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CHAPTER 3

SECURITY AND ATTACHMENT

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Throughout my entire career the underlying aim has been the understanding of intimate interpersonal relationships, especially the earliest of these, and how they influence subsequent personality development. Undoubtedly it was this interest—then half-recognized—that led me to choose to study psychology when an undergraduate at the University of Toronto in the early 1930s. This core interest became overt after having attended Professor William Blatz's courses in genetic and abnormal psychology, in which he introduced us to his "security theory." At the same time, an experimental project directed by Professor Sperrin Chant taught me that research could be fascinating. These experiences, especially, led me to stay on at Toronto as a graduate student.

Theoretical and research interests were happily combined in 1936 when Blatz suggested that I undertake dissertation research relevant to his security theory under his and Chant's supervision. My dissertation was completed in 1939 and published in the following year (Salter, 1940). I believe that it was the first publication stemming from Blatzian security theory. Blatz and I intended then to assemble a team to continue and expand this research, but the outbreak of war intervened. Blatz became involved in the establishment of wartime nurseries in Great Britain. I remained in the department for 3 years as a member of the faculty, but

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then joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps and was assigned to the Directorate of Personnel Selection. Then in 1945-46 I became Superintendent of Women's Rehabilitation in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

These services experiences led me to perceive clinical psychology and its assessment procedures as a way to implement my interest in personality development. Thus after I returned to the University of Toronto in 1946 my teaching focused on personality theory and appraisal, and Blatz and I finally undertook team research guided by security theory.

In 1950 personal circumstances led me to London where by good fortune I obtained a research appointment at the Tavistock Clinic in a project directed by Dr. John Bowlby on the effects on personality development of separation from the mother in early childhood. Bowlby, a psychoanalyst, had become impressed with the adverse effects on young children's personality development that could follow the distortion or disruption of their relationships with their mothers. He had chosen specifically to study major separations since, unlike other adverse experiences, their occurrence could be readily established. While his research team gathered data relevant to this problem, he explored the theoretical implications of our findings. The upshot was a new theory of personality development—attachment theory. This is an open-ended, eclectic theory, stemming from psychoanalytic "object relations" theory, but drawing heavily on contemporary biology (especially evolutionary theory and ethology), systems theory, and cognitive psychology.

I became engrossed first in the research and then also in the theory itself. When I left the Tavistock in 1953, I spent 2 years in Uganda, and then went to the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In both places my research focused on the development of attachment of infants to their mothers. Almost from the beginning, I found myself guided by both Bowlby's attachment theory and Blatz's security theory. To me, the two positions were mutually enriching. In the partnership that John Bowlby and I have had in developing attachment theory and research over the years, certain of Blatz's concepts became focal.

I would like here to focus on these aspects of Blatzian security theory and show their relevance to attachment concepts.

HIGHLIGHTS OF BLATZ'S THEORY OF SECURITY

Although I first learned about Blatz's security theory as an undergraduate, this was expanded later by my later close research association with Blatz. He did not record or publish many of his insights. Even in his last book titled *Human Security* (Blatz, 1966) he said relatively little about what had first captured my interest. Security theory was largely an oral tradi-

tion and there was plenty of scope for one listener to focus on some aspects and other listeners to focus on others. What I can tell you about it is what came through to *me* as most important.

Security theory is essentially a theory about personality development. It can be characterized as an open-ended theory, in that Blatz anticipated that it would be expanded and refined through research. He was a brilliant hypothesizer, but I believe that he did not think of research so much as a way of testing hypotheses as a way of reformulating old hypotheses and discovering new ones. He did not attempt to spin a theory to encompass all of personality and its development. He did, however, think that the concept of security could guide the exploration of this rich and confusing field.

When Blatz first conceived of security theory, Freudian theory and its several variations dominated views of personality and its development. I believe that Blatz was basically influenced by these theories, although he never publicly acknowledged this, and indeed his views differed very much from Freud's on several points. Blatz specified two emotions (anger and fear) and several "appetites" as the sources of motivation, but his theory is not a drive theory like Freud's, with all drives having a common pool of libidinal energy. The appetites included hunger, thirst, elimination, sex (although he did not focus on infantile sexuality), rest, and change. The appetite of change was original and of particular value. His notion was that from infancy onward people are intrinsically interested in changes that take place in the world around them, for their own sake and not necessarily as a derivation from some other motive—whether such changes result from their own activity or otherwise. It is the appetite for change that leads to exploratory activity, and thus to learning and the acquisition of skill and knowledge. Blatz's notion of appetites and emotions is less elaborated than the concept of behavioral systems that Bowlby's attachment theory borrowed from contemporary biology, but compatible with it.

Blatz's differences with Freud centered on the issue of the unconscious. He thought it was logically ridiculous to talk about unconscious thoughts or wishes. Thoughts and wishes *had* to be conscious. This belief, in my opinion, resulted in difficulties especially when he came to deal with defensive processes, which he recognized as essential for an understanding of individual differences in personality development. The cognitive research that demonstrated how cognitive processes may operate unconsciously was useful to John Bowlby when he came to account for defensive processes in attachment theory. Had that body of research been available also to Blatz he might have given more credence to the role of unconscious cognitive processes.

What of "security," which formed the core of Blatz's position? He usually spoke of security as willingness to accept the consequences of one's own behaviour, or being able to rely upon someone else to accept them on one's own behalf. This statement refers more to the definition of conditions that make for security than constituting a definition of security itself. In 1939 when I was drafting my dissertation, it was drawn forcibly to my attention by Professor Edward A. Bott that the word is derived from the Latin *sine cura*, that is, "without care"—or, if you like, "without anxiety," "without fear," or indeed "free from insecurity." This definition implies that security is a feeling. Blatz, too, thought of security as a feeling, for he distinguished between *safety*, objectively defined as being free from harm or danger, and *security*, defined as a subjective feeling of being safe whether one actually was or was not. By the time I published my dissertation, I wrote:

> Security as defined by Blatz and Chant implies two things: (1) the immediate experience of adequacy in any given situation—that is, the individual feels capable of dealing with the situation whether he actually is or not; (2) a feeling of adequacy to meet the future consequences of the immediate response, as anticipated by the individual, whether this anticipation be a clear-cut foreseeing of possibilities or merely a vague expectation of results. Thus security as experienced has an immediate and a future reference. (Salter, 1940, p. 6.)

Thus Blatz seemed to equate feeling secure with feeling confident or effective, even though one's feeling of efficacy might stem from reliance on something or someone other than oneself.

BASES OF SECURITY

According to Blatz, security rested on several bases: immature dependence, independence, mature dependence and, to some extent, defensive maneuvers that he called "deputy agents" or "compensations."

Immature dependent security. Infants, and to a decreasing extent young children, can achieve security only through depending on others (primarily parents) to take care of them, fulfill their survival needs, and take responsibility for the consequences of their behavior. The appetite of change leads children to be curious about the world around them, however, and to explore it, and to learn about it. But learning itself involves insecurity. Blatz's notion was that if and when children get into some kind of frightening situation—perhaps only "in over their depth"—they have to feel free to retreat to a parent figure for comfort and reassurance in order to derive security enough to be able to venture forth again to brave

the insecurities of exploring and learning. I cannot remember whether Blatz used the term "secure base from which to explore the world" or whether this is my own phrasing. In any event the concept of a secure base had captured me.

> Familial security in the early stages is of a dependent type and forms a basis from which the individual can work out gradually, forming new skills and interests in other fields. Where familial security is lacking, the individual is handicapped by the lack of what might be called a secure base from which to work. (Salter, 1940, p. 45)

To the extent that children can rely on parents to provide this kind of base they are secure, and to the extent that they can not, they are insecure. To Blatz this kind of dependent basis for security was characteristic only of the earliest phase of life, and both impossible and inappropriate as a continuing sole basis for security. The concept of the secure base is also a key concept in attachment theory.

Independent security. As children explore the world from a secure base they gradually gain knowledge about it and skills to cope with it. This body of knowledge and skills gradually forms an independent basis for security. Children rely increasingly upon themselves, and thus less upon their parents. Indeed Blatz assumed that by the time children reach maturity they should be fully emancipated from parents and not dependent upon them any more. Thus any substantial continuation of "immature dependent security" was to be viewed as undesirable.

Mature dependent security. However, Blatz pointed out that one cannot be secure solely on the basis of independence. He conceived of "mature dependent security" as a state in which people depend on one or a few others to supplement whatever independent security they have managed to achieve. He thought of this as occurring in a reciprocal give-and-take relationship, in which each partner on the basis of his or her knowledge and skills can provide security to the other. Thus, a relationship characterized by mature dependent security is contingent upon each partner having achieved a modicum of independent security. Of course, the prototype of a good relationship of this kind is a good marital partnership.

Bowlby's attachment theory counterpart to mature dependence is what he called the "goal-corrected partnership." However, Bowlby conceived of this partnership beginning to develop as early as the fourth year of life, when newly acquired cognitive abilities (such as perspective-taking and improved communication through language) enable a child to understand a parent's perspective, motivation, and plans well enough to negotiate to achieve common plans mutually agreed upon. Thus, under favorable circumstances, the nature of a child's attachment to the parent undergoes developmental change and continues to do so. It is this capac-

ity for "goal- corrected partnership" that carries forward to enable secure attachments to other partners to be formed later in life.

close space

Thus an "attachment," although first developed to a primary caregiver in infancy, is not synonymous with immature dependence. Secure attachment almost from the beginning tends to foster the development of self-reliance (cf. the secure base concept). Thus attachment is not antithetical to self-reliance, whereas dependence and independence are indeed considered polar opposites. Blatz's distinction between immature and mature dependence went a long way toward correcting the notion implicit in the dependence-independence polarization that dependence is an undesirable characteristic beyond infancy. However, Blatz held that a young person could not have a healthy relationship with parents except through having become independent of them; he did not conceive of a parent constituting a maturely dependent secure base for an offspring. Nevertheless, his concept of mature dependent security is one of his most important original contributions to an understanding of personality development.

Deputy agents. Blatz's theory includes defensive processes, termed deputy agents. This term implies that when persons can neither accept the consequences of their own behavior nor rely on other agents (such as parents) to do so, they have to resort to other substitute or deputy agents. He liked these "agents" or processes to analgesic drugs that reduce pain without coping with the cause of the pain—an apt characterization of defenses. As such, they provide some illusory security. The more that people rely on deputy agents as a source of security, and the less they rely on other sources, especially on independent and mature dependent security, the more fragile is their adjustment. Nevertheless, Blatz attached some value to these defensive processes in their analgesic role. If they temporarily assist people to overcome insecurity enough to get on with the acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant to the problem at issue, they can gradually shift the basis of security to confidence in their own resources, and dispense with the defenses provided by the deputy agents.

likened

Some common deputy agents, as I recall them, were intolerance of the views of others, and blaming others for one's own shortcomings. I now think that Blatz arrived at his list in a purely *ad hoc* fashion in the course of his clinical experience, and never claimed that it was complete. He rejected Freud's notion of using libidinal energy to banish painful experience to the unconscious, but apparently did not attempt to discover another explanation for the mechanisms through which defenses operate. In considering deputy agents in scale construction I felt handicapped by multifarious particulars without any basis for grasping the underlying processes. I do not believe that one can cope with defenses in personality assessment without a theoretical basis for understanding them, and indeed I believe that such a basis must acknowledge the existence of

unconscious processes. Current attachment theory has gone a long way toward handling this problem.

Security versus insecurity. Blatz's theory does not hold with a simplistic dichotomy between secure and insecure. The degree to which children are secure can be assessed through an examination of their confidence in others, especially parents, to provide comfort, reassurance, and protection when needed, and their confidence in being able to cope with the world on the basis of their own skills and knowledge. Similarly for an adult, it would be largely the combination of the contribution of mature dependent and independent security that would tell the story. This then would be balanced against the incidence and strength of feelings of insecurity in making the judgment of how secure in comparison to how insecure the person felt.

But there is also the issue of the security contributed by immature dependence on others beyond childhood and by deputy agents. One can not arrive at a single security-insecurity score, but should instead consider the *patterning* in a comprehensive assessment. This patterning was implicit in the assessment research that Blatz directed, even though I do not recall him ever being theoretically explicit about this matter.

AREAS OF SECURITY AND INSECURITY

It was Blatz's emphasis on close interpersonal relations—intimacies, as he called them—that I found compelling. In retrospect, it is quite extraordinary how both psychological theory and research at that time shied away from scientific exploration of interaction between intimates, especially between sexual partners. Even Blatz, who attached much importance to marriage in his security theory, did not propose to assess security in marriage—at least in what was then the foreseeable future—because of the danger of arousing consternation in the general public, which could jeopardize further security research.

Although dependent security, both immature and mature, implied close interpersonal relationships, Blatz conceived of security as pertaining to other areas of life as well. Specially, he mentioned not only familial intimacies (children and their parents) and extrafamilial intimacies (age peer intimacies in close friendships and later in sexual partnerships), but also vocations (jobs and money), avocations (hobbies and interests, with boredom implying insecurity) and philosophy of life. In this Blatz's theory spreads its net more widely than does attachment theory. In focusing so closely on intimacies some attachment researchers have come to conceive of them as the only source of security—which is a pity. However, it is intended here to focus on intimacies, and to refer the reader to Grapko (this volume) for more detail about others areas.

ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY-INSECURITY

My dissertation research, the first assessment of security–insecurity following Blatzian theory, focused on familial and extra-familial intimacies. The subjects were young adults—116 third-year college students enrolled in a course in personality which required an autobiography from each student. I used these autobiographies in my study.

Scales were constructed for each of the two areas, consisting of self-report items administered as a group pencil-paper test. Anonymity was ensured for both scale scores and autobiographies by a student-monitored system using identifying numbers. The scale items were in the form of statements descriptive of feelings and attitudes. The students were instructed to check only those statements they felt to be applicable to them; they were not forced to respond to every item.

Each test had two scales. The two scales for the familial test were security–insecurity and independence-dependence. These items were presented in random order. A scale value was calculated for each item. For the security-insecurity scale items indicating security were given positive scale values, and those indicating insecurity negative values. The algebraic sum of these values gave the security-insecurity score. Similarly for the other scale an independence-dependence score was obtained. Four patterns of scores could be identified on the basis of the two scales: independently secure, dependently secure, independently insecure, and dependently insecure.

The two scales for the extrafamilial test were security-insecurity and tolerance-intolerance—the latter indicative of the extent to which "deputy agents" were used. The score for each scale was the algebraic sum of the scale values. The four patterns of scores were thus socially secure and tolerant, socially secure and intolerant, socially insecure and tolerant, and socially insecure and intolerant.

Care was taken to ensure internal consistency in each scale, and to discard items that did not meet the criterion. The difficult part was the weighting of the various items, for there was preexisting methodology for only forced-choice scales—and I felt strongly that these introduced distortions. My methodology was severely criticized by some.

However, the size of the total scale scores turned out not to matter, because it became apparent that the strength of the method of assessment lay in the patterns of scores that emerged. Thus, for example, those whose scores were clearly secure in the familial area could be divided into those whose scores on the independence-dependence scale were either clearly independent or clearly dependent. There were twice as many who were secure and independent as there were those who were secure and dependent. Nearly all those who were secure and independent in familial rela-

tions were clearly both secure and tolerant in the extrafamilial area. (In attachment terms, those who were securely attached to parents but who were also self-reliant tended to have secure relationships with age peers and were free of distortions of social attitudes associated with defensive processes.)

I selected the most extreme cases manifesting each of the most common patterns of scores, together with a few striking uncommon patterns, as illustrations of the usefulness of the descriptions yielded both by the patterning of the scores and the content of the items endorsed. For each of these I summarized the autobiography. I was enormously impressed by the congruence of the score patterns and the autobiographical material. However, at that point I could conceive of no way to analyze 116 autobiographies in order to demonstrate objectively the congruence of these with the test patterns, and had to be content with my own subjective impressions, which scarcely provide acceptable validation.

After the war had ended, Blatz and I codirected a research team to resume scale construction to cover other areas. I myself revised the familial and extrafamilial scales, and constructed scales assessing security-insecurity in the areas of avocations and philosophy of life, and these were eventually published (Ainsworth & Ainsworth,1958). Apart from a study by Leonard Ainsworth, establishing that insecurity as measured by these scales was correlated significantly with rigidity in problem solving, I know of no use that was made of them. In the 1960s I made an unpublished exploration of their diagnostic utility with mental hospital patients, and found that testable depressives scored as strikingly insecure, but that patients diagnosed as having anxiety state, paranoid conditions, or psychopathic character disorders were conspicuous for endorsing very few items that resulted in minimally secure scores. This confirmed dissatisfaction I had already felt about the weaknesses of self-report tests in the case of highly disturbed subjects. I am certain that such tests do a poor job of detecting defensive maneuvers that mask underlying insecurity.

When I joined Bowlby's team at the Tavistock Clinic, I became wholly enchanted with the notion of prospective research in the natural environment, relying on direct observation of behavior beginning in infancy, rather than upon retrospective inferences from paper-pencil tests for adults. Meanwhile, others of Blatz's team in Toronto went on with security research constructing their own tests, with Grapko studying children and Flint infants. Although their work has been of undoubted value, I shall not attempt to comment on it, for my purpose here is to highlight the contribution that my work with Blatz made to attachment theory and research.

CONCLUSIONS

Among the aspects of Blatz's position that I most valued was the implication that intimacies could be subjected to scientific study, and that the findings of such study were relevant to an understanding of personality development. However, it was the concept of security itself, as a guiding principle to such understanding, that constituted his chief contribution to my subsequent work.

First, his developmental emphasis, with the fundamental concept of a secure base, was perhaps the most important concept that I carried over into attachment theory. In infancy and throughout later life it balances exploration, learning, knowledge, and skills that result in security based on self-reliance with intimacies in which one can rely on one's partners to provide security. Both develop in parallel, but in interacting parallel, each aspect influencing the other.

Second, Blatz's theory holds that a secure base in an intimate relationship, from which one could explore confidently (and achieve), depends on the motivation implicit in the "appetite of change," as well as upon whatever motivation leads one to seek proximity to a caregiving figure. Thus the motivations underlying both seeking and sustaining intimate relationships and exploration, learning, and achievement stemmed from different behavioral systems. In attachment theory these are the attachment and the exploratory systems. Blatz seemed to take for granted that there was some underlying motivation for an infant to seek security, comfort, and reassurance from a parent when feeling insecure but did not specify it.

Third, Blatz's work implies that feelings of security and insecurity are central to an assessment of individual differences in personality relevant to mental health. This has been absorbed into attachment theory and research, and gained widespread acceptance and use.

Fourth, the developmental perspective inherent in security theory begins with the interplay between immature dependent security and insecurity, and continues with the development of both independent security and mature dependent security and may be extended to apply to adult life. Blatz did not sketch in the story of this development across the life span in any detail, but relied on future research to do so. Attachment research began at the beginning and has filled in much detail about the infancy period, but only recently has begun to extend itself into the issue of attachments and other affectional bonds in later years. However, I am optimistic that security theory coupled with attachment theory will do much to expand our knowledge of personality development across the life span.

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