

Attachment Styles and Parental Representations

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Relationships between attachment styles and the content and structure of mental representations of parents were investigated. Undergraduates completed 3- and 4-category measures of attachment style and wrote descriptions of their parents. Securely attached participants' parental representations were characterized by differentiation, elaboration, benevolence, and nonpunitiveness. Representations by dismissing participants were characterized by less differentiation and more punitiveness and malevolence. Fearful participants also described their parents as relatively punitive and malevolent, but their representations were well differentiated and conceptually complex. Anxious-ambivalent participants described their parents ambivalently as both punitive and benevolent.

A basic postulate of both attachment theory (e.g., Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980; Bretherton, 1985) and object relations theory (e.g., Blatt, 1974, 1995; Fairbairn, 1952; Kernberg, 1975; Winnicott, 1960) is that mental representations of self and others emerge from early relationships with caregivers and then act as heuristic guides for subsequent close relationships. Attachment theory and object relations theory both posit that the structure (e.g., coherence or integration) and the content (e.g., the belief that relationship partners are generally benevolent) of these cognitive-affective schemas influence expectations and feelings as well as the general patterns of behavior that characterize people's interpersonal relationships (Diamond & Blatt, 1994; Slade & Aber, 1992). To date, however, researchers who study adult attachment have not generally explored the ideas and measures created by object relations theorists. The purpose of the present research is to explore the content and structure of representations of parents associated with different adult attachment styles.

Attachment Theory

Bowlby, a British psychiatrist, was trained as a physician and psychoanalyst early in this century, when object relations

approaches to psychoanalysis were beginning to be formulated. (See Karen, 1994, and Shaver & Clark, 1994, for accounts of Bowlby's intellectual development.) For various reasons, he diverged somewhat from his psychoanalytic colleagues in focusing on the observable behavior of infants' interactions with their caregivers, especially their mothers, and by encouraging prospective studies of the effects of early attachment relationships on personality development. Most object relations theorists focused instead on adults' mental representations of self and others in close relationships, as often revealed during psychotherapy, although these theorists also believed that such representations are an outgrowth of early relationships with parents.

Bowlby turned to a combination of scientific disciplines, including psychoanalysis, ethology, cognitive psychology, and developmental psychology, for an array of compatible concepts that could explain affectional bonding between infants and their caregivers and the long-term effects of early attachment experiences on personality development and psychopathology. He conceptualized human motivation in terms of *behavioral systems*, a concept borrowed from ethology, and noted that attachment-related behavior in infancy (e.g., clinging, crying, smiling, monitoring caregivers, and developing a preference for a few reliable caregivers, or *attachment figures*) is part of a functional biological system that increases the likelihood of protection from predation, comfort during times of stress, and social learning. Preference for a particular caregiver (the *primary attachment figure*) was thought to be based on the familiarity, availability, responsiveness, and reliability of the caregiver (Bowlby, 1969/1982).

Bowlby theorized that early interactions with attachment figures were encoded in mental representations that he called inner, or internal, working models of self and others. This is the part of his formulation most affected by the object relations theories during the time of his training and early research. These working models include expectations, beliefs, emotional appraisals, and rules for processing or excluding information. They can be partly conscious and partly unconscious and need not be completely consistent or coherent. (For a more complete account of

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working models in attachment theory, see Bretherton, 1987, or Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996.)

Ainsworth, in collaboration with Bowlby, devised procedures for systematically observing parent-infant interactions both at home and in the laboratory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Ainsworth developed a well-known laboratory procedure, the Strange Situation, to classify infant-parent relationships (based largely on the infant's behavior) into one of three categories: secure, avoidant, or anxious-ambivalent. (Later, a fourth category, disorganized-disoriented, was added; see Crittenden, 1988; Main & Hesse, 1990; Main & Solomon, 1990.) These categories reflect infant-parent relationships outside the laboratory. Parents of secure infants, for example, are generally more available, responsive, and sensitive to their children's feelings than parents of insecure infants. Parents of avoidant children are often rejecting, aloof, and uncomfortable with bodily contact; they tend to withdraw support when their children most need it—in times of distress. Parents of anxious children are somewhat more self-preoccupied, perhaps more sensitive to their own needs and anxiety than to their children's needs, and often intrusive and inconsistent. Parents of disorganized babies are more troubled, depressed, and abusive, perhaps because they are still troubled by their own unresolved attachment-related traumas and losses (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994).

The bulk of research on individual differences in attachment has used Ainsworth's Strange Situation procedure to classify infants (or infant-parent relationships) at about 12 to 18 months of age and to predict cognitive and social outcomes months or even years later. Two longitudinal studies (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Grossmann & Grossmann, 1991) monitored children for as long as 10 years after their assessment with the Strange Situation procedure and found predictable personality and social behaviors over that decade. A more recent study (Waters, Merrick, Albersheim, & Treboux, 1995) monitored 50 individuals for 20 years, finding 64% stability in attachment classifications (actually, greater than 70% stability for individuals with no major negative life events and less than 50% stability for those who had lost a parent, endured parental divorce, etc.). Thus, the available evidence indicates that attachment classifications are fairly stable over extended periods of time, although the relative importance of various contributors to stability and change—for example, temperament, continuing relationships with the same family members, negative life events, change-resistant internal working models, and behavior patterns that produce self-fulfilling prophecies—remains to be determined by further research. Most likely, all of these factors play a significant role. (See Rothbard & Shaver, 1994, for a review of research on continuity.)

Based on Bowlby's (1979) contention that the attachment system is active "from the cradle to the grave," various investigators working in the mid-1980s (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) independently began to apply attachment classifications to the study of adults. Main and her colleagues developed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), a 1-hr attachment history interview, noting that features of interviews with parents of infants reliably predicted the Strange Situation behavior of their children. They found that current parents' reports about interactions with their own parents years earlier could predict their children's Strange Situation classifications

with about 80% accuracy, an astonishing finding that has now been replicated several times (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Evidently, young parents' "current state of mind with respect to attachment" (a phrase used by Main and her colleagues to indicate that parents' memories and characterizations of their childhood relationships need not be complete, consistent, perfectly correct, or unchanging over time) is closely associated with their treatment of their infants, which shapes their children's attachment orientations. In general, a child's attachment style replicates the style of his or her primary attachment figure. An infant, however, at least at 12 months of age, can exhibit different attachment styles with different parents, reflecting the fact that spouses' AAI classifications often differ from each other.

Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1990) and Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw (1988) also studied adult attachment, but with rather different methods and purposes. They devised a brief self-report measure of adult *romantic* attachment modeled on Ainsworth's infant attachment typology. Their initial measure asked adults to indicate which of three attachment style descriptions—secure, avoidant, or anxious-ambivalent—they were most like, generalizing across all of their important romantic relationships. In a host of studies since 1987, this brief measure and various extensions of it have significantly predicted relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, breakups, commitment), patterns of coping with stress, couple communication, and even phenomena such as religious experiences and patterns of career development (see reviews by Shaver & Clark, 1994, and Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

In an important recent development, Bartholomew (1990) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) showed that adult attachment, like infant attachment as conceptualized by Crittenden (1988) or Main and Solomon (1990), can best be characterized by four rather than three major categories. Bartholomew's key insight was that Main's prototype of the adult avoidant attachment style (assessed in the context of parenting) is more defensive, denial oriented, and overtly unemotional than Hazan and Shaver's avoidant romantic attachment style, which seems more vulnerable, conscious of emotional pain, and fearful. In Bartholomew's four-category interview and self-report classifications of adult attachment styles, both kinds of avoidance, dismissing and fearful, are included.

With this revision of Hazan and Shaver's classification scheme, it became evident to Bartholomew that the four categories could be arrayed in a two-dimensional space, with one dimension being *model of self* (positive vs. negative) and the other being *model of others* (positive vs. negative). (See, for example, Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994a, 1994b.) In other words, Bartholomew conceptualized adult attachment styles in terms of the combinations of representational models of self and others that purportedly underlie them. For secure individuals, models of self and others are both generally positive. For preoccupied or anxious-ambivalent individuals, the model of others is positive (i.e., relationships are attractive) but the model of self is not. For dismissing individuals, the reverse is true: The somewhat defensively maintained model of self is positive, whereas the model of others is not (i.e., intimacy in relationships is regarded with caution or avoided). Fearful individuals have relatively negative models of self and others.

Although the AAI category system, Hazan and Shaver's three-

category typology, Bartholomew's four-category typology, and several variations of these conceptual frameworks are all rooted in Bowlby's and Ainsworth's theory and research, they are not conceptually identical (e.g., some are more clearly dimensional than others, and some focus on parenting whereas others focus on romantic relationships) and they have generated different kinds of measures. The AAI is scored primarily in terms of indicators of "current state of mind," such as awkward pauses, gaps in memory, incoherent discourse, and other signs of defensiveness. The self-report measures, such as Bartholomew's and Hazan and Shaver's, tap self-characterizations of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in romantic or other close relationships. From the beginning, Bartholomew included both interviews and self-report measures in her studies, and her interviews covered both relationships with parents (in line with the AAI) and relationships with close friends and romantic partners (in line with Hazan and Shaver's work). Bartholomew's self-report measure is a four-category extension of Hazan and Shaver's three-category romantic attachment measure.

Recent examination of several studies based on Bartholomew's measures and either the AAI or Hazan and Shaver's measure (Bartholomew & Shaver, in press) suggests a rough continuum ranging from the AAI (an interview measure focused on parenting issues and coded categorically rather than dimensionally) through Bartholomew's parental attachment and peer-romantic interviews and her self-report measure to Shaver and Hazan's self-report measure. Methods that lie close to each other on this continuum are more highly related empirically, but factor analyses or structural equation models based on several measures consistently indicate the presence of an underlying latent construct, which Bartholomew and Shaver (in press) interpret as reflecting a common core that is established in childhood. These attachment orientations may become differentiated with development and social experience.

Object Relations Theory

Compared with social psychological concepts such as schema (as reviewed by Fiske & Taylor, 1991) and Bartholomew's models of self and other, the concept of representations in object relations theory has a more epigenetic, developmental quality. Blatt and his colleagues (Blatt, 1974; Blatt & Lerner, 1983), for example, by integrating psychoanalytic theory and the cognitive developmental perspective of Piaget (1956) and Werner (1948), have suggested that the cognitive and affective components of representations of self and others develop epigenetically and become increasingly accurate, articulated, and conceptually complex structures over time. According to this approach, higher levels of representation evolve from and extend lower levels; thus, new representational modes are increasingly more comprehensive and effective than earlier modes of representation. Following these epigenetic principles, Blatt and colleagues stressed that representations of self and others can range from global, diffuse, fragmentary, and inflexible to increasingly differentiated, flexible, and hierarchically organized.

To evaluate representations of self and significant others, Blatt and his colleagues (Blatt, Bers, & Schaffer, 1993; Blatt, Wein, Chevron, & Quinlan, 1979; Blatt, Chevron, Quinlan, Schaffer, & Wein, 1992; Diamond, Blatt, Stayner, & Kaslow, 1992) devel-

oped procedures to evaluate both the content and the structure of open-ended descriptions of self and significant others (e.g., parents). Content scores for descriptions of significant others include affectionate, ambitious, malevolent-benevolent, cold-warm, constructive involvement, intellectual, judgmental, negative-positive ideal, nurturant, punitive, successful, and weak-strong. Additionally, the individual's degree of ambivalence about the parent is rated on a 5-point scale. Structure is measured by three scales: Conceptual Level, Self-Other Differentiation-Relatedness, and Scorable Attributes. Conceptual level is scored in terms of five levels: sensorimotor-preoperational (e.g., conceiving of a person, such as one's mother, primarily in terms of need gratification), concrete perceptual (focusing on physical characteristics), external iconic (emphasizing behavior and actions), internal iconic (noting feelings and other mental states), and conceptual (describing the person as an independent actor, developing and changing in time, with complex traits, needs, and goals). Differentiation-relatedness is measured on a 10-point scale ranging from self-other boundary confusion to a cohesive and reciprocally interrelated sense of self and others (Diamond et al., 1992). Scorable attributes is the number of the 12 content variables included in the description. Although these dimensions have been scored at acceptable levels of reliability and data from several studies have indicated good validity, these structural representational variables have not been previously assessed in studies of adult romantic attachment.

The purpose of this study is to examine associations between (a) the thematic content and structure (degree of differentiation-relatedness and conceptual level) of representations of parents and (b) young adults' attachment styles as assessed with Hazan and Shaver's (1987, 1990) and Bartholomew's (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) self-report measures. On the basis of the research reviewed earlier, we expect the parental representations of securely attached individuals to be more positive in content and more complex and mature in structure than those of insecurely attached individuals (Hypothesis 1). Among the insecurely attached groups, we expect parental descriptions of anxious-ambivalent individuals to be more ambivalent and to contain more attributes (greater articulation) than those of avoidant individuals (Hypothesis 2). In comparing the two kinds of avoidant individuals delineated by Bartholomew, dismissing and fearful, we expect fearful individuals, who seem more aware of their own reactions and feelings, to express more differentiated and complex descriptions of their parents than dismissing individuals but also to express greater ambivalence (Hypothesis 3). In other words, we expect to find a unique pattern of parental representations associated with each romantic attachment style.

Method

Participants

We selected 101 men and 88 women, median age 19 years, from 863 students (530 men and 333 women) enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Students participated as part of a course requirement. We selected approximately equal numbers of students from the three attachment style categories from the total sample on the basis of responses to Hazan and Shaver's three-category attachment measure administered during a brief classroom screening session. One or 2 months later, we recontacted groups of 20

to 25 students and gave them other measures, including a two-page questionnaire that contained a readministration of the three-category attachment measure and a Likert-type rating scale for each of the three attachment styles. (The precise wording of these questions can be found in Shaver & Hazan, 1993.) Because we became aware of the Bartholomew attachment measures (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) after beginning data collection, only the last 54 of the 189 students completed Bartholomew's measures, but we believe that it is worthwhile to present the results for the Bartholomew measures in addition to the results for Hazan and Shaver's measure. The reasons for this decision will become clear in the Results section.

Assessment Procedures

Attachment style. We asked participants to think back across their most important romantic relationships and then decide which of the three Hazan-Shaver attachment style prototypes best characterized their behavior and experiences. We also asked them to rate their similarity to each of the three prototypes on a 7-point scale, ranging from *very dissimilar* to *very similar*. These two measures have moderate test-retest reliability over periods ranging from a few weeks to 4 years (e.g., Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994). Seventy to 75% of participants usually check the same category over these periods, and the three single-item rating scales have test-retest stabilities of approximately .60. The fact that the stabilities are similar regardless of the length of the test-retest period suggests that the underlying construct, attachment style, is quite stable. These simple attachment measures have been sufficiently precise (see Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994) to generate a large and coherent body of evidence supporting their construct validity, including their association with attachment-related behavior (e.g., Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992).

In this study, the three attachment style rating scales were intercorrelated as follows. Secure attachment was negatively correlated with the two insecure styles, $r = -.53, p < .001$, for avoidance, and $r = -.19, p < .001$, for anxious-ambivalence, which were not significantly correlated with each other, $r = .05, ns$. These correlations are consistent with prior findings (e.g., Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Brennan, Shaver, & Tobey, 1991; Levy & Davis, 1988) and compatible with Bartholomew's (1990) claim that there are essentially two dimensions underlying self-report attachment measures. In this study, one of these dimensions runs from secure to avoidant attachment (where avoidant is similar to Bartholomew's fearful avoidance), and the other dimension is anxious-ambivalence. In Bartholomew's theoretical scheme, this second dimension runs from dismissing avoidance to anxious-ambivalence (which she calls preoccupied attachment) (see Brennan et al., 1991, for empirical confirmation of this analysis).

We also administered to 54 of the 189 participants Bartholomew's four-category self-report attachment measure, which is reproduced in full in an appendix to Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) article. It includes both a self-categorization component (forcing a choice among secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing attachment styles) and four self-rating scales, one for each attachment style prototype. Both aspects of this measure, like Hazan and Shaver's measure, have moderate test-retest reliability and good construct validity (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994a, 1994b; Horowitz, Rosenberg, & Bartholomew, 1993). Moreover, in factor analyses and structural equation analyses, the self-report measure, Bartholomew's interview measure, and peer descriptions of individuals' attachment patterns all converge.

Correlations among the four attachment style rating scales in this study were as follows: secure with fearful, $r = -.32, p < .01$, preoccupied, $r = -.14, ns$, and dismissing, $r = -.18, ns$; fearful with preoccupied, $r = .02, ns$, and dismissing, $r = -.17, ns$; and preoccupied with dismissing, $r = -.21, ns$. Although only one of these correlations is significant be-

cause of the relatively small sample, the sizes of these are compatible with Bartholomew's placement of the four styles in a two-dimensional conceptual space. In fact, when subjected to principal-components analysis followed by varimax rotation, the four ratings produced two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, the first accounting for 35% of the variance and the second accounting for 31%. On the first factor, the secure rating loaded $-.87$ and the fearful rating loaded $.78$. The other two ratings loaded below $.15$. On the second factor, the dismissing rating loaded $-.85$ and the preoccupied rating loaded $.66$. The other two ratings loaded below $.27$.

The correspondence of categorical attachment style self-classifications over a 1- to 2-month period in this study was 76% (weighted kappa = $.65, p < .05$) for both the Hazan and Shaver and the Bartholomew measures. This reliability is similar to the 70 to 75% reliability obtained in previous studies spanning periods as long as 4 years.

Assessment of mental representations. We gave participants booklets that included instructions to "Describe your mother" and "Describe your father," in counterbalanced order (Blatt et al., 1979; Blatt et al., 1992). Content and structural dimensions of these written descriptions were scored by a judge with previously established reliability and who was blind to all other information provided by the participants. Descriptions of parents were rated on 7-point scales for each of the 12 traits discussed earlier (e.g., affectionate, benevolent). Blatt and his colleagues (Quinlan, Blatt, Chevron, & Wein, 1992) found that these ratings form three factors, Benevolent, Punitive, and Ambitious. Each description was also scored for the participant's degree of ambivalence about the parent, the description's length (in words), scorable attributes, conceptual level, and self-other differentiation-relatedness.

Parental descriptions in prior studies have been reliably scored in terms of these content and structure variables (Blatt et al., 1979; Bornstein, Galley, & Leone, 1986; Bornstein, Leone, & Galley, 1988; Diamond et al., 1992), which are stable over at least a 2-month period (Bornstein, Leone, & Galley, 1990) and which are unrelated to intelligence, verbal productivity, or socioeconomic status (Blatt et al., 1979; Blatt, Stayner, Auerbach, & Behrends, 1996; Bornstein et al., 1986, 1988; Wilson, 1982). Previous research supports the construct and predictive validity of these variables (see reviews by Fishler, Sperling, & Carr, 1990, and Stricker & Healey, 1990). In this study, the interrater reliability of two coders was obtained for a subsample of 20 protocols. A Pearson correlation coefficient of $.75$ or greater was obtained for ratings of each of the 12 traits and the three derived factors as well as for ratings of ambivalence, description length, conceptual level, scorable attributes, and differentiation-relatedness. This interrater reliability is comparable to reliabilities reported earlier (Blatt et al., 1979; Diamond et al., 1992).

Correlations among the three parental description factors were as follows. Father benevolent was negatively correlated with father punitive, $r = -.66, p < .001$. Father benevolent and father punitive were not significantly correlated with father ambitious, $r = .02$ and $r = .07$, respectively. The findings were similar for mother benevolent and mother punitive, which were negatively correlated, $r = -.66, p < .001$. Mother benevolent and mother punitive were not significantly correlated with mother ambitious, $r = .07$ and $r = -.03$, respectively.

The alpha coefficients for the three factors were as follows: father benevolent = $.89$; father punitive = $.60$; father ambitious = $-.09$; mother benevolent = $.86$; mother punitive = $.71$; and mother ambitious = $.53$. Because father ambitious was not a coherent construct for this sample and mother ambitious had the lowest reliability of the remaining factors, these two factors were deleted from the remaining analyses.

Results

Parental Representations and Hazan and Shaver's Attachment Style Categories

Categorical analyses. A two-way (Attachment Style \times Gender) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was per-

formed on the entire set of dimensions derived from the descriptions of mother and father: the two content factors (benevolent and punitive), degree of ambivalence, conceptual level, differentiation-relatedness, number of scorable attributes articulated, and length of description. The overall F value for the effect of attachment style was significant, $F(28, 284) = 4.27, p < .001$. Means from univariate tests are shown in Table 1. As indicated in the upper portion of the table, which contains results for the

variables derived from the descriptions of mothers, the effect of attachment style was significant for every variable except description length. The pattern of means indicated that secure individuals, as compared with both avoidant and anxious-ambivalent individuals, represented their mothers as significantly more benevolent and less punitive. They also portrayed their mothers with less ambivalence. Regarding structural features, the descriptions given by secure individuals contained more scorable

Table 1
Features of Parental Descriptions as a Function of Hazan and Shaver's (1987) Attachment Styles

Parental description	Attachment style			F ratio		
	Avoidant ($n = 63$)	Anxious-Ambivalent ($n = 50$)	Secure ($n = 76$)	Attachment	Gender	Interaction
Mother variables						
Benevolent						
<i>M</i>	4.54 _a	4.59 _a	5.25 _b	11.94***	0.43	1.31
<i>SD</i>	0.94	0.98	0.72			
Punitive						
<i>M</i>	3.32 _a	3.64 _a	2.62 _b	18.61***	0.74	2.17
<i>SD</i>	0.66	0.89	1.00			
Ambivalence						
<i>M</i>	2.22 _a	2.66 _a	1.66 _b	11.71***	0.87	5.52*
<i>SD</i>	1.08	1.40	0.83			
Scorable attributes						
<i>M</i>	4.98 _a	5.23 _a	6.10 _b	4.21*	0.31	2.59
<i>SD</i>	1.86	2.02	1.89			
Conceptual level						
<i>M</i>	4.98 _a	4.56 _a	5.65 _b	12.44***	3.79	6.22**
<i>SD</i>	1.12	1.40	0.87			
Differentiation						
<i>M</i>	5.76 _a	5.48 _a	6.25 _b	11.41***	3.21	1.88
<i>SD</i>	1.04	0.71	0.77			
Length of description						
<i>M</i>	2.47	2.25	2.36	0.37	11.43***	0.11
<i>SD</i>	1.45	1.26	1.38			
Father variables						
Benevolent						
<i>M</i>	3.94 _a	4.23 _a	4.88 _b	13.24***	1.19	0.79
<i>SD</i>	1.05	0.95	1.16			
Punitive						
<i>M</i>	3.69 _a	3.67 _a	3.01 _b	17.90***	0.96	0.24
<i>SD</i>	0.75	0.54	0.96			
Ambivalence						
<i>M</i>	2.59 _a	2.98 _a	1.86 _b	18.04***	0.63	0.18
<i>SD</i>	1.02	1.24	0.98			
Scorable attributes						
<i>M</i>	5.11 _{a,b}	4.89 _a	5.79 _b	3.32*	2.98	0.14
<i>SD</i>	2.01	1.60	2.14			
Conceptual level						
<i>M</i>	5.00 _a	5.00 _a	5.65 _b	5.46**	3.33	5.46**
<i>SD</i>	1.18	1.41	0.88			
Differentiation						
<i>M</i>	5.86 _a	5.73 _a	6.49 _b	11.85***	1.26	1.03
<i>SD</i>	0.90	0.89	0.89			
Length of description						
<i>M</i>	2.45	2.65	2.57	0.28	8.58**	0.16
<i>SD</i>	1.37	1.49	1.55			

Note. Means within a row that have different subscripts differ significantly at the .05 level by Tukey b post hoc comparisons.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

attributes and were characterized by a higher conceptual level and greater differentiation. The results for the variables derived from the descriptions of father representations, shown in the lower portion of Table 1, were similar to the results with mother representations except for the scorable attributes variable, on which secure individuals obtained a significantly higher average than anxious-ambivalent individuals, but not higher than that of avoidant individuals. In general, these results support the first hypothesis concerning differences in content between representations of securely and insecurely attached individuals. Because all of the significant main effects appeared in the contrast of secure individuals with insecure individuals but not in the two kinds of insecure individuals with each other, there was no support for the second hypothesis in the analysis of these main effects.

There were two significant gender effects, both having to do with length of description. Women wrote longer descriptions of both mother and father than did men. There were three significant Gender \times Attachment Style interactions. As shown in Figure 1 and consistent with Hypothesis 2, the ambivalence expressed in the mother representations was significantly higher for anxious-ambivalent men than for the other two groups of men. In contrast, ambivalence was significantly higher for avoidant women than for secure women, with anxious-ambivalent women falling in between—a pattern not predicted by the second hypothesis. The only significant gender difference within an attachment style category occurred for the anxious-ambivalent groups: Men scored significantly higher than did women on the mother ambivalence dimension.

Figure 2 illustrates the Gender \times Attachment Style interaction for the conceptual level of the mother representation. The simple effects tests (illustrated in figure) indicated that secure men described their mothers at higher conceptual levels than did avoidant or anxious-ambivalent men. Anxious-ambivalent women described their mothers at lower conceptual levels than did secure or avoidant women. The only significant gender dif-

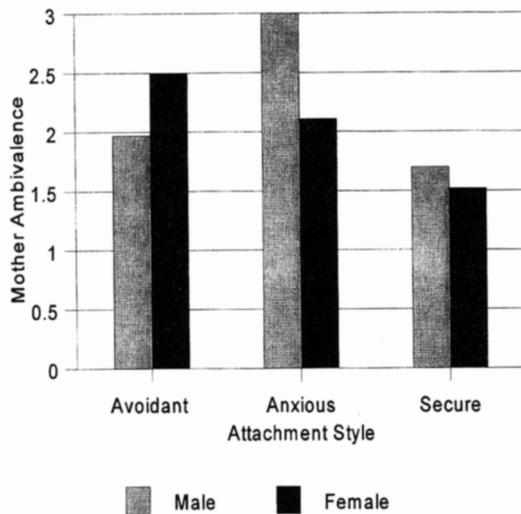


Figure 1. Mother ambivalence as a function of Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment groups and gender.

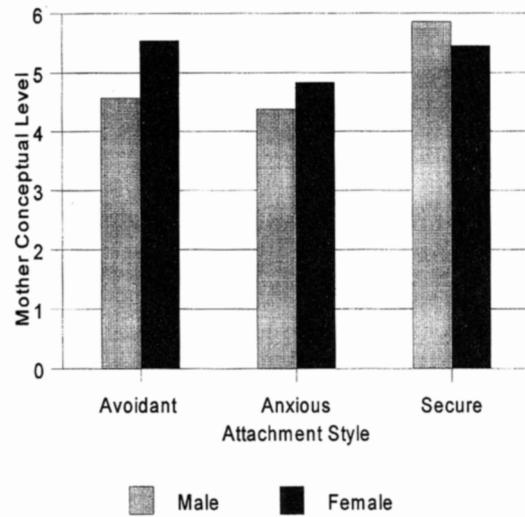


Figure 2. Mother conceptual level as a function of Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment groups and gender.

ference within an attachment style category occurred for the avoidant participants. Avoidant women described their mothers at higher conceptual levels than did avoidant men. (As discussed later, this result was partly attributable to the following facts: Women are disproportionately represented in Bartholomew's fearful avoidant category, men are disproportionately represented in her dismissing avoidant category, and fearful avoidant individuals operated at higher conceptual levels than did dismissing avoidant individuals.)

The Gender \times Attachment Style interaction for the conceptual level of the father representation is shown in Figure 3. The pattern of significant results was the same as the pattern for mother representation shown in Figure 2.

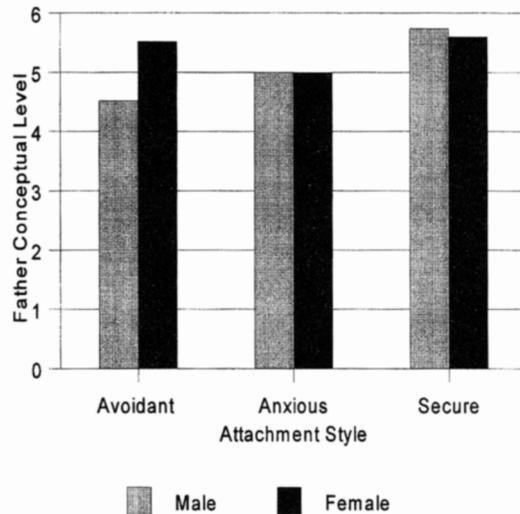


Figure 3. Father conceptual level as a function of Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment groups and gender.

Dimensional analyses. Because attachment style was assessed both categorically and with rating scales, we were able to conduct both categorical (i.e., univariate analysis of variance [ANOVA] and MANOVA) analyses and correlation-regression analyses. The correlation results are shown in Table 2. In general, the correlation results parallel the MANOVA and ANOVA results based on the categorical ratings.

In order to capture the gist of the correlation results, we also conducted three stepwise regression analyses predicting each of the attachment style ratings from the parental representation variables.

The security rating was predicted by a combination of gender and four parental representation variables: mother punitive, father punitive, length of mother description, and conceptual level of mother description. The R was .42, $F(5, 154) = 6.76$, $p < .001$. The beta coefficients, all significant at $p < .05$, were as follows: gender (with women coded high), .17; mother punitive, -.19; father punitive, -.16; mother description length, -.24; and mother conceptual level, .21. In other words, more secure individuals wrote descriptions of their mothers that were shorter and at higher conceptual levels than those of less secure individuals and portrayed both of their parents as less punitive. They were also more likely to be women.

The avoidance rating was predicted by a combination of four parental representation variables: mother benevolent, father differentiation, father punitive, and length of description of mother. The R was .46, $F(5, 154) = 8.35$, $p < .001$. The significant beta coefficients were as follows: mother benevolent, -.21; father differentiation, -.26; father punitive, .20; and length of mother description, .19. In other words, more avoidant individuals produced descriptions of their fathers that were relatively undifferentiated and portrayed their fathers as punitive. They also produced longer descriptions of their mothers that indicated that

their mothers, although not exceptionally punitive, were in other ways relatively malevolent.

The anxious-ambivalence rating was predicted by father ambivalence, beta coefficient = .25, and mother scorable attributes, beta coefficient = -.19. The R was .33, $F(3, 156) = 6.15$, $p < .001$. More anxious individuals tended to give descriptions of their mothers that contained fewer codable features and (as expected) exhibited ambivalence in their representations of their fathers.

Association Between the Hazan-Shaver and the Bartholomew Measures of Attachment Style

Brennan et al. (1991), in a large-sample study, found that the two measures of attachment style used in this study were highly congruent. Secure and anxious-ambivalent classifications on the Hazan-Shaver measure were closely associated with parallel classifications on the Bartholomew measure (i.e., secure and preoccupied). The major difference between the two measures occurred in the avoidant categories. Avoidant individuals in the Hazan-Shaver system classified themselves as fearful in the Bartholomew system. Dismissing avoidant individuals (i.e., those in Bartholomew's new category) came primarily from both the secure and avoidant Hazan-Shaver categories (Brennan et al., 1991).

In this study, the two measures were highly related, $\chi^2(6, N = 48) = 56.15$, $p < .0001$. Of the 21 Hazan-Shaver secure individuals, 16 (76%) also chose the secure category on Bartholomew's measure. The remaining 5 (24%) all chose the fearful category. Of the 21 avoidant individuals, 14 (67%) chose the fearful category, 6 (29%) chose the dismissing category, and 1 (5%) chose the preoccupied category. Of the 16 anxious-ambivalent individuals, 8 (50.0%) chose the preoccupied category, 6 (37.5%) chose the fearful category, and 2 (12.5%) chose the dismissing category. These results are compatible with those of Brennan et al. (1991).

We also computed correlations between the Hazan-Shaver and Bartholomew attachment style ratings. The correlations of the four Bartholomew ratings with the Hazan-Shaver security score were as follows: security, .80, $p < .001$; fearfulness, -.43, $p < .01$; preoccupation, -.04, *ns*; and dismissiveness, -.22, *ns*. The correlations with the Hazan-Shaver anxious-ambivalence score were as follows: security, -.38, $p < .001$; fearfulness, -.04, *ns*; preoccupation, .61, $p < .001$; and dismissiveness, .01, *ns*. The correlations with the Hazan-Shaver avoidance score were as follows: security, -.41, $p < .01$; fearfulness, .46, $p < .01$; preoccupation, -.15, *ns*; and dismissiveness, .41, $p < .01$. These results, like those from the comparison of the two categorical measures, indicate that the concepts of security and anxious-ambivalence are similar across the two measures. The Hazan-Shaver concept of avoidance is moderately related to both of Bartholomew's avoidance concepts, fearful and dismissing.

Parental Representations and Bartholomew's Attachment Style Categories

Categorical analyses. Because of the relatively small number of individuals who completed Bartholomew's attachment measure, it was not possible to analyze the parental representa-

Table 2
Correlations Between Parental Descriptions and Hazan and Shaver's (1987) Attachment Style Self-Ratings

Parental description	Attachment style		
	Avoidant	Anxious	Secure
Mother variables			
Benevolent	-.35***	-.15*	.26***
Punitive	.30***	.23**	-.30***
Ambivalence	.21**	.14	-.28***
Scorable attributes	-.13	-.21**	.07
Conceptual level	-.14	-.19*	.19*
Differentiation	-.13	-.21**	.18*
Length of description	.09	-.05	-.12
Father variables			
Benevolent	-.29***	-.11	.14
Punitive	.29***	.25**	-.20**
Ambivalence	.24**	.25**	-.17*
Scorable attributes	-.01	-.12	-.05
Conceptual level	-.21**	-.14	.08
Differentiation	-.26**	-.18*	.19**
Length of description	.00	.05	-.03

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

tion variables with a two-way MANOVA that included gender as an independent variable. Thus, a one-way (attachment style) MANOVA was performed on the representation variables. The means from univariate tests are presented in Table 3. The effect of attachment on representation variables was significant, $F(42, 114) = 1.80, p < .01$.

As can be seen in the upper portion of Table 3, which contains the results for the representation variables for the description of mother, the effect of attachment style was significant for

mother benevolent, ambivalence in describing mother, conceptual level, and length of description. On the benevolent rating of mother, secure individuals obtained a higher mean than did fearful and preoccupied individuals. The secure and fearful individuals scored higher than did preoccupied and dismissing individuals on the mother conceptual level rating. Fearful individuals produced longer descriptions of their mothers than did preoccupied and dismissing individuals and more ambivalent descriptions than preoccupied and secure individuals.

Table 3
Features of Parental Descriptions as a Function of Bartholomew's (1990) Attachment Styles

Parental description	Attachment style				<i>F</i> ratio for attachment
	Secure (<i>n</i> = 16)	Fearful (<i>n</i> = 22)	Preoccupied (<i>n</i> = 8)	Dismissing (<i>n</i> = 8)	
Mother variables					
Benevolent					
<i>M</i>	5.42 _a	4.48 _b	4.58 _b	4.61 _{a,b}	3.29*
<i>SD</i>	0.64	1.22	0.95	0.61	
Punitive					
<i>M</i>	2.77	3.29	3.54	3.25	2.20
<i>SD</i>	0.81	0.93	0.47	0.35	
Ambivalence					
<i>M</i>	1.69 _a	2.50 _b	1.66 _a	1.88 _{a,b}	2.53*
<i>SD</i>	0.70	1.10	1.41	1.13	
Scorable attributes					
<i>M</i>	5.56	6.00	5.00	4.50	1.44
<i>SD</i>	1.32	2.45	1.20	1.60	
Conceptual level					
<i>M</i>	5.88 _a	5.59 _a	5.13 _b	4.00 _b	4.53*
<i>SD</i>	0.89	1.47	0.84	1.41	
Differentiation					
<i>M</i>	6.00	6.41	5.75	5.50	2.24
<i>SD</i>	1.03	1.10	0.46	0.51	
Length of description					
<i>M</i>	2.44 _{a,b}	3.41 _a	2.00 _b	2.13 _b	2.83*
<i>SD</i>	1.55	1.65	1.31	0.84	
Father variables					
Benevolent					
<i>M</i>	5.16 _a	4.07 _b	3.64 _b	4.13 _b	4.94**
<i>SD</i>	1.10	1.26	0.63	0.76	
Punitive					
<i>M</i>	2.86 _a	3.81 _b	3.92 _b	3.42 _{a,b}	5.18**
<i>SD</i>	0.94	0.74	0.71	0.79	
Ambivalence					
<i>M</i>	1.82 _a	2.86 _b	3.38 _b	2.38 _{a,b}	3.81*
<i>SD</i>	1.02	1.20	1.41	1.41	
Scorable attributes					
<i>M</i>	6.47 _a	5.81 _{a,b}	4.50 _b	4.50 _b	2.86*
<i>SD</i>	1.94	2.99	2.92	0.92	
Conceptual level					
<i>M</i>	5.88 _a	5.67 _a	5.25 _{a,b}	4.25 _b	4.64*
<i>SD</i>	0.93	1.02	1.49	1.04	
Differentiation					
<i>M</i>	6.82 _a	6.47 _{a,b}	5.88 _{b,c}	5.50 _c	4.18*
<i>SD</i>	0.95	1.17	0.64	0.54	
Length of description					
<i>M</i>	2.24	3.00	2.38	2.13	1.55
<i>SD</i>	1.03	1.55	1.30	0.84	

Note. Means within a row that have different subscripts differ significantly at the .05 level by Student–Newman–Keuls post hoc comparisons.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Although the univariate effect of attachment style on mother differentiation was not significant, a planned comparison between the two avoidant groups, fearful and dismissing, was significant, $t(50) = 2.33, p < .05$. Fearful avoidant individuals ($M = 6.41$) had more differentiated representations of their mothers than did dismissing avoidant individuals ($M = 5.50$).

The lower portion of Table 3 contains the results for the father representation variables. All of the father variables except for length of description were significantly associated with attachment style. The secure group had higher benevolent ratings of father than did any of the three insecure groups. Secure individuals scored lower than did fearful and preoccupied individuals on father punitive and ambivalence ratings. Secure individuals provided more scorable attributes of their fathers than did preoccupied and dismissing individuals. Secure and fearful individuals scored higher than did dismissing individuals on father conceptual level and differentiation-relatedness ratings. Secure individuals also scored higher than did dismissing individuals on the father differentiation-relatedness rating.

Dimensional analyses. Because of the relatively small number of individuals who completed Bartholomew's attachment measure, it was not possible to compute meaningful regression equations predicting each of the four attachment style ratings from the parental representation variables. Therefore, only correlation coefficients were computed, as shown in Table 4. In general, the correlation results parallel the MANOVA and ANOVA results, although they make even clearer the fact that fearful and dismissing forms of avoidance have different associations with parental representations. For example, the dismissing rating correlated negatively with both mother and father differentiation and conceptual level and with mother scorable attributes, whereas the fearful rating did not. Also, the fearful rating corre-

lated significantly with the length of both mother and father descriptions, whereas the dismissing rating did not.

Gender Differences

As reported in other studies with the Hazan-Shaver measure of attachment styles, there was no gender difference in the distribution of attachment types, $\chi^2(2) = 1.34, n.s.$ Of the 101 men, 40 (40%) were secure, 31 (31%) were avoidant, and 30 (30%) were anxious-ambivalent. Of the 88 women, 36 (41%) were secure, 32 (36%) were avoidant, and 20 (23%) were anxious-ambivalent.

As reported in other studies with the Bartholomew measure, there was a significant gender difference in the distribution of attachment types, $\chi^2(3) = 9.25, p < .05$. Of the 36 men, 10 (28%) were secure, 11 (31%) were fearful, 7 (19%) were preoccupied, and 8 (22%) were dismissing. Of the 23 women, 7 (30%) were secure, 14 (61%) were fearful, 2 (9%) were preoccupied, and none were dismissing.

Because fearful avoidance was associated with higher levels of parental representation and because women were more likely than men to classify themselves as fearful, we explored the possible impact of gender differences on representations within the fearful category. No significant or nearly significant differences were found, suggesting that differences in the fearful individuals' representations were not associated with gender. No such comparison was possible for the dismissing category because all eight dismissing individuals were men. As discussed earlier, the disproportionate number of women who were fearfully avoidant may have affected the parental representation findings for the fearful category, but these analyses indicated that there were no gender differences among the people within the fearful avoidant category.

Discussion

On the basis of attachment theory and previous research, we expected secure individuals' parental representations to be more positive in content and more conceptually complex and differentiated in structure than those of insecure individuals. In fact, secure individuals had well-differentiated representations of both parents, describing their parents as more benevolent than insecure individuals. Among the insecurely attached groups, we expected parental descriptions given by anxious-ambivalent individuals to be more ambivalent and to contain more attributes than descriptions written by avoidant individuals. These expectations were not supported. The results indicated instead that both insecure groups were ambivalent compared with the secure group, and anxious-ambivalent individuals provided significantly fewer attributes than did secure individuals, whereas avoidant individuals fell in between.

There were three interactions between gender and attachment style, as assessed with the Hazan-Shaver measure. Regarding the mother ambivalence variable, anxious-ambivalent men represented their mothers as more ambivalent than did secure and avoidant men, whereas avoidant women represented their mothers as more ambivalent than did secure and anxious-ambivalent women. The only significant gender difference in mother ambivalence within an attachment style category occurred for anxious-

Table 4
Correlations Between Parental Descriptions and
Bartholomew's (1990) Attachment Style Self-Ratings

Parental description	Attachment style			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Mother variables				
Benevolent	.46***	-.22	.01	-.17
Punitive	-.27	.20	.24	.12
Ambivalence	-.21	.10	.05	.06
Scorable attributes	.03	.18	-.11	-.31*
Conceptual level	.14	.00	-.24	-.35*
Differentiation	-.03	.27	-.14	-.32*
Length of description	-.20	.36*	-.10	-.14
Father variables				
Benevolent	.46***	-.29	-.15	-.25
Punitive	-.40**	.30*	.12	.08
Ambivalence	-.30*	.34*	.21	-.13
Scorable attributes	.25	.07	-.23	-.12
Conceptual level	.22	.11	.08	-.49***
Differentiation	.20	.05	-.05	-.56***
Length of description	-.12	.40**	.06	-.25

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ambivalent men and women. The men's high scores were as predicted; the women's moderate-level scores were unexpected. The pattern suggests that women may have extra reasons, besides maternal ambivalence, for developing an anxious-ambivalent romantic orientation. The difference may have something to do with the socialization of women (Shaver, Papalia, et al., 1996); there are similarities between traditional femininity and the anxious-ambivalent style. The other two Gender \times Attachment Style interactions involved the mother and father conceptual level variables. In both cases, the major difference occurred within the avoidant attachment category, in which women had higher scores than did men. That is, avoidant women represented their parents at higher conceptual levels than did avoidant men (and the avoidant men's representations were at a lower level than were secure men's, but that difference was absent among women). This pattern of results was attributable, at least in part, to the following facts. (a) Hazan and Shaver's avoidant category is more like Bartholomew's fearful category than like her dismissing category. (b) Fearful avoidant individuals are disproportionately women, and dismissing avoidant individuals are disproportionately men. (c) Fearful avoidant individuals score higher on conceptual level than do dismissing avoidant individuals. Understanding why dismissing avoidance but not fearful avoidance is associated with relatively low-level conceptualization of parents is an important topic for further study. One possibility is that the repressive, minimizing strategy used by dismissing avoidant individuals impedes their ability to think clearly, extensively, and empathically about their parents, resulting in less conceptually sophisticated mental representations. For men, this tendency may interact with gender socialization pressures toward independence, suppression of emotions, and lack of emphasis on close relationships (Blatt, 1991).

Regarding the two kinds of avoidant individuals delineated by Bartholomew, dismissing and fearful, we expected fearful individuals to provide more differentiated and complex descriptions of their parents than dismissing individuals but also to express greater ambivalence. These expectations were supported. In addition, both dismissing and fearful individuals represented their parents as punitive and malevolent, although in contrast to the dismissing avoidant individuals' representations, the representations of fearful avoidant individuals, like those of secure individuals, were well differentiated and conceptually complex, despite being ambivalent. Anxious-ambivalent individuals, like fearful avoidant individuals, provided ambivalent descriptions and represented their parents as punitive.

The fact that fearful avoidant individuals represented their parents as relatively malevolent but did so with differentiation and integration and at a conceptual level similar to that displayed by secure individuals is especially noteworthy because previous research has portrayed them as opposite to secure individuals on many dimensions, causing them to be viewed as the least secure of the three insecure groups (e.g., Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Fearful avoidant individuals are often seen as the most distressed and least healthy. (They are the least trusting, the least assertive, and so on.) Nevertheless, although fearful avoidant individuals are ambivalent about their parents, they, like secure individuals, think of their parents in complex ways, integrating good and bad aspects of their parents and differentiating themselves from their parents. This finding is consistent with Bartholomew's (1989) finding that although fearful individuals, like dismissing individuals, report parental rejection (low parental acceptance and involvement), they are no more likely to idealize their parents or to be incoherent during an attachment interview than are secure subject individuals. Evidently, fearful individuals have had a difficult time with their parents but have achieved structural sophistication in their parental representations.

This finding is particularly important in light of recent AAI studies of secure attachment (e.g., Pearson, Cohn, Cowen, & Cowen, 1994), which distinguish between two kinds of secure attachment based on the AAI: continuously secure and earned secure. Continuously secure individuals coherently describe warm and benevolent early relationships with parents, whereas earned secure individuals describe difficult early relationships with parents but also do this in a highly coherent way. Pearson et al. classified 40 parents of preschool children as either earned secure or continuously secure and then compared them with each other and with insecure parents on a measure of depression and two sets of observational ratings of parenting behavior. Supporting the validity of the continuous/earned distinction, Pearson et al. found that earned secure individuals were similar to insecure individuals on the measure of depression but were similar to continuous secure individuals with regard to good parenting behavior.

The similarities between Pearson et al.'s (1994) earned secure individuals and our fearful avoidant individuals are notable: Both groups report difficult childhoods but have formed coherent representations of their parents. One might think that many of the fearful avoidant individuals are actually secure in some sense, especially in light of the fact that the typical AAI study finds proportions of secure adults in the vicinity of 65%, whereas the typical study based on Bartholomew's self-report measure finds proportions closer to 45%. Additionally, studies done with Bartholomew's measure typically find that approximately 20% are fearfully avoidant. Adding together the typical proportions for Bartholomew's secure and fearful individuals would equal the proportions of secure individuals expected from the AAI. However, the 65% figure was more or less imposed on the AAI because it was designed to predict the Strange Situation classification of an interviewee's child, and studies of American middle-class children typically find about 65% of them to be securely attached. In contrast, Bartholomew's measure was derived by elaborating Hazan and Shaver's measure so that it distinguished two kinds of avoidant attachment styles instead of one. There was no criterion such as children's performance in the Strange Situation, only construct validity in the realms of personality and adult relationships. (People identified as being fearful avoidant with Bartholomew's questionnaire or similar self-report measures are behaviorally avoidant in adult relationships [Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Simpson et al., 1992].)

Our findings, plus the line of reasoning just summarized, suggest that many fearful avoidant individuals can be security-enhancing parents despite their tendencies toward avoidant attachment in romantic and marital relationships. Moreover, Fonagy (1994) recently reported that, among insecurely attached mothers (defined in terms of the AAI), a measure of reflective self-function (awareness of mental processes in the self and in others and the ability to take account of one's own and others'

mental states in understanding why people behave in specific ways) predicted whether or not a mother's infant would be securely attached, as measured in the Strange Situation. Fonagy believes that reflective self-function plays an important role in parenting, and his concept of reflective self-function seems similar to Blatt and colleagues' (Blatt et al., 1979; Blatt et al., 1996; Diamond, Kaslow, Coonerty, & Blatt, 1990) concepts of conceptual level and differentiation-relatedness. Future research should explore the possibility that some fearful avoidant individuals are on the way to becoming earned secure individuals, perhaps first as parents and then in their own adult relationships. It would be worthwhile to determine how those individuals achieve high conceptual levels and how these conceptual capacities can lead to increased security in interpersonal relationships.

Our findings support Bartholomew's (1990) distinction between two kinds of avoidant attachment, fearful and dismissing. Not only do these individuals' models of self differ in positivity, as noted by Bartholomew (1990), but also they differ in the structure of their parental representations. This difference may turn out to be at least as important as the purported differences in self-esteem. It is possible, for example, that dismissing avoidant individuals are responsible for the hotly contested view that individuals with high self-esteem distort information in defensive and self-protective ways (e.g., Block & Colvin, 1994; Colvin & Block, 1994; Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995; Shedler, Mayman, & Manis, 1993, 1994; Taylor & Brown, 1988, 1994a, 1994b). It seems likely that dismissing avoidant individuals, who have high self-reported self-esteem, are more defensive than secure individuals.

Two other issues warrant mentioning. The first concerns the importance of representations of both parents. In contrast to the usual emphasis on the mother as the central figure in attachment and object relations theories, our findings, consistent with those of other investigators (Lamb, 1982; Loewald, 1960), indicate important associations between attachment styles and representations of both parents. Loewald discussed the role of the father as an alternate attachment figure who supports individuation. Our findings are consistent with the view that from early childhood through adolescence, both parents play central roles (Blatt, 1990; Blatt & Homann, 1992).

The second issue concerns the nature of separation-individuation in adolescence. Although the process of individuation during the transition into young adulthood is characterized by increasing autonomy, independence, and detachment from family members (Blos, 1979), our findings suggest that individuation is facilitated by attachment rather than detachment. Representations of parents as supportive and nurturing are related not to dependence but to the capacity for individuation. This idea is consistent with the findings of Ryan and colleagues (Avery & Ryan, 1988; Ryan & Lynch, 1989) to the effect that representing parents as nurturant is significantly associated with perceived parental support for autonomy, assessments of self-esteem, perceived competence, and sociometric outcomes in middle childhood and adolescence. Thus, attachment is a dynamic process that facilitates development by providing the emotional support necessary for healthy autonomy and relatedness, despite periodic tensions (Blatt & Blass, 1990, 1995). Ryan and his coauthors stressed that individuation is not something that occurs from parents but rather with parents, not only during infancy

and early childhood but also during adolescence and young adulthood.

Two limitations of this study should be noted. First, our results are not intended to provide information about parents' actual behavior. There may be a substantial gap between representations of parents and the way they actually behave. Although representations are believed by attachment researchers to be derived from childhood experiences of actual parental behaviors, the connection needs to be documented empirically. Second, although self-report measures of adult romantic attachment have been shown to have considerable reliability and construct validity (Shaver & Hazan, 1993) as well as a moderate degree of convergence with interview ratings (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bartholomew & Shaver, in press), studies of parental representations that use interview-based measures of adult attachment are desirable.

The findings of this study extend our understanding of adult romantic attachment styles by elaborating the content and structure of representations of parents associated with each style. Delineation of the developmental level of the structure of these representations is particularly important, because differences in cognitive and affective organization may be as important for social behavior as are the content differences emphasized in previous social psychological research on romantic attachment.

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