

Journal of Social and Personal Relationships

<http://spr.sagepub.com/>

Attachment Styles and Marital Adjustment among Newlywed Couples

Marilyn Senchak and Kenneth E. Leonard

Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 1992 9: 51

DOI: 10.1177/0265407592091003

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://spr.sagepub.com/content/9/1/51>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

International Association for Relationship Research

Additional services and information for *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://spr.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://spr.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://spr.sagepub.com/content/9/1/51.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Feb 1, 1992

[What is This?](#)

ATTACHMENT STYLES AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG NEWLYWED COUPLES

Marilyn Senchak & Kenneth E. Leonard

New York State Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse

Recent research has shown a relation between adults' attachment styles and their interpersonal functioning. The present study examined attachment styles and marital adjustment among 322 young, newlywed couples participating in a longitudinal study of alcohol use and marital functioning. Couples completed a three-item measure of adult attachment styles and measures of marital intimacy, partners' marital functioning and partners' conflict resolution behaviors. The data were analyzed within a repeated measure design. Couple attachment type (both partners' attachment styles) was the between subject factor, and husband-wife was the within subject factor. Results showed that husbands and wives tended to pair on the basis of similarity of attachment security. However, it was the nature of the pairings, rather than their similarity, per se, which was associated with the marital adjustment variables. Couples in which both partners were securely attached evidenced better overall marital adjustment than couples in which one or both partners were insecurely attached. Additional findings are discussed.

According to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973), people construct internal, working models of themselves and their early relationships, which function to guide social behavior throughout the life-span. Consistent with this, Hazan & Shaver (1987) found that adults' attachment styles predicted the quality of their romantic experiences and their beliefs about relationships. Compared to avoidant or ambivalent subjects, secure subjects reported happy, trusting romantic experiences. Avoidant subjects were character-

This research was supported by Grant No. 1 RO1 AA07183-01A1 from NIAAA to Kenneth E. Leonard. We would like to thank Steve Duck, Harry Reis and Cathy Surra and Joel Bennett (JSPR's reviewers) for helpful comments on an earlier version of this manuscript. Reprint requests to: Marilyn Senchak, Research Institute on Alcoholism, 1021 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203, USA

Journal of Social and Personal Relationships (SAGE, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi), Vol. 9 (1992), 51-64

ized by fear of intimacy; ambivalent subjects were distinguished by a preoccupation with relationships. Given the relevance of attachment styles for adults' romantic relationships, it seems reasonable to suggest that attachment styles might also be important with respect to marital relationships. Bowlby (1979) implicated insecure attachment in a variety of adult dysfunctions, including marital problems, and several studies have indicated that disruption of childhood attachments is linked to marital disharmony (e.g. Quinton et al., 1984).

Bartholomew (1990) has discussed several specific ways in which working models of attachment might affect marital relationships. Drawing on interpersonal theories of personality (e.g. Sullivan, 1953; Swann, 1983), she notes that individuals tend to select social partners who sustain their initial dispositions, regardless of whether these dispositions are positive or negative. In addition, positive assortative mating has been demonstrated for a variety of characteristics (e.g. extroversion, Buss, 1984) and has been shown to be independent of social homogamy factors (Phillips et al., 1988), suggesting an active process. Given that attachment styles are aspects of personality specifically concerned with interpersonal orientations in relationships with significant others, it seems likely that they would be central dimensions on which individuals select marital partners. Moreover, this selection may be of a mutually confirming nature, be it by similarity or complementarity of styles. For example, avoidant adults would choose other avoidant or unavailable partners in order to keep intimacy at bay, thereby maintaining initial avoidant tendencies. Alternatively, they might select ambivalent partners whose dependence validates avoidance. Secure adults, on the other hand, would be less able to tolerate marital partners who either avoid or are preoccupied with intimacy. Instead, they would most likely choose other, secure partners who share and confirm their comfort in close relationships. In a recent study, Collins & Read (1990) found support for partner similarity on secure attachment, i.e. dating partners shared similar beliefs about closeness and dependability in relationships. However, it is not known whether adults choose marital partners on the basis of attachment styles. Moreover, 95 percent of the population marries at some point in their lives (Cate & Lloyd, 1988), and there is considerable descriptive value in examining the natural occurrence of pairings across attachment styles among married couples.

In addition to partner selection, individuals tend to create social environments that sustain their initial dispositions by behaving in ways that elicit self-confirming responses from others (Snyder, 1987). Bartholomew (1990) has suggested that the interaction patterns associated with different attachment styles may affect marital relationships through this process. Her position is consistent with current views which link behavioral patterns learned in childhood with subsequent marital and family development (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Caspi & Elder, 1988). For example, marital interaction studies show that spouse's use of an avoidant behavioral style, such as withdrawal and hostility, is related to negative partner affect (e.g. Gottman & Levenson, 1988). Such an avoidant strategy would be confirmed in the partner's negative response and would likely be related to marital dissatisfaction. Negative communication and conflict behaviors have repeatedly been shown to discriminate distressed from non-distressed marriages (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988), yet there is little research on factors which might cause these behaviors (for an exception to the latter, see Fitzpatrick, 1990, on marital schemata). Working models of attachment function to guide behavior in relationships, and these behavioral styles may affect the marital relationship.

Several studies have addressed relationship satisfaction and behavioral patterns associated with different attachment styles. Collins & Read (1990) reported that attachment style dimensions were related to partners' evaluation of the relationship, although differently for males and females. Pistole (1989) examined attachment styles and conflict resolution behaviors reported by college students concerning their most important romance. Secure subjects reported more adaptive strategies (e.g. compromise) than insecure subjects, and adaptive strategies were associated with satisfaction in relationships. In one study of particular relevance, Kobak & Hazan (1991) asked husbands and wives to complete attachment style and marital satisfaction measures and to participate in behavioral, marital interaction tasks. Results indicated significant associations between security of attachment and both partners' marital satisfaction. Secure husbands and wives were also rated to have more constructive problem-solving interactions than insecure husbands and wives. Together, these studies support an association between attachment styles and evaluations of relationships, conflict behaviors and the quality of marital interactions.

Although these studies have shown that individuals' attachment styles are associated with different behavioral patterns and evaluations of relationships, no study has examined behaviors or outcomes as a function of both partners' attachment styles. The importance of assessing the attachment styles of both partners is indicated by Hindy & Schwarz's (1984) finding of moderate correlations in anxious attachment across pairs of relationship partners, which suggests both continuity of attachment style and variation with partner or relationship characteristics. Thus, for example, the behavioral expression of confident emotional attachment which secure individuals bring to their relationships may be modified by whether their partners hold secure or insecure models of attachment. In particular, partners may feel closer to each other and manage their households better when they are able to communicate well around issues of conflict. In contrast, couples who do not resolve conflicts easily may be less close and exhibit poorer marital functioning. The attachment styles of both partners may aptly predict interactive behavior and adjustment in marital relationships as partners act and react on the basis of their interpersonal styles.

The present study utilized a general population, paired sample of young couples drawn from marriage license applicants and will examine (1) the nature of pairing on attachment styles and (2) the implications of particular pairings on attachment styles for marital intimacy, evaluations of partners' marital functioning and partners' conflict resolution behaviors. However, it is difficult to make precise predictions concerning pairing and adjustment, since the mesh of styles that might facilitate adjustment could be a function of either similarity or complementarity.

Method

Subjects were 322 couples participating in a longitudinal study of alcohol use and marital functioning. Couples were first approached at a marriage license bureau in a medium-sized urban area. Eligible couples (first marriage, husband between the ages of 18 and 29, English speaking) were asked to participate in a short interview in exchange for \$5. Of the couples approached 78 percent agreed to the short interview, and the most common reason for refusal was lack of time. Each subject was interviewed separately by a same-sex interviewer regarding sociodemographics, premarital characteristics and alcohol use.

Couples were then recruited into the longitudinal study; 11 percent declined to participate. Each couple received \$50 for completing an extensive, take-home questionnaire concerning marital functioning, alcohol use and personality and atti-

tudes. Husbands and wives were asked to return their questionnaires within 2 weeks, using separate envelopes. Approximately 75 percent of husbands and wives returned their questionnaires. There were no significant differences on the short interview data between subjects who returned and who did not return their questionnaires. The mean questionnaire return times were: husbands, .49 months ($SD = 1.51$); wives, .34 months ($SD = 1.55$).

The subjects were predominantly white (75 percent) and Catholic (55 percent). The average ages of the husbands and wives were 24.18 years ($SD = 2.87$) and 23.35 years ($SD = 3.67$), respectively. The majority of subjects had received a high school degree or had completed a GED (90 percent), and approximately one-quarter (26 percent) had earned at least a college degree.

Attachment styles, sociodemographics and premarital characteristics were assessed during the short interview. Scales measuring marital intimacy, evaluation of partner's functioning in the relationship and partner's conflict resolution behaviors were included in the questionnaire which couples completed at home.

Hazan & Shaver's single-item measure was used to classify subjects as secure, avoidant or ambivalent in their attachment style. Subjects endorsed one of three brief paragraphs that 'best described their feelings' about comfort in close relationships. For example, the avoidant paragraph included, 'I am nervous when anyone gets too close', while the ambivalent paragraph included, 'I want to merge completely with another person'. Hazan & Shaver (1987) have documented the validity of the attachment style measure with regard to attachment history and beliefs about self and relationships. Factor analysis of the thirteen items which comprise the paragraphs has revealed a three-factor solution corresponding to the three attachment types (Hazan & Shaver, 1988). Pistole (1989) reported adequate consistency for the attachment measure over a 1-week interval.

The Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982) is composed of seventeen items which tap the degree of closeness, affection and personal disclosure in a relationship (e.g. 'How often do you confide very personal information to your partner?' 'How affectionate do you feel towards your partner?'). Subjects rated each question on a 10-point scale. Reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for the MSIS were .88 for husbands and .83 for wives.

The Family Assessment Measure (FAM; Skinner et al., 1983) is a self-report of family strengths and weaknesses, modified to refer to the marital dyad. The FAM derives from a theoretical model of important processes for adaptive family functioning (Steinhauer et al., 1984) and is highly correlated with the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). Item examples include: 'When I have a problem, my partner helps me with it', and 'My partner expects too much of me'. The FAM is inversely scored. Reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for the total FAM score were .93 for husbands and .92 for wives.

The Margolin Conflict Inventory (MCI; Margolin, 1980) is a twenty-six-item scale which measures typical behavioral responses to marital conflict. Each subject rated the frequency with which his or her partner engaged in problem-solving (e.g. 'come up with helpful ideas or suggestions'); withdrawal (e.g. 'sulk or pout'); and verbal aggression (e.g. 'insult or call names'). Subscale reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for husbands and wives, respectively, were: problem-solving (.57 and .61), withdrawal (.66 and .68) and verbal aggression (.72 and .68).

Results

The total proportions and numbers of subjects in each attachment style group were: secure, 82 percent, $n = 529$; avoidant, 11 percent, $n = 74$; and ambivalent, 6 percent, $n = 41$. The proportion of subjects endorsing the secure attachment style was similar for husbands and wives (82 percent). Slightly more husbands than wives endorsed the avoidant style (13 vs 10 percent), and slightly more wives than husbands endorsed the ambivalent style (8 vs 5 percent).

Sociodemographic data were examined for any systematic relations with attachment styles which might confound analyses of the marital adjustment variables. There were no effects of husbands' attachment for husbands' age, education, income, religion or race. One-way analysis of variance showed an effect of wives' attachment for their education only, $F(2,331) = 4.10$, $p < .05$. Secure wives reported higher educational levels ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.08$) than avoidant ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.12$) or ambivalent wives ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.06$), although mean differences were not significant by the Scheffé method.

The length of couples' premarital relationship and their alcohol use were also examined as possible confounds of relations between attachment styles and marital adjustment. Hazan & Shaver (1987) found that secure subjects reported longer relationships than insecure subjects. Longer relationships may indicate better initial functioning or time to develop skills related to functioning. Morris (1981) has suggested that alcohol may be used to regulate distance in relationships, i.e. to maintain distance or to weaken inhibitions concerning intimacy. Alcohol abuse has also been linked to marital dysfunction (Leonard & Jacob, 1988).

One-way analysis of variance showed an effect of husbands' attachment style for length of relationship, $F(2,318) = 5.45$, $p < .01$. Mean comparisons by the Scheffé method showed that ambivalent husbands reported significantly shorter relationships ($M = 19.38$ months, $SD = 15.61$) than either secure husbands ($M = 49.19$ months, $SD = 37.58$) or avoidant husbands ($M = 45.58$ months, $SD = 33.06$). Husbands' attachment style was also related to their scores on the Alcohol Dependence Scale (ADS; Skinner & Allen, 1982), which measures different aspects of heavy alcohol use (e.g. compulsive drinking), $F(2,323) = 6.63$, $p < .01$. Mean comparisons indicated significantly higher ADS scores among

avoidant husbands ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 4.70$) than secure husbands ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 3.51$); the mean score for ambivalent husbands was 3.83, $SD = 4.56$. Wives' attachment was not related to the length of their relationship or their alcohol use.

Partner selection-attachment style pairings: Chi-square analysis indicated a significant association between husbands' and wives' attachment styles, $\chi^2(4) = 19.44$, $p < .001$. The distribution of couples among cells of the 3 (husband attachment style) \times 3 (wife attachment style) contingency table is shown in Table 1. Since the numbers of couples in several of the cells were relatively small, the two insecure attachment styles (avoidant and ambivalent) were combined for both husbands and wives. Chi-square analysis of the resulting 2×2 table was significant, $X^2(1) = 13.70$, $p < .001$. A Kappa value of .21 indicated a small, positive association between husbands' and wives' security of attachment. As can be seen by examining the blocked numbers in Table 1, both insecure and secure husbands and wives were more likely to be married to secure than insecure partners, presumably due to the simple probability that a given sampled subject was secure. However, a greater proportion of insecure (34 percent) than secure husbands (14 percent) were married to insecure partners, and a greater proportion of insecure (36 percent) than secure wives (15 percent) were married to insecure partners. These results suggest a tendency for marital partners to pair on the basis of their attachment styles.

TABLE 1
Husbands' attachment style by wives' attachment style

Husbands' attachment style	Wives' attachment style			
	Avoidant	Ambivalent	Secure	
Avoidant	5	8	29	$n = 42$ 13.0%
Ambivalent	5	2	10	$n = 17$ 5.3%
Secure	22	14	227	$n = 263$ 81.7%
	$n = 32$ 9.9%	$n = 24$ 7.5%	$n = 266$ 82.6%	

Note: The sums of blocked numbers indicate the distribution of couples based on security of attachment (secure, insecure).

Data analysis: Multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs) were used to evaluate effects of husbands' and wives' attachment styles with respect to (1) ratings of marital intimacy and evaluations of partner's functioning, and (2) the three subscales of the MCI. As can be seen in Table 1, there were sufficient numbers for analysis of four couple types: (1) *insecure* — both partners insecure; (2) *mixed-W* — wife secure and husband insecure; (3) *mixed-H* — husband secure and wife insecure; (4) *secure* — both partners secure. The analyses were conducted within a 4 between (couple type) \times 2 within (husband-wife) repeated measure design. Use of the couple as the unit of analysis controls for possible bias due to non-independence of husbands' and wives' responses (Kenny, 1988). Significant multivariate effects were followed by univariate analyses with mean comparisons by the Scheffé method. Wives' education, total length of couples' premarital relationship and husbands' alcohol use, shown to be related to attachment styles in preliminary analyses, were included as covariates in subsequent analyses.

The MANCOVA conducted on the intimacy and partner functioning variables was significant for the repeated measure factor, husband-wife, multivariate $F(2,294) = 10.07$, $p < .001$, and for couple type, multivariate $F(6,582) = 3.40$, $p < .01$.

At the univariate level, wives reported significantly more marital intimacy than husbands ($M = 154.68$, $SD = 11.33$ vs $M = 149.52$, $SD = 16.59$), $t(1,295) = 18.36$, $p < .001$, and evaluated their partners more favorably than husbands ($M = 30.46$, $SD = 14.81$ vs $M = 33.77$, $SD = 13.45$), $t(1,295) = 9.75$, $p < .01$. Univariate analyses for couple type were significant for both intimacy, $F(3,292) = 4.89$, $p < .01$, and evaluations of partner functioning, $F(3,292) = 6.25$, $p < .001$. Post hoc analyses indicated similar patterns of means for couples' ratings on these variables. Husbands and wives in secure couple types had significantly higher ratings on intimacy and partner functioning than husbands and wives in both mixed couple types and non-significantly higher ratings ($p < .07$) on partner functioning than husbands and wives in insecure couple types. Secure couple types also had higher mean intimacy ratings than insecure couple types, but this comparison did not reach a conventional level of significance, possibly due to the small number of insecure couple types in this sample. The mean intimacy and partner functioning ratings for each couple type are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Means for marital adjustment variables by couple types

	Insecure	Couple types		Secure
		Mixed-W	Mixed-H	
Marital intimacy	149.44 _{AB} (12.18)	148.09 _A (13.91)	148.76 _A (16.79)	153.58 _B * (12.96)
Partners' marital functioning	36.08 _{AB} (15.10)	35.65 _A (13.57)	36.33 _A (13.90)	30.47 _B ** (13.96)
Partners' conflict resolution behaviors				
Problem-solving	37.01 (7.04)	34.17 (6.26)	35.71 (6.11)	35.87 (5.50)
Withdrawal	20.94 _A (7.03)	20.38 _{AB} (6.39)	21.84 _A (6.42)	18.96 _B ** (5.71)
Verbal aggression	7.62 _A (4.46)	6.85 _{AB} (2.97)	7.43 _A (3.40)	6.11 _B * (2.83)

Note: Marital functioning is inversely scored. Mixed-W is secure wife and insecure husband. Mixed-H is secure husband and insecure wife. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations. The significance of univariate effects for couple type are indicated by asterisks, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$. Within a given line of the table, means not sharing a common subscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$. Non-significant differences were found between insecure and secure couple types for partners' marital functioning ($p < .07$) and between secure and mixed-W couple types for partners' withdrawal ($p < .08$).

Multivariate analysis of the three subscales of the MCI was significant for couple type, multivariate $F(9,713) = 2.99$, $p < .01$. Univariate analyses indicated significant couple type effects for the withdrawal subscale, $F(3,295) = 5.54$, $p < .001$, and for the verbal aggression subscale, $F(3,295) = 4.37$, $p < .01$. Mean comparisons again showed similar patterns for both negative conflict behaviors. Secure couple types reported that their partners engaged in withdrawal and verbal aggression significantly less frequently than insecure and mixed-H couple types. Secure couple types also reported less frequent withdrawal by their partners than mixed-W couple types ($p < .08$). The mean withdrawal and verbal aggression ratings for each couple type are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 3
Means for couple type by husband-wife interaction for partners' problem-solving behavior

	Insecure	Couple types		Secure
		Mixed-W	Mixed-H	
Partners' problem-solving				
Husbands	37.84 (6.75)	32.84 (6.80)	36.72 (4.60)	35.48 (5.84)
Wives	36.18 (7.33)	35.49 (5.73)	34.70 (7.63)	36.25 (5.17)

Note: Mixed-W is secure wife and insecure husband. Mixed-H is secure husband and insecure wife. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations. Interaction was significant, $p < .05$. The only significant difference between husbands and wives occurred among mixed-W couples.

There was no main effect of the repeated measure factor, husband–wife, for the MCI subscales. Husband–wife did, however, interact with couple type to show a non-significant effect for partners' conflict resolution behaviors, multivariate $F(9,720) = 1.81, p < .07$. In univariate analysis, the husband–wife \times couple type interaction was significant for partners' problem-solving behavior, $F(3,298) = 2.83, p < .05$. Post hoc analyses revealed that the only significant difference between husbands' and wives' reports of partners' problem-solving was found among mixed-W couples. Husbands in mixed-W couples reported less frequent problem-solving by their partners than wives in mixed-W couples. Means for the husband–wife \times couple type interaction for partners' problem-solving behavior are shown in Table 3.

Discussion

The results generally supported our first proposal concerning attachment styles as a basis for pairing in marital relationships. The pattern of pairings was most clear when considering insecure (avoidant and ambivalent) and secure attachment styles. Greater proportions of insecure than secure husbands and wives were married to insecure partners, and greater proportions of secure than insecure husbands and wives were married to secure partners. This is consistent with studies reporting positive assortative mating (Caspi & Herbener, 1990) and suggests that attachment styles may be an important dimension by which individuals choose their marital partners. Presumably, one's own attachment style or interpersonal orientation is validated by a similar partner. However, both insecure and secure husbands and wives were more likely to marry secure than insecure partners, which is not unexpected given the greater numbers of secure individuals in this sample.

The second research question concerned whether and how pairings on attachment styles or couple types would be related to the measures of adjustment in marriage. In general, the findings are suggestive of a pattern whereby couples in which both partners were secure evidenced better overall marital adjustment than couples in which one or both partners were insecure. Husbands and wives in secure couple types perceived more intimacy in their marriages than mixed couple types and evaluated each other more favorably than mixed and insecure couple types, although the comparison with the

latter group was not statistically significant. With regard to partners' conflict resolution behaviors, husbands and wives in secure couple types reported significantly less frequent withdrawal and verbal aggression by their partners than mixed-H or insecure couple types and non-significantly less frequent withdrawal by their partners than mixed-W couple types. Although marital partners tended to pair on the basis of similarity of attachment security, similarity per se was not associated with better marital adjustment, since insecure couples reported significantly more negative partner behaviors and non-significantly poorer partner functioning than secure couples. Moreover, there were no significant differences between mixed-H and mixed-W couples' ratings of negative partner behavior. Thus, in the first year of marriage, insecure attachment seems to carry more weight than secure attachment in negotiations of marital outcomes. A question for future research is whether insecure attachment will continue to have a negative impact on adjustment as marriages progress through different stages of development.

Additionally, sex differences were found on several of the measures. Wives reported more intimacy and more favorable evaluations of their partners than husbands, regardless of couple type. The former is not surprising, as it is generally acknowledged that females are more socioemotionally expressive than males (e.g. Brehm, 1985). Wives' greater perceptions of marital intimacy may have generalized to their more favorable evaluations of their partners. There were no sex differences in husbands' and wives' reports of partners' negative conflict behaviors (withdrawal and verbal aggression). Sex did, however, interact with couple type to predict frequency of partners' problem-solving behavior. The crux of the interaction appeared to be the low frequency of partner problem-solving behavior reported by husbands in mixed-W couples. Based on their own insecure model of attachment, these husbands may perceive less frequent problem-solving by their wives. However, this explanation is unlikely, since husbands in insecure couple types did not perceive less wife problem-solving. Alternatively, secure wives of insecure husbands may actually engage in problem-solving less frequently than other wives.

Additionally, ambivalent husband couples had shorter premarital relationships than couples in which the husband was secure or avoidant. Ambivalent attachment is characterized by a preoccupation with relationships, which might motivate early marriage. Previous studies (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987)

have been inconsistent with regard to length of relationship among insecure individuals. In theory, one would expect avoidant husband couples to delay marriage due to the intimacy and trust concerns which characterize this style. However, in this study, the relationships of avoidant husband couples were similar in length to those of secure husband couples. Bartholomew (1990) has outlined two types of avoidant attachment, differentiated by their conscious awareness of attachment needs. Individuals with a dismissing style defensively deny their attachment needs. Individuals with a fearful style are aware of their attachment needs but are inhibited by attachment fears. Bartholomew has suggested that the fearful style overlaps with Hazan & Shaver's avoidant style. However, it is not known to what extent this overlap occurs in the present sample or whether a distinction between dismissing and fearful avoidance will ultimately clarify inconsistencies in the relationship lengths of insecure individuals.

The proportions of subjects endorsing secure, avoidant or ambivalent attachment styles were somewhat different from previously reported figures. Studies using college student or survey samples (e.g. Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) have consistently found that just over half of the sample endorses the secure style, with the remaining half splitting their endorsements fairly evenly between the avoidant and ambivalent styles. However, in our study, four-fifths of newlywed husbands and wives endorsed the secure style. It is unlikely that our high proportion of secure subjects is due to biased sampling, since there were no differences in sociodemographics or premarital characteristics between participants and non-participants. Secure individuals may simply be more likely to marry than insecure individuals. Insecure individuals may take other relationship paths, such as multiple partners or cohabitation. Self-perception theory (Bem, 1972) would suggest that individuals see themselves as securely attached because they are newly married. Given the longitudinal nature of the present study, it will be possible to assess the stability of the proportions found in this sample as the newlyweds' relationships progress and change.

Hazan & Shaver's (1987) measure of adult attachment has proven useful in extending the concept of working models of attachment to adult interpersonal relationships. However, there are problems inherent in the categorical assessment of attachment styles. The three attachment styles have been assumed to be mutually exclusive, yet it is not possible to determine the degree to

which a particular attachment style characterizes an individual. Moreover, each attachment style has several components, and these may have differential effects. Recently, several new measures of adult attachment have been developed (e.g. Collins & Read, 1990; Kobak & Hazan, 1991), which will enable fuller examination of the content of working models and more refined prediction of attachment behaviors.

REFERENCES

- Bartholomew, K. (1990) 'Avoidance of Intimacy: An Attachment Perspective', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 7: 147–78.
- Belsky, J. & Pensky, E. (1988) 'Developmental History, Personality, and Family Relationships: Toward an Emergent Family System', in R.A. Hinde & J. Stevenson-Hinde (eds) *Relationships Within Families*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bem, D. (1972) 'Self-perception Theory', in L. Berkowitz (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 6. New York: Academic Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1973) *Separation (Attachment and Loss, Vol. 2)*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1979) *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*. London: Tavistock.
- Brehm, S.S. (1985) *Intimate Relationships*. New York: Random House.
- Buss, D.M. (1984) 'Toward a Psychology of Person–Environment (PE) Correlation: The Role of Spouse Selection', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47: 361–77.
- Caspi, A. & Elder, G.H., Jr (1988) 'Emergent Family Patterns: The Intergenerational Construction of Problem Behaviour and Relationships', in R.A. Hinde & J. Stevenson-Hinde (eds) *Relationships Within Families*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Caspi, A. & Herbener, E.S. (1990) 'Continuity and Change: Assortative Marriage and the Consistency of Personality in Adulthood', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58(2): 250–8.
- Cate, R.M. & Lloyd, S.A. (1988) 'Courtship', in S.W. Duck (ed.) *Handbook of Personal Relationships*. New York: Wiley.
- Collins, N.L. & Read, S.J. (1990) 'Adult Attachment, Working Models, and Relationship Quality in Dating Couples', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58(4): 644–63.
- Feeney, J.A. & Noller, P. (1990) 'Attachment Style as a Predictor of Adult Romantic Relationships', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58(2): 281–91.
- Fitzpatrick, M.A. (1990) 'Models of Marital Interaction', in H. Giles & W.P. Robinson (eds) *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*, pp. 433–51. Chichester: Wiley.
- Gottman, J.M. & Levenson, R.W. (1988) 'The Social Psychophysiology of Marriage', in P. Noller & M.A. Fitzpatrick (eds) *Perspective on Marital Interaction*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Hazan, C. & Shaver, P.R. (1987) 'Romantic Love Conceptualized as an Attachment Process', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52: 511–24.

- Hazan, C. & Shaver, P.R. (1988) 'Measures from our Adult Attachment Studies', unpublished document.
- Hindy, C.G. & Schwarz, J.C. (1984) 'Individual Differences in the Tendency toward Anxious Romantic Attachments', paper presented at the Second International Conference on Personal Relationships, Madison, WI.
- Kenny, D.A. (1988) 'The Analysis of Data from Two-person Relationships', in S.W. Duck (ed.) *Handbook of Personal Relationships*. New York: Wiley.
- Kobak, R.R. & Hazan, C. (1991) 'Attachment in Marriage: Effects of Security and Accuracy of Working Models', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60: 861–9.
- Leonard, K.E. & Jacob, T. (1988) 'Alcohol, Alcoholism and Family Violence', in V.B. Van Hasselt, R.L. Morrison, A.S. Bellack & M. Hersen (eds) *Handbook of Family Violence*, pp. 383–406. New York: Plenum Press.
- Locke, H.J. & Wallace, K.M. (1959) 'Short Marital-adjustment Prediction Tests: Their Reliability and Validity', *Marriage and Family Living* 21: 251–5.
- Margolin, G. (1980) 'The Conflict Inventory', unpublished manuscript.
- Miller, R.S. & Lefcourt, H.M. (1982) 'The Assessment of Social Intimacy', *Journal of Personality Assessment* 46: 514–8.
- Morris, D. (1981) 'Attachment and Intimacy', in G. Stricker (ed.) *Intimacy*, pp. 305–23. New York: Plenum Press.
- Noller, P. & Fitzpatrick, M.A. (1988) 'Perspectives on Marital Interaction', in H. Giles (ed.) *Monographs in Social Psychology of Language 1*. Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters.
- Phillips, K., Fulkner, D.W., Carey, G. & Nagoshi, C.T. (1988) 'Direct Marital Assortment for Cognitive and Personality Variables', *Behavior Genetics* 18: 347–56.
- Pistole, M.C. (1989) 'Attachment in Adult Romantic Relationships: Style of Conflict Resolution and Relationship Satisfaction', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 6: 505–10.
- Quinton, D., Rutter, M. & Liddle, C. (1984) 'Institutional Rearing, Parenting Difficulties and Marital Support', *Psychological Medicine* 14: 107–24.
- Skinner, H.A. & Allen, B.A. (1982) 'Alcohol Dependence Syndrome: Measurement and Validation', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 79: 199–209.
- Skinner, H.A., Steinhauer, P.D. & Santa-Barbara, J. (1983) 'The Family Assessment Measure', *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health* 2: 91–105.
- Snyder, M. (1987) *Public Appearances/Private Realities*. San Francisco, CA: Freeman.
- Steinhauer, P.D., Santa-Barbara, J. & Skinner, H.A. (1984) 'The Process Method of Family Functioning', *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 29: 77–87.
- Sullivan, H.S. (1953) *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*. New York: Norton.
- Swann, W.B. (1983) 'Self-verification: Bringing Social Reality into Harmony with the Self', in J. Suls & A.G. Greenwald (eds) *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*, Vol. 2. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.