DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 502 CG 030 999

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TITLE Adult Attachment and the Effects on Romantic Relationships.
PUB DATE 2000-12-00
NOTE 52p.; Doctoral Research Paper, Biola University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Doctoral Dissertations (041)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Attachment Behavior; *Caregiver Child Relationship; Interpersonal Relationship; Intimacy; Literature Reviews; *Marriage; *Parent Child Relationship; *Psychological Patterns
IDENTIFIERS Childhood Experiences; Heterosexuality

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the current research on the nature of relationships from an attachment theory perspective. It begins with a review of attachment theory and states that an understanding of adult attachment is crucial for an understanding of the effects of attachment styles on relationships. It addresses the effect that each attachment style has on romantic heterosexual and marital relationships. The attachment style that developed with the early primary caregiver continues in adulthood and is then reinforced by the selection of a partner with a similar attachment style. Partners with a secure style were found be more comfortable with closeness. Conflict and stress were less destructive to the relationship of people with a secure attachment. Participants who behaved aggressively toward their partners were those with a fearful or preoccupied attachment style. Several difficulties are described in evaluating some of the research results. Suggestions are presented for further research on attachment styles and the loss of the relationships. (Contains 62 references.) (JDM)

ADULT ATTACHMENT AND THE EFFECTS ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

A Doctoral Research Paper

Presented to

the Faculty of the Rosemead School of Psychology

Biola University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Psychology

by

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December, 2000

ADULT ATTACHMENT AND THE EFFECTS

ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is dedicated to my daughter, Kristie, my son Chip, and my son-in-law, Mike, with thanks and appreciation for all of their encouragement, support, and care throughout this process. I would also like to thank my parents, Albert and Margaret Newill, as well as other family members and my dear friends for their continued encouragement. A special thanks goes to Xavey for being an inspiration to me, especially in my study of attachment. Thank you, everyone.

ADULT ATTACHMENT AND THE EFFECTS ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

Most adults desire deep, intimate relationships, and many couples do indeed have relationships characterized by emotional closeness, safety, and security. However, creating and maintaining a level of intimacy that keeps relationships satisfying becomes problematic. Even after failed relationships, most adults move on to become involved in other relationships. These other relationships often look like marriages, even if the couple declines the formal, legal joining by exchanging marriage vows (Haskey, 1995). Although divorce rates in the United States exceed those of any other country (Reibstein, 1997), people still desire to marry or be involved in committed relationships. The rise of adulterous relationships has also increased greatly, suggesting that desires or expectations are not being met in the current relationship (Reibstein, 1997).

Reibstein (1997) found some consistent variables in married and unmarried couples who reported successful, intimate, lasting, and loving relationships. Foremost in her finding, Reibstein found that the feeling of being protected by one's partner was the most constant factor in successful relationships. The couples in her study also spoke of their mutual interdependence as an important factor. Mutual interdependence provides each partner the safety to be weak and strong within the relationship and the ability to

rely on each other to help meet their needs. These couples' commitment to each other was taken seriously and was central in their lives. They were able to listen to each other non-defensively, with comfort and with care. Being heard and valued, even in the midst of conflict, preserved the relationships. Reibstein also found that successful couples took time to focus on each other. They made time to give undivided attention to each other, continually getting to know each other more and updating each other on their lives.

These couples showed a mutual give-and-take in balancing their relationships. They thought about each other and sought to meet the other's needs, as well as getting their own needs met. Successful couples verbalized appreciation for each other and showed their gratitude for each other with affection. Finally, Reibstein found the pursuit of pleasure to be essential for these couples. They played and laughed together while also having separate interests and pleasures.

Obviously most relationships do not have all of these factors that contribute to happy, intimate relationships. Why not? Why do relationships fail so often? Why is it that couples who say they really love each other have relationships that do not endure? Adult attachment theory offers one explanation. To understand adult attachment, one must go back to first relationships with primary caregivers and look at early attachments.

The purpose of this paper is to review the current research on the nature of relationships from an attachment theory perspective. The effect that each attachment style has on romantic and marital relationships will also be addressed. The empirical studies reviewed in this paper were published between 1994 and 1999 and were based on romantic and marital relationships in the heterosexual population. Other articles

reviewed consisted primarily of infant and adult attachment literature (Holmes, 1997; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Ainsworth, 1982; Ainsworth, Blehar, Water, & Wall, 1978; Main & Solomom, 1987).

Attachment Theory

According to Bowlby's attachment theory, during the first year of life children develop what he called "internal working models" (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). He believed that an internal working model was an emotional bond (attachment) to a primary caregiver (mother), a bond which resulted from the caregiver's behaviors and the child's perception of those behaviors. His two key factors of attachment included first, consistent emotional support and protection provided by the caregiver; and second, the child's feelings of being loved. He postulated that the emotional support and protection by the caretaker created an environment of safety and trust. This security resulted in the child's experiential feeling of being loved and feeling worthy of receiving support and protection. The feeling of being loved and feeling worthy of care gave rise to the child's perceptions and behaviors (Ainsworth, Blehar, Water, & Wall, 1978; Main & Solomon, 1987). Bowlby's working model represented an internal view of self and an external view of others (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Bowlby also believed that attachment maintains throughout life, (Bowlby, 1977, 1980, 1982).

Ainsworth (1982) further developed Bowlby's theory by providing empirical evidence for different attachment styles. Her research revealed three types of attachments: Secure, Anxious/ambivalent, and Avoidant. She found that Securely

attached children were able to protest at the mother's departure but reconnect easily with the mother upon her return. Anxious/ambivalent children protested at the mother's departure. They had difficulty connecting with her at her return and manifested behaviors to obtain and keep her attention when she returned. Avoidant children showed little distress at the mother's leaving, and upon her return they hovered around her, having difficulty connecting.

Many theorists believe that children carry these different attachment styles into adult life and into their adult relationships, (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990). When they fall in love their attachment style is already in place and operating. The research on adult attachment and how it affects romantic relationships started as a result of Bowlby's attachment theory and the research by Ainsworth (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Feeney & Noller, 1990). The late 1980s through the 1990s has seen an influx of empirical research indicating that adults' attachment styles affect romantic relationships. An understanding of adult attachment is imperative to begin to understand the effects of attachment styles on relationships.

Adult Attachment

Hazan and Shaver (1987) were among the first to find empirical evidence for adult attachment. They theorized that a couple's experience of their romantic relationship differs depending upon their early attachment with primary caregivers. Their study with adults showed evidence for three styles of attachment: Secure, Anxious/ ambivalent, and Avoidant, paralleling those mentioned earlier by Ainsworth (1982) in

her study of attachment in children. Fifty-six percent of Hazan and Shaver's subjects were classified as Secure, 19% Anxious/ambivalent, and 25% as Avoidant.

Hazan & Shaver (1987) conceptualized romantic love as an attachment process. Their study found that Securely attached adults described their relationships as happy, friendly, and trusting. These enduring relationships were described as having mutual support. Subjects also reported that whereas their romantic feelings may fluctuate, they believed that romantic love never dies. The Anxious/ ambivalent group described love as an obsession, desire for reciprocation and union, emotional highs and lows, and extreme sexual attraction and jealousy. They found it easy to fall in love but rarely found love enduring or real. Avoidant couples categorized their relationships as reflecting fear of intimacy, emotional highs and lows, and jealousy. Avoidants also believed romantic love, as depicted in movies and novels, does not exist. They stated that not only does romantic love not last, but that it is difficult to find a true love.

Feeney and Noller (1990) used early attachment style as a reliable predictor of adult romantic relationships. They replicated the findings of Hazan and Shaver (1987) and found that Securely attached individuals reported positive early relationships and felt trust toward others. Anxious/ambivalent individuals expressed a lack of paternal supportiveness and admitted to dependence in their relationships. As was expected, Avoidants voiced mistrust and distance in their adult relationships. Consistent with the Hazen and Shaver study, it was found that Secure relationships endured longer than the other two types of relationships.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), and a separate later study by Bartholomew (1997), expanded Bowlby's theory of self to include the model of other. Bowlby believed that a child gained a positive view of self as a result of feeling loved and feeling worthy of being loved and supported. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) also proposed that a person's self-image was shaped by the primary caregiver's behavior toward him or her, resulting in a positive or negative view of herself. They added that the image the child had of others was also viewed as either positive or negative. Bartholomew and Horowitz proposed a theoretical and empirical working model of four dimensions based on Bowlby's theory of self and others. They were the first to combine two levels of self-image (positive and negative) with two levels of image of others (positive and negative). The experimenters interviewed the participating adults by asking them to describe their patterns in friendships. They also interviewed the friends in order to compare the data. The subjects' reports of self-concept, sociability, and interpersonal problems were evaluated and compared to their friends' ratings.

The results of Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) study indicated that subjects could be categorized into four quadrants. Cell I was labeled as Secure, Cell II as Preoccupied, Cell III as Fearful, and Cell IV as Dismissing. The subjects in the Secure cell reported a positive sense of self, worthy of being loved with an expectation that others were accepting and supportive. This cell contained individuals who were comfortable with intimacy and interdependence. Cell II (Preoccupied) included subjects who reported feelings of being unlovable; however, this group had a positive view of others. Preoccupied subjects were characterized by attempts to gain acceptance from

others. Their need to find acceptance from others drives them to be preoccupied with relationships. This group corresponded to Hazan and Shaver's (1987) Anxious/ ambivalent category.

Subjects in Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) Cell III (Fearful) reported a negative view of self and the expectation that others were not trustworthy. This Fearful cell included subjects who fear intimacy because of their expected rejection, so they avoid social involvement. Cell IV subjects (Dismissing) reported a positive self-worth and a negative view of others, expecting others to reject them. This type avoided close relationships as a defense against rejection. They projected themselves to others as independent and not needing relationships. The only significant differences found in this four-category prototype were that there were more females in the Preoccupied cell and more males in the Dismissing cell.

According to Bartholomew (1997), parental consistency facilitated the Secure subjects' internal belief in a lovable self and in the trustworthiness of others. Secure individuals were also able to seek out others when in need of support. Preoccupied subjects had inconsistent parenting, parents who at times gave emotional support and protection and at times did not provide it. This inconsistency resulted in their feelings of self-blame for the lack of love they felt. They were preoccupied with attempting to get their needs met in relationships and thus became excessively dependent on others for acceptance and approval. Bartholomew reported that Avoidant and Dismissing subjects avoided others in time of stress, perhaps reflecting a history of unresponsive caregivers. Theorists have proposed that these working models maintain over time, so it is

reasonable to expect personal, early dynamics to influence adult romantic relationships (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bartholomew, 1993; Collins & Read, 1994).

In romantic relationships, each person becomes an attachment figure for the other (Fisher & Crandell, 1997). Fisher & Crandell proposed that in a healthy relationship, each partner is flexible within the dependent and independent roles, thus being mutually interdependent. They described these couples as secure. The dependent one comes to the attachment figure for security, safety and empathy, and the couple is able to reverse roles when needed. Each person in the dyad is comfortable with both roles. Fisher & Crandell called this relationship a 'complex attachment' because of the bi-directional relating of each adult.

Fisher and Crandell (1997) also described the three attachment relationships of Insecure couples: Dismissing/Dismissing, Preoccupied/Preoccupied, and Dismissing / Preoccupied. They suggested that persons who relate in these three Insecure patterns share traits of inflexibility, lack of mutuality, and lack of bi-directional support. Individuals in these types of dyads also show little empathy for their partner's experience. Persons who attach with a Dismissing/Dismissing style revealed a history of rejection of their dependency needs by primary caregivers. As a result, they deny their feelings of vulnerability and present themselves as self-reliant with an attitude that indicates an "I don't need anyone." This pseudo-independence wards off any feelings of needing others and probably enables the relationship to remain fairly smooth (although not intimate) until a stressful situation occurs. At that time, anger and

resentment may be unleashed by one or both partners without an understanding of why this is occurring.

Preoccupied/Preoccupied couples' history indicates inconsistent responsiveness by parents. This inconsistent foundation leads adults to seek others to fill their needs, but they then find that what others can give does not fill all of their needs. The lack of need fulfillment results in anger. Each partner demands fulfillment by remaining in the dependency position and resisting the other's requests for emotional nurturance.

Dismissing/Preoccupied couple attachments reflect high conflict. Typically the Preoccupied partner complains the most and the Dismissing partner believes that the problem with the relationship is that the Preoccupied one is not happy. The Dismissing partner denies having dependency needs and hates those needs in the partner. The Preoccupied partner feels deprived and emotionally abandoned.

Fisher and Crandell (1997) suggested that a relationship between a Secure partner and an Insecure partner could result in the Insecure partner's experiencing feelings of safety and love from the Secure partner. They proposed that this might provide a "corrective" experience in which the Insecure partner becomes more Secure. As each partner moves within mutual dependency, they provided comfort and intimacy for and with each other. The inflexibility that was caused by the Insecure partner becomes balanced, giving support and safety for their relationship.

Attachment and Romantic Relationships

Having an understanding of how an adult comes into a relationship with his or her

attachment style already in place, leads to the question, "How does attachment style affect that relationship?" Researchers have found that attraction, affect regulation, conflict and stress, and marital satisfaction are affected by a partner's attachment style.

Attraction and Attachment

According to social psychology, attraction between individuals is largely based on similarities (Berscheid, 1985). Frazier, Byer, Fischer, Wright, and DeBord (1996) found that similar attachment styles influenced the level of attraction between two people. Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) found that 75% to 85% of those rated as having a Secure attachment were in relationship with a partner with a Secure attachment. One study (Senchak & Leonard, 1992) reported that people with Insecure attachments were most likely to be in relationship with Insecure individuals and that Secures most likely would not be involved with Insecurely attached individuals.

Adult attachment theory states that people develop relationships with individuals who maintain the early relational patterns developed with their primary caretakers (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Studies have shown that men with cold and inconsistent mothers tended to be in relationship with anxious women, who often acted cold and inconsistent. Another group of women with fathers who were uncomfortable with connectedness dated men who acted similarly (Collins & Read, 1990). Conversely, if a woman's experience of her father was warm, she most likely would be dating someone who was comfortable connecting with others. Additionally, Collins & Read produced evidence that Anxious and Avoidant styles will choose an Insecurely attached partner. In summary, evidence for similarity in partner selection was found in the Secure/Secure

dyads; complementary matching evidenced itself in the Anxious/Avoidant pairings (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994).

Frazier et al. (1996) were among the few researchers to use correlation and experimental methods to ascertain patterns in partner choice. Their study found evidence for Secure/Secure matching and Anxious/Anxious matching. They also investigated their subjects' choices of dating partners as compared to their attachment style. They found that 52% of the Secure individuals selected Secure partners; 39% selected Anxious partners; and 9% selected Avoidant partners. Anxious individuals choose Anxiously attached partners most often (53%); then Securely attached (36%) followed by those Avoidantly attached (11%). Avoidantly attached participants selected Avoidant partners 41% of the time, Anxious partners 31%, and Secure partners 28% of the time. This appears to support the hypothesis that individuals tend to choose partners who have attachment styles similar to their own.

Further research conducted by Frazier et al. (1996) showed that when selecting a partner, Secure individuals were rated higher by Avoidant participants than by other Securely attached individuals. Anxiously attached subjects rated other Anxiously attached subjects higher than others rated them. As was expected, those more comfortable with closeness were more satisfied in their relationships than those who were less comfortable with closeness. Subjects with Anxious and Avoidant styles reported less satisfactory relationships. No Anxious/Avoidant dyads were found when individuals were assessed for their attachment.

The researchers also looked at correlations between partner choice and parental characteristics. Frazier et al. (1996) found that if the subjects' perceptions of their parents was warm, the quality of their current relationships was described as less anxious, more interdependent, and they reported being more comfortable around others. Additionally, the researchers found that the maternal style of relating was a more consistent predictor of attachment style than the paternal style. This finding may be because mothers tend to be the primary caregivers.

Adults communicate closeness and being comfortable through nonverbal means such as touch, facial expression, and proximity seeking. Tucker and Anders (1998) compared the nonverbal behaviors related to comfort-seeking and closeness with three attachment styles, Secure, Preoccupied, and Avoidant. They rated behaviors such as the amount of time gazing at each other, smiling at each other, and position of the lower body toward their partner. The results showed that Securely attached individuals laughed more, touched more, gazed more, and smiled more at each other when conversing. Compared to other attachment styles, those with a Secure attachment were significantly more expressive nonverbally. Tucker and Anders also found that the Secure participants seemed to experience more joy in relating and experienced less tension during their interactions.

In contrast to those with a Secure attachment, Anxiously attached participants showed significantly less nonverbal expression toward each other, such as touching their partners less, and they experienced less joy and smiled less. Avoidant participants touched their partners less, gazed less often at them, and smiled at their partner less than

any other types. They also showed less enjoyment and were more tense (Tucker & Anders, 1998).

Another researcher, Guerrero (1996), studied variables that convey levels of intimacy and attachment. Because she used Bartholomew & Horowitz's (1991) four-category model, comparing her results with the three-category model used by Tucker and Anders was difficult. However, her findings showed that Secure and Preoccupied (Anxious) types indicated more trust and receptivity in relationships than Fearful or Dismissive types. Additionally, Guerrero (1996) found that Fearfuls sat further away from their partners than did Secures, Preoccupieds, and Dissmissives. Secure and Preoccupied participants gazed more at their romantic partners. Facial pleasantness and vocal pleasantness were correlated with Secure and Preoccupied participants, although Preoccupied individuals exhibited less relaxed laughter. Guerrero also found that Secure and Preoccupied styles showed more interest and attentiveness to their partner than either Fearful or Dismissive styles. As would be expected, Fearful types and Preoccupied types showed more social anxiety than other types. Random movement was significantly less with Fearfuls and Preoccupieds, as might be expected from anxious people, and they demonstrated a higher level of vocal anxiety. In summary, this study showed that nonverbal communication in relationships reflects the attachment styles of the partners.

Summarizing, research found that attachment style affects the attraction between individuals. People in relationships with each other tended to have similar attachment styles. Additionally, the research found that attachment style developed with early primary caregivers continued into adulthood, and then these styles were reinforced by the

selection of a partner with a similar attachment style. Secures were found to be more comfortable with closeness and showed this comfort level with more nonverbal behaviors such as touching and smiling.

Affect Regulation

Hazan and Shaver (1987) defined romantic love as an attachment process, an emotional bond that exists between two adults, thus identifying emotions as exercising a substantial influence in relationships. Bartholomew (1990) stated that in order to avoid displeasing others, Fearfuls tend to inhibit their expression of emotions when in a stressful situation associated with attachment or abandonment issues. She went on to state that Dismissives avoid situations where attachment issues are relevant in order to keep their anxious feelings from rising to the surface of their awareness.

Bowlby (1969) identified protest, despair, and detachment as reactions to attachment distress. He correlated protest with anger, despair with sadness, and detachment with anxiety. Despair, better known as depression, is described as stemming from early negative attachment experiences with primary caretakers. The sadness of depression, he believed, is experienced by most people as more tolerable than the anger or anxiety of protest and detachment. Additionally Bowlby believed that inconsistent love, perceived lack of nurturance, and sternness describe situations resulting in Insecure attachments and at least one of the three emotions. Bowlby stated that a person's working model of others is then internalized with the belief that one is unlovable and that others are expected to respond similarly, either rejecting or inconsistent.

In a study by Coyne et al. (1987), it was found that individuals suffering from depression generally experienced difficulties with interpersonal relationships. Communication became troublesome, characterized by problems such as mixed messages, poor conflict resolution, and negative affect. They suggested that this may be due to distorted interpretations that the depressed individual has of the partner's communication. Coyne et al. proposed that spouses of depressed mates were more likely to be feeling burdened by the other's negativity and their own inability to help with their mate's needs. This may decrease marital satisfaction for both partners. Whereas depression may be one cause of marital difficulties, marital difficulties may also be increased by depression (Coates & Wortman, 1980). In summary, whether depression causes marital difficulties or exacerbates them, marital relationships are affected by depression.

Carnelley, Pietromonaco, and Jaffe (1994) studied the effects of depression, attachment style, and the working model of others on relationship functioning. Two groups were studied: one group of subjects with a mild depression diagnosis and one group of subjects recovered from a depression diagnosis. The researchers defined working models of others as the internalized representations that one has of others which are identified by the attachment style. Their study found adult attachment style the highest predictor of functioning relationships, such as satisfaction and conflict resolution. Subjects who had positive experiences with early caregivers reported better relationships and less depression. Those subjects with more negative experiences with early caregivers reported poorer quality relationships and more depressive symptoms.

Contrary to the results of Coates and Wortman (1980), Carnelley, Pietromonaco, & Jaffe (1994) found that no matter when depression became a factor in the relationship, it was not a significant predictor of marital functioning. However, their evidence indicated that women who described themselves as mildly depressed were more likely to be characterized as having an Insecure attachment style.

Carnelley et al. (1994) also found that Fearful Avoidant women who were mildly depressed had fewer satisfactory relationships, were less able to deal with conflict, and had fewer experiences of support with their partner compared to Secure women. They also found that attachment style and depression were linked to subjects' parents and relational functioning. Women with controlling mothers were less able to resolve conflict in their own relationships. Surprisingly, they found that no childhood experiences with their fathers, positive or negative, significantly predicted women's relational functioning.

Subjects with a Fearful Avoidant attachment style were more likely than Secures to have had a major depression diagnosis. They also reported fewer positive experiences with caregivers. The researchers found that positive experiences with a mother and father as a child resulted in less clinical depression as an adult. Additionally, they found depressed women to have had less positive childhood experiences than non-depressed women. Consistent with Carnelley et al's (1994) study, Carnelley et al. (1996) found that clinical depression was associated with less positive experiences from early caregivers. This study also suggested that a woman with clinical depression also had a Fearful Avoidant attachment style indicating a negative view of self and other, which is

consistent with depression. In contrast to the first group of mildly depressed participants, the second group studied were women who had recovered from depression. Carnelley et al. (1996) found no association between less positive childhood experiences and an Insecure attachment style in the group of recovered depressed women. Attachment style was the greatest predictor of relationship functioning. For example, women who had an Fearful/Avoidant or Preoccupied attachment style reported lower marital satisfaction than Secures, and Fearful/Avoidants were less likely than Secures to resolve conflict.

Depending on their attachment styles, individuals have been found to use different strategies in handling negative emotions within relationships. Kobak and Sceery (1988) found that because Secure individuals received nurturing caregiving in their early years, they tended to acknowledge difficulties and sought support from their partner. Anxious-Ambivalents had reactive and elevated expressions of negative emotions, while attempting to maintain contact with their partner. The researchers suggested this was probably a result of the inconsistent caregiving they received in their early childhood experiences (Kobak & Sceery, 1988).

Simpson, Rhodes, and Phillips (1996) found that early rejecting and insensitive responses from parents resulted in the development of an Avoidant attachment style in individuals. With this type of attachment style, individuals matured with a restriction of their expression of negative feelings due to their desire to avoid conflict. Individuals with Secure attachment styles were found to display less negative emotion than other types, and Avoidant and Anxious styles were characterized by more negative feelings. Secure individuals sought support when troubled, whereas Avoidants withdrew from

their partners. During conflict, Anxious-Ambivalent individuals became more stressed (Simpson et al.,1996).

Additionally, the Simpson et al. (1996) study found that married couples handled negative emotions better than couples in other types of partner relationships. They expressed more positive emotions which resulted in better marriages. Sroufe and Waters (1977) stated that part of the foundation of attachment theory is the expression of positive affect. The expression of positive affect has been found to increase intimacy, joy, love, and pride. They reported that the expression of positive emotions helps to develop individuals' positive self-esteem, resulting in a positive internalized working model of themselves and others.

Feeney and Noller (1991) found that Insecure individuals tend to idealize relationships and tend to speak of romantic partners only in positive terms. Their tendency to avoid the expression of sadness limited the safety in the relationship and hindered growth and intimacy. This study also found that anger was controlled by Insecure individuals more than sadness, and sadness more than anxiety. This control extended to a desire for the other partner to control his or her anger in the same manner.

In her 1995 study, Feeney explored adult attachment style and the control of emotional expression in dating relationships that had been ongoing for a minimum of one year. Feeney compared the degree of anger, sadness, and anxiety expressed within the relationship with the couples' attachment styles. Among the subjects, Feeney found controlling negative emotions did not result in feeling secure in a relationship. Also, she found that those who felt secure, perceived that their partners did not control their

negative emotions nor wanted their partners to control their negative affect. Feeney found that individuals reported high levels of anxiety when they believed that their partner limited themselves from feeling sadness. Individuals who believed their partner desired them to control their partner's sadness reported high anxiety and low comfort levels. Avoidant partners tended to avoid admitting distress and did not look to their partner for needed support. As expected, Avoidant subjects showed more emotional withdrawal than subjects with other types of attachment.

In a later study, Feeney (1999) used married couples to study the effect of positive emotions on marital satisfaction. In this study, Feeney first determined the couple's attachment style. She found a gender link with attachment style in that wives were more likely to express a Preoccupied style and husbands more likely to be Dismissive. She also correlated attachment style and negative emotions. Feeney found that Insecures endorsed more anxiety answers and fewer comfort answers than did Secures, suggesting that negative emotions tend to be less expressed in Insecure relationships than in Secure relationships.

Feeney (1999) also found that if positive emotions were expressed to each other, partners feel more secure in the relationship. Feeney believed that these expressions lead to greater intimacy within the relationship. Those who rated themselves more comfortable with being close expressed more satisfaction in the relationship. Anxiety was associated with more expressed negative emotions and less marital satisfaction regardless of type of attachment style. Husbands who reported that they did not express their positive feelings also reported lower satisfaction in the marriage. Feeney

additionally found that controlling negative and positive emotions led to lower marital satisfaction for both spouses.

The results of the research on attachment and affect regulation showed that Secures express and are more comfortable with negative emotion than Insecures. Reseach also indicated that the quality of relationships was affected by depression. Secures had less depression than Insecures and more satisfying relationships. Depression was found to affect relationships negatively. Additional research found that the positive expression of emotions between two people brought more security to the relationship.

Conflict and Stress

All relationships consist of times of stress and distress whether the stress is coming from within the relationship or without. According to Bowlby (1969), when Securely attached individuals feel distressed or threatened, they seek physical proximity with a safe person to decrease these feelings. Stressful circumstances such as fear-provoking situations, challenging circumstances, and conflictual interactions were found to have a tendency to activate the attachment system (Kobak and Duemmler, 1994). Past studies have shown that Secure individuals, when faced with one of these stress activating situations, use a variety of strategies to contend with difficulties. They engage in more self-disclosure, are more reciprocal in conversing, and regulate their emotions better than other types. They also show less dysfunctional anger and engage in more constructive problem-solving. Additionally, Secure individuals approach conflict more pro-actively and productively (Kobak & Hazan, 1991). Kobak and Duemmler's (1994) model of conversational strategies and attachment styles in problem solving situations

suggested the need for more emotional support from the attachment figure during times of stress and conflict. Thus when support is available, it increases the individual's internal perception that others are reliable and that self is worth loving.

Avoidant individuals develop defenses to keep their feelings of attachment loss from coming into awareness. Kobak and Duemmler (1994) proposed that they tend to live this way because they believe that there is little hope of actually obtaining a secure relationship with anyone. By avoiding their need to obtain support and connectedness, they reinforce their internal belief that others are not trustworthy. Thus Avoidants keep anger out of stressful situations to relieve their anxiety (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994).

Anxiously attached people respond quickly to any situation that could activate their attachment system. Because their internal model states that their partner is unpredictable and not consistently available, their anxiety mounts, often accompanied by anger (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bowlby (1973) proposed that anger communicates a person's need for comfort, or it is a response to not having that need met. Individuals who are Anxiously attached tend to have relationships fraught with vacillating emotions and these relationships tend to be unstable. Anxiously attached people also tend to use patterns of approach and then retreat in their interactions with others. Because these patterns do not lead to resolution, there is less satisfaction in the relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Simpson et al. (1996) studied attachment styles and the perceptions of the partners during conflict resolution. They found that whether male or female those with an Ambivalent attachment reported high levels of distress regardless of the intensity of

the problem and degree of anger toward their partner. The researchers also found that Ambivalent men and women reported less positive perceptions of their partner, and that individuals who described themselves as less anxious reported more positive perceptions of their partner. These findings suggest that Ambivalents operate out of their internal working model when responding to conflict resolution. Their internal working model reflects a negative self-view and a belief that their partner is unable to be supportive and nurturing.

Additional findings in the Simpson et al. study (1996) found that those with an Avoidant attachment remained emotionally detached during conflict. Compared to Secures, Avoidants were rated as being less supportive and warm during discussions, were perceived as cold and rejecting, and reported having greater anger. Securely attached individuals perceived their partners more positively after a conflict, reflecting and reinforcing their internal model that others are trustworthy (Simpson et al., 1996).

Interdependence theory has found that accommodation (responding constructively to destructive behavior and inhibiting the impulse to react destructively) was usually manifested by those highly invested in keeping the relationship (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). According to Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982), when a partner behaves in a way to threaten a relationship, there are four categories of responses that result. The first two are constructive and the other two destructive. They are 1) voice (discussion); 2) loyalty (passively waiting for improvement); 3) neglect (passive ignoring of problem); and 4) exit (yelling, leaving or threatening to leave).

Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991) found a positive association between being relationally satisfied and the voice response discussion, and a negative association between satisfaction and the exit and neglect responses. Interestingly, Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986) found that married couples tended to use neglect and were less likely to use exit or voice when a spouse's destructive behavior, such as yelling, has occurred. They also found that the length of the marriage was positively associated with passive responses and negatively associated with active responses.

A Scharfe and Bartholomew (1995) study examined the connection between attachment style and an individual's response to the destructive behaviors of his or her partner and his or her ability to inhibit impulses to react destructively. This study found that regardless of attachment style, the more satisfaction experienced in a current or a past relationship led to higher accommodation, that is the tendency to inhibit impulsive destructive behaviors and respond positively when the partner is responding destructively. Additionally, security was associated with the use of constructive strategies and with the inhibition of destructive maneuvers. Conversely, those rated as Fearful in attachment style exhibited higher use of destructive strategies and more inhibition of productive methods. Internal attachment models seemed to influence accommodation independently of relationship satisfaction.

Men's Preoccupied and Fearful styles were negatively associated with their partners' use of voice (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995). Scharfe & Bartholomew (1995) also found that men's use of exit was positively associated with Fearful and Preoccupied attachment styles.

According to attachment theory, Secure individuals would find the presence of their partners an anxiety reducer when in a stressful situation whereas non-Securely attached people would find the presence of their partner, in a similar situation, more stress producing. With this premise in mind, Carpenter and Kirkpatrick (1996) studied women involved in serious relationships to determine their psychophysiological responses to a stressful laboratory circumstance. The researchers found that whether their partners were present or absent had no detectable effect on Secures. Non-Secure individuals, however, scored with higher heart rates and blood pressures when their partners were present compared to when their partner was absent. This finding is consistent with attachment theory that proposes that Insecures do not view others as responsive to their needs thus increasing the Non-Secures' anxiety. This study also found that both Avoidants and Anxiously attached participants found the presence of their partners to be psychologically threatening.

Gaines et al. (1997) studied the impact of attachment styles on an individual's reaction to accommodative dilemmas in romantic relationships. They defined an accommodative dilemma as a behavior by one partner that results in a potentially destructive consequence, such as being cold and rejecting, or yelling at the other. Interdependence theory suggests that accommodative dilemmas significantly threaten trust and security (Holmes & Rempel,1989). It states that the greater the dependence, the greater the threat when such a behavior occurs.

Gaines et al. (1997) found that an Insecure attachment style was negatively correlated with voice responses in threatening situations. Insecurely attached styles

correlated positively with reactions that tended to produce destructive results, such as exit and neglect. The Secure attachment style correlated positively with voice and negatively with exit and neglect. Predictably, an Avoidant style correlated negatively with voice and positively with exit and neglect. The Anxious attachment style also correlated positively with exit and neglect but was not associated positively with voice. Correlations with loyalty were weak and inconsistent except in relation to gender; men showed a greater tendency toward loyalty than did women. There were no significant gender differences between attachment style and reactions in accommodative situations.

Bookwala and Zdanius (1998) assessed conflict behaviors to determine if there were an association between attachment style and the occurrence of reciprocal aggression in dating relationships. Based on Bowlby's (1973) belief that anger helps attachment figures to be more available to each other and that unavailability becomes a staple part of the individual's internal working model, Bookwala and Zdanius (1998) found a connection between a chronic fear of abandonment and a fear that becomes an angry, emotional trigger in other relationships. Because the anxiety and fear of being abandoned stays unresolved in those with an Anxious attachment, they turn these fears into anger as a reaction. Whenever they feel the threat of abandonment, whether real or perceived, they become angry.

Assessing for attachment style in participants involved in aggressive relationships, Bookwala and Zdanius (1998) found that the predominate styles were Preoccupied and Fearful as compared to those in non-aggressive relationships. Preoccupied and Fearful types also reported more interpersonal problems in their relationships than Secures and

had more difficulty being social, submissive, and intimate. They were also found to be more controlling than other types.

Mayseless (1991) proposed that anger in relationships may be an indicator of strong emotions of caring and attachment. However, dysfunctional anger may occur when one partner (or both) feels the threat of physical or emotional abandonment. Similarly, according to Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) four category model, the two styles with a negative view of self (Preoccupied and Fearful) believe they do not deserve to be loved. A threat of rejection can damage their self-esteem and can result in anger and aggression toward themselves or their partner. Dutton, Saunders, Starzomsky, and Bartholomew (1994) found that wife-batterers scored higher in the Fearful and Preoccupied styles of attachment when compared with the control group. Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) also found that Preoccupieds and Fearfuls experienced substantially more interpersonal problems.

Dutton et al. (1994) found that 55.3% of their sample (85) reported inflicting at least one act of aggression against their partner, and there were no gender differences in this finding. Subjects were measured by a self-report. Men were more likely to smash, kick, or hit an object; women more frequently pushed, grabbed, or shoved their partners. On the interpersonal scale, the aggressors reported the most difficulty with being assertive and with feeling too responsible in and for the relationship. Those who admitted aggression in relationships reported more Preoccupied and Fearful styles of attachment, more difficulties in their relationships, and that they maintained longer relationships with less satisfaction in the relationship.

In summary, the research on conflict and stress in relationships found that these disruptions were not as destructive to the relationship for people with a Secure attachment as compared to those with an Insecure attachment. The researchers found that Secures were more invested in the relationship, thereby maintaining positive feelings during stressful times. Those with an Anxious attachment quickly reacted with negative behaviors when they experienced conflict or stress as abandonment. During times of stress and conflict, Avoidants detached emotionally. The research also found that most of the participants who acknowledged aggression toward their partners had Fearful or Preoccupied attachment styles.

Marital Satisfaction

Helping marriages and relationships become more satisfying is an important concern to American society. Satisfaction in relationships is defined as a safe, comfortable haven for the couple, is comfortable with the expression of emotions, positive or negative, and is exemplified by caregiving behaviors. Most people enter relationships with the expectation of finding happiness, support, and security, but they also experience anxiety, affliction, and insecurity in relationships (Coyne & Delongis, 1986). Each partner enters the relationship with preconceived expectations, conscious or unconscious, and relates within the framework of those expectations.

Attachment theory provides an understanding of relational expectations. This theory proposes that expectations and beliefs about relationships develop from experiences with a primary childhood caretaker. These experiences evolve into an internal working model of expectations of others that affect one's feelings, perceptions,

and beliefs about others. This internal model is especially significant in partner relationships, as these are adults' primary attachment (Bowlby, 1969, 1977; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). Because of the reciprocal relationship in the dyad, each partner's expectations and internal models have a sigificant impact on the relationship.

Marital quality has been found to correlate with individuals' and partners' caregiving behaviors (Kotler, 1985). Those more comfortable with intimacy and closeness, the Securely attached, reported higher marital satisfaction (Collins & Read, 1990; Simpson, 1990). Simpson, Rhodes, and Nelligan (1992) found that Avoidant males, when compared to Secure males, provided less emotional support when their partners were in distress thus leading to less marital satisfaction.

Carnelley et al. (1996) looked at attachment, caregiving, and relationship functioning. Their first study of dating couples found that women who had positive experiences with their mothers provided more caregiving toward their partners. The same correlation with mothers or fathers was not significant for the men. Subjects scoring high in Fearful Avoidance demonstrated the fewest caregiving behaviors in their romantic relationships. Men who were able to provide caregiving behaviors were less likely to date Preoccupied women. Fearful/avoidant subjects paid less attention to the needs of their partners than other types. This resulted in their partners reporting less satisfaction in the relationship.

In their study of married couples, Carnelley et al. (1996) found that wives, like dating females, who had positive childhood experiences with their mothers also provided

more caregiving behaviors in their relationships. Furthermore, married men who had positive early experiences with their fathers provided more caregiving to their spouse. Preoccupieds and Fearfuls reported less caregiving behaviors. In addition, caregiving wives were more likely to have husbands who provided more caregiving; however, women with less caregiving behavior tended to be married to a Fearful or Preoccupied mate. The study did not find the husbands' caregiving to be significantly correlated to the wives' attachment style (Carnelley et al., 1996).

Further results of the Carnelley et al. (1996) study supported other studies that found Insecurely attached individuals tended to marry those who are also Insecurely attached (Senchak & Leonard, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Frazier et al., 1996). These Insecure spouses reported less favorable relationships than Secures, but when the husband was able to provide some caregiving to the wife, the quality of the relationship was more satisfying to the wife.

Feeney (1994) studied married couples to determine the effect of attachment style and communication on the satisfaction of the marital dyad over the life cycle. Subjects married for more than 20 years reported less anxiety than those married 10 years or less. Older husbands reported a greater satisfaction with the marriage than their wives but also reported less comfort with closeness. The anxiety of the wives was positively correlated with the husbands' anxiety at all stages of marriage. Self anxiety correlated with low marital satisfaction across the life cycle of marriage. Feeney also found that in marriages of 1 to 10 years in length, a spouse high in anxiety and a spouse low in comfort would report low marital satisfaction.

Feeney (1994) then added communication variables and found that mutuality was the strongest predictor of a husband's satisfaction. Wives also placed mutuality as the highest predictor of satisfaction across the life cycle, suggesting that marital satisfaction is highly influenced by communication. She also found that length of marriage was unrelated to marital satisfaction. Frazier et al. (1996) found that couples reported greater satisfaction when each felt that his or her partner was dependable and when each was comfortable with closeness. Couples with Anxious or Avoidant attachment styles reported less satisfaction. Satisfaction was more likely for men with Secure partners and women felt least satisfied with Anxious men.

In a large study of 354 couples by Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994), the correlation between relationship stability and their attachment style and gender was studied over a three year period. The researchers did an initial assessment at the beginning of the study, another assessment approximately 12 months later, and then a final one approximately 24 months after the initial assessment. They found that Avoidant men viewed themselves as having less positive characteristics than other styles. They were significantly less committed, intimate, caring, and satisfied than Secure men and significantly less committed and passionate than Anxious men. The partners of Avoidant males reported higher passion ratings than those with Anxious partners. Females with Anxious partners reported significantly more conflict-ambivalence than women with Secure or Avoidant partners.

Consistent with the findings of Collins & Read (1990), the Anxious women in the Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) study reported less satisfaction, viability, and caring.

Furthermore they reported more conflict-ambivalence than did those Securely attached. Men with an Anxiously attached partner reported less commitment, intimacy, conflict-ambivalence, and satisfaction than those with a Secure female partner. Relationships of longer duration resulted in more stability and commitment as well as greater satisfaction for both partners. Anxious men reported less stability over time, and Avoidant men viewed the relationship most negatively. Anxious men and Avoidant women reported the highest number of break-ups over time.

A NIMH study by Young and Acitelli (1998) investigated attachment style and the subjects' assessment of their partners to determine if marital status affected their perception of their partner's commitment to the relationship. Each partner rated values such as cooperation, maturity, friendliness, and caring about others. Confirming their expectations, Young and Acitelli (1998) found that Secure women and men rated their partners significantly higher on these values than Avoidant women or men rated their partners. Anxious married men rated their partners significantly lower than Secures and Avoidants. Secure women reported higher appraisals of their spouse than Anxious and Avoidant participants. Additionally the researchers found that anxiously attached married men rated their partners lower on these values than did dating participants. Married women with an Anxious attachment style appraised their spouses lower than dating respondents but not significantly lower. Overall, the highest ratings of partners were made by Securely attached individuals.

Kotler (1985) suggested that caregiving is a stronger indication of marital satisfaction than material possessions, personality, or health. This relational quality

ranks as the most frequently mentioned quality in both romantic relationships and friendships. Feeney studied a sample of 229 married couples in 1996, to assess the association between attachment, caregiving, and marital satisfaction. Feeney proposed that an important factor in attachment was caregiving, defined as proximity, sensitivity, and cooperation.

Feeney (1996) also identified compulsive caregiving as a negative attribute in relationships. Compulsive caregiving was defined as being excessively concerned and feeling responsible for the relationship. Feeney found that husbands reported less compulsive caregiving and less responsiveness compared to wives. Couples married fewer years reported more responsive behaviors toward their spouse than those married longer. Feeney also found that Secure individuals were rated higher than other types on the responsive care, sensitivity, and proximity variables. Fearfuls scored low on the responsive care, sensitivity, and proximity categories. Preoccupieds and Fearfuls reported high compulsive care, probably due to their fear of abandonment and their low self-worth. Anxiety was positively associated with compulsive care and inversely related to responsive caregiving. Secures rated high in responsive care and low in compulsive care. This was consistent with their Secure attachment and favorable caretaking style. Feeney concluded that caregiving and attachment interrelate, at least indirectly, and affect marital satisfaction. Additionally, satisfaction with the marriage was significantly related to responsive caregiving.

Marriage is a major stressor to individuals, and effectively handling difficult situations is imperative to maintaining marital satisfaction. Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

identified two types of coping strategies: 1) "problem-focused" coping; and 2) "emotion-focused" coping. Problem-focused coping was defined as a way of handling stress by initiating a change in the circumstances causing the stress. This is done by analyzing the problem, problem solving, and/or taking the necessary actions to change the problem. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, was defined as a way of handling stress by managing the emotions. Examples of this type of coping would be blaming, seeking support, and wishful thinking. Pearlin and Shooler (1978) identified a third coping style, an avoidant type of coping which is reflected in behaviors such as taking a walk, going on vacation, eating or sleeping.

Sabourin, Laporte, and Wright (1990) examined coping strategies in marriages and discovered that couples in satisfying relationships tended to use active coping strategies, such as problem solving and discussing options. Bowman (1990) demonstrated that in conflictual and distressed relationships, partners tended to use passive strategies such as blaming, avoidance, and arguing to resolve their conflict.

Folkman and Lazarus (1988) contributed to the premise that coping strategies influence and guide the assessment of marital satisfaction and thus establish perceptions of satisfaction. They suggested that attachment theory posits that a particular attachment style is characterized by particular behaviors of coping. Securely attached individuals tend to seek support, those who are Anxiously attached cling and feel distressed about the relationships, and Avoidant individuals tend to become emotionally distant.

Combining attachment style and coping strategies into an integrated model, one would expect to find individuals with different attachment styles coping with marital

distress in particular ways. A Canadian study broadened the research in marital satisfaction by investigating the relationship between both affective and cognitive coping strategies and attachment styles. This study by Lussier, Sabourin, and Turgeon (1997) used a working definition for coping as the series of thoughts (cognitions) and actions (behaviors) one uses to manage a stressful situation. They found that Securely attached spouses used task-centered strategies for coping with stress, Anxious partners utilized emotion-focused strategies, and Avoidant partners used strategies associated with avoidance. However, Avoidant and Anxious individuals tended to fluctuate between anxious strategies and avoidant ones. Their study also found that action-oriented strategies were positively associated with marital satisfaction, and that there was a negative relationship between marital satisfaction and emotion-focused strategies. Predictably, women with Anxious attachments tended to have dissatisfied spouses and the same was true for Anxious men. However, Lussier et al. (1997) found no direct relationship between Anxious and Avoidant styles and marital satisfaction.

Some general findings from the Lussier et al. (1997) study indicated that the lower the income of the couple, the more avoidant coping strategies were being used when the relationship was in distress. Married individuals did not differ from cohabiting individuals in their coping strategies. However, those cohabiting (more than half of the sample) reported more Anxious attachments compared to those married. Divorced participants recorded more Anxious attachment styles but did not differ from marrieds in coping strategies. Emotion-focused strategies and avoidant strategies tended to be used more by women than men, but there were no gender differences in the use of task-

oriented strategies. Men in this study scored higher on Anxious attachment styles than women.

Research on marital satisfaction and attachment found that people with positive childhood experiences had more marital satisfaction than those with negative childhood experiences. Caregiving behaviors increased relationship satisfaction as did communication and active problem solving strategies. However, the researchers found that compulsive caregiving, caused by assuming too much responsibilty for the relationship, led to decreased marital satisfaction.

Conclusions

Adult attachment theory has blossomed in the last two decades. Moving from infant attachment to adult attachment, the importance of the bond between two people who are significant to each other has been clearly demonstrated through empirical studies and clinical work. The research and theory reviewed in this paper were chosen to provide an understanding of adult attachment and how these attachment styles affect romantic relationships. The attraction between two people is affected by the partners' attachment styles, the affect regulation within the relationship, and how the couple deals with conflict and stress. Communication between the partners and the satisfaction with the relationship are also associated with the couple's attachment style.

Summary of the Findings

The research showed that attachment style affects the attraction between two

people; similar attachment styles tend to be in relationships with each other. Researchers found that the attachment style that was developed with the early primary caregiver was continued in adulthood and then reinforced by the seclection of a partner with a similar attachment style. Partners with a Secure style were found to be more comfortable with closeness and showed this comfort level with more nonverbal behaviors such as touching and smiling.

The results of the research on attachment and affect regulation showed that Secures express and are more comfortable with negative emotion than Insecures. Reseach indicated that the quality of relationships is affected by depression. Secures experiences less depression than Insecures and maintained more satisfying relationships. Depression was found to affect relationships negatively. Other research found that the positive expression of emotions toward each other brought more security to the relationship.

Research found that conflict and stress were less destructive to the relationship of people with a Secure attachment than to those with an Insecure attachment. Researchers found that Secures were more invested in the relationship, enabling them to maintain positive feelings during the stressful times. Those with an Anxious attachment quickly reacted with negative behaviors when conflict or stress occurred, due to their feelings of abandonment. During times of stress and conflict, Avoidants detached emotionally. The research also found that most of the participants who had behaved aggressively toward their partners were those with a Fearful or Preoccupied attachment styles.

People with positive childhood experiences experienced more marital satisfaction than those with negative childhood experiences. Caregiving behaviors between partners increased relationship satisfaction as did communication and active problem solving strategies. Additionally, the researchers found that compulsive caregiving, based on assuming too much responsibility for the relationship, led to decreased marital satisfaction.

Evaluation of the Research

The major difficulty in evaluating this research was the inconsistency of terms. Some of the research labeled the attachment with words such as Secure, Anxious/ Ambivalent, and Avoidant (Frazier et al., 1996; Lussier et al., 1997; Gaines et al., 1997). Others used only Secure and Insecure (Feeney, 1994; Young & Acitelli, 1998; Feeney, 1999). Still others used the four category labels of Secure, Preoccupied, Dismissing, and Fearful (Carnelley et al., 1994; Simpson et al., 1996; Guerrero, 1996). At times the different categorization made the outcomes difficult to compare.

Whereas there were some studies with married couples and older romantic couples, the majority of studies utilized romantic couples from universities who tended to be younger in age. This limited the results of these studies in several ways. First, most couples feel secure in a relationship in its early stages. This skews the information obtained for a study by over representing Secure relationships. The lack of time in the relationship hinders the authentic measurement of attachment, and the age factor limits the maturity and life experience needed to gain a clearer picture of adult attachment.

A second difficulty arose due to the preponderance of college students used in the relationship studies. More college students come from middle to upper class families than from lower class families, and the use of these samples does not provide assessment of the whole range of socio-economic levels in the population. A third difficulty is the lack of enough studies that measured relationships longitudinally. To gain a more complete picture of how attachment works and changes, studies need to be conducted on relationships through the life span. This would facilitate the study of the effect that attachment style has on the ordinary stressors of life such as children, jobs, losses, and the aging process over the life cycle of relationships.

A fourth difficulty is related to the use of information gleaned from self-reports. Subjects choose their responses based on many different variables, and subjective biases can prevent accurate reporting. When rating their relational satisfaction or the security that they feel in the relationship, subjects can be influenced by a need to look good or make the relationship appear as something that it is not. Scharfe and Bartholomew (1995), found that subjects' current relationship experiences greatly influenced their recall of past relationship satisfaction. Subjects in this study categorized their relationship at its beginning and then eight months later. Scharfe and Bartholomew concluded that the results were not stable due to invalid self-reporting.

Gender differences in reporting present a fifth difficulty in evaluating this research. Tennen (1990) found that men tend to view the world within a framework of hierarchy wherein independence is utmost in importance. They also tend to view failure

as demoralizing. In contrast, Tennen found that women tend to approach situations to gain closeness and support. Because of these different perspectives, how men and women view their relationship and what is important can influence their self-reports.

Finally, due to the different populations represented in these studies, it was difficult to draw conclusions regarding the effects of adult attachment style on relationships. Some studies measured married people, other studies assessed romantic relationships, and still others rated students' relationships. The use of these very different populations raises some important questions. Does longevity in a relationship change the partner's attachment style? According to attachment theory, it should. Does the perception of 19 year old students differ from 30 year olds? The obvious answer is yes. How do the perceptions of these different populations affect the results of research?

Implications for Treatment

Treatment for relational problems should take into consideration the dynamics of attachment styles occurring within dyad. To create an environment in which a Secure style is established, the therapist must model that environment to the clients and help them to create this environment with each other by identifying behaviors that interfere with feelings of safety and closeness. Therapy must stress the importance of each spouse showing consistent, caregiving behaviors. Couples should be encouraged to risk moving toward vulnerability by communicating their feelings and needs to each other. The aim of treatment should be to focus the relationship toward a more Secure attachment style.

Hazan and Hutt (1990) discovered in one study that 25% of their sample reported a change in attachment style during adulthood, usually going from Insecure to Secure. Primarily this occurred because the negative internal working model of self and/or other had changed. Baldwin and Fehr (1995) also found that approximately 30% of their subjects had some change of attachment style during a course of time. With the use of therapeutic interventions, more change toward Secure attachment styles would occur. A study by Davila, Burge, and Hammen (1997) discovered that changes in attachment style occur in people with Insecure attachments. They also found that change in circumstances, particularly stressful events, contributed to changes in style. Additionally, psychopathology and personality contributed to a change in attachment style. Given this information, a stressful situation could potentially help the couple to create a more Secure internal working model from which to relate.

Future Research

Further research needs to be conducted on the effect of adult attachment and parenting. How does attachment style relate to effective parenting? How does such parenting affect the child? Rhodes, Simpson, and Blakely (1995), Green (1996), and Cowan, Cowan, Cohn, and Pearson (1996) have done some research in this area; however, more is needed. An understanding of the effects of adults' attachment styles on their parenting style can help parents develop Secure attachments with their children, giving the children a more secure upbringing and enhancing their development into healthier adults.

In light of the high rate of marriage failure, there needs to be research on how attachment styles are related to the loss of relationship. Research on attachment can provide a basis of help for those experiencing break-ups and divorce. Berman (1988) and Bakermans-Kranenburg and Ijzendoorn (1997) studied divorce and adjustment in relation to attachment style, but more research needs to be conducted, particularly by researchers in the United States.

Clearly attachment style affects individual lives in a multitude of ways. Unfortunately many partners are not directly aware of how their relationships are impacted by their attachment styles. Any research that helps individuals understand themselves better and helps them develop better interpersonal relationships will benefit children, families, and society as a whole.

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