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The Effects of Attachment Styles on Self Efficacy, Depression, and Relationships

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Abstract

Attachment style is a term that refers to a tendency of behaviors individuals exhibit in regards to interpersonal relationships and internal beliefs regarding themselves. The effects of attachment style have been implicated in the general adaptability of humans throughout childhood into adulthood. The theory suggests that individuals with secure attachment styles are the most likely to become well adjusted adults compared to individuals who develop insecure attachment typical behavior. The goal of this paper is to examine existing research in regards to the effect of attachment styles on self efficacy, depression, and adult relationships. It was hypothesized that individuals with secure attachment styles will have higher rates of self efficacy, lower instances of depression, and more satisfaction in adult relationships. It was also hypothesized that individuals with anxious or avoidant attachment styles will show lower rates of self efficacy and adult relationship satisfaction, but higher rates of depression. The results examined across the literature support the hypothesis that secure attachment individuals are more likely to experience high rates of self efficacy and relationship satisfaction, and lower rates of depression. The research also supports the hypothesis that individuals with anxious attachment behaviors are more likely to report lower levels of self efficacy and relationship satisfaction, but higher instances of depression. Lastly, the research indicates that individuals with avoidant attachment styles are prone to show varying levels of self efficacy and depression, but these individuals do tend to show diminished relationship satisfaction.
The Effects of Attachment Styles on Self Efficacy, Depression, and Relationships

The attachment theory provides explanation on the ongoing pertinence of the earliest connection made between an infant and at least one caregiver during infancy. More specifically, the attachment theory suggests that in order for infants to grow into well adjusted adults there must be a consistent and secure attachment made between a sensitive caregiver and infant (Rosmalen, van der Horst, & Veer, 2016). The attachment theory was initiated by John Bowlby, a trained psychoanalyst, based off of the cases he had been exposed to while completing clinical work. As a result of observing patterns seen in these cases he concluded that there was a correlation between children engaging in problematic behavior and early childhood neglect, emotional or physical deprivation, or separation. These conclusions arose as Bowlby began to work with children who were emotionally withdrawn and prone to deviant activities, such as stealing. His research provided that a majority of “affectionless thieves” were often times exposed to early separations from their mothers, the typical primary caregiver, during the critical bonding period that occurs during infancy. Contrastingly, the control subjects, who were not prone to stealing, revealed no history of early childhood neglect. This early experiment led attachment theorists to examine the characteristics of children and their caregivers and resulting levels of attachment. The examination of these characteristics propelled Bowlby closer toward the development of attachment theory as he made observations of very specific behavioral patterns. While developing the attachment theory Bowlby noted in his journal that “many of the delinquent adolescents had disrupted childhoods.” Although, Bowlby’s theories were supported by patterns observed through real life experiences, his theories were not capable of explaining the role of a mother outside of the importance of simple presence.
The lack of explanation of the degree to which a mother’s presence is important led Mary Ainsworth to attempt to explain the role a mother plays in the earliest experiences of infanthood connection. Ainsworth’s interest was channeled through surveys of emotional reactions elicited within children in response to being separated from their mothers for varying periods of time (Rosmalen, van der Horst, & Veer, 2016). It was theorized that these reactions would ultimately be mediated by the level of security of which the child is connected with its mother. It was also hypothesized that elicited reactions would provide a template of responses to later interactions across a variety of models. Therefore, leading to the idea that separation from the mother in early childhood, to the extent that it involves deprivation, would have negative effects on an individual’s ability to form and maintain satisfactory relationships between the self and others.

Previously, Blatz explained that a mother’s role was important to an infant’s early survival due to her level of responsiveness being detrimental to an infant’s sense of security. This sense of security would then allow an infant to develop enough courage to eventually explore its environment away from the base of security (its mother). Blatz also explained that if an infant with a secure attachment to its mother found themself unable to safely explore, the infant would retreat back to the safety of its mother. These theories provided Ainsworth a blueprint for the strange situation procedure, which is a laboratory experiment that measured and classified an infant’s attachment to its caregiver. The additions of Ainsworth’s research were groundbreaking in the history of attachment theory because the results provided attachment typing for both the caregiver and child in a short time span of twenty minutes (Rosmalen, Veer, & van der Horst, 2015).

The strange situation procedure involves a mother and infant pairing in which the pair are in an environment of which the infant is unfamiliar (Rosmalen, van der Horst, & Veer, 2016).
While the mother and infant are in this “strange environment” a stranger enters the room, and after a period of the three individuals being in the room together the mother leaves the infant alone with the stranger. The mother then returns and the stranger leaves the room, leaving the infant and mother alone in the room. Suddenly, the mother leaves the room and the infant is left alone. In the last phase of the procedure the stranger reenters the room and finally, the mother returns. Throughout the phases, of which the stranger and parent continuously exit and enter the room, the infant’s behavior in response to the mother leaving and returning is observed. The infant’s behavior is theorized as being indicative of how securely attached the infant is to its caregiver. The researchers were attentive as to whether the infant sought contact with its mother once reunited, and whether the infant was consolable or not. Based on the results of the strange situation procedure, Ainsworth observed that a small portion of infants showed very little disturbance upon separation (these individuals would be classified as insecure avoidant). It was also observed that the average infant was clearly upset by the separation but managed to adapt, these children would be classified as securely attached children. Lastly, Ainsworth observed a group of infants who were clearly upset by their mother’s disappearance and showed distinct maladaptive behaviors that were reflective of anxiety and stress (these infants would be classified as insecure ambivalent). The categorizations of attachment styles provided by Ainsworth thrusted Bowlby’s attachment theory into the forefront due to developed organization and classifications mediated by the experimental methodology of the strange situation procedure.

The research provided Ainsworth and Bowlby lead to the inevitable conclusion that the quality of maternal care would serve as a predictor of the degree of security existing between an infant and mother, and the ability of a child to adapt in varying environments (Rosmalen, van der Horst, & Veer, 2016). Consequently, the research began to transform into an opportunity to teach
mothers sensitivity and cartaking interventions suitable to varying needs of infants. Ainsworth proposed that mothers take into account their quality of sensitivity since higher quality caretaker sensitivity often resulted in appropriate responses to an infant’s needs which would lead to healthy infant adaptability. Therefore, it was concluded that attachment was induced by the continued presence and reassurance of an attachment figure. Meanwhile, the security of this attachment would be influenced by the sensitivity of the mother.

Through the initial attachment made during infancy individuals develop a framework in which they utilize throughout their lifetime. Thereby proving that the implications of attachment theory are pertinent to the basic wellbeing and development of children far into adulthood (Blatz & Bott, 1927). The study of attachment theory remains important because the results provide that the ability to successfully adjust throughout life experiences is controllable, to a certain extent, through nurture. The intentional implementation of behaviors that induce secure attachments may be a pathway for parents to follow in which they can decrease the likelihood of their children suffering psychopathologies or engaging in delinquent behaviors.

The purpose of this paper is to survey the results of research that examine the effects and interactions between attachment styles and self efficacy, depression, and adult relationships. Self efficacy can be defined as one’s perception of their ability to achieve goals (Usher, Li, Butz, & Rojas, 2018). I hypothesize that self efficacy will show to have a positive relationship across attachment types because the previous research done by Ainsworth suggests that individuals with secure attachments are generally more likely to engage in adaptive behaviors, and high self efficacy is an adaptive trait. Meaning, that the insecure types would have lower rates of self efficacy while securely typed individuals would show higher rates of self efficacy. The operant definition of depression examined in this paper involves the experience of depressive symptoms
such as low self esteem, feelings of loneliness, and difficulty with general emotion regulation (Owens, Held, Hamrick, & Keller, 2018). Based on the research provided by Ainsworth it is hypothesized that the general attachment theory research will indicate a negative relationship between depression and attachment types, in which individuals who are securely attached will have lower rates of depression while insecurely attached individuals will show higher rates of depression. Lastly, research regarding adult relationship satisfaction and attachment types will be examined. Adult relationship satisfaction will be analyzed in regards to reports of domestic violence incidence, reports on trusting, self reports of marital quality, and other factors that affect relationship satisfaction. It is hypothesized that individuals who are scored as securely attached types are more likely to report feelings of relationship satisfaction compared to individuals who are prone to insecure attachment behaviors. This hypothesis is based on Ainsworth’s conclusion that individuals who are typed as having secure attachment behaviors tend to experience higher quality relationships in general compared to their counterparts with insecure attachments. These three factors were chosen because a combination of these factors are often implicated in exhibition of behavioral resilience (Zhao, 2018). Through examining the interaction between attachment styles and characteristics of resilience it is potential to develop an understanding on how to propagate resilience in growing children. Additionally, there could be developments on understanding how to initiate behaviors of resilience in already developed adults. Based on the research completed by Bowlby and Ainsworth, it would be plausible to assume that promoting behaviors of resilience through secure attachments would lead to a society of well adjusted humans who are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors and are more likely to excel in various aspects of life.

Self Efficacy
The correlation between attachment styles and self efficacy have been explored to examine whether varying degrees of relational security experienced in early childhood exist as predictors to an individual’s sense of ability to achieve goals in later adulthood. The concept of self efficacy refers to an individual’s belief regarding their perceived ability to achieve general goals. The concept of self efficacy is important because an individual's perception of ability to achieve goals in a specific domain is likely to generalize across varying aspects of self concept and effect overall performance across tasks (Zonash & Iqbal, 2017). Researchers examined the link between insecure attachment styles and general indicators of resilience (Ringer, Buchanan, Olesek, & Lysaker, 2014). Interestingly, this study involved subjects who were recovering from a schizophrenic episode. Ringer and colleagues (2014) explored whether attachment styles would correlate with the scored level of self efficacy presented by each subjects during the recovery stage. The results of this study provided that individuals who were characterized as being prone to insecure anxious attachments were more likely to experience feelings of low self esteem and self efficacy. The individuals who reported behaviors correlated with avoidant attachment described general feelings of hopelessness in regards to their recovery and future. The attachment style scoring indicated that none of the subjects had secure attachment tendencies, which would be expected in a sample exclusively consisting of individuals who exhibited symptoms of a psychopathology. There were no revealed significances between positive or negative symptoms of schizophrenia therefore it was plausible to assume that feelings of low self efficacy stemmed from attachment style.

These results are indicative of the idea that individuals who experience insecure attachments have a lower sense of autonomy thus leading to diminished feelings of self efficacy (Zonash & Iqbal, 2017). Zonash and Iqbal provided through research that individuals who were
more likely to show higher rates of self efficacy were also typically prone to show characteristics of secure attachments. Additionally, the study suggested that individuals who engaged in insecure attachment behaviors were more likely to have a diminished sense of self efficacy. These results correlate with the study of Ringer and coworkers (2014) as both studies suggest that secure attachments can be indicative of a higher sense of self efficacy. Interestingly enough, Zonash and Iqbal (2017) indicate that a healthy sense of autonomy could be a mediating factor between secure attachments and self efficacy. These suggestions indicate that individuals who have secure attachments are likely to have a strong sense of autonomy, thus leading to an ability to make adjustments by the means of healthy exploration. Huntsinger and Luecken (2014) provided that individuals who were prone to exhibiting behaviors that correlated to either secure or avoidant attachment were also more likely, compared to anxiously attached individuals, to engage in behaviors that promoted general health. Although these differing groups were likely to engage in similar behaviors, the mediating factors that induced these behaviors are different. It was concluded that individuals who were identified as having avoidant styles were more likely to engage in behaviors that promote general health compared to individuals who exhibited anxious attachment because individuals with avoidant attachment styles are more likely to be self reliant. Individuals with avoidant attachment styles are less likely to avoid relying on others, therefore are more likely to engage in behaviors that are solely important to their sense of self. The research also provided that individuals who had anxious attachment styles were more likely to engage in behaviors that would eventually cause declines in health. It was concluded that anxiously attached individuals were more likely to experience declines in health due to an inability to apply focus to themselves due to a preoccupation with relationships. It was also hypothesized that individuals who exhibited secure attachment styles and avoidant attachment
styles were most likely to engage in behaviors that promoted higher rates of self esteem due to an ability to find value within themselves outside of relationships. Individuals with secure or avoidant attachment styles are able to maintain high self esteem outside of the realm of relationships. This conclusion suggests that individuals who are securely or avoidantly attached are less likely to define their value in the context of a relationship, thereby increasing their ability to define their self worth through characteristics that are innate to their actual self. Individuals with anxious attachment styles are characterized by intense preoccupations with relationships with others, and these individuals often exhibit the tendency to attribute their self value through the context of relationships. Therefore, anxious attachment behaviors are more likely to induce deficiencies in perceived self value independent of others. This preoccupation with others and an inability to focus on the self is correlated with behaviors that do not lend to higher rates of self esteem in individuals with anxious attachment styles. Individuals with anxious attachment types were more likely to report low self esteem, poor health behaviors, and unsatisfying relationships. These results combined suggest that high dependence of others, for the maintenance of self esteem, has damaging effects on both physical and mental health. Bylsma (1997) explored the relationship between attachment styles and simple self esteem. The results provided that securely attached individuals had higher rates of self esteem and greater perceptions of competence compared to anxiously attached participants. Consistent with past studies, individuals who had anxious and avoidant attachment styles were less likely to report consistent rates of self perceived competence. These individuals provided that they felt as if they were less competent in areas such as social interactions, romantic relationships, physical attractiveness, and sports domains. The subjects in these studies were college age students therefore it could be concluded that the domains in which the subjects reported feelings of incompetence were only in response
to domains in which are perceived as important amongst college aged students. Meaning, the results were inconsistent across groups because each domain differed in importance to the integration of self between individuals. For example, the researchers concluded that during the early years of undergraduate not many students are typically integrating sport related efficacy into their concept of self because the average student is not an athlete. The findings demonstrated that measures of self esteem and attachment styles should integrate characteristics that contribute to the sense of lovability as many students portrayed general knowledge that was broader than concepts of of attractiveness and sports domains. The results showed trends that indicate an ability to integrate self worth outside of basic characterizations. Henceforth, suggesting that positive self esteem is a function of attachment styles and varying perceptions of general competence.

Although self efficacy has effects on health and perceptions of autonomy, self efficacy can also have effects on career and academic success (Wolfe & Betz, 2004). The results of this study extend the findings of other researchers in that secure style positively related to self efficacy across domains. In concordance with previous research, individuals who had anxious attachment styles were most likely to have lower rates of career decision making self efficacy. Additionally, individuals who had avoidant attachments had higher scores in the subscale of decisional difficulty, which is indicative of a tendency to avoid commitments. This particular result correlates with the idea that individuals with avoidant attachments are more likely to avoid making decisions due to a fear of making the wrong choice. This conclusion stems from the idea that individuals who experience avoidant attachment styles tend to internalize their environmental stimuli and in turn begin to blame themselves for failures. In Ainsworth’s theory, it was suggested that avoidant individuals were less likely to explore due to feelings of
insecurity, since avoidant attachment is an insecure subset, and that these individuals were more likely to internalize neglect as opposed to seeking comfort in their mothers (Rosmalen, van der Horst, & Veer, 2016).

Following the trend of examining career self efficacy and attachment styles, Wright (2015) suggested that secure attachments lead to higher self efficacy in regards to career search tactics. Most importantly, this research suggested that anxious attachments had an effect on self efficacy such that the interviewing process was perceived as a negative experience. Wright suggests that individuals who experience greater fear due to related interpersonal rejection, which is common in individuals with anxious attachment, are more likely to ruminate on the potential negative interactions that occur during an interview compared to individuals who are not prone to integrating the views of others into their degree of self value. Contrastingly, individuals with avoidant attachment style tendencies were more likely to report difficulty in personal exploration and networking. It was suggested that these individuals found the experience of personal exploration and networking to be mostly negative due to the fact that both of these domains require self reliance in regards to communicating. It was concluded that individuals who were described as having avoidant attachment styles were less likely to engage in experiences in which failures are attributed solely to the individual’s ability. Thereby, adding to the idea that individuals who are prone to avoidant attachment engage in avoidance behaviors in order to separate themselves from potential factors attributing to failures. These individuals are more likely to engage in experiences in which failures can be blamed on an outside factor.

The idea that individuals who engaged in avoidant attachment styles are more likely to engage in causal attributions outside of themselves was exemplified in research completed by Kohut (2016). Researchers explored links between attachment styles, self efficacy, and causal
attributions for achievement related failures. The concept of causal attributions for achievement related failures relates to the concept of whether individuals attribute failures to themselves or outside sources. The results of their study correlated with the general consensus of attachment style studies in regards to self efficacy. Thus, it was concluded that anxious attachment lead to lower expectations in self efficacy in the domain of achievement. Meaning, that lower expectations in self efficacy lead to individuals believing that they were less likely to achieve due to a fault within themselves. Contrastingly, there were no significant differences between avoidant and secure attachment styles and self efficacy. The difference between avoidant and anxious attachment styles can be attributed to the idea that avoidant individuals maintain self esteem in regards to achievement because they believe that failures are either inaccurate are not due to a personal fault. Although individuals of all three attachment style groups were exposed to failures, the avoidant attachment style engaged with the least maladaptive causal attributions. The avoidant attachment group was defined as engaging in fewer maladaptive causal attributions because they did not abuse their self esteem through feelings of self blame and inadequacy. The avoidantly attached individuals did not take responsibility for their failures, which decreased the likelihood of rumination and negative internalization of failure.

Furthermore, researchers have investigated the effects of attachment between workers and their supervisors and the effects on self efficacy. An experimental study using psychotherapists determined whether a training clinicians attachment to their supervisor would affect their counseling self efficacy, which is described as their ability to effectively counsel (Mesrie, Diener, & Clark, 2018). The results of this study suggested that individuals with anxious and avoidant attachments to their supervisors were more likely to report lower counseling self efficacy. Similar to the parent and child relationship, the supervisory relationship
exists as a secure base in which the trainee can establish enough security to encourage exploratory behavior and development of a professional identity within the workplace. Thus, similarly to the parent child model, an inability to establish a secure base of which an individual can rely on for support, it is likely for individuals to perceive themselves as incompetent or even unworthy.

A more direct study regarding the interactions between self efficacy, attachment, and resilience was completed by Bender and Ingram (2018) which examined the contributions of self efficacy and attachment to resilience. The results of the study indicated that secure attachments may enhance resilience through self efficacy. It was concluded that individuals with secure attachment tendencies were more likely to be resilient due to their beliefs of greater efficacy compared to individuals who were not securely attached. The researchers theorized that the extent of which an individual can be resilient depends on the degree in which an individual believes that they have control over their environment. The ability to feel in control of their environment is paralleled with the tendency to explore the environment, which correlates to the studies done in the strange situation procedure. Therefore, it can be concluded that individuals who develop secure bases are more likely to explore their environments and learn adaptive behaviors that increase an ability to control the environment in one’s favor.

Throughout a singular lifetime every individual will experience the occurrence of a stressor in which it is necessary to to cope. Researchers examined the extent in which coping efficacy and attachment styles were related, in which the results suggested that individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment styles were less likely to report feelings of coping efficacy (Wright, Firsick, Kacmarski, & Jenkins- Guarnieri, 2016). The individuals who reported lower levels of coping efficacy also reported lower levels of life satisfaction. The researchers theorized
that content specific perceptions of self efficacy influenced life satisfaction. In concordance with previous research done on attachment theory and its effects on self efficacy, this research suggests that perceptions of self efficacy may influence goals, actions, and outcomes.

Bolat and Odaci (2016) examined the relationship between career decision making self efficacy and attachment styles in high school aged students. The results provided that individuals who were securely attached were more likely to show higher decision making efficacy. Contrasting with the general research done, this paper also concluded that individuals with avoidant attachment types were also likely to report higher levels of self efficacy. Bolat and Odaci provided that individuals who are prone to attachment styles are more likely to have negative perceptions of themselves and experience fear of rejection. Due to their fear of rejection, individuals with avoidant attachment styles are likely to report higher levels of efficacy in order to protect themselves from criticism. It was theorized that individuals with avoidant attachment styles may be more likely to work harder than others in an attempt to gain approval and recognition. This conclusion adds to the theory provided by Ainsworth, who suggested that individuals who were denied attention may simply avoid attention at all costs. However, Bolat and Odaci suggest that avoidantly attached individuals may soon work harder in order to achieve the attention that was denied to them during infancy.

The overarching conclusion of the generated results indicate that individuals with secure attachment styles are more likely to have higher rates of general self efficacy. It seems that through developing a secure relationship with an individual who exists as a symbolic base of security allows individuals to explore their environment with a sense of safety. Individuals who are able to explore their environments, with an understanding that their secure base is present during danger, individuals may be more likely to make mistakes and develop in a sense of which
they can learn self efficacy. Thus, individuals with secure attachment types more likely to trust themselves because they are not hesitant to explore and they have a reliant base of security. However, the research does indicate that individuals who are prone to avoidant attachment behaviors are likely to report varying degrees of self efficacy. It seems that the degree of which individuals with avoidant attachment styles perceive themselves as having self efficacy may depend on their desires for general achievement. Individuals who are driven to prove a point through excelling may be more likely to engage in more behaviors that are correlated with self efficacy. Although these individuals may portray behaviors that are indicative of self efficacy, these individuals are still characterized by insecure attachments. The insecurity exists within their desire gain acceptance and recognition through achievement (Bolat & Odaci, 2017). Lastly, the research provides that individuals who are prone to anxious attachment behavior are less likely to exhibit behaviors that are correlated with self efficacy. The general research suggests that these individuals are prone to internalizing negative experiences and negative perceptions of themselves which leads to diminished self efficacy. Thus, it can be concluded that individuals who are capable of honest self efficacy and self esteem are individuals who develop and maintain secure bases through attachment.

**Depression**

Depression is characterized as symptoms of depressed mood, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, diminished ability to make decisions, suicidal ideation and other experiences relating to feelings of intense sadness. These symptoms of depression are often times exacerbated by the inability to develop healthy social attachments. Researchers explored the association between attachment styles and self reported symptoms of depression in college aged students (Bishop, Norona, Roberson, Welsh, & McCurry, 2018). This study, unlike many other
studies, took into account external factors that may influence stress levels. Therefore, the subjects were presented the study during mid-semester when there were fewer pressures to complete exams and meet due dates. In regards to anxious attachment individuals, there was a significant effect on depression. Researchers concluded that anxiously attached individuals had difficulty in balancing individual and relational commitment in regards to self care, which would intensify symptoms of depression. Contrastingly, individuals who met criterion for avoidant attachment characterization had no significant relationship to depressive symptoms. Although these results are unlike the typical results, researchers theorized that attachment may have had less of an effect on depressive symptoms because the students surveyed were freshman. Since the subjects were so young, these individuals may have been less likely to be riddled with stress due to an inability or fear of connecting with others romantically. Therefore, since relationship status may be an irrelevant factor of self esteem it would make sense that avoidant individuals would remain unaffected (Mayseless, 2014). These results contribute to the idea that individuals with anxious attachment issues are less likely to experience general well being due to an inability to focus on their personal well being outside of their preoccupation with relationships. This research suggests that individuals with anxious attachments are less likely to engage in self care measures due to an inability to focus on their individual well being prior to relational health.

The results of the research completed by Bishop and coworkers seem to scratch the surface of the idea that social skills may be an intermediate factor between the relationship between depression and attachment style. In an attempt to further this theory, researchers suggested that subjects with secure attachment styles were less likely to experience feelings of loneliness and depression (DiTommaso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross, & Burgess, 2003). It was shown that subjects classified as having secure attachments were more likely to experience
familial and social connectedness. The securely attached population was found to have had effective social skills of emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, social expressivity, and social control. The ability to excel in these domains of social interaction would in turn make individuals with secure attachments more likely to have the social support needed to combat experiences that may intensify depressive symptoms. The results also indicate that individuals with anxious attachment were more likely to report feelings of romantic and family loneliness. These individuals also had lower scores in regards to emotional and social skills. The preoccupation with romantic love may impede on the ability to make sound interpersonal connections thereby, intensifying the prevalence of depression amongst these individuals. The avoidant attachment style individuals had higher levels of loneliness across family, social, and romantic relationships. The report of higher levels of loneliness is characteristic of avoidant types. These individuals are prone to avoiding forms of emotional connection, therefore it would be likely that these individuals do not make satisfactory connections regardless of relationship type. The inability to make connections with others is indicative of higher levels of depressive symptoms due to difficulties building social support systems. Cooley, Van Buren, and Cole (2010) suggested that anxious and avoidant types were more likely to engage in counterproductive socialization due to their earliest parent and child relationship that may have provided the original experiential basis for negative views of the self. These negative views of the self are then transported into a mental framework that affects social support and depressive symptoms.

Interestingly, Murphy and Bates (1997) examined the role of attachment styles in differentiating depressed and nondepressed college students. The results supported general research by providing that a higher percentage of depressed individuals than non depressed
individuals were characterized as having either avoidant or anxious attachment styles. Individuals who were prone to secure attachment behaviors were more likely to be a part of the non-depressed group. This study was original in that there was an examination of sociotropic tendencies, which is characterized by preoccupation with interpersonal relationships, of showing “concern”, “dependency”, or the desire to “please others”. These sociotropic characteristics were most positively correlated with anxious attachment types and least correlated with avoidant and secure attachment types. This study also evaluated the correlation between “self-criticism” and attachment styles. The subscale of self-criticism was most negatively correlated with secure attachment. The correlation between self-criticism was positively related to insecurely attached individuals who placed as either avoidant or anxiously attached. Since secure individuals had lower rates of self-criticism and depression compared to insecurely attached individuals, it can be assumed that self-criticism is strongly associated with depression. Self-criticism is often paired with tendencies toward perfectionism. Blat (1995) provided that self-criticism, or perfectionism, is a common factor of depression that leads to negative affect and potentially suicide. Individuals who were initially exposed to insecure attachments are more likely to attempt to make sense of neglect through themselves. This mode of introspection then leads to the desire to internalize issues thereby creating the idea that issues exist within. Thereby, creating breeding grounds for depression, helplessness, and detachment from others. Moreover, Cantazaro (2007) examined whether self-criticism was a mediator between insecure attachment types and depression. The results provided that self-criticism was a significant mediator between attachment anxiety or avoidance and depression. In regards to both anxious and avoidant attachment types, self-criticism stimulates an innate desire for approval. Cantazaro theorized that a need for approval in conjunction with a negative sense of self are connected to depressive symptoms. Rice and
Mirzadeh (2000) suggested that anxious and avoidant attachment behaviors are indicative of maladaptive perfectionism, which involves having high standards and goals that are impossible to accomplish, high anxiety about imperfections, and negative affect regarding completed projects. Insecure attachment is theorized to be associated with maladaptive perfectionism and depression due to an inability to find satisfaction in set goals thus feeding into negative concepts of self.

Additionally, Hankin, Kassel, and Abela (2003) examined the relation between adult attachment dimensions and symptoms of emotional distress. The results provided that avoidant and anxious attachment predicted symptoms of depression, while anxious attachment also indicated anxiety symptoms. This study also examined cognitive risk factors and their effects on depression and anxiety. This examination studied dysfunctional attitudes, reflecting maladaptive contingencies of self worth and self esteem as components of cognitive factors. The results provided that avoidant and anxiety attachments were negatively associated with qualities of self esteem. Avoidant and anxiety attachments were also positively related to affective distress and dysfunctional attitudes. The research seems to indicate that avoidant and anxious attachment predicted depressive symptoms. Meanwhile, only anxious attachment predicted anxiety symptoms. Avoidant attachment may not be a predictor of anxiety due to the fact that many individuals who engage in avoidant attachment types are more likely to be detached from others. Thereby, creating a mental environment in which anxieties do not exist due to the irrelevance of external factors.

Owens, Held, Hamrick and Keller (2018) examined associations among attachment style, depression, and meaning made in one’s life. In this particular study the subjects were individuals who reported having experienced stressful and/or potentially traumatic events. Similarly to the
general consensus, the results yielded showed that anxiety and avoidant attachment were associated with higher rates of depressive symptoms and diminished perceived meaning of life. Unlike other studies, an emotion regulation subscale involved questions that determined one’s ability to control their emotions in situations that involve non-acceptance, goals, impulse, awareness, coping strategies, and emotional clarity. Attachment anxiety was positively associated with emotion regulation subscales, which showed that they were less proficient at emotion regulation compared to secure attachment types. These results may have been acquired due to an inability for anxiously attached individuals to maintain awareness of their own emotions due to their preoccupation of the emotional states of others. The results also suggest that a lack in ability to effectively regulate emotion may be a factor that explains the association between depression in anxious and avoidant individuals. The findings may indicate that individuals who are high in anxious or avoidant attachment may believe that once upset, there is a little to be done to regulate their emotions which would inevitably lead to helplessness and depressive symptoms. Interestingly, the only difference found between anxious and avoidant attached individuals was within the subscale of completing goal directed behaviors. This indicates an association between goal directed behaviors and meaning made.

McBride, Atkinson, Quilty, and Bagby (2006) examined whether adult attachment styles were moderators of treatment outcome for interpersonal psychotherapy (IP) and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Although attachment styles have been implicated in behavior and cognition through working models of the self and others, attachment has not been associated with treatment outcomes. The research focused solely on the insecure attachment types of anxious and avoidant styles. The researchers theorized that a therapy would be most effective if the therapy type matched an individual’s attachment orientation. Psychotherapists have noted
that higher levels of social dysfunction was associated with less successful outcome in IPT and have found that CBT was more effective for individuals with an elevated level of avoidant personality disorder symptoms. It was hypothesized that individuals with avoidant attachment styles would respond best to CBT due to assumed parallels between avoidant attachment and avoidant personality disorder. It was also hypothesized that individuals with anxious attachment styles would respond best to the IPT due to perceptions of social dysfunction stemming from preoccupations with interpersonal relationships. The efficiency of each treatment was examined based on comparison of depressive symptoms pre and post treatment implementation. The results provided no significant change in severity of depression in anxious attachment individuals in response to either IPT or CBT. The results also provided that anxious attachment style behavior were not significant predictors of depression remission. It is potential that anxious attachment did not show any effects because anxious attachment individuals are characterized as being sensitive to external stimuli. Therefore, it can be assumed that the anxiously attached subjects were equally sensitive to both treatments. In contrast, the results showed that avoidance attachments predicted changes in depressive symptoms and that avoidant individuals were more responsive to CBT. CBT focuses less on interpersonal skills, and more on an individual's cognitive influence on issues which propagates avoidance of focus on interpersonal relationships. Since CBT does not emphasize interpersonal relationships avoidant attachment individuals would be more likely to effectively engage in CBT.

Researchers examined what types of life experiences in conjunction with insecure attachments (both anxious and avoidant types) heighten the risk of depressive symptoms (Smagur, Bogat, & Levendosky, 2018). These researchers hypothesized that insecure attachments mediated the effects of life experiences of childhood maltreatment (CM) and
intimate partner violence (IPV). The results indicated that childhood maltreatment and intimate partner violence increased the likelihood of depressive symptoms. The application of general insecure attachment to the research model resulted in diminished effect of CM and IPV on depressive symptoms. In conclusion, it was assumed that insecure attachment (both avoidant and anxious) mediated the effects of CM and IPV on symptoms of depression. Since the effects of CM and IPV are mediated by attachment style, it was theorized that attachment styles may lead to depressive symptoms due to the existing negative mental framework that is conducive with insecurity.

This research seems to add to the development that insecure attachment styles create mental environments that are characterized by negativity. These negative frameworks are then implicated in symptoms of depression due to learned feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. More specifically, the general consensus is that anxious and avoidant individuals are prone to exhibiting depressive symptoms. Owens and colleagues suggested that anxious and avoidant attachment are prone to depressive symptoms due to beliefs that once they are upset there is little to be done to regulate their emotions (Owens, Held, Hamrick, & Keller, 2018). This framework is correlated with Ainsworth’s strange situation procedure in which anxious and avoidant typed infants were visibly upset, due to their mother leaving, but did not the reassurance needed to provide a sense of security. It has been theorized that individuals with insecure attachment types are more likely to exhibit maladaptive responses to stress, such as depressive symptoms, due to developing working models of rejection and inconsistency in response to having detached parents (Khan & Renk, 2018).

**Adult Relationships**
Research has provided that early attachment may be indicative of satisfaction in regards to adulthood relationships and overall quality of life (Le, Impett, Lemay, Muise, & Tskhay, 2018). For instance, individuals who practice communal motivation, which is defined as the care and concern for the welfare of others, report higher quality of living and having parents who were highly responsive to their needs. People who provide caring and engage in healthy relationships often benefit due to experiencing intrinsic joy and the positive reinforcement that is innate in having satisfying relationship bonds. Through maintaining satisfactory bonds people are likely to experience positive self perception due to increased confidence and integrating the value placed onto them by their partners. The ability for individuals to maintain healthy and happy relationships is thus correlated to perceived adulthood. As individuals maintain healthy relationships they are more likely to integrate positive self perceptions into their working model of themselves and their environments. This domain of adulthood relationships is seemingly most innately tied to attachment styles since the initial attachment bond formed often exists as the blueprint of relationships formed thereafter (Hazan, 1987).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) examined the possibility that romantic love is an attachment process that exists similarly to the process of attachment that occurs during infancy between an infant and a caregiver. The results provided show that adult individuals are capable of classifying themselves into one of the three attachment style types. Just 56% of the subjects identified themselves as secure, and about 25% classified themselves as avoidant while 19% of the individuals classified themselves as anxiously attached. These proportions are similar to the proportions of secure, avoidant, and anxiously attached researchers found to exist within groups of infants (Rosmalen, Veer, & van der Horst, 2015). Their results suggested that the three attachment types persist throughout one’s lifetime. Hazan and Shaver’s exploration of effects of
attachment styles on love experiences provided that secure types were more likely to describe their most prevalent love experience as “happy”, “friendly”, and “trusting.” Relationships between secure individuals were characterized by accepting and supporting their partners and longer endurance. The avoidant group was characterized by emotional instability, fear of intimacy, and jealousy. The anxious group experienced love as a phenomenon calling for obsession, desire for union and reciprocative love, emotional instability, and extreme sexual attraction and jealousy. Lastly, Hazan and Shaver explored mental representations of love relationships. Their results suggested that secure lovers had realistic representations of romantic relationships. These individuals were more likely to believe that romance wax and wanes, and at times reaches the intensity experienced in the earlier stages of a relationship. These individuals were also more likely to believe that in some relationships love never fades. Individuals who were typed as avoidant were less likely to believe that love never fades and that romance was a realistic goal. These results are indicative of the idea that avoidant types are less likely to engage in romantic relationships compared to anxious and secure types due to their early learning to avoid attachment at all costs. Lastly, anxiously attached individuals were also likely to believe that romantic feelings wax and wane over the course of a relationship, but these individuals were also more likely to fall in love frequently. Both anxious and avoidant attached individuals were likely to report not experiencing their idea of real love. Similarly, VanUitert and Galliher (2012) examined attachment representations in friendship and romantic relationships. Their results indicated that secure individuals were more likely to have more satisfying platonic and romantic relationships. These individuals also reported having a higher prevalence of satisfying friendships and romantic relationships. Interestingly, in this study, the male population of subjects were more likely to engage in anxious or avoidant attachment style behavior while
women were more likely to engage in “prosocial” behaviors which were correlated with secure attachment types. These studies seem to suggest that attachment styles are transferable across relationship type thereby strengthening the importance of the attachment theory.

Cabeldue and Boswell (2012) examined relationship self efficacy with attachment styles, jealousy, self esteem, and gender. The results provided that relationship self efficacy was negatively correlated with avoidant and anxious attachment styles in conjunction with self esteem. The study showed that individuals with greater self esteem tended to have more confidence in their ability to maintain healthy relationships. Thus, it was concluded that attachment style alone did not affect relationship quality, but that self esteem also influenced perceived relationship quality. Contrasting with general research findings, secure attachment style was not significantly correlated with relationship self efficacy. The findings within this study might suggest that secure attachments have more of an effect on relationship quality than feelings in one’s ability to maintain romantic relationships. In regards to avoidant and anxious attachment styles, it was shown that these individuals had tended to have lower relationship self esteem due to engaging in a never ending cycle of seeking intimacy and approval from their partners. The existence of jealousy in a relationship is at times indicative of maladaptive perceptions of relationships. Miga, Hare, Allen, and Manning (2010) furthered the study of maladaptive behaviors within relationships and attachments by examining the relation of attachment states of mind and self reported attachment relationship types to domestic violence. Their results provided that individuals who dated anxiously attached individuals were more likely to report victimization by partner by means of verbal or physical aggression. There were no significant relations found between avoidant or secure attachment types and the perpetuation of violence in romantic relationships. Interestingly, this study did suggest that individuals who
were more likely to partake in avoidant attachment styles are more likely to become victims of abuse. These individuals are more likely to withdraw in order to avoid conflict, thus making them susceptible to the “demand- withdraw” patterns of negotiating conflict that persist in abusive relationships and typically intensify over time.

Although, it seems that previous research has considered the effects of the attachment style of a singular partner on relationship quality, Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham, and Busby (2013) examined the relationship between dyadic adult attachment and aggressive behaviors within romantic relationships. Relationships consisting of one insecurely (avoidant or anxious) attached individual and a securely attached individual had higher levels of aggression compared to relationships consisting of two securely attached partners. Meanwhile, relationships consisting of two insecurely attached partners had the highest levels of aggressive behaviors among all groups. Therefore, this study provides that relationships in which even one of the partners is not securely attached are more likely to experience events of violence. It seems that these studies provide that secure attachments cannot be developed later in life, but that these attachments must be made in early infancy. Otherwise, it would seem that a secure and insecure pairing would influence the insecure partner to become more secure, but the researcher suggests the exact opposite.

Demircioglu and Kose (2018) investigated the mediating effects of attachment styles on relationship satisfaction and social media addiction. This study is interesting and seems a bit more modern because it considers potential relationships between attachment style and social media usage. This paper defines social media addiction (SMA) as an inability to control social media usage to the point of interference in an individual's social and academic life. It was hypothesized that insecure attachment types (avoidant and anxious) were negatively correlated
with relationship satisfaction and social media addiction; the results did not completely support this hypothesis. Individuals with avoidant attachment styles were more likely to report relationship dissatisfaction and instances of SMA while individuals with anxious attachment styles were not significantly correlated with relationships dissatisfaction and SMA. Individuals with avoidant attachment types are less likely to seek face-to-face interactions thereby making them more at risk to SMA. Additionally, the researchers theorized that avoidant attachment typed people are more likely to have low self esteem, which is quickly fixed through the instant gratification world of social media.

Sandberg, Bradford, and Brown (2017) examined the influence of attachment styles on marital quality for couples. The results yielded provided that secure attachment styles and secure attachment behaviors were positively correlated to relationship quality. Thus, this study provides that attachment style and attachment behaviors are predictors of high marital quality for both men and women. The more securely attached partners are within themselves and between each other, the more likely couples are to function efficiently.

Furthermore, researchers have examined the relationship between attachment security, love styles, and subjective well-being (SWB) (Galinha, Oishi, Pereira, Wirtz, & Esteves, 2013). It was hypothesized that secure attachment would result in higher rates of subjective well-being across all types of love. The results provided that the main predictor of subjective well being was secure attachment behaviors. The love style eros (romantic love characterized by sexual intimacy) was the only love type that provided this result, there were no significant results provided in regards to agape (characterized by loving without expectations for receiving love in return), pragma (characterized by the pursuit of compatibility in regards to social standards), mania (characterized by obsessive love), ludas (characterized by dating multiple partners at
once), and storgic (which is characterized by platonic loving). The results yielded a significant correlation between the eros love type and secure attachment. The researchers theorized that individuals with secure attachment types were prone to romantic and less practical views of love due to an inability to integrate romantic positivity to their already positive frameworks in regards to interpersonal relationships. The results also suggested that individuals with high scores on eros and secure attachment were more likely to experience SWB. There were negative correlations between security attachment, subjective well being and the love types of mania and ludas. These love types are more characteristic of individuals who are avoidant or anxious. For example, individuals who engage in ludas love types engage in this type of loving because being involved with multiple partners inhibit commitment, which is most ideal for an individual hoping to avoid interpersonal connections. Additionally, individuals with anxious attachment types are more likely to engage in manic love. Anxious attachment types are prone to manic love due to a preoccupation with others, especially their romantic partners. The research then concluded that individuals who engaged in secure attachment typical behavior were more likely to experience SWB. These individuals would endure less stress and more social support compared to their anxiously and avoidantly typed counterparts.

Through analyzing the overall research completed regarding attachment types and the effects on adult relationships it can be concluded that individuals who engage in secure attachment behavior are more likely to have more fulfilling relationships. These individuals are not prone to the stress of preoccupation, which is prevalent amongst the anxiously attached individuals. Furthermore, individuals who engage in secure attachment style behaviors are also likely to experience more pleasure in regards to interpersonal relationships because they engage in behaviors that encourage the development of consistent social support. It seems that based on
the provided research that individuals with secure attachment behaviors have developed a secure
enough base within themselves, through their earliest experiences with their mothers, that
provides a blueprint of what a healthy and satisfying relationship should look like. For example,
Blat (1995) suggested that individuals who have secure attachments are not prone to engaging in
detrimental self criticism because they have built a secure base within themselves and not
dependant on acceptance of others. Thus, it can be assumed that these individuals are able to
translate internal self acceptance and respect and integrate similar concepts in their framework
regarding their intimate partners.

Discussion

In conclusion, it seems that attachment theory provides insight on a variety of factors
that may influence overall well being. The research has provided that earliest attachments
influence perceptions of self efficacy, depressive symptoms, and satisfaction within adult
relationships. Attachment theory has offered understanding in how the quality of interactions
with primary caregivers influence mental representations acquired throughout adulthood
(Thompson, Glaso, Matthiesen, 2018). It is typically assumed that interactions between an infant
and mother are cognitively encoded and these learned experiences are then attributed to the
outside world and self. Individuals characterized as having secure attachments are open to
creating close connections and depending on others. Those who are characterized as having
avoidant attachment styles are uncomfortable with emotional attachment and dependency. These
individuals are more likely to engage in activities in which they rely on themselves and can
exercise independence. Contrastingly, anxious attachment is characterized by a preoccupation
with whether the individual is loved and desiring closeness with others.
The general consensus of the research is that attachment style exists as a mediator between factors of life such as self efficacy, depression, and adult relationships. Thus, suggesting that attachment types influence almost all aspects of life. Through understanding attachment styles it seems as if therapists could develop individualised treatments. For example, It seems that this research is important in regards to understanding root causes of diminished enjoyment of life. For example, it can be theorized that individuals who are anxiously attached are prone to depression and suicidal behaviors due to an inability to find worth in their own life outside of others. It can be theorized that individuals without secure attachments are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness due to deficits in personal social support. Therefore, therapists could potentially use implications of attachment theory in conjunction with other personal factors in order to develop connection and understanding with their client (Burke, Danquah, & Berry, 2016).

The research seems to suggest that self efficacy, depression, and relationship quality are interconnected in that in each of these factors potentially affect the other. For example, individuals who with low self efficacy were also found to have higher rates of depressive symptoms (Ringer, Buchanan, Olesek, & Lysaker, 2014). The consensus of the interpersonal relationship research suggests that individuals who have not developed a secure base within themselves are also prone to experiencing dissatisfaction in relationships with others. It seems that the experience of low self efficacy and low interpersonal relationship satisfaction are learned habits that were ingrained during infancy. These learned insecure attachments then have side effects of psychopathologies such as depressive symptoms.

Interestingly, the research seems to indicate that secure attachments must be made early in life in order to lead to healthy adjustment. There is not much existing research on the effects
of experiencing insecure relationships that lead to the degradation of securely attached individuals. It seems possible that securely attached individuals can have experiences that diminish secure attachment behaviors. If this were true, then it would undermine the idea that attachment styles are implanted throughout infancy. It seems that future research regarding attachment theory could explore whether attachment style is malleable. It seems that individuals who have avoidant or anxious attachment types could potentially learn to establish secure attachment types during therapeutic sessions in which the individual is called to create a new secure base through the therapist (Burke, Danquah, & Berry, 2016).

It can be concluded that in order to prevent the development of insecure attachments parents and early childhood figures should remain responsive to the needs of children. The research suggests that individuals with secure attachments are not as likely as their insecure counterparts to experience the effects of exacerbated stress due to feelings of loneliness (a symptom of depression) and inadequacy (a symptom of low self efficacy). There did not seem to be any research examining whether effects of already developed insecure attachment can be diminished. It seems that realignment within attachment types could be acquired through psychotherapy which would be an interesting approach to attachment types.

References


