

Determinants of Deviance: How attachment effects psychopathy

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Abstract

Background: Researchers have provided evidence that early adversity may be linked to attachment and psychopathy and, in this study, we examined the association among these variables. **Methods:** Participants were 628 undergraduates who completed surveys to assess early adversity (Felitti et al., 1998), psychopathy (Paulhus et al., 2009) and parental attachment (Scharfe, 2016). We grouped participants based on their reports of adverse childhood experiences (none reported, one, two, three, and four or more) and their psychopathy scores (53% low/below median, 47% high/above median). **Results:** We found that participants who reported no adversity reported highest security and lowest avoidance, while participants who reported 4 or more occurrences of adversity reported lowest security and highest avoidance. This pattern of results was similar for participants who reported low psychopathy but interestingly there were no attachment differences across adversity groups for individuals who reported high psychopathy. **Conclusions:** There is evidence that attachment representations and psychopathy are influenced by early adversity, however, high levels of psychopathy may mask the effects of attachment relationships. **Impact:** These findings may provide some evidence to understand the reason why attachment relationships may be of little importance to individuals with high levels of psychopathy.

Method

Procedure & Measures

Participants (N=628) were recruited through Trent University's online PSYC SONA system by way of voluntary sign up for a study exploring attachment and the dark triad. The study was visible to select students enrolled in psychology undergraduate courses. Participants were compensated 1% bonus marks towards their selected course of study. The online survey assessed participants' early experiences of adversity, level of psychopathy and attachment representations to parents. Participants were typical of an undergraduate university sample: majority were female (83%), Caucasian (72%), single (42%) and in their first year of undergraduate studies (53%). Participant's were grouped based on their reports of adverse childhood experiences (none reported (32%), one (21%), two (16%), three (10%), and four or more (11%)) and their psychopathy scores (53% low/below median, 47% high/above median).

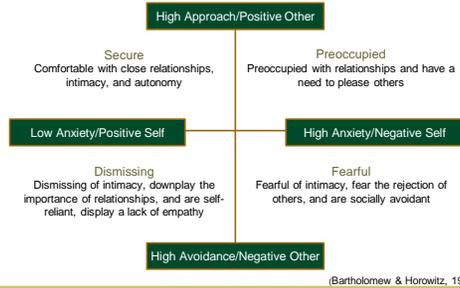
The descriptive statistics for the measurement scales are listed below in Table 1. The means and standard deviations of the attachment representations are similar to those presented by Scharfe (2016).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for the T-RSQ

Variable	Mean	SD	Alpha
Maternal Attachment			
Secure	4.76	1.06	0.75
Fearful	2.77	1.21	0.85
Preoccupied	3.40	0.80	0.49
Dismissing	3.41	1.23	0.75
Paternal Attachment			
Secure	4.15	1.14	0.76
Fearful	3.11	1.34	0.85
Preoccupied	3.17	0.89	0.56
Dismissing	3.87	1.44	0.75

Note: N=628. T-RSQ = Trent Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Scharfe, 2016).

Bartholomew's Four-Category Model of Attachment



Results

A 5x2 (adversity x psychopathy) Factorial MANOVA was conducted to explore the associations between attachment representations, adversity, and psychopathy. All four attachment representations were grouped together as dependent variables. There was a significant main effect for psychopathy ($F(4,596) = 2.61, p = .04$) and adversity ($F(16, 1821.4) = 4.22, p < .01$) for paternal attachment. Similarly, there were significant main effects for psychopathy ($F(4, 612) = 9.95, p < .01$) and adversity ($F(16, 1870.3) = 3.49, p < .01$) with maternal attachment. In exploring specific attachment dimensions, participants who reported no adversity had highest security and lowest avoidance across both attachment relationships. In contrast, participants who reported four or more occurrences of adversity had lowest security and highest avoidance across maternal and paternal attachment relationships. This pattern of results was similar for participants who reported low psychopathy. Interestingly, there were no significant attachment differences across adversity for participants who reported high psychopathy. See Table 2 for reported post hoc analyses exploring the difference in attachment means for participants who reported no adversity versus 4 or more occurrences of adversity, as well as low and high psychopathy.

Table 2 Post Hoc Analyses of Attachment Differences for Main Effects of Adversity and Psychopathy

Attachment	Psychopathy			Adversity		
	Mean	High	NK	Mean	4+	NK
AttachmentM						
Secure	5.02	4.49	<0.001	4.94	4.45	0.003
Fearful	2.32	3.06	<0.001	2.35	3.16	<0.001
Preoccupied	3.43	3.37	0.36	3.32	3.54	0.19
Dismissing	3.09	3.75	<0.001	3.06	3.98	<0.001
AttachmentF						
Secure	4.31	3.97	<0.001	4.51	3.85	<0.001
Fearful	2.91	3.33	<0.001	2.68	3.61	<0.001
Preoccupied	3.15	3.19	0.54	3.15	3.22	0.80
Dismissing	3.67	4.07	<0.001	3.73	4.50	<0.001

Note: N=628. AttachmentM = attachment to mothers; AttachmentF = attachment to fathers; NK = Newman-Keuls.

Introduction

Attachment researchers have found support that relationships formed during childhood become the foundation for later socialization (De Clercq, Hofmans, Vergauwe, De Fruyt, & Sharp, 2017). Traditionally, researchers have indicated that experiences of unresponsive parenting results in the development of insecure attachment relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Characterized by high control and lack of care, insecure relationships result in the child experiencing inconsistencies that negatively affect typical development (De Clercq et al., 2017). Common developmental challenges associated with insecurity include underdeveloped social competencies as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties (Lee & Harkin, 2009). Researchers have also found support that early adversity is a key component of insecure attachment formations as adversity is critical to personality formation (Blanchard & Lyons, 2016). From an attachment perspective Bowlby (1983) primarily discussed adversity in the context of unstable homes, abuse, neglect and separation. Bowlby (1983) proposed two key concepts of adversity-first, vulnerability increases after each experience. In other words, one experience of adversity opens individuals up to other vulnerabilities. Second, Bowlby (1983) discussed comorbidity of adverse experiences whereby situational occurrences foster an ideal environment for additional adversity to take place. Felitti et al. (1998) empirically tested comorbidity of adverse experiences in their study exploring health risk behaviour and disease in adulthood. The researchers (Felitti et al., 1988) found that exposure to categories of adversity were positively correlated with increased negative health outcomes.

In the past decade, research on adversity and attachment has extended to include socially aversive personality traits, such as psychopathy (Paulhus, & Williams, 2002). Majority of empirical research surrounding psychopathy has determined that the trajectory of traits stem from proximal risk factors such as attachment. Blanchard and Lyons (2016) found that psychopathic traits in both men and women were associated with insecure attachment to mothers and fathers. Based on previous research we expected that increased categories of adverse experiences would be associated with higher reported insecurity as well as higher reported psychopathy.

Discussion

Our hypotheses were supported. The goal of our study was to determine if there was an association between attachment representations, adversity, and psychopathy. As predicted, there were significant associations between parental attachment representations and group membership for both psychopathy (low versus high) and adversity (0,1,2,3,4 or more). Overall, higher security and lower avoidance was associated with low psychopathy and an absence of adversity. Conversely, participants who reported four or more adverse experiences reported lower security and higher avoidance. Interestingly, there were no significant interactions among the variables nor were there differences in reported adversity for the high psychopathy group.

Our results indicate that attachment and psychopathy are associated with experiences of early adversity and provide some insight into why individuals with high psychopathy regard attachment relationships as unimportant. One limitation of our study was that psychopathy prevalence rates are often low in student samples (Blanchard, & Lyons, 2016). Therefore, further exploration of the associations between adversity, psychopathy and attachment within a forensic population may provide further insight. Such exploration would be of benefit in providing research informed interventions for populations where adversity and psychopathy are higher.

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Beyond the class A team: Secure attachment and substance experimentation

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Abstract

Background: Although, secure attachment has been found to be associated with both health promotion and risk, Scharfe and Eldredge (2001) suggested that secure university students would be more likely to experiment with sex and drugs. In this study, we tested whether attachment representations would influence experimentation and how the recent legalization of cannabis influenced this relationship. **Method:** In total, 1010 university students completed surveys to assess attachment (Scharfe, 2016) and frequency of alcohol and drug use. Experimentation was defined as using 1-4 times per month. **Results:** We found that security was higher while fearful and dismissing attachment was lower in students who reported experimenting with drugs and alcohol compared to students who abstained or used frequently. Not surprisingly, after legalization of cannabis, there was an increase in experimentation with cannabis (36% before and 48% after). Effects of security (increasing experimentation) and the effect of dismissing attachment (decreasing experimentation) were maintained. **Conclusions:** These findings highlight the importance of understanding how our close relationships may influence experimentation. **Action/Impact:** It is important that parents as well as post-secondary institutions are reminded of the typical and normal experimentation of secure emerging adults.

Method

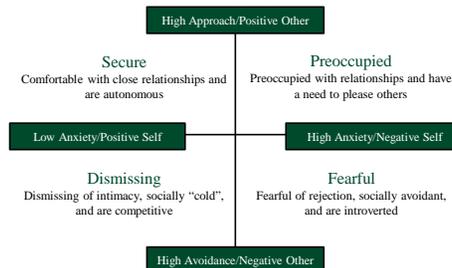
Participants were university students aged 18 to 38 ($M = 19$) enrolled in a first or second year undergraduate psychology course ($N = 1010$). The participants identified as mostly male (15%) or female (84%) and the majority were Caucasian (72%). 55% of participants were single and 45% of participants were in a relationship. Most participants reported living on their own (37%), in residence (33%), or living at home with their parents (21%) at the time of study. Participants received bonus course credit in exchange for their participation.

The survey included the Trent Relationship Scales Questionnaire (*T-RSQ*; Scharfe, 2016) to assess attachment representations (see Table 1) and a Frequency of Alcohol and Other Drug Use questionnaire to assess how often participants used drugs within the past year (not for medical reasons and without a prescription). Experimentation was defined as having used the substance either monthly or 2-4 times a month. Not experimenting was defined as never using the substance, using 2-3 times a week, or using 4 or more times a week. The survey was administered before and after the legalization of cannabis in Canada.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Coefficients for Attachment Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	
Attachment to Mother			
Secure	4.83	1.07	0.75
Fearful	2.60	1.30	0.88
Preoccupied	3.44	0.83	0.51
Dismissing	3.31	1.31	0.86
Attachment to Father			
Secure	4.19	1.14	0.76
Fearful	2.88	1.37	0.87
Preoccupied	3.15	0.93	0.60
Dismissing	3.70	1.42	0.87
Attachment to Peers			
Secure	4.82	1.01	0.76
Fearful	3.02	1.23	0.88
Preoccupied	4.00	0.90	0.63
Dismissing	3.28	1.13	0.83

Bartholomew's Four-Category Model of Attachment



Results

T-tests were used to determine whether attachment representations influenced cannabis and alcohol experimentation. See table 2 for significant results.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine whether legalization influenced experimentation with cannabis. The relationship between legalization and experimentation was significant, $\chi^2(1, 1010) = 12.56, p < .001$. Experimentation increased after the legalization of cannabis (see Figure 1).

A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine the influence of legalization (pre or post) on experimentation (experiments or does not experiment) for each attachment variable. The interaction effect was only significant for dismissing attachment, $F(1, 997) = 6.14, p = .01$. Experimentation increased after the legalization of cannabis.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values for Attachment Variables

Variable	Experimentation		t
	Mean (SD)	No Experimentation Mean (SD)	
Alcohol Use			
Attachment to Mother			
Secure	4.89 (1.09)	4.69 (1.05)	-2.71**
Fearful	2.51 (1.25)	2.80 (1.37)	3.36**
Preoccupied	3.46 (0.77)	3.39 (0.96)	-1.36
Dismissing	3.24 (1.25)	3.47 (1.43)	2.47*
Attachment to Peers			
Secure	4.89 (1.00)	4.66 (1.03)	-3.23**
Fearful	2.98 (1.26)	3.09 (1.32)	1.26
Preoccupied	4.02 (0.88)	3.96 (0.94)	-1.01
Dismissing	3.28 (1.12)	3.29 (1.15)	0.16
Cannabis Use			
Attachment to Mother			
Secure	4.87 (1.02)	4.81 (1.10)	-0.83
Fearful	2.58 (1.26)	2.61 (1.32)	0.41
Preoccupied	3.40 (0.82)	3.47 (0.83)	1.35
Dismissing	3.27 (1.28)	3.34 (1.33)	0.87
Attachment to Peers			
Secure	4.89 (0.98)	4.77 (1.03)	-1.82*
Fearful	2.96 (1.30)	3.05 (1.27)	1.11
Preoccupied	4.01 (0.85)	3.99 (0.93)	-0.33
Dismissing	3.18 (1.12)	3.34 (1.14)	2.20*

Note. N=1011. Experimentation = use is monthly or 2-4 times a month. No experimentation = never using the substance, using 2-3 times a week, or using 4 or more times a week. Attachment to father is not included and did not yield any significant results.
* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$.

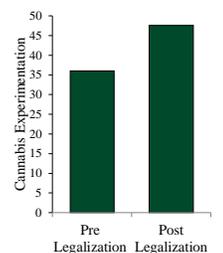


Figure 1. Cannabis experimentation before and after legalization (October 17, 2018).

Introduction

Insecure attachment seems to be related to either abuse of substances or refraining entirely. Kassel, Wardle, and Roberts (2007) found that fear of abandonment, which is characteristic of fearful attachment, was not related to high frequencies of alcohol and cannabis use unless in response to feeling distressed. Alcohol is perceived as a normal part of college life and the avoidance of social interactions could contribute to the lower frequency of use in general (Kassel et al., 2007; Scharfe & Eldredge, 2001).

Secure attachment has been found to be associated with health promotion but has also been connected to health risk behaviours. Scharfe and Eldredge (2001) found that security was associated with some risky behaviour and suggested that secure university students would be more likely to experiment with sex and drugs as a result of interpersonal confidence and the maintenance of social relationships. This suggestion led to the current study in which we explored whether secure attachment in university students would be associated with a more experimental approach to cannabis and alcohol use.

Hypotheses

1. Attachment scores will differ between students that experiment with alcohol and cannabis and students that either refrain from use or use often.
2. The recent legalization of cannabis will influence the relationship between attachment and cannabis experimentation.

Discussion

Our hypotheses were partially supported. The focus of our study was to determine whether attachment representations would differ for individuals based on whether or not they engaged in alcohol and cannabis experimentation. Furthermore, we wanted to test whether the legalization of cannabis would impact this relationship. As predicted, there were some significant differences in attachment ratings between the experimentation (casual use) and no experimentation groups (no use at all or overuse). Secure attachment to mother and peers was significantly higher for students that experimented with alcohol. The same trend was found for attachment to peers regarding cannabis use. Conversely, dismissing and fearful attachment to mother was significantly higher for students that did not experiment with alcohol. Dismissing attachment to peers was also significantly higher for students that did not experiment with cannabis.

We then examined the relationship between attachment, cannabis use and legalization in Canada. Once legalized, more students experimented with cannabis (36% before legalization and 48% after). The interaction between legalization and experimentation for dismissing attachment was significant, indicating that legalization increased experimentation. Though the only significant interaction between legalization and cannabis use was for dismissing attachment, future studies should continue to explore the relationship between attachment style and how laws impact decision making in regards to risky behaviours.

Our results support that secure attachment is higher among students that experiment with cannabis and alcohol. As stated by Scharfe and Eldredge (2001), experimentation is a normal part of college and student life, making this "risky behaviour" a normal part of development.

Selected References

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The Power of Love: Attachment, Attributions, and Relational Aggression

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Abstract

Rationale: Attachment has been found to shape attributions and influence behaviour in friendships and romantic relationships. Specifically, insecure attachment has been found to increase incidence of relational aggression (RA; e.g., Goldstein, 2011). Hostile attributions have also been found to consistently contribute to higher incidence of RA in close relationships (e.g., Bailey & Ostrov, 2008). In this study, we tested the hypothesis that attachment would predict RA after first controlling for hostile attributions.

Method: A sample of 302 Psychology undergraduate students completed a questionnaire to assess attachment to friends and romantic partners (Trent Relationship Scales Questionnaire; Scharfe, 2016), vignettes to assess attributions (Social Information Processing-Attribution and Emotional Response Questionnaire; Coccaro, Nobilett, & McCloskey, 2009), and both a questionnaire (Self-Report of Aggression and Social Behavior Measure; Morales & Crick, 1998) and follow-up questions after the vignettes to assess RA.

Results: Hierarchical regressions revealed that, after first controlling for hostile attributions in romantic relationships, attachment to romantic partner significantly predicted RA measured using the survey and the vignettes. However, after first controlling for hostile attributions in friendships, attachment to friends significantly predicted RA measured using the survey but not RA measured using the vignettes.

Conclusions: Our findings suggest that attachment may provide unique insights into understanding RA in friendships and romantic relationships. Attachment may be important to consider when trying to reduce levels of RA in close relationships.

Method

Participants were 302 undergraduate university students

Age 18 to 53 years ($M = 20.64$, $SD = 5.07$)
Gender 68% identified as female and 32% male
Ethnicity 74% were Caucasian, 14% Asian, 9% Black
Romantic Relationships 64% were in a romantic relationship and 35% were single
Sexual Orientations 82% identified as heterosexual, 12% bisexual, 3% homosexual

Measures

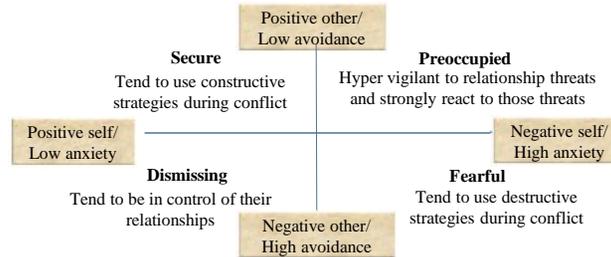
Trent Relationship Scales Questionnaire (T-RSQ; Scharfe, 2016). Participants rated 40 items assessing the quality of their friendships and romantic relationships on a scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 7 (very much like me). Example item: *I find it difficult to depend on my close friends*. Means and standard deviations are listed below in the format M (SD).

	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Friends	4.95 (0.86)	3.23 (1.13)	3.91 (0.82)	3.36 (0.91)
Romantic Partner	5.20 (0.99)	3.22 (1.18)	4.37 (0.86)	3.30 (1.00)

Social Information Processing-Attribution and Emotional Response Questionnaire (SIP-AEQ; Coccaro et al., 2009). The SIP-AEQ consists of eight vignettes describing relational and physical aggression. For this study, the vignettes were modified to describe relational aggression between friends and romantic partners. Each vignette was followed by one question assessing hostile attributions rated on a scale from 0 (*not at all likely*) to 3 (*very likely*). Example item: *My friend wanted to expose my secret*. To assess relational aggression as a response to the vignettes, additional follow-up questions were created. Example item: *How likely are you to intentionally ignore your friend until he/she apologizes for sharing your secret with other people?* Items were rated on a scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*very true*).

Self-Report of Aggression and Social Behavior Measure (SRASBM; Morales & Crick, 1998). The relational aggression subscales consist of 11 items assessing RA in friendships (e.g., *I have threatened to share private information about my friends with other people in order to get them to comply with my wishes*) and five items assessing RA in romantic relationships (e.g., *If my romantic partner makes me mad, I will flirt with another person in front of him/her*).

Bartholomew's Four-Category Model of Attachment



(Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995)

Results

Four hierarchical regressions were performed to predict relational aggression using attachment and hostile attributions. Consistent with previous research, hostile attributions predicted RA in all four regressions (step 1). After controlling for hostile attributions (step 2), attachment to romantic partner predicted RA in romantic relationships (for both the survey and vignettes) but attachment to friends significantly predicted RA in friendships only when measured using the survey, but not the vignettes. The significant results can be seen in Tables 1, 2, & 3.

Table 1 Summary of Hierarchical Regression (romantic partner – survey)

	R ²	F	
Step 1. Hostile attributions	0.04***	12.73***	0.20***
Step 2. Attachment to partner	0.10***	8.26***	
Secure			-0.16 [†]
Fearful			0.18 [†]
Preoccupied			0.08
Dismissing			-0.01

[†]p<0.10. ***p<0.001.

Table 2 Summary of Hierarchical Regression (romantic partner – vignettes)

	R ²	F	
Step 1. Hostile attributions	0.16***	58.91***	0.41***
Step 2. Attachment to partner	0.04**	3.71**	
Secure			-0.02
Fearful			0.14
Preoccupied			0.07
Dismissing			0.02

p<0.01. *p<0.001.

Table 3 Summary of Hierarchical Regression (friends – survey)

	R ²	F	
Step 1. Hostile attributions	0.09***	28.55***	0.29***
Step 2. Attachment to friends	0.03*	2.58*	
Secure			-0.06
Fearful			0.10
Preoccupied			-0.001
Dismissing			0.05

*p<0.05. ***p<0.001.

Introduction

The quality of early relationships with caregivers lays the groundwork for the development of models of the self and others which influence the way individuals see themselves and the people around them (Bowlby, 1988). Later in life, individuals form a hierarchy of attachment figures which includes individuals other than their caregivers, such as friends and romantic partners (Bowlby, 1988). Favourable interactions with caregivers equip individuals to develop secure attachment representations (positive self and positive other) which may positively influence interactions in future social relationships (Bowlby, 1988). On the other hand, inconsistent or rejecting caregiving is typically associated with the development of insecure attachment representations (negative models of the self and/or others) which may negatively influence interactions in future social relationships.

Although attachment representations are relatively stable across time (Bowlby, 1969, 1988), individuals are constantly processing social information and making attributions about new social occurrences. Consequently, individuals may perceive certain social information as threatening and may use aggressive behaviours during threatening situations (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Interestingly, insecure attachment has been found to contribute to the persistence of universal hostile attributions, which is likely to increase individuals' likelihood of behaving aggressively (Dodge, 2006). In this study, we tested the hypothesis that attachment would predict RA in friendships and romantic relationships after first controlling for hostile attributions.

Discussion

The findings mostly supported our hypothesis. Consistent with previous research, hostile attributions significantly predicted relational aggression in friendships and romantic relationships. In romantic relationships, attachment to romantic partner significantly predicted relational aggression after first controlling for hostile attributions. In friendships, however, attachment to friends significantly predicted relational aggression measured using the survey, but not the vignettes, after first controlling for hostile attributions.

Future research may explore why the results were different when relational aggression in friendships was measured using different instruments (i.e., survey versus vignettes). A potential explanation for the discrepancy in the friendship findings may be that the scenarios described in the vignettes were not reflective of participants' real-life interactions with their friends. Therefore, participants' attachment representations may not have guided their response when they were explicitly instructed to imagine themselves in hypothetical situations and respond accordingly. A way around this issue would be to conduct a pilot study to test whether the vignettes were representative of interactions at the university level.

In summary, our findings suggest that although individuals' hostile attributions may be a predictor of relational aggression, individuals' attachment representations are likely to influence their tendency to react in an aggressive manner. In other words, even when individuals explain behaviours in a hostile manner, their views of their friendships and romantic relationships are likely to determine whether they engage in relational aggression.

Although the individual attachment scales (i.e., secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing) did not individually contribute to the explanation of relational aggression, secure attachment was negatively associated with engaging in relational aggression while insecure attachment was positively associated with engaging in relational aggression. Therefore, secure attachment may act as a buffer against engaging in relational aggression and should be explored further in interventions targeting relational aggression.

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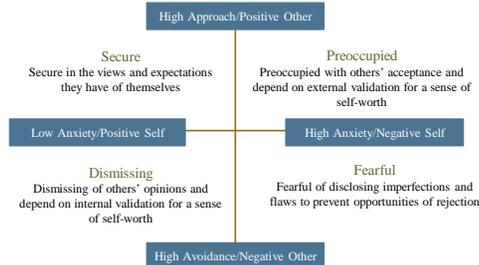
Perfect me: Adult attachment and perfectionism

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Abstract

Background/rationale: In a recent study, Chen et al. (2012) suggested that perfectionism contributes to difficult interpersonal relationships. In this study, we used the attachment framework to further examine their suggestion and tested if adult attachment relationships were associated with perfectionism. **Method:** Undergraduate students (n=964) completed measures of attachment to mother, father and peers (T-RSQ; Scharfe, 2016) and perfectionism (PCI; Flett et al., 1998). Regression analyses were used to predict perfectionism. **Results:** We found that attachment with mother and father significantly predicted 12% of the variance of perfectionism. In particular, fearful attachment to mother and preoccupied attachment to both mother and father significantly contributed to the regression equation. Once the influence of parents was controlled, attachment to peers significantly contributed an additional 7% to the prediction of perfectionism. For peers, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing attachment significantly contributed to the regression equation. **Conclusion:** The findings suggest that attachment, in particular insecurity, is significantly associated with perfectionism. **Action/Impact:** Although the effect of parents was evident, it is clear that understanding the influence of peers may be important when supporting individuals who report tendencies toward perfectionism.

Bartholomew's Four-Category Model of Attachment



Introduction

Chen et al. (2012) found individuals with high perfectionism scores report poor functioning interpersonal relationships. This consequence may be attributed to characteristics of internal working models of the self and other in Bartholomew's four-category model of adult attachment. Secure and dismissing individuals have a positive sense of self; thus they feel a sense of worthiness. Conversely, preoccupied and fearful individuals have a negative sense of self (feelings of unworthiness) but differing views of the other. Preoccupied individuals have a positive evaluation of others and depend on their acceptance for a sense of validation thus they have a desire to appear "perfect". Contrastingly, fearful individuals have a negative evaluation of others and expect others to be rejecting, thus they avoid disclosing flaws and failures to avoid anticipated rejection. Both preoccupied and fearful individuals may be at risk of perfectionistic cognitions based on how they view themselves and others which may contribute to difficult interpersonal relationships.

Hypotheses

1. We expected to replicate the findings of Chen et al. (2012). Preoccupied and fearful attachment to mother, father, and peers will be associated with perfectionism.
2. We also expected that fearful and preoccupied attachment to mother, father, and peers to be associated with PCI Concerns; dismissing attachment to mother and father will be associated with PCI Striving; and, that fearful and preoccupied attachment to mother, father, and peers will be associated with PCI Demands.

Method

Undergraduate students (n= 964) registered in first- and second-year Psychology courses at Trent University completed the online surveys for 1% bonus credit. Participants were primarily second year students (98.6%), 19.21 years old (SD = 1.56, ranging from 18 to 38 years), predominantly female (83.8%) and predominantly Caucasian (72%).

Procedure & Measures

Participants completed online questionnaires to assess attachment to mother, father, and peers (T-RSQ; Scharfe, 2016) and perfectionism (PCI; Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Gray, 1998). See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of the scales.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Coefficients of the T-RSQ and PCI

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Range	α
Attachment to Mother					
Secure	4.84	1.07	4.50	1.90-7.00	0.75
Fearful	2.60	1.29	2.30	1.00-6.40	0.88
Preoccupied	3.44	0.84	3.50	1.00-6.70	0.52
Dismissing	3.31	1.30	3.20	1.00-6.90	0.86
Attachment to Father					
Secure	4.19	1.13	4.10	1.10-6.90	0.76
Fearful	2.89	1.37	2.79	1.00-7.00	0.87
Preoccupied	3.15	0.93	3.16	1.00-7.00	0.61
Dismissing	3.71	1.41	3.70	1.00-7.00	0.87
Attachment to Peers					
Secure	4.83	1.00	4.80	1.80-7.00	0.76
Fearful	3.01	1.28	3.00	1.00-7.00	0.87
Preoccupied	4.00	0.90	4.00	1.00-7.00	0.61
Dismissing	3.27	1.11	3.20	1.00-7.00	0.87
PCI					
Total	2.09	0.86	2.12	0.00-4.00	0.95
Concerns	1.69	0.99	1.64	0.00-4.00	0.91
Strivings	2.20	0.91	2.27	0.00-4.00	0.90
Demands	2.41	0.81	2.44	0.00-4.00	0.85

Note. N = 964. PCI = Perfectionistic Cognitions Inventory.

Results

Table 2
Regression Analyses Predicting Perfectionism from Attachment to Mother, Father, and Peers

Scale	AR ²	F Change
PCI Total		
Step 1.	0.128**	17.505**
Step 2.	0.065**	19.046**
PCI Concerns		
Step 1.	0.191**	28.205**
Step 2.	0.666**	20.986**
PCI Strivings		
Step 1.	0.073**	9.377**
Step 2.	0.040**	10.690**
PCI Demands		
Step 1.	0.078**	10.038**
Step 2.	0.047**	12.741**

Note. N = 964. Step 1 included attachment to mother and father. Step 2 included attachment to peers while controlling for attachment to mother and father.

** $p < .01$

Stepwise regression analyses were used to determine whether adult attachment relationships were associated with perfectionism (see Table 2). The first PCI subscale "perfectionistic concerns" refers to concerns over mistakes, feelings of discrepancy between one's standards and performance, and fear of negative evaluation and rejection by others. We found that secure attachment to father, and fearful and preoccupied attachment to mother and father were significant in the regression equation. For peers, fearful and preoccupied attachment predicted greater variance of perfectionistic concerns. The second PCI subscale "perfectionistic striving", refers to perfectionistic self-standards and a self-oriented striving for perfection. We found that preoccupied attachment to mother as well as preoccupied and dismissing attachment to peer were significant in the regression equation. The third PCI subscale "perfectionistic demands", refers to self-applied pressures to be perfect. We found a similar pattern illustrated in the perfectionistic striving where both preoccupied attachment to mother, and preoccupied and dismissing attachment to peer were significant. Overall, preoccupied attachment to mother and father, and fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing attachment to peers significantly predicted total perfectionism scores.

Discussion

Our hypotheses were partially supported. The goal of our study was to test whether adult attachment relationships were associated with perfectionism. In particular, we wanted to test whether attachment orientations may influence participants' scores on the three PCI subscales; perfectionistic concerns, strivings, and demands. In relation to our first hypothesis, we found that preoccupied attachment predicted individual's total perfectionism scores; however, only fearful attachment to peers was significant in the regression equation. Interestingly, dismissing attachment to peer significantly predicted perfectionism which may be explained by the positive sense of self in a competitive social environment such as university. In addition, our findings provide evidence that both supports and challenges our second hypothesis. First, as expected, fearful attachment was significant for perfectionistic concerns; however, only preoccupied attachment to peer predicted variance. This may be explained by the emphasis that undergraduates place on attachment relations with peers while away at university. Second, we found contradicting evidence for perfectionistic strivings. While we expected that dismissing attachment to mother and father would be significant, we instead found that dismissing attachment to peer to be significant. This finding may be attributed to the positive sense of self that dismissing individuals hold. Third, although we did not find evidence of fearful attachment predicting perfectionistic demands, we found that preoccupied attachment to mother and peer were significant. Additionally, dismissing attachment to peer was also significant which, like perfectionistic strivings, may be explained by their positive sense of self. It is worth noting that while controlling for attachment to parents, attachment to peers contributed greater variance of perfectionism. It is important to understand the emphasis of peer attachment relationships when exploring perfectionism in a university sample.

Selected References

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