Chapter 5

Early Social and Emotional Development II

University of Guelph
Psychology 3450 — Dr. K. Hennig
Winter 2003 Term

Chapter 5 in outline

1) Human Attachment
   • The cognitive component
   • Attachment theory as a theory of emotion regulation
2) Factors that Influence Attachment Security
3) Fathers as Attachment Objects
4) Attachment and Later Development
5) Adult Romantic Attachment
HUMAN ATTACHMENT

Note. student reflections are NOT diagnostic!!!
1) The cognitive component

Internal working models (IWM)

- IWM = small scale model based on past experience from which consequences associated with alternative actions relating to the present and future can be explored; scripts or event schemas of ‘who does what to whom, when, where, why, and how’

Scripts

- Knowledge about the world is represented not only in terms of simple facts (concepts & objects) but knowledge involving our social interactions
- help us to make sense of behaviors we observe but instruct as to how to act
- E.g., “going to movies script” - expect one pay to enter, cost depending on age and time of day, may opt for popcorn, quiet talking OK before but then no talking
2) The emotional component

Attachment as a theory about emotion regulation

- emotion of “felt security”- attachment figure serves a secure base function (supportive of exploration, play)
- child feels afraid/anxious (insecurity) - exploratory goals are overridden by impetus to seek refuge (assistance, comfort)

Insecure attachment strategies (link Piaget: means-ends)

- hyperactivation - recurrent attempts to minimize distance from attachment figure (AF) and elicit support and love by clinging and controlling behavior; anxious attentional focus on attachment figures; hyperactivation of negative emotions and thoughts
- deactivation (defensive exclusion) - minimize distance from AF, avoid interdependence, seeks self-reliance and control, suppress distressing thoughts, repress painful memories
Making conceptual links:
Behaviorism and operant conditioning

(Rf+) Behavioral approach
Signals of reward
Signals of nonpunishment
(positive)
EMOTIONS
Hope
Elation
Relief
Approach
(explor)

(Rf- & punishment)
Behavioral inhibition
Signals of punishment
Signals of nonreward
Novel stimuli
Innate anxiety stimuli
(negative)
EMOTIONS
Anxiety
Inhibition, avoidance
Increased arousal
Increased attention

Flight/flight system (FFS)
Punishment
Nonreward
EMOTIONS
Terror
Rage
Unconditioned escape
(fight)

Bowlby’s notion of defensive exclusion
Segregation of contradictory information
• not all information in one system may be similarly represented in another system
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN ATTACHMENT

• Strange Situation (SSn; Ainsworth et al., 1978) - a measure of the caregiver-child relationship
  • A series of eight episodes that attempt to simulate:
    • naturalistic caregiver/infant interactions in the presence of toys (to see if infant uses parent as a secure base)
    • brief separations and encounters with strangers (=stress)
    • reunion episodes (to see if infant derives comfort, continues to explore)

Attachment (contd.)

• Four categories of parent-child classification:
  • Secure (65%): explores when with mother; may be upset upon separation; greets mother warmly upon return; if distressed will seek comfort from mother
  • Resistant (10%): explore little; distressed upon separation; become very distressed upon mother’s departure; ambivalent upon her return
  • Avoidant (20%): show little distress upon separation and may ignore mother even when she tries to gain attention; often sociable with strangers but also occasionally ignore them
  • Disorganized/disoriented (5-10%): most stressed by SSn; approach-avoidance confusion (e.g., move closer then abruptly move away)
Ainsworth’s Strange Situation
(8 episodes - 3 min. each)

1) Parent and baby enter playroom
2) Parents sits while baby plays (parent as secure base)
3) Stranger enters and talks to parent (stranger anxiety)
4) Parent leaves (separation anxiety)
5) Parent returns and offers comfort; stranger leaves (reunion behavior)
6) Parent leaves (separation anxiety)
7) Stranger returns and offers comfort (ability to be soothed by stranger)
8) Parent returns and offers comfort (reunion behavior)

Cultural variations

- Assumption of attachment system as a biological drive (i.e., universal)
- yet, percentage within each category varies
  - invalidates the SSn or reflects cultural differences in child-rearing and attitudes?
  - e.g., German parents encourage independence and discourage close, clingy contact; view children as dependent (higher percentage of avoidant)
  - e.g., Japanese parents rarely leave infants; view infant as independent (higher percentage of resistant)
- Adaptiveness? most cultures prefer secure infants; secure is the most common
FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ATTACHMENT

- Quality of caregiving (caregiving hypothesis):
  - pos. attitude, sensitivity to infant’s needs, est. interactional synchrony, provides stimulation and emotional support -> infant derives comfort & pleasure -> secure attachment
  - Resistant: irritable and unresponsive temperaments; inconsistent caregiving, unresponsive; mood dependent enthusiasm/indifference
  - Avoidant (2 patterns): impatient, unresponsive to signals, have neg. feelings toward infant, do not enjoy close contact with baby (i.e., rigid, self-centered individuals who often reject the baby)
    OR overzealous parents, who chatter, provide excess stimulation when not wanted

At risk parents

- Depressed moms – ignore babies signals, fail to establish synchronous relationships; infants become angry and may soon match symptoms
- Parents who felt unloved, neglected, or abused; vow to do better but unrealistic in their expectations; irritable, fussy baby is perceived as rejecting
- unplanned/unwanted pregnancies
  - child: more frequently hospitalized, poorer in school, less stable family life, poorer peer relations, more irritable and antisocial
  - adulthood: less marital satisfaction, jobs, mental health
**Ecological constraints**

*Relationships aren’t just about individuals: context!*

- Insensitive parenting increases with health-related, legal, or financial problems
- E.g., unhappy marriages prior to child:
  - less sensitive caregivers
  - less pos. attitude to baby and parenting role
  - less secure attachment
- Happy marriages: support one another’s parenting efforts, esp. if a difficult infant
- “at risk” babies (sluggish, irritable) -> nonsynchronous interactions (unless parents are happily married)

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**Attachment or temperament?**

- Temperament influences but attachment can’t be reduced
- Maternal attachment is unrelated to paternal attachment
- Parental training of moms with difficult children -> secure attachment
- Maternal problems (illness, depression, life stressors) => insensitivity & insecure attachment
- Child problems (prematurity, illness) did not predict attachment
Attachment or temperament? (contd.)

- Integrative theory
  - caregiving characteristics predictors in/security, but
  - temperament predicts the type of insecurity
  - moms of secure infants display a lot of patience and positive affect, adapt caregiving to temperament
  - fearful (inhibited) -> anxious attachment
  - fearless (uninhibited) -> avoidant attachment
- Goodness-of-fit model (see C, 4) - sensitive care includes ability to tailor one’s routines to temperamental characteristics of child

FATHERS AS ATTACHMENT OBJECTS

- Become increasingly involved over the 1st year (M = 1 hr/day interacting)
- predictors: happy marriage, wife encourages involvement
- Different parental roles played
  - moms: sooth, talk, play traditional games (peek-a-boo)
  - dads: playful stimulation, initiate unusual or unpredictable games
- Once dad forms an attachment bond, serve as secure base
Father influence on cognitive development

- Predicts intelligence tests for infants & toddlers
- Involved and sensitive fathers predicts greater cognitive task persistence
- Effect continues through middle childhood, even when father no longer resides at home
- Contact with absent father is also important for girls
- Unclear as to how father fosters intellectual and academic achievement

Fathers’ influence on early socio-emotional development

- Both is best, moms are next.
ATTACHMENT AND LATER DEVELOPMENT

- Attachment at 12-18 mos. predicts:
  - problem solving at 2 yrs.
  - complexity and creativity in symbolic play
  - preferred as playmates
- Disorganized attachment predicts:
  - hostile and aggressive pre-school children
  - greater peer rejection
- Waters et al. (1979) - Secure at 15 mos. predicts:
  - social leaders at 3.5 yrs; initiating play activities
  - sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, popular
  - personality: curious, self-directed, eager to learn

Attachment outcomes (contd.)

- Insecurity at 15 mos. predicts:
  - socially and emotionally withdrawn
  - hesitant to engage others
  - personality: less curious, less interested in learning, more forceful in pursuing their goals
- Camp follow-up at 11-12 yrs: security predicted better social skills, having close friends
- Conclusion:
  - attachments are stable over time (over 80% consistency between infancy and grade school
  - correspondence with adult attachments (AAI, self-report)
**ADULT ATTACHMENT**

*The four category model and strategies*

- Experience in the past -> later interpretations & expectations
- Two research traditions: (a) social psych (b) developmental

**Model of Self**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of Self</th>
<th>Positive (approach-avoidance)</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SECURE (secure)</td>
<td>Preoccupied (resistant/anxious)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISMISSING (avoidant)</td>
<td>FEARFUL (disorganized/disoriented)</td>
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**Paper and pencil**

*Which relationship style best fits you?*

- **Sec:** It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don’t worry about being alone or having others not accept me.
- **Preoccupied/Anxious:** I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don’t value me as much as I value them.
- **Dismissing/Avoidant:** I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.
- **Fearful:** I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
Adult working models (IWM)
The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- “I’d like you to describe your relationship with your parents as a young child... if you could start from as far back as you can remember?
- Choose five adjectives that describe your relationship with your mother/father... you said she was _____ are there any memories or incidents that come to mind with respect to her (being) _____
- To whom are you closest? Why isn’t there this feeling with ______
- When you were upset as a child what would you do?

Adult working models (IWM)
The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- Secure adults are free to explore both the negative and positive memories (cognition) of past events along with their accompanying emotions, able to be objective in their recollections of the past, coherent/integrated episodic & semantic (specific vs. general) recollections, value relationships, view relationships as formative; enjoy satisfying interpersonal relationships
- Avoidant adults dismiss themselves cognitively or behaviorally from the source of distress (defensive exclusion), discount the relevance of early experiences on present functioning, fewer reported memories; specific recalled events tend to be negative, if not rejecting, yet generally report positive relations with parents (semantic memory); suppress personal deficiencies and minimize distance from others
Adult attachment (contd.)

Note the cognitive and related emotional components

- Anxious/Preoccupied - adults have ready access to negative memories (cognitive) but seem to have difficulty controlling the automatic spread of activation from one memory with a particular negative emotional tone to other, different negative emotions - suggesting an undifferentiated, chaotic emotional architecture; difficulty organizing memories into a coherent narrative (‘incoherence of mind’); e.g., have strong angry feelings which are experienced as interfering and potentially overwhelming; interpersonally - continue to seek parental acceptance; focus on their own distress, ruminate on negative thoughts, adopt emotion-focused coping strategies which exacerbate rather than diminish distress. Along with self-devaluation aims at seeking support/assistance

- Fearful/Disorganized - combo of Anxious and Avoidant

Parental models (contd.)

- Mothers assessed on AAI before birth of baby predicted 60%-75% whether infants would show insecure/secure patterns in the SSn

- Mother’s working model and sensitive caregiving made separate contributions
  - so something else is going on other than working model
  - sensitive caregiving
  - mom’s working model was a better predictor in one study
  - (This point we will need to come back to when we discuss self-development)
**Stability, destiny, and change in attachment**

- Secure to insecure shift:
  - mother returns to work and infant goes to a poor day care
  - life stressors: marital problems, maj. illness, financial problems
- Insecure to secure shift:
  - child goes to good day care; caregiver recovers
- Marital transitions
- “Working” models implies change
- Note: neither secure nor insecure perfectly predicts outcome [individuals have some control]

**THE UNATTACHED INFANT:**

_Social isolation in dogs_

- Thompson & Melzack (1956) separation of post-weaned Scottish-terrier pups. After 7 to 10 mos:
  - isolated pups were more agitated upon exposure to novel stimuli (umbrella opening)
  - less dominant (competing with others for a bone)
  - low social responsiveness (explored the pen rather and paid little attention to other dogs (vs. wagging tail, barking at, and examining other dogs); this persisted for years
  - subsequent research: sensitive period (3 to 12 wks of age) for development of social responsiveness in dogs
Harlow’s rhesus monkeys

- Isolated infants in individualized steel cubicles. When removed:
  - appeared terrified by clutching themselves, crouching, burying their heads in their arms (to shut out this newly introduced world?)
  - Abnormal behaviors: self-biting, rocking, pulling out hair
  - Eventual recovery with daily 30-min. play periods with a normal age-mate
- If isolated more than 6 mos. avoided others, preferred toys; any social direction was towards other isolates (misery loves miserable company)

Harlow’s rhesus monkeys (contd.)

- Absence of normal aggressive period; acceptance of others’ aggressiveness
- 12-mo. isolates were much worse:
  - withdrawn, apathetic
  - often had to be separated as they were likely to be injured or killed during periods of aggressive play
- Isolates develop bizarre patterns of social and sexual behavior during adolescence & adulthood [latency]
- Recovery? play with younger less active & aggressive peers who cling rather than aggress
- Critical or sensitive period?
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