

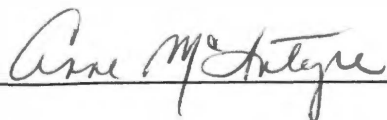
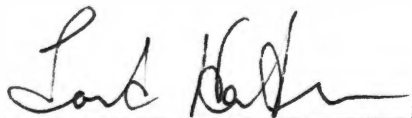
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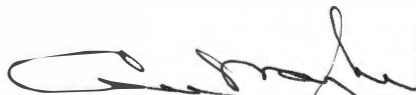


Robert G. Wahler, Major Professor

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ATTACHMENT SECURITY: THE GENESIS OF PARENTING STYLE?

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ian P. Haag

December 2005

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

Thank you for the endless love, support, and encouragement you've offered me throughout the years... for instilling in me the notion that there are few limits that aren't self-imposed... and for giving me the courage to face disappointment on the road toward success. Most importantly, thanks for reminding me to enjoy the ride along the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mentor and research advisor Bob Wahler for his input and assistance on this project. His guidance, both on this study and throughout the course of the program, has helped me to find comfort in pursuing my own particular interests in the clinical field. I would like to thank him for providing me with the support I needed to settle my feet in graduate school and the freedom to search for what moved me. His sound advice along the way has made for a smooth journey. Additionally I would like to thank Anne McIntyre and Len Handler for their contribution to the development and refinement of this project as members of my master's committee.

Finally, I would like to thank Noah Roost, Eric Peters, and Chad Sims for their support and assistance with this project. There is no doubt that this study could not have been completed without their help. For that, I am ever grateful.

ABSTRACT

There is a great deal of literature examining attachment security and parenting styles but little research has considered these topics in relation to each other. This paper examines the nature of this relationship with a particular focus on Baumrind's (1978) categorical parenting styles and Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Utilizing a clinic population of 20 parents, it was proposed that securely attached parents would evidence authoritative parenting styles, while insecurely attached parents would evidence non-authoritative parenting styles. The Adult Attachment Projective (AAP), the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) were utilized in assessing attachment security. The Parental Authority Questionnaire – Revised (PAQ-R) was administered to measure parenting style. Variable results were found; findings utilizing the RQ supported the hypothesis, findings from the AAS were approaching significance in the hypothesized direction, and those arising from use of the AAP were non-significant. Further investigation of this relationship is suggested. Additionally, these findings are discussed in relation to van IJzendoorn's (1995) discussion of the transmission of attachment.

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CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One could argue that parenting is the most thoroughly investigated area of research within psychology. As we are so often drawn to issues that we find personally relevant, this fact seems logical when one considers the significant impact parents, both in their absence and in their presence, make on each and every one of us. The wealth of areas that has been investigated under the heading of parenting would prove to be too numerous to summarize here. A broad overview of the parenting research can be found elsewhere (Maccoby, 1992).

This paper will focus on two particular paths forged within the parenting research, the first of which is parenting style. As will be discussed, the concept of parenting style has along the way been variously understood, conceptualized, and investigated through a number of different theoretical models. Researchers have at times disagreed on how to operationalize parenting style, how it impacts child development, and the contextual nature of the concept. This disparity, rather than reducing parenting style to a disjointed, meaningless label, helped guide researchers toward a more unified understanding. It provided a rich body of research that offered a more fully considered and specified conceptualization of the complexities of parenting style. Within this paper, parenting style will be discussed utilizing its most contemporary definition as “a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together,

create a climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). This description represents the integration of much of the earlier work on parenting styles and reflects the current understanding of this concept. What this definition means, how it came to be, and the implications of such a conceptualization will be addressed in full in the next section.

The second major component of this paper will address Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Although this review will focus a great deal on the development of attachment security in early infancy and childhood, the intended goal is to understand attachment-security as it exists in adulthood. Like parenting style, a significant amount of research has been performed in investigating the specifics of attachment theory. Though this work began as a model for understanding the complexities of the development of the infant-parent bond, it has grown into a theory that encapsulates much more. It now provides an explanatory model for both behavioral and cognitive components of the relational process, extending from infancy through adulthood. Attachment theory suggests that individuals develop experienced based, idiosyncratic models that they utilize as guides through the interpersonal world. This model is initially reflected in specific behavioral patterns in infancy and early childhood (Bowlby, 1969) and later in life exemplified in particular styles of discourse, especially within discussions of attachment related issues (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). The development of attachment theory, as well as a more thorough examination of the concept, will be presented later in the paper.

The purpose of this project is to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between adult attachment security and parenting style. In particular, the question of

whether particular attachment styles in adulthood are linked to particular parenting styles will be addressed. In addition, there has at this point been little research addressing the issue of how parenting styles develop. This paper will contend with the question of whether one's attachment security may in fact provide the pathway through which parenting style arises. In particular, will specific aspects of a parent's model of relating, as defined in her (his) attachment classification, necessarily predispose her (him) toward a particular style of parenting? The justification for this proposition, as well as a more thorough discussion of its particulars, will be addressed following the discussion of these two topics: parenting style and attachment.

Parenting Style

Early Conceptualizations

The first half of the 20th century was witness to the emergence of two dominant theoretical conceptualizations in psychology: the behavioral and psychoanalytic perspectives (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992). While their impact was felt throughout psychology as a whole, these theoretical perspectives would prove to be particularly influential in the discussion of the socialization of the child (i.e. the act of parenting). Though considerably different in many of their central tenets, these two paradigms would eventually come to a remarkably similar understanding of the parenting process, due in part to their methods for evaluating it (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992). This proved to be a significant step towards creating the framework for the current understanding of the parenting process. Although more recent

conceptualizations of parenting have advanced beyond this earlier work, current theories of parenting cannot be fully appreciated without first revisiting these early beginnings.

Both the behavioral and psychoanalytic perspectives began by assuming a unidirectional model of parenting: in each case the parent was viewed as the agent of change with the child largely passive in the process (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992). The behavioral approach considered the parent-child relationship analogous to the teacher-student relationship: the parent teaches the child the necessary and appropriate modes of functioning within society (Maccoby, 1992). Based on the theories of classical and operant conditioning, it was proposed that the child learns what is socially appropriate through the parent's systematic reinforcement of their child's behaviors. Similarly, in the psychoanalytic conceptualization, because the child was believed to have innate sexual and aggressive drives that would run out of control if left unchecked, the parent's task was to socialize the child by placing restrictions on their behaviors.

In both the behavioral and psychoanalytic conceptualizations the parent presents the child with the appropriate manners for behaving and imparts the necessary conditions so that the child adopts these behaviors. In essence, they have suggested that the characteristic of import resides within the parent. Variability in the child's development was considered a reflection of disparate styles of parenting. Where these theories differed was in their assertion of exactly what parental characteristics represented this agent of change (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992).

With much of the focus on reinforcements and contingencies, the behavioral theorists chose to focus their research on particular parenting practices that could be

tracked and measured. It was proposed that the observable behaviors of the parents constituted the distinguishing characteristic of an environment, and consequently would offer the best insight into differences in child socialization outcomes. The psychoanalytic investigation into parenting was concerned with the emotional relationship and, in particular, the attitudes of the parents. It was thought that the attitudes and beliefs of the parents would provide insight into the meaning and purpose of particular behaviors. The difficulty arose with the fact that the only means for measuring these parental attitudes was through the manner in which they were expressed: behaviors. Researchers attempted to overcome this problem by aggregating behaviors into general descriptive classes that might represent attitudes, such as strictness or warmth.

Although some significant advances were being made in the attempt to understand the socialization process, research suggested that these early models were not adequately addressing the issue as they proposed. Focusing primarily on parental behavior, studies at this point were unable to consistently predict the psychological well being of a child. For the most part, these models failed to tap into the affective components of parenting or consider the importance of the parent's value and belief systems. It was evident that there existed the need to develop a single model that could account for these attributes that had, so far, gone largely unexamined.

A New Direction

Diana Baumrind (1978) offered the first model that regarded the parent's *belief* system as central to the parenting process. She began with the basic tenet that parents hold a particular mindset about the appropriate means for socializing their child. In

particular, she focused on the concept of control and suggested that a parent's beliefs about appropriate use of control would provide a framework for the particular parenting practice he utilizes. This conceptualization is exemplified in her now widely utilized categorical distinction of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting. Baumrind noted that the *authoritarian* parent believes that "the application of socialization pressures is both appropriate and necessary (1978, p. 241)." The parent views himself as the primary agent for promoting societal adaptation for the child. The authoritarian parent believes that the position he holds as a parent indicates that he is better suited for distinguishing what are the appropriate values, beliefs, and behaviors for his child. Disagreements over these issues are met with action from the parent, quite often through the restriction of the child's autonomy. It is through these actions that the child comes to learn what constitutes appropriate beliefs and behaviors. The *permissive* parent approaches parenting with the belief that, if left to his own devices, the child will naturally develop the appropriate and necessary attributes that will be beneficial in society (1978). These parents believe that to interfere with this process, such as by placing injunctions on the child's behavior, risks limiting the child's ability to reach their full potential. A permissive parent regards himself as a resource for the child: affectionate, affirming, and utilizing behaviors that seek to foster a sense of freedom in the child. The *authoritative* parent is guided by a rational mentality that is issue focused and seeks to maintain a balance between parental authority and personal autonomy (1978). This mindset is based on the parent's recognition of the importance of both the child's expression of his idiosyncratic qualities as well as the need for growth according to socially guided ideals. The attitude is expressed through the parent's open and direct

communication about parenting issues with the child. It is the promotion of a balance between autonomy and duty and enjoyment and responsibility.

In early research investigating the relationship between parenting styles and child competence, Baumrind found that preschoolers of authoritative parents tended to be the most socially competent (1971a). She noted that while warmth and control were both necessary elements of successful parenting, her findings showed that neither warmth nor control were able to independently predict the child's social competence. Only when both factors were utilized in her assessment was an accurate prediction possible (1971a). As further research utilizing these parenting styles began to emerge, counter-theoretical results were starting to show up in a number of studies. A particularly significant finding in terms of challenging the merits of Baumrind's classification system had to do with variability in parent effectiveness when race was included as a variable. It seemed that in both African-American (Baumrind, 1972) and Asian-American (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, & Roberts, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994) families, authoritarian parenting styles, rather than authoritative parenting, better predicted child competence. This finding countered much of the results that had consistently shown up in the research utilizing Caucasian, middle-class families. It seemed that context, in this case variability as defined by cultural differences, played a part in shaping the effectiveness of particular parenting styles.

Maccoby and Martin (1983) were intrigued by Baumrind's system and sought to examine it further. In particular, it was the notion that her categorical presentation of parenting style could be reduced down to two factors, in Baumrind's case, control and warmth. Rather than utilizing the terms that Baumrind had previously discussed, they

elected to use the terms demandingness and responsiveness, respectively. Maccoby and Martin noted that demandingness refers to various forms of control, including “discipline, maturity demands, restrictiveness, and encouragement of independent contracts (1983, p. 39).” Responsiveness is loosely defined as reinforcement and is used in the ethological sense, unlike warmth, which is more contingent on the child’s behavior. In this respect, responsiveness reflects differential reinforcement of child behaviors and parental sensitivity (1983). Using these two orthogonal dimensions and working from Baumrind’s tripartite model, Maccoby and Martin devised a two-dimensional parenting style classification system. Utilizing the notion of high or low demandingness vs. high or low responsiveness, they conceptualized four parenting styles. Although they have maintained some of Baumrind’s terminology, their dimensions are rough estimates of her categories. The four classifications generated by their system were authoritative-reciprocal, authoritarian-autocratic, indulgent-permissive, and indifferent-uninvolved.

The *authoritative-reciprocal* parent is both demanding and responsive while the *authoritarian-autocratic* is demanding but unresponsive. These two typologies roughly equate to Baumrind’s authoritative and authoritarian classifications, respectively. Where Baumrind generated one style that reflected the undemanding parent, i.e. permissive (Baumrind, 1978), Maccoby and Martin (1983) proposed two categories: indulgent-permissive, and indifferent-uninvolved. The *indulgent-permissive* parent, similar to Baumrind’s permissive classification, is responsive to their child’s needs, but places few demands on them. The *indifferent-uninvolved* parent also demands little from their child, but unlike the indulgent parent, is unresponsive to their needs. Similar to Baumrind’s findings, the authoritative-reciprocal parenting style tended to generate the most socially

competent children, the authoritarian-autocratic parent less so, and the indifferent-uninvolved parent the least competent (1983).

Maccoby and Martin had succeeded in taking Baumrind's qualitative configurational approach and returning it to the field's earlier quantitative roots as a two-dimensional orthogonal system. More importantly, what they also succeeded in doing was returning the focus of the research back to the parent's *behaviors*, rather than their overarching belief system. Baumrind's (1978) categorical system attempted to highlight the beliefs and values about the parenting process that underlie the parent's particular behaviors. Maccoby and Martin, utilizing a reductionistic approach, were more focused on the component parts, in particular the parenting practices. It was clear that there existed a distinct disagreement among the parenting researchers over what constituted the area of import with respect to parenting style: parenting behaviors or the values and beliefs a parent holds about the parenting process?

Parenting Style and Parenting Practices

Darling and Steinberg (1993) sought to address this very tension. They attempted to unify this disjunct between attitudes and behaviors by suggesting that both elements are important and are in fact separate, though related, components of the same parenting process. They began their argument by offering a reassessment of what was meant by the variously defined term "parenting style." As was noted above, this term has been used in numerous forms, most notably referring either to the beliefs and values a parent holds about the socialization process or to the behaviors that make up this process. Darling and Steinberg suggest that parenting style be understood as "a constellation of attitudes

toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create a climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed" (1993, p. 488). So, what does this mean? To understand this definition, one must begin with the parent's overarching beliefs about parenting. These beliefs represent the general goals, values, and ideals that a parent holds with respect to parenting-related issues. These beliefs set the stage for two forms of expression: behaviors and attitudes. The behavioral expression of the parent's goals and values is evidenced directly in what is now defined as "parenting practices." The particular attitudes about the nature of the parent child-relationship, which develop naturally out of the goals and values the parent holds, are what Darling and Steinberg choose to classify as "parenting style." These attitudes are expressed to the child not just verbally, but also through means such as tone of voice, body language, focused interest, and through various emotional expressions. Darling and Steinberg note that there are at least two ways in which parenting style impacts the socialization process.

For instance, because certain aspects of the style are conducive to certain parenting practices, parenting style can actually facilitate particular parenting practices. Research has shown that dialogue about drug use between parent and child can help to lower the risk that the child may eventually use drugs (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). In this case, a parenting style that incorporates an attitude that fosters open communication would, as opposed to one that does not hold this value, prove to be more effective in an intervention aimed at preventing drug use. Authoritative parenting, which is characterized by an openness to reciprocal dialogue and a responsiveness to the child's cues should prove to be effective in this situation. Conversely, directing an authoritarian parent into a discussion about drugs with their child would probably not prove to be as

effective. Their tendency to limit open discussion as well as the unlikelihood of their considering their child's point of view as being as relevant as theirs suggests that a discussion about drug use would not be facilitated by their style and would prove to be ineffective. In this conceptualization, parenting style acts as a moderator, influencing the effectiveness of particular practices on child development.

A second proposition is that parenting style creates an emotional environment in which parent-child interactions are experienced. The particular climate of this environment affects the child's willingness to be socialized by the parent and consequently the effectiveness of their parenting practices. For instance, a parent whose style promotes a generally more warm, open, and supportive setting may find that they have fostered an environment of reciprocity in the home. When they try to direct their child to complete some task, for instance cleaning his room, they may find their child more open to following their orders. This is contrasted with a demanding parent, who is at times harsh and unsupportive and has fostered an environment where the child expects little in return for the following of parental decrees. When the child is asked to clean his room, the parent may be met with more resistance than the warm, supportive parent.

In this overview of the development of the literature we have observed the gradual transformation of how researchers have conceptualized and classified issues associated with parenting style. Much of the early work focused primarily on parenting behaviors with little attempt at distinguishing the practices from attitudes or values related to parenting. Only more recently has the importance of attitudes as distinct from parenting behaviors been recognized and applied to theoretical models. Darling and Steinberg's (1993) model represents a logical extension of the early research and

provides us with a distinct understanding of parenting styles as representative of a constellation of attitudes about parenting.

Before leaving the topic of parenting styles and moving on to discuss attachment theory, I want to reiterate the purpose of this project. As was noted before, most research in these two areas has developed independently of the progress made in the other. In continuing with a review of attachment theory, the reader may begin to recognize that while these two fields have moved forward separately, in many ways their progression has led them toward a similar conceptualization. Following the review of attachment theory I will discuss the nature of this similarity and the possible implications of this theoretical convergence.

Attachment

Early Conceptualizations: John Bowlby

Prior to John Bowlby's (1969) conceptualization of "attachment," there had been little structured, scientific study of the nature of the bond that exists between a parent and child. Psychoanalytic theorists had offered a great deal of insight and understanding into this topic, but their methods were being cited more and more as lacking the scientific exactitude that was being demanded of laboratory research. Studies were often retrospective and concerned with pathogenicity, wherein an adult patient's relational problems were traced back in time to an earlier age where a specific cause could be deciphered. While there was undoubtedly significant merit to this work, it was difficult to test its validity. Coming from a psychoanalytic background himself, Bowlby sought to utilize the theoretical underpinnings of this body of work in conjunction with the latest

findings that ethology and control theory had to offer. In doing so, he hoped to formulate a theory of attachment that would prove to be more comprehensive and informative.

Bowlby's (1969) decision to make the methodological shift to a prospective approach probably represents one of the most significant changes he made in differentiating his work from the earlier attempts at understanding the parent-child bond. At that time, very little developmental research was actually utilizing methods that involved direct observation of infants or children. Bowlby suggested that one could gain important insight into developmental issues by observing a child's behavior and extrapolating forward. The basis for this proposition grew largely from his beliefs about the psychological development of a child. Bowlby proposed that, for an infant, there existed a direct congruence between his behaviors and his psychological processes. This was true, he suggested, because there is no distinction or separation between the external behavior and the inner mental processes in infants – they are one and the same (1969). Only with age and experience does the child begin to transform external behavior into a separate thing we call inner mental states. One could therefore study the objective behaviors of an infant and confidently translate them into the language of the mental processes.

Bowlby (1969) made an additional break from much of the early theoretical positions when he sought to formulate elements of his theory on tenets from the field of ethology. Utilizing the findings of various research projects performed with primates, he espoused the importance of the need for security and touch as a precedent for the development of an attachment bond. Bowlby noted that human attachment should not be considered a secondary drive linked to the need for nourishment or reproduction, but

rather, a primary need in and of itself (1958). He suggested that the primary role of attachment was to maintain proximity to an attachment figure. Attachment behavior was therefore considered to be any behavior that was aimed toward the maintenance of this proximity.

Drawing on concepts derived from control theory, Bowlby (1969) proposed that human attachment systems developed in much the same way as other subhuman primates. Briefly stated, Bowlby utilized the notions of set-goals and feedback systems to provide the underlying mechanics of the attachment behavior. He suggested that initially, the infant orients her social responses, such as crying or smiling, toward others without any significant discrimination. This orientation becomes more specified over time as the infant begins to distinguish between familiar and foreign others. Bowlby noted that familiar individuals tend to stimulate an approach response in the infant, while strangers elicit withdrawal or aggression behaviors. Further focusing of these discriminating behaviors results in heightened recognition of, and preference for, a particular attachment figure. Bowlby stated that at this point, the infant has developed a “primitive cognitive map (p. 267)” for set behaviors in terms of her environment. He considers the map “primitive” because of the limited level of development; the infant has yet to acquire the capacity to generate insight into the attachment figure’s intentions. She is presently only aware of her own aims and desires.

At around 2 or 3 years of age, through repeated and prolonged experience with the attachment figure, the child is able to develop a set of beliefs about the potential behaviors of the parent across situations (Bowlby, 1969). This ability to utilize insight into the parent’s mental state allows for a reciprocal relationship to develop between the

attachment figure and the child. Bowlby notes that a relationship consisting of consistent and stable interactions between parent and child is likely to be marked by pleasing interchanges. He termed this a *secure attachment* (1969). Conversely, when these terms are not met, the child experiences the interchanges as unpleasant and intolerable. This he classified as an *insecure attachment* (1969). Bowlby noted that these terms refer to the fact that the child has developed an internal working model. The child is now able to assess “how the physical world may be expected to behave, how his mother and other significant persons may be expected to behave, how he himself may be expected to behave, and how each interacts with all the others (Bowlby, 1969, p. 354).”

The Contributions of Mary Ainsworth

While Bowlby’s contributions to the field of attachment were significant, they would not have been nearly so without the work of Mary Ainsworth. Her direct observations of mother-infant dyads in the home (Ainsworth, 1967, cited in Bretherton, 1992) and in the laboratory (Ainsworth, 1970; 1978) were dually important as outgrowths of Bowlby’s early thoughts on attachment, and at the same time, contributors to the sharpening of this theory as it continued to develop. Her home observations of Ugandan mother-infant dyads were the first to examine individual differences in parent-child pairs. Ainsworth’s (1967, cited in Bretherton, 1992) findings suggested three categories of infant attachment status: (1) secure infants, who seemed generally content and exhibited comfort in exploring a room in the presence of their mother, (2) insecurely attached infants, who cried a great deal and rarely explored their surroundings, and (3) infants who appeared wholly unattached. Arguably more important than her classifications, was the

finding that maternal sensitivity correlated with infant attachment security; sensitive mothers were more likely to have securely attached infants, while less sensitive mothers tended to raise infants that were less secure in their own attachments.

These observations were replicated and extended in a later study that employed the more controlled environment of the laboratory (Ainsworth, 1970). Ainsworth developed the now widely utilized Strange Situation Procedure (1967), which assesses infant behavioral responses to two separations and two reunions between mother and infant over eight interpersonal scenarios. The researchers found there to be three consistent patterns of attachment. *Secure infants* exhibited comfort in exploring an unfamiliar room while in the presence of their mother, showed signs of distress upon her exit, and actively reengaged her upon her return, seeming to regain comfort from her presence (1970). *Insecure-avoidant infants* also exhibited comfort in exploring the unfamiliar room while in the presence of their mother, but showed little or no concern over her departure. These infants continued to remain unresponsive upon the return of their mother, appearing to avoid or ignore her (1970). *Insecure-resistant infants* appeared distressed throughout the entire procedure, rarely explored, and exhibited an extreme preoccupation with their mother across scenarios. These infants displayed considerable distress upon separation and an ambivalence upon their mother's return, mixing approach and retreat behaviors (1970).

These classifications, arising out of the concurrent work of Bowlby and Ainsworth, represented the internal working model, the blueprint for the infant's expectations about relationships. This research, and the understanding that arose from it, was based on a model that examined nonverbal infant behaviors as the object of

importance. But clearly, an individual's internal working model did not stop at infancy. As was noted above, Bowlby proposed that as the child progresses in age, a distinction develops between external behaviors and inner mental states. If attachment was going to be studied in populations beyond infancy, it was clear that new methods that extended beyond observing nonverbal behavior were needed.

Contemporary Understandings of Attachment

In the first step toward making this shift to newer methods that could be extended beyond infancy, Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) redefined the notion of what constituted the internal working model. They described it as the "set of conscious and/or unconscious rules for the organization of information relevant to attachment and for obtaining or limiting access to that information, that is, information regarding attachment-related experiences, feelings, and ideations" (Main, et al., 1985, p. 67). So, what does this mean, and how is it a departure from the earlier concept? The authors note that this is a move from the behavioral to the representational level. The internal working model is the individual's mental construction of "the self in relation to attachment" (1985, p. 67). This means that the model not only guides the feelings and behaviors of the individual, but also affects how information related to attachment is assessed, if at all. When one discusses attachment classification they are not just considering the individual's behavior in particular situations, but also to what information they attend, and how they attend to it. One of the larger ramifications of this reconceptualization was that language and its organization became just as pertinent to understanding attachment as was other attachment behavior. This expansion into the linguistic features of

attachment meant that research could be effectively extended to assess attachment related issues in scenarios beyond infancy and the Strange Situation.

A direct outgrowth of this new direction in attachment research was the development of the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) or AAI. The AAI is a loosely constructed interview that requires participants to participate by providing a narrative on a number of issues relating to their interpersonal history. In addition to discussing relationships in general, participants are asked to recall autobiographical memories that seem to relate to the discussion and to talk about their current relationship with their parents. Participants are also asked to provide attachment-related memories from their own childhood, reflect upon these memories, and offer any new insights into the recalled experiences (1985). These transcripts are then coded, partially for content but primarily for the manner in which the participant structures their language and on how they reflect on their memories. Of particular importance is the coherence of the narrative. George et al. (1985) suggested that these markers of the narrative would help to identify the attachment status of the participant. Building off of Main et al. (1985) and their definition of the internal working model, it was proposed that an individual's attachment related narrative would reflect the manners in which they structured their conceptualizations of relationships. George et al. (1985) found four consistent narrative patterns. *Autonomous*, or secure, adults tend to present narratives that are coherent, clear, supported by concordant memories, and of an appropriate length. *Dismissing* (insecure) participants tend to contradict themselves in their narratives and often claim to be unable to recall attachment-related experiences. Adults classified as *preoccupied* (insecure) tend to provide rather confusing and lengthy narratives that reflect

a negative affective preoccupation with their parents. Finally, participants classified as *disorganized* or *unresolved* usually have a traumatic experience in their past that they have been unable to resolve and which tends to interfere with their narrative (George et al., 1985). This is usually exhibited in their inability to produce a structured and cohesive discussion of their past experiences. As would be presumed, autonomous adults tend to be more emotionally available as parents, while preoccupied and dismissive parents are less available to their children (Biringen, Brown, Donaldson, Green, Krcmarik, & Lovas, 2000).

One of the major theoretical questions that subsequently arose from this research (as well as Ainsworth, 1971) considered the relationship between a parent's attachment status (as measured by the AAI) and their child's attachment classification (as measured by the Strange Situation). This question has been addressed by a vast number of studies. In a meta-analysis of these projects Van IJzendoorn (1995) found the results to be consistent and strong. For the secure/insecure split, the correlation between parent and child attachment status was $r = .47$, with a large effect size of 1.06. Van IJzendoorn noted that it would take 1,087 studies showing a null effect to reduce this to an insignificant finding. This systematic consistency remained even across the three-way classifications. If a parent was deemed autonomous, it was highly likely that their child would be classified secure. Parents categorized preoccupied had children who were observed to be insecure-resistant, and parents classified dismissive had children observed to be insecure-avoidant (Van IJzendoorn, 1995). This is an astonishing result when one considers the two seemingly dissimilar domains that are being analyzed: verbal discourse about attachment related issues in the case of the AAI, and infant behavioral responses to

distress upon the separation from, and reunion with, a parent in the Strange Situation.

Similar findings have been noted in three longitudinal studies that examined the consistency between the AAI and the Strange Situation for one individual from infancy to adolescence or early adulthood (Hamilton, 1995; Jones, 1996; Watters, Merrick, Albersheim, & Treboux, 1995; cited in Main, 1996). These studies found similar rates of consistency, with a 77% correspondence in the secure/insecure split (Hamilton, 1995), and 78% (Jones, 1996) and 77% (Watters et al., 1995) correspondence rates across the three main attachment classifications. These findings support Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy's (1985) reconceptualization of attachment security in that they demonstrate the consistency of measuring the attachment status of the same individual through the various measures of infant behavior and later verbal discourse.

These studies investigating the relationship between parent-child attachment classifications, as well as the intra-individual longitudinal correlations of attachment status, provide a synthesis of the attachment research to date. Bowlby's (1969) initial suggestion that early external behaviors are transformed into inner mental states has at this point been supported by the existing research. Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) have provided some clarification for what these inner mental states, or internal working models, are, and described how they function. As was noted above, they depict the model as a means for organizing information, emotion, and experiences related to attachment. The individual has a working model as their conscious and/or unconscious guide to navigate the interpersonal world. What begins as a behavioral response to attachment focused interpersonal situations comes to be internalized and utilized as a mental framework for negotiating relationships.

Attachment: The Framework for Parenting Style

The Present Study

As was noted above, there has been little research addressing the relationship that may exist between a parent's attachment security, or internal working model, and their parenting style. Theoretically, it seems reasonable that these two relational attributes would be associated with each other. Parenting style, it has been shown, refers to a parent's attitudes about parenting and develops directly out of the goals, beliefs, and values they hold. An individual's internal working model refers to their mental representation of relationships and functions as a guide in interpersonal interactions. It follows then that, whether conscious or not, both parenting style and an individual's attachment security reflect attributes that function at the conceptual level. They are both more aptly recognized as aspects of the individual's mental world rather than as particular behavioral repertoires. Additionally, when one considers the fact that each of these variables seeks to characterize the nature of the parent-child relationship, it seems unlikely that they would operate independently of each other. This project seeks to investigate this connection by determining if in fact a predictable relationship exists between a parent's attachment classification and their parenting style.

Before offering my hypotheses on this relationship, it is necessary to distinguish the manner in which these two variables (parenting style and attachment security) will be defined and utilized. For the purpose of this project, attachment status will be reduced to the secure/insecure split. Likewise, parenting style will be assessed along the authoritative/non-authoritative dimensions. At this point it would seem an arbitrary and anecdotal distinction to associate preoccupied or dismissive attachment classifications

(both insecure) with either an authoritarian or permissive parenting style (both non-authoritative). It seems that viable arguments could be made for associating either of the insecure classifications with either of the non-authoritative categories. It is for this reason that the more condensed categorical dimensions of secure/insecure and authoritative/non-authoritative will be utilized.

That being said, I propose that a parent classified as securely attached will concurrently hold attitudes about parenting that reflect an authoritative parenting style. Conversely, those parents found to be insecurely attached will likely hold attitudes about parenting categorized as non-authoritative. This claim is based on the notion of felt security as central to the parenting process. Felt security is a more recent reconceptualization of Bowlby's proposition that attachment behaviors are guided by the need for proximity to the caretaker. It is now suggested that rather than proximity, it is instead the drive for the feeling of security that is the set goal of the attachment system (Collins & Read, 1990). It is this notion of the need for felt-security that I apply to parents and the parenting process. Authoritative parenting reflects a willingness to be flexible, to manage ambivalence, and to yield some control to the child. This type of conduct would be difficult to manage if the parent didn't possess an overall sense of security about the nature of relationships. This security allows for both the exertion and the relinquishment of control without the fear that the relationship will be destroyed or lost. Conversely, non-authoritative parenting reflects a rigidity wherein little flexibility makes its way into the parent's notion of what their child needs. The parent's adoption of a resolute position on what is appropriate parenting functions as a defense against their fears and anxieties about relationships. It is the all-or-none belief about what is

appropriate parenting that protects the parent from tapping into the sense of insecurity they feel about relationships.

I mentioned briefly at the beginning of this paper that an individual's attachment security might act as a developmental pathway through which a particular parenting style might arise. This notion is already widely accepted and recognized with respect to parenting behaviors as discussed by Van Ijzendoorn (1995). In a meta-analysis of 10 studies involving 389 dyads, a modest effect size of 0.72 ($r = .34$) was found for the relationship between a parent's internal working model of attachment and their corresponding responsiveness (Van Ijzendoorn, 1995). Though Darling and Steinberg (1993) note that parenting practices such as responsiveness are considered to be distinctly separate from parenting styles, they maintain that they arise from the same set of values and goals that a parent holds. It seems reasonable then that parenting styles, like parenting practices, develop out of the same framework of attachment. Further, the early development of the internal working model, its general stability over time, and the focus on relationally related material suggests fertile ground for the evolution of attitudes about parenting, otherwise known as parenting style.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

Twenty parents were recruited through the University of Tennessee Psychology Clinic for the purposes of this study. Each parent was a patient in the clinic (9) or had a child who was a patient (11). The sample was composed of 16 mothers and 4 fathers, ranging in age from 26 to 48, with an average age of 37.5. Nine of the 20 parents failed to report their combined household income. Of those who did complete this question, income levels ranged from \$10,000 to \$75,000 with an average household income of \$36,431. With respect to marital status, eleven parents reported being married, one was separated, five were divorced, one parent was single, and two parents did not complete this question. No significant findings arose due to these demographic measures, so they were all collapsed across participants.

Materials

Attachment

Three measures assessing attachment classifications were utilized.

1. The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) is an adaptation of the attachment measure originally developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987). It consists of four short descriptions of an individual's possible attachment styles. After reading the four descriptions, the participant is instructed to select the classification that

he feels best describes him in relationships. From this selection, the participant can be classified into a secure, preoccupied, dismissing, or fearful attachment group. Statistical findings, as well as discussions of the development of the measure, can be found in Hazan and Shaver (1987) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991).

2. The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) is an attachment measure developed by Collins and Read (1990). It is an 18-item measure based on Hazan and Shaver's (1987) adult attachment descriptions with additional aspects of attachment included, such as caregiver availability and responsiveness, and the individual's reactions to separation. The participant assesses on a 5-point Likert-scale how characteristic each statement is in describing their feelings. Response patterns indicate the classification that best represents the participant's attachment status: secure, preoccupied, or dismissive. Development of this measure as well as the relevant statistical information can be found in Collins and Read (1990).

3. The Adult Attachment Projective (AAP; George & West, 2001) is an attachment measure utilizing participant's responses to a set of eight pictures comprised of one neutral, and seven attachment-related drawings. Participants are asked to provide a narrative for each drawing, describing what is occurring in the picture, what events may have led up to the scene depicted, thoughts and feelings the characters are experiencing, and what the respondent believes may occur next. The narratives of the seven attachment-related drawings are then assessed by a rater along three dimensions: discourse, content, and defensive processing. Participant's particular response patterns along these dimensions allow for their designation to either a secure, preoccupied, dismissive, or unresolved attachment group. To assess for interjudge reliability on the

security ratings of the Adult Attachment Projective in this study a Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed. As was noted above, a standardized scoring process led each rater to designate a participant into a particular attachment group based on the participant's narrative. Interjudge reliability, based on the assessment of five randomly selected participants was .83, suggesting adequate interjudge reliability for this project. Information relevant to the development of this measure, including statistical findings, can be found in George and West (2001).

Parenting Style

One measure was utilized for the assessment of parenting style. The Parental Authority Questionnaire - Revised (PAQ-R; Reitman, Rhode, Hupp, & Altobello, 2002) is a 30-item measure designed to assess the particular parenting style of a respondent based on phenomenological appraisals of their own parenting practices. This measure is a minor modification of Buri's (1991) original Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Whereas the PAQ was designed to ascertain retrospective adolescent ratings of their parent's parenting style, the PAQ-R items were modified for completion by the parents themselves. The items of the PAQ-R are based on concepts derived from Baumrind's (1971) discussion of components of the various parenting styles. Participants responded to each of the items on a five-point Likert-scale indicating how much they agree with each statement. From these response patterns, parents are classified according to a particular parenting style: authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive. Information relevant to the development and modification of the PAQ, as well as relevant statistical findings, can be found in Buri (1991) and Reitman et al. (2002).

Procedure

Participants came to the clinic for a one-time session generally lasting about one-and-a-half hours. They were originally asked to complete one self-report questionnaire and one demographic form. In addition, participants were also asked to complete a projective measure assessing attachment classification. Due to concerns about the validity of one of the measures being utilized in this project, two new self-report measures were added after seven participants had already completed the study. Because of this late addition, seven participants did not complete the two self-report measures assessing attachment security: The Relationship Questionnaire and the Adult Attachment Scale. Thirteen participants completed the entire set of measures within the study: three self-report measures, one demographic form, and one projective measure. Participants were compensated with a \$25 gift-card to an electronics store upon completion of their participation.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

As was noted above, there were no significant differences that arose due to gender, patient status, marital status, or income level; these variables, then, were collapsed for the analyses.

A chi-square test of independence was used to assess the relationship between attachment status (secure vs. insecure) and parenting style (authoritative vs. non-authoritative). As there were three measures of attachment security, this test was performed for each measure. The same parenting style measure, the Parental Authority Questionnaire, was utilized for each of these analyses.

There was a significant relationship in the predicted direction between attachment, as measured by the Relationship Questionnaire, and parenting style, as measured by the Parental Authority Questionnaire, $\chi^2 (1, N = 13) = 6.20, p = .03$. A secure parent was more likely to evidence an authoritative style, while an insecure parent was more likely to evidence a non-authoritative style (see Table A-1). A similar though non-significant pattern in the predicted direction emerged for the relationship between the Adult Attachment Scale (attachment security) and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (parenting style) as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 13) = 3.899, p = .10$ (see Table A-1). No significant pattern emerged with respect to the overall relationship between attachment, as measured by the Adult Attachment Projective, and parenting style, as measured by the Parental Authority Questionnaire, $\chi^2 (1, N = 20) = .642, p = .642$. Even so, there was some

suggestion that elements of this pattern did exist. While there was no preference for a particular style in the secure parents, with nearly equal representation of both forms, insecure parents evidenced the same preference for non-authoritative parenting as found in the Relationship Questionnaire and Adult Attachment Scale (see Table A-1).

To investigate the similarities of the three attachment measures, Pearson's correlations were run between these three measures as well. The correlation between attachment security as measured by the Relationship Questionnaire and the Adult Attachment Scale was significant, $r = .86$, $p < .001$. The correlation between the Adult Attachment Projective and the Relationship Questionnaire was non-significant, $r = .38$, $p > .05$, as was the Adult Attachment Projective's relationship with the Adult Attachment Scale, $r = .55$, $p > .05$. All correlations listed in Table A-2.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Earlier in this paper it was proposed that a securely attached parent would be more likely to report an authoritative parenting style while an insecurely attached parent would be more prone to report a non-authoritative parenting style. This hypothesis has been supported to the extent that one of the three measures, the RQ, did indeed reflect this relationship. Furthermore, there are valid considerations to address with respect to the non-significant findings of the AAS and AAP. Although the AAS did not reach the critical alpha level (.05) necessary to substantiate the claim of a systematic relationship between attachment and parenting style, a similar pattern emerged as in the RQ. Indeed the findings of the AAS analyses were approaching significance in the predicted direction. Noteworthy of these two measures is the fact that only 13 participants were being considered in these analyses. While one cannot assert that the same pattern would persist if more participants were utilized, it is remarkable that a significant result arose from such a small number of participants.

Unlike the AAS, the AAP did not exhibit the same overall pattern as the RQ, nor was the finding approaching significance. As these three measures were designed to assess attachment security, the question arises as to how these variable results arose. A potential explanation for this can be found in Meyer, Finn, Eyde, Kay, Moreland, Dies, Eisman, Kubiszyn, and Read's (2001) discussion of the difficulties that can arise is utilizing multi-modal methods to assess a similar construct. They note that self-reports

“elicit details concerning patients' conscious understandings of themselves and overtly experienced symptomatology (2001, p. 145).” Projective measures on the other hand, “elicit data about behavior in unstructured settings or implicit dynamics” and tap into “underlying templates of perception and motivation (2001, p. 145).” The result is that, although the same construct is being addressed, different aspects of that construct are being measured. Meyer et al. (2001) note in their analyses of the literature that this methodological disjunct “is evident from the relatively low to moderate associations between independent methods of assessing similar constructs (2001, p. 145).” This is apparent in the current study, as the relationship between the RQ and the AAS is quite strong while those between the AAP (a projective) and the self-reports are less so (see Table A-2). It is quite possible that participants did not score consistently secure or insecure across the attachment measures because the measures were tapping into differing components of attachment. Furthermore, the main analysis examined the relationship between these three attachment measures and the PAQ-R, a self-report. In this light, it is of little surprise that the two self-reports, the RQ and AAS, fared much better in their comparison to the PAQ-R. Perhaps these three self-report measures allowed for the same self-censuring toward social desirability that would be unavailable to a participant completing a projective.

In the process of considering what factors may have affected the outcome of this particular study, the nature of the population that was utilized must also be addressed. The participants in this project were predominantly married, middle class, Caucasian women who were active patients in the university clinic. This is potentially problematic when one considers that the proposed hypothesis was nomothetic in nature; the findings

of this study are not easily generalizeable due to the limited nature of the participant population. Further investigation utilizing more varied populations would improve external validity is certainly called for. In addition, while the PAQ-R and AAP were normed on relatively representative samples, the reliabilities and validities of the AAS and RQ were based on university students whose demographics differ greatly from this project's population. This raises further questions as to the applicability of these measures to this particular population of participants.

Conclusion

This paper began with a detailed review of the development of both the parenting style and attachment literature. Contemporary understandings suggest that each concept exists at the level of mental representations, meaning they are more appropriately understood as conceptual in nature rather than behavioral. Parenting style reflects the *attitudes* a parent holds about the parenting process. Likewise, an individual's internal working model represents an organized set of *beliefs* about the expected security of relationships. These are not descriptors of behaviors per se, but rather belief systems organized around the perceived viability of particular interpersonal behaviors. As both an individual's parenting style and their internal working model are organized around this notion of interpersonal behavior, it seems reasonable that they would be related.

This project has begun to address this possibility in an initial examination of the relationship between these two variables. Preliminary results suggest the strong likelihood that there is indeed a relationship that exists between an individual's sense of

security in relationships, and their flexibility in parenting. As predicted, it has been found that a secure parent is more likely to evidence an authoritative parenting style while an insecure parent is more likely to evidence a non-authoritative parenting style. While further study of this relationship needs to be conducted before any definite statements are made on this topic, this study suggests that further examination is indeed in order.

Though the purpose of this investigation is rather specified, it is ultimately aimed at developing a broader understanding of the parent's contribution to the developmental process of the infant/child. In particular, this study begins to address one aspect of the question of what parental attributes coincide with positive child development. Although child outcome measures were not assessed in this study, the psychological health of the child is implicitly understood in the connection that has been found in this study between secure attachment in adulthood and consequent authoritative parenting. Research has demonstrated a strong relationship between secure attachment in the parent and the corresponding secure attachment in the child (van IJzendoorn, 1995). As has been noted, a secure internal working model is one marker of emotional health in a child. If a securely attached parent is more likely to be authoritative in nature, it is thus plausible to suggest that an authoritative parenting style is related to the development and maintenance of a secure attachment in the infant/child. van IJzendoorn (1995) notes that while parental responsiveness accounts for a major portion of the child's attachment security, the largest influence lies in mechanisms outside of the parent's behavioral sensitivity to their child, what he labels the "transmission gap (p. 398)." In other words, the greatest determinant of a child's sense of security is something other than parental

behavior. I return to the notion that parenting style reflects the *attitudes* and *beliefs* that create the environment within which particular parenting behaviors are expressed.

Perhaps this “transmission gap” represents the emotional environment generated by the parent’s style as well as much of the parenting process that doesn’t fall under “practices.”

Were one to examine a parent’s belief system in addition to their behaviors it would likely provide a more complete understanding of all those factors that help to promote the healthy development of the securely attached child.

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APPENDICES

Table A-1

Relationship between Parenting Style and Attachment Security

Attachment Security ^a	Parenting Style	
	Authoritative	Non-Authoritative
Relationship Questionnaire (N = 13)		
Secure	5	1
Insecure	1	6
Adult Attachment Scale (N = 13)		
Secure	5	1
Insecure	2	5
Adult Attachment Projective (N = 20)		
Secure	4	3
Insecure	5	8

Note: Values represent the number of participants per cell.

^aAttachment security as measured through three independent attachment measures.

Table A-2
Intercorrelations between Attachment Measures
(N = 13)

Measure	1	2	3
1. Relationship Questionnaire	--	.86*	.38
2. Adult Attachment Scale		--	.55
3. Adult Attachment Projective			--

* $p < .001$

VITA

Ian P. Haag was born in Topeka, Kansas on August 13th, 1978. He attended Topeka public schools and graduated from Topeka High School in May of 1996. He attended Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in May of 2000. Following graduation, Ian returned to Topeka and began working as a staff member on the adolescent inpatient unit at Menninger Psychiatric Hospital. Additionally, he worked as a research assistant for a Menninger run study investigating childhood aggression. In the fall of 2001, he entered the Social Psychology doctoral program at the University of Nevada, Reno. Finding himself unfilled by purely research-oriented pursuits, he made the decision to return to the clinical setting. Ian left Reno in the fall of 2002 and entered the doctoral program in Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. His Master of Arts degree in Psychology was received in December of 2005.

Ian is presently completing his clinical training at the University of Tennessee Psychology Clinic where he conducts psychotherapy as well as psychological evaluations with clinic patients. He is concurrently working under supervision as a psychotherapist for a community health provider with predominantly underserved populations. His current research interests focus on relational dynamics, particularly parent-child, as they develop out of early primary attachments. Additionally, he is interested in the everyday impacts of problematic parent-child bonds, especially with respect to psychotherapy. He plans to graduate from the clinical program in May of 2007.

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