub-category of one of the main patterns), or as a possibly interesting new construct that however needs to be explored in much greater detail.

(2) In the Background section, fourth paragraph, the statement ‘contains items from [11] and [12]’ is not informative enough and should be modified in order to incorporate the names of the instruments (not only the reference numbers) from which the items were borrowed.

(3) At the end of the same paragraph, the authors use the term ‘convergent validity’ to describe some findings that would be more appropriately subsumed under the label of ‘construct validity’ (correlation in the expected way with
measures of different though related constructs, rather than correlation with other measures of the same construct). Also, in the same statement, the word 'confirmed' may better be replaced by a more prudent word such as 'supported' or 'corroborated'.

(4) In the paragraph describing the study sample, the authors state that 37.2% of participants were ‘single’. Is this to be read literally (i.e., they were not involved in any romantic relationship), or does it stay for ‘unmarried’? In the latter case, it would be more appropriate to use the term 'unmarried' to improve clarity.

(5) In the ‘Instruments’ section, first paragraph, the two 'corrected item-total correlations' reported for each scale are likely 'mean corrected item-total correlations'. In the second paragraph, the statement ‘a new standardization followed 2001 by Hinz’ should be substituted with ‘a new standardization followed in 2001 by Hinz’. In the fourth paragraph, that describes the FLZ, the word ‘ensure’ may better be replaced by a more prudent word such as ‘support’ or ‘corroborate’.

(6) In the first section of the Results, I find it difficult to understand the meaning of the phrase ‘Individuals who experienced their partner as socially supported, as measured by the F-SozU (K14), showed an increased ability and willingness.’ Something seems to be missing.

(7) In the Discussion, fourth paragraph, the term ‘discriminant validity’ would be better substituted with ‘construct validity’. In the sixth paragraph, the phrase ‘pattern of correlations in relationship quality scales’ should be substituted with ‘pattern of correlations with relationship quality scales’. Also, the statement ‘attachment patterns and the scales they consist of’ would be better replaced by ‘attachment patterns and the underlying dimensions’, as it is difficult to hold the position that the patterns literally ‘consist’ of defined ‘scales’.

(8) In the final paragraph of the discussion, the terms ‘psychological disorders’ and ‘psycho-pathologies’ are not fully appropriate. The first would be better substituted with ‘mental disorders’ or ‘psychiatric disorders’. The point here is that ‘psychological disorders’ do not formally exist, and that when the level of psychological distress reaches the threshold for a formal diagnosis one enters the realm of psychiatry. The second term is of unclear meaning and would be better substituted with ‘psychiatric symptoms’.

Discretionary Revisions

(9) In the Background section, first paragraph, the word ‘threatening’ may be better substituted with ‘attachment-relevant’.

(10) The insecure attachment clusters (Background section, third paragraph) would be best denominated in a consistent way. If the term ‘insecure-avoidant’ is used, then the fourth and fifth cluster should be called ‘insecure-ambivalent-clinging’ and ‘insecure-ambivalent-withdrawing’. Alternatively, one may remove the word ‘insecure’ from the first cluster.
(11) In the Discussion, second paragraph, the adjective ‘medium’ used to describe the size of a correlation would be better substituted with ‘moderate’.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests