



# Attachment Theory: An Objective View on We Desire The Love We Believe We Deserve

Aren Jayanthan (*I am not a professional and this has not been proofread, please do your own research.*)

CC-BY 4.0 (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Citations are owned by their respective owners. Massive disclaimer: All of this is for educational and entertainment uses only. Please entertain the thoughts here without accepting them.

Unreviewed, Objectively Researched, Subjectively Organized Paper (printer-friendly)

*There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable.*

*Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal.*

*Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness.*

*But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.*

*The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside*

*Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.*

*It remains certainly true that all natural loves can be inordinate. Inordinate does not mean 'insufficiently cautious'. Nor does it mean 'too big'. It is not a quantitative term.*

*It is probably impossible to love any human being simply 'too much'. We may love him too much in proportion to our love for God; but it is the smallness of our love for God, not the greatness of our love for the man, that constitutes the inordinacy.*

- C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls, and doesn't have another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one keep warm alone?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-11

# INTRODUCTION

**Massive massive massive clarification before we start.** I'm basically done with the entire paper but realized that I had a completely lopsided way of thinking about attachment theory.

I assumed that people fell into a distribution of 1/3 secure, 1/3 avoidant, 1/3 anxious-resistant (infant attachment) or 1/4 secure, 1/4 preoccupied, 1/4 dismissing, 1/4 fearful (adult attachment).<sup>1</sup>

- To reiterate: my assumption was if you take a group of 100 people, there would be an balanced 33/33/33 (infant) and 25/25/25/25 (adult) group of people

**This is not at all true.** The actual distribution is more (approximately) 65 secure/20 avoidant/15 anxious-resistant (infant) and 50 secure/25 preoccupied/17 dismissing/10 fearful.

This is also biased towards western populations. Distributions vary significantly by population, culture, age, and methodology

AND one other caveat: there are sooooo many papers. Some organize the infant and attachment distribution under the three-category model or four-category model FOR EACH. There's also different phrasing and organizing, which means there's four different distribution, each with different interpretations.

Please do your own research and don't take the numbers above, and quite frankly everything here, as an absolute. If I hear you're like "Well, Aren said you have a higher chance of being a dismissive because you're showing this part of

your personality to me" I will *personally* yeet you from Washington D.C. to Mars.

Everyone has different parts of their personality they may show to you. People can have one personality living multiple lives or multiple personalities living one life.

Please, for the sake of not getting yeeted, please entertain the thoughts here without accepting them.

Ok so this entire thing is actually a supplement to a paper I'm working on: ***The Longingness Complex: A Subjective View on We Desire The Love We Believe We Deserve*** which (as of the writing of this paper is about two concepts:

- **Schrödinger's Limerence** is seeing the magic in the superposition of not knowing the end and being comfortable with the unknown. (Whether it will result in a reward, punishment<sup>2</sup>, or nothing at all, or if you will bounce back from it<sup>3</sup>.) But more importantly, **falling in love with the truth**, not the idea/illusion/delusion of the truth (assuming it's not just a lie disguised a truth (while taking into consideration that it could be disguised by self, disguised by other, or both)).
- **Pavlov's Treadmill**: conditioning towards complacency and self-induced obsolescence. People tend to greatly underestimate the amount of power they have in their lives (possibly as a responsibility/accountability/ownership load avoidance). One part of Pavlov's Treadmill is having the discretion of asking more questions, both in volume and precision.

<sup>1</sup> I clear up the three/four factor model differences in another section.

<sup>2</sup> **Reinforcement theory** (from B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning framework) focuses specifically on how consequences shape behavior. **The core idea:** behaviors followed by positive consequences tend to increase, while those followed by negative consequences tend to decrease. While reinforcement is a key mechanism within operant conditioning, the terms are not interchangeable: operant conditioning encompasses the broader framework of how behavior is modified through environmental consequences.

<sup>3</sup> Bounce back as evidence to do something again (such as getting into another relationship) or as failure to not do anything again. The latter option could mean never realizing that most things in life are similar because it rhymes but with different intentions.

These are both personal interpretations/creative rendition, not formal concepts.

I also want to do another subjective view on ***The Rebellious Dependency Conflict: Attachment Theory Applied to Independence and Autonomy***

- Goes into the dependence paradox, hyper-independence, hyper-dependence, interdependence, counter-dependence, counter-independence, rebellion, and probably a bunch more (this is closely tied to social vs emotional loneliness).

**BUT to understand that,** I needed to understand the why behind both “we desire the love we believe we deserve” and “we adore the ones who ignore us and ignore the ones who adore us”, which went deep into the attachment theory rabbit hole.

**This paper is gonna be mostly research points and not too much commentary.**

#### **Related (kinda):**

- To have what you want, you might have to let go of who you are/are not.
  - *Accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.* - Declaration of Independence
- I want to make new memories to forget the ones that made me who I am
- You are responsible for your own happiness, but not at the expense of others
- I would highly recommend reading David Buss' *The Evolution of Desire* if you want to go down the evolutionary psychology rabbit hole
- The body will never go where the mind has never been (meaning most, or rather all things, are done by action, with the most influential being in person. If your mind doesn't want to go, the probability and possibility of it happening goes wayyyy down)
- Narcissism and childhood development, Pavlov's conditioning, sorities paradox, opportunity cost, longingness, and loneliness.
- Maybe??? You have to be your own parent

## TOO LONG; DIDN'T READ

### **Attachment Theory from a Matrix View**

If you imagine a 2x2 matrix, **Anxiety** is on one axis (how much you fear rejection) and **Avoidance** is on the other (how much you fear intimacy).

- **Secure:** Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy
  - Low Anxiety / Low Avoidance
  - Positive model of self, positive model of other
  - [Secure (Group B) under Ainsworth/Main; Secure under Bartholomew/Hazan]
- **(Insecure) Anxious/Preoccupied:** Clingy, anxious about relationships, needs validation
  - High Anxiety / Low Avoidance
  - Negative model of self, positive model of other
  - [Anxious-Resistant/Ambivalent (Group C) under Ainsworth/Main; Preoccupied/Anxious under Bartholomew/Hazan]
- **(Insecure) Dismissive/Dismissive-Avoidant:** Values independence, minimizes importance of relationships
  - Low Anxiety / High Avoidance
  - Positive model of self, negative model of other
  - [Avoidant (Group A) under Ainsworth/Main; Dismissing/Dismissive-Avoidant under Bartholomew/Hazan]

- **(Insecure) Fearful/Fearful-Avoidant:** Wants closeness but fears rejection, approach-avoidance conflict

- High Anxiety / High Avoidance
- Negative model of self, negative model of other
- [Disorganized (Group D) under Ainsworth/Main; Fearful/Fearful-Avoidant under Bartholomew/Hazan]

**(The Disorganized → Fearful-Avoidant mapping is the most debated:**

- Infant disorganized attachment is defined by the absence of a coherent strategy (contradictory behaviors, freezing, confusion), whereas adult fearful-avoidant is described as having two conflicting strategies (approach-avoidance), wanting closeness but fearing rejection.
- So they're related but not identical constructs. Some researchers argue fearful-avoidant adults may have either disorganized or anxious-ambivalent childhood histories.)

## HOUSEKEEPING

Idk where to put this in this paper because it both organizes the terms but also kinda overcomplicates a bit.

(Clarification: it is getting overcomplicated to me. My mind is swimming with sooooo much information.)

**There's two major attachment theory categories:**

- Hazen, Bartholomew, and Brennan's **Adult Attachment Theory:** Secure, Preoccupied/Anxious, Dismissing-avoidant, Fearful-avoidant (this is the most up to date version)

- Bowlby, Ainsworth, and Main's **Infant Attachment Theory:** Secure, Anxious-resistant/ambivalent, Avoidant, Disorganized

Adult and infant attachment theory are not distinct/separate categories in the scientific literature I read. It's just to make this paper easier to read and understand.

**Three terms are going to come up:**

- **Attachment Dimensions:** Bartholomew's **self/other model** and Brennan et al.'s **anxiety/avoidance dimensions**
  - **Self-model dimension:** Positive to negative view of self (anxiety/dependency axis).
  - **Other-model dimension:** Positive to negative view of others (avoidance axis)
  - (The **self/other model** and the **anxiety/avoidance dimensions** are related but not identical. Anxiety correlates with negative self-model, but they're not the same construct. Bartholomew is categorical whereas Brennan is dimensional.)

**- Attachment Styles:**

- **Secure:** Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy. **Preoccupied:** Clingy, anxious about relationships, needs validation. **Dismissing:** Values independence, minimizes importance of relationships. **Fearful-avoidant:** Wants closeness but fears rejection, approach-avoidance conflict
- Refer to the "Three Category vs Four Category attachment styles across multiple papers" section on a bit more context around attachment styles
- **Attachment Measures:** formats to identify attachment dimensions and styles<sup>4</sup>
  - **Self-report measures: Relationship Questionnaire (RQ):** Asks people to rate

<sup>4</sup> The Context Section has some sample of questions asked on the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R)

how much they identify with descriptions of each of the 4 attachment styles.

**Continuous scales:** Multi-item questionnaires that measure dimensions (e.g., anxiety items, avoidance items)

- **Interview-based measures**, such as a peer attachment interviews where a trained interviewer rates attachment based on narrative descriptions
- **Observer reports:** Other people (friends, family, partners) rate the target person's attachment

### Three Category vs Four Category attachment styles across multiple papers:

There are many different wordings as to how different researchers categorize infant and adult attachment.

(These are different from the anxiety and avoidance axis, which are a reflection of the self-model vs other-model dimensions.)

The TL;DR section comes directly from Ainsworth/Main and Bartholomew/Hazan and not all the (probably at this point) hundreds of papers on attachment theory. Hopefully this clears up a bit of the terminology:

- **Infant Attachment:** Secure; Avoidant; Anxious-resistant/ambivalent (or Resistant, Ambivalent, Anxious/Ambivalent); Disorganized
- **Adult Attachment:** Secure; Dismissing-Avoidant (or Dismissing); Preoccupied (or Preoccupied-Anxious); Fearful-Avoidant

One paper's version of secure might be different from another paper's definition of secure.

- Which is why in the next section, anything in [brackets] organizes the terms a bit for easier reading.

## WHAT IS SECURE ATTACHMENT?

### Activation and deactivation of the attachment-system<sup>5</sup>:

*The goal of the system is to establish a sense of protection or security (called by Sroufe & Waters, 1977a, "felt security"), which normally terminates the system's activation.*

*This sense of felt security is a psychological state with many implications:*

- *Feeling secure, a person can devote attention to matters other than self-protection;*
- *being well cared for, he can appreciate the feeling of being loved and valued;*
- *in some circumstances, he can take risks, being confident that help is readily available.*

*This goal is made particularly salient by encounters with actual or symbolic threats and by appraising an attachment figure as not sufficiently near, interested, or responsive.*

*In such cases, the attachment system is activated and the individual is motivated to seek and reestablish actual or symbolic proximity to an attachment figure. These bids for proximity persist until protection and security are attained.*

*When the goal of felt security is attained, the attachment system is deactivated and the individual can calmly and coherently return to nonattachment activities.*

There is also another section, *Interplay between the Attachment Behavioral System and Other Behavioral Systems*, but I can't put everything here. I would highly encourage you to take a look at Mikulincer and Shaver's *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change* for more information, since these are actually intelligent people who have studied Attachment Theory far longer than this passionate hobbyist.

<sup>5</sup> Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2016)

# ATTACHMENT THEORY

The **Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised (ECR-R)**<sup>6</sup> is the main reference test for attachment theory, which should help explain the theory from a beginner's stage.

Start with Bartholomew & Horowitz's 1991 paper on *Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model*<sup>7</sup>:

## Four categories based on high/low dependence and high/low avoidance:

- **Secure** (comfortable with intimacy and autonomy): **positive** model of self, **positive** model of other
  - Cell I indicates a sense of worthiness (lovability) plus an expectation that other people are generally accepting and responsive. Because this cell corresponds conceptually to categories that investigators call securely attached.
- **Preoccupied** (preoccupied with relationships): **negative** model of self, **positive** model of other
  - Cell II indicates a sense of unworthiness (unlovability) combined with a positive evaluation of others. This combination of characteristics would lead the person to strive for self-acceptance by gaining the acceptance of valued others.
- **Dismissing/Dismissive-Avoidant** (dismissing of intimacy, counter-dependent): **positive** model of self, **negative** model of other
  - Cell IV indicates a sense of love-worthiness combined with a negative disposition toward other people. Such people protect themselves against disappointment by avoiding close relationships and maintaining a sense of independence and invulnerability.
- **Fearful/Fearful-Avoidant** (fearful of intimacy, socially avoidant): **negative** model of self, **positive** model of other
  - Cell III indicates a sense of unworthiness (unlovability) combined with an expectation that others will be negatively disposed (untrustworthy and rejecting). By avoiding close involvement with others, this style enables people to protect themselves against anticipated rejection by others.

*The dismissing and fearful styles are alike in that both reflect the avoidance of intimacy; they differ, however, in the person's need for others' acceptance to maintain a positive self-regard.*

*Similarly, the preoccupied and fearful groups are alike in that both exhibit strong dependency on others to maintain a positive self-regard, but they differ in their readiness to become involved in close relationships.*

*Whereas the preoccupied cell implies a reaching out to others in an attempt to fulfill dependency needs, the fearful cell implies an avoidance of closeness to minimize eventual disappointment.*

Disappointment and anxiety induced from memories and past experiences are seriously tough.

It could be in love, family, career, almost anything where the expectations of safety, security, hope, stability (emotionally, financially, physically), etc - realistic or not - were not met.

Small triggers here, an off the cuff statement over there. Childhood memories, an insecure partner, taught not to be a burden to others, a smell associated with fear.

My point is, it's all by design. Humans are not logical creatures that pursue happiness but are emotional creatures who avoid pain.

<sup>6</sup> **Side note:** there is a 2011 ECR-RS (Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures) test which assesses attachment orientations toward multiple specific relationship figures (like mother, father, romantic partner, best friend) rather than just romantic relationships in general. For the sake of simplicity, this paper will focus on the 2000 ECR-R and the anxiety and avoidance dimensions.

<sup>7</sup> Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991)

**From *On the Sufferings of the World*<sup>8</sup>:**

*I have reminded the reader that every state of welfare, every feeling of satisfaction, is negative in its character; that is to say, it consists in freedom from pain, which is the positive element of existence.*

*It follows, therefore, that the happiness of any given life is to be measured, not by its joys and pleasures, but by the extent to which it has been free from suffering - from positive evil.*

*If this is the true standpoint, the lower animals appear to enjoy a happier destiny than man.*

**Bartholomew & Horowitz also outline the model of self vs model of other:****- Model of Self: Dependence**

- *Dependency can vary from low (a positive self-regard is established internally and does not require external validation) to high (positive self-regard can only be maintained by others' ongoing acceptance).*

**- Model of Other: Avoidance**

- *Avoidance of intimacy reflects the degree to which people avoid close contact with others as a result of their expectations of aversive consequences.*

*If a person's abstract image of the self is dichotomized as positive or negative (the self as worthy of love and support or not) and if the person's abstracted image of the other is also dichotomized as positive or negative (other people*

*are seen as trustworthy and available vs. unreliable and rejecting), then four combinations can be conceptualized.*

**(Just to be clear:** a high positive self-model and a high negative other-model might be 8/10 positive and 3/10 negative. It isn't binary absolutes like 100% high negative.)

*From Models of the self and other: Fundamental dimensions underlying measures of adult attachment<sup>9</sup>:*

*In our final study, three continuous measures of adult attachment were examined, and all were shown to be measuring constructs similar to the self- and other-model latent<sup>10</sup> dimensions underlying Bartholomew's four-category model.*

*Study 3 also revealed the one anomalous finding in the measurement models presented here: Although men were able to reliably assess both their partners' self and other models, women seemed to be unreliable reporters of their partners' self models.*

*It may represent random fluctuation, a systematic bias<sup>11</sup> in women's perceptions of their romantic partners, or the failure of male partners to disclose their own self-evaluations.*

**Now, here's something interesting the same paper mentions (page 442):**

Bowlby characterized them (attachment styles) as globally positive (or negative) **expectations and evaluations** whereas later folks categorized the measures by distinct strategies or approaches to **maintaining felt security**.

<sup>8</sup> Schopenhauer, A. (2004)

<sup>9</sup> Griffin, D. W., & Bartholomew, K. (1994).

<sup>10</sup> **Latent:** present and capable of emerging or developing but not now visible, obvious, active, or symptomatic (Merriam-Webster)

<sup>11</sup> **Systematic bias** is a consistent, predictable error or distortion that affects measurements, observations, or conclusions in a particular direction. Unlike random errors that vary unpredictably, systematic bias pushes results consistently toward one side. It has **consistency** (the bias affects data or judgments in the same way repeatedly, rather than randomly varying), **directionality** (tends to skew results consistently higher or lower, toward or away from certain outcomes), and a **source** (it arises from flaws in the process being used, not from chance.) It is similar to the placebo effect, self-fulfilling prophecy, and "Between what is said and not meant, and meant but not said, most of love is lost."

Expectations, evaluations, and security will probably be the topic of another paper.

Here's the fun part: this paper mentions Bowlby, Ainsworth (1978<sup>12</sup>), Hazan (1987<sup>13</sup>), Bartholomew (1990<sup>14</sup>) (I outline the more influential 1991 work by Bartholomew & Horowitz), and Main (1985<sup>15</sup>).

Wow, four papers for you to read. "That's not fun" you may think.

Well think no more because I get to do alllllll that research and you get the results.

## THEORY ORIGINS: THE BOWLBY TRILOGY

Bowlby's key point: that secure attachment involves confidence that an attachment figure will be accessible when needed, even when not physically present.

John Bowlby wrote three volumes on Attachment and Loss:

- **Volume 1:** Attachment<sup>16</sup>
- **Volume 2:** Separation, Anxiety, and Anger<sup>17</sup>
- **Volume 3:** Loss, Sadness, and Depression<sup>18</sup>

As much as I would LOVE to read all 1,000+ pages across all three volumes, I have to keep this simple.

But background first, from his Secure Base<sup>19</sup> book:

*Soon after the end of my contract I submitted my report, which was published early in 1951 as a WHO monograph entitled Maternal Care and Mental Health.*

*In it I reviewed the far from negligible evidence then available regarding the adverse influences on personality development of inadequate maternal care during early childhood, called attention to the acute distress of young children who find themselves separated from those they know and love, and made recommendations of how best to avoid, or at least mitigate, the short- and long-term ill effects.*

...

*Having discarded the secondary-drive, dependency theory of the child's tie to his mother, and also the Kleinian alternative, a first task was to formulate a replacement.*

...

*This led to the concept of attachment behaviour with its own dynamics distinct from the behaviour and dynamics of either feeding or sex, the two sources of human motivation for long widely regarded as the most fundamental.*

...

*Attachment behaviour is any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified*

<sup>12</sup> Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation.

<sup>13</sup> Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process.

<sup>14</sup> Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective.

<sup>15</sup> Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation.

<sup>16</sup> Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and Loss, Volume 1: Attachment.

<sup>17</sup> Bowlby, J. (1973). Attachment and Loss, Volume 2: Separation, Anxiety and Anger.

<sup>18</sup> Bowlby, J. (1980). Attachment and Loss, Volume 3: Loss, Sadness and Depression.

<sup>19</sup> Bowlby, J. (1988). A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development.



*individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world.*

*It is most obvious whenever the person is frightened, fatigued, or sick, and is assuaged by comforting and caregiving. At other times the behaviour is less in evidence.*

*Nevertheless for a person to know that an attachment figure is available and responsive gives him a strong and pervasive feeling of security, and so encourages him to value and continue the relationship.*

*Whilst attachment behaviour is at its most obvious in early childhood, it can be observed throughout the life cycle, especially in emergencies.*

•••

*There is abundant evidence that almost every child habitually prefers one person, usually his mother-figure, to whom to go when distressed but that, in her absence, he will make do with someone else, preferably someone whom he knows well.*

*On these occasions most children show a clear hierarchy of preference so that, in extremity and with no one else available, even a kindly stranger may be approached.*

*The theory of attachment is an attempt to explain both attachment behaviour, with its episodic appearance and disappearance, and also the enduring attachments that children and other individuals make to particular others.*

Attention, presence, reciprocity, feeling seen/heard by someone you want to seen/heard by<sup>20</sup>, currency of emotional availability, consistency, communication (and sometimes having to repeat the same thing a thousand times), consideration. Dude, I could go on SOOOO many tangents.

From Bowlby's volume 2:

*Confidence that an attachment figure is, apart from being accessible, likely to be responsive can be seen to turn on at least two variables:*

- (a) whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection;*
- (b) whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way.*

*Logically these variables are independent. In practice they are apt to be confounded.*

*As a result, the model of the attachment figure and the model of the self are likely to develop so as to be complementary and mutually confirming.*

*Thus an unwanted child is likely not only to feel unwanted by his parents but to believe that he is essentially unwanted, namely unwanted by anyone.*

*Conversely, a much-loved child may grow up to be not only confident of his parents' affection but confident that everyone else will find him lovable too.*

[This is related to childhood narcissism. Refer to the Narcissism Breakdown paper<sup>21</sup>.]

•••

*The theory proposed can be formulated in two steps:*

*from the early months onwards and throughout life the actual presence or absence of an attachment figure is a major variable that determines **whether a person is or is not alarmed by any potentially alarming situation**;*

*from about the same age, and again onwards throughout life, **a second major variable is a***

<sup>20</sup> The quality of the listener and the person seeing is just as important as the desire to feel heard or seen. Kinda like the messenger is just as important as the message. Probably goes on the tangent of selective reciprocity, trust bias, and investment bias (value built over time, lack of perceived judgment or ridicule).

<sup>21</sup> Narcissism Breakdown: Why Do People Choose to Hurt Other People? (Revision: February 2026)

**person's confidence**, or lack of confidence, that an attachment figure not actually present will none the less be available, namely accessible and responsive, should he for any reason desire this.

**The younger the individual the more influential is the first variable**, actual presence or absence; up to about the third birthday it is the dominant variable. After the third birthday forecasts of availability or unavailability become of increasing importance, and after puberty are likely in their turn to become the dominant variable.

...

The states of mind with which we are concerned can conveniently be described in terms of representational or working models.

In the first volume it is suggested that it is plausible to suppose that each individual builds **working models of the world** and of himself in it, with the aid of which he perceives events, forecasts the future, and constructs his plans.

- In the working model of the world that anyone builds, a key feature is his notion of who his attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they may be expected to respond.

Similarly, in the working model of the self that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of how acceptable or unacceptable he himself is in the eyes of his attachment figures.

- On the structure of these complementary models are based that person's forecasts of how accessible and responsive his attachment figures are likely to be should he turn to them for support.

And, in terms of the theory now advanced, it is on the structure of those models that depends, also, whether he feels confident that his attachment figures are in general readily available or whether he is more or less afraid that they will not be available - occasionally, frequently, or most of the time.

## ATTACHMENT IN INFANTS

### Ainsworth et. al. and Main & Solomon

Four categories for attachment theory applied to infants: **secure, resistant/ambivalent<sup>22</sup> (also under anxious), and avoidant** (from Ainsworth et. al.<sup>23</sup>) and later **disorganized/disoriented** (Main & Solomon<sup>24,25</sup>).

Ainsworth et. al. (for simplicity will be referred to as Ainsworth), had different groups and subgroups (please refer to pages 59-63 from the 1978 paper for the full breakdown/categorization):

**Group A (Avoidant):** Conspicuous avoidance of proximity to or interaction with the mother in the reunion episodes.

*Either the baby ignores his mother on her return, greeting her casually if at all, or, if there is approach and/or a less casual greeting, the baby tends to mingle his welcome with avoidance responses - turning away, moving past, averting the gaze, and the like.*

- **Subgroup A1:** Conspicuous avoidance of the mother in the reunion episodes, which is likely to consist of ignoring her altogether, although there may be some pointed looking away, turning away, or moving away.
- **Subgroup A2:** The baby shows a mixed response to his mother on reunion, with some

<sup>22</sup> **Ambivalent:** "having or showing simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings toward something or someone." (Merriam-Webster)

<sup>23</sup> Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978)

<sup>24</sup> Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1986). Discovery of an insecure-disorganized/disoriented attachment pattern.

<sup>25</sup> Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1990). Procedures for identifying infants as disorganized/disoriented during the Ainsworth Strange Situation.

tendency to greet and to approach, intermingled with a marked tendency to turn or move away from her, move past her, avert the gaze from her, or ignore her. Thus there may be **moderate proximity seeking, combined with strong proximity avoiding**.

**Group B (Secure):** The baby wants either proximity and contact with his mother or interaction with her, and he actively seeks it, especially in the reunion episodes.

If he achieves contact, he seeks to maintain it, and either resists release or at least protests if he is put down. The baby responds to his mother's return in the reunion episodes with more than a casual greeting—either with a smile or a cry or a tendency to approach.

- **Subgroup B1:** The baby greets his mother, smiling upon her return, and shows strong initiative in interaction with her across a distance, although he **does not especially seek proximity to or physical contact with her**.
- **Subgroup B2:** The baby greets his mother upon reunion, tends to approach her, and **seems to want contact with her, but to a lesser extent than a B<sub>3</sub> baby**.
  - Some B<sub>2</sub> babies seek proximity in the preseparation episodes, but not again until Episode 8, and then perhaps only after some delay.
- **Subgroup B3:** The baby **actively seeks physical contact** with his mother, and when he gains it he is conspicuous for attempting to maintain it, actively resisting her attempts to release him.
  - Most B<sub>3</sub> babies show their strongest proximity-seeking and contact-maintaining behavior in Episode 8, but some do so in Episode 5 and are so distressed in the second separation episode that they cannot

mobilize active proximity seeking and resort to signaling.

- **Subgroup B4:** The baby wants contact, especially in the reunion episodes, and seeks it by approaching, clinging, and resisting release; he is, however, **somewhat less active and competent in these behaviors** than most B<sub>3</sub> babies, especially in Episode 8.

**Group C (Resistant/Ambivalent):** The baby displays conspicuous contact- and interaction-resisting behavior, perhaps especially in Episode 8.

He also shows moderate-to-strong seeking of proximity and contact and seeking to maintain contact once gained, so that he gives the impression of being ambivalent to his mother.

He shows little or no tendency to ignore his mother in the reunion episodes, or to turn or move away from her, or to avert his gaze.

- **Subgroup C1:** Proximity seeking and contact maintaining are strong in the reunion episodes, and are also more likely to occur in the preseparation episodes than in the case of Group-B infants.
- **Subgroup C2:** Perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of C<sub>2</sub> infants is their **passivity**. Their exploratory behavior is limited throughout the strange situation, and their interactive behaviors are relatively lacking in active initiative.

(I think these are related to a paper I want to do on a personal interpretation of direct vs indirect vs explicit vs implicit communication.<sup>26</sup>)

Main & Solomon outlined in their 1986, and subsequently 1990, **Group D (Disorganized/Disoriented)**:

<sup>26</sup> **Direct + Explicit:** "Please close the door because it's cold in here". **Direct + Implicit:** "Close the door" (the reason is understood from context). **Indirect + Explicit:** "I wonder if someone could close the door since it's getting cold". **Indirect + Implicit:** Shivering while glancing at an open door (no spoken communication at all, just thoughts).

*The central discovery we reported earlier was the absence of clear new categories of infant Strange-Situation behavior (Main & Solomon 1986).*

*Surprisingly, infants who could not be classified within the present A, B, C system did not appear to us to resemble one another in coherent, organized ways. What these infants shared in common was instead **bouts or sequences of behavior which seemed to lack a readily observable goal, intention, or explanation.***

*The term we selected to describe these diverse behavior patterns was **disorganized and/or disoriented.***

- *In some infants, behavior could be seen as disorganized only when it was considered at an abstract level, as for example with respect to the observer's expectations regarding the usual temporal patterning of infant behavior.*
- *In others, there were episodes of more obviously disorganized or disoriented behavior (e.g., approaching with head averted, stilling or freezing of movement for thirty seconds with a dazed expression).*

***We described the behavior of these D infants as including one or more of the following features:***

- *disordering of expected temporal sequences;*
- *simultaneous display of contradictory behavior patterns;*
- *incomplete or undirected movements and expressions, including stereotypes;*
- *direct indices of confusion and apprehension; and behavioral stilling.*

I looked for subcategories of Group D and found this note from the authors:

*This tentative assignment to subcategory should not lead to early reification of the concept of D subcategories. For any potential subclassification to meet the criteria for a coherent subcategory, we will need evidence for predictable and distinct sequelae, and for a specific and distinct history.*

## HAZAN & SHAVER: INFANTS TO ADULT

**(Side note:** Hazan & Shaver published their paper in 1987 where as Main & Solomon had introduced the concept of Group D in 1986 so I'm guessing Hazen & Shaver hadn't applied the fourth one yet and/or it (Group D) wasn't well established/accepted by 1987. Either way, Hazen & Shaver applied the three category system (secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant) to the study of romantic love.)

From Hazen & Shaver's *Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process*<sup>27</sup>, there were **five hypotheses** supported by their studies:

- I. **Distribution of attachment styles:** The adult distribution were similar to infant distributions.<sup>28</sup>
- II. **Different love experiences by attachment style:** *We predicted that the most important love experience of*
  - A. a **secure** adult would be characterized by trust, friendship, and positive emotions.
  - B. For **avoidant** adults, love was expected to be marked by fear of closeness and lack of trust.

<sup>27</sup> Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987)

<sup>28</sup> Their actual findings were roughly 56% secure, 25% avoidant, 19% anxious/ambivalent. The standard infant distribution (from Ainsworth's samples) is approximately 65% secure, 20% avoidant, 12% anxious-resistant. These are in the same ballpark but not an exact match — particularly the anxious category, which was notably higher in the adult sample.

C. **Anxious/ambivalent** adults<sup>29</sup> were expected to experience love as a preoccupying, almost painfully exciting struggle to merge with another person.

1. *anxious/ambivalent subjects described relationships marked by jealousy, emotional highs and lows, and desire for reciprocation.*

### III. Working models related to attachment

**style:** Different attachment styles correlated with different beliefs about romantic love, partner availability, and self-worth.

- A. **Secure** types should believe in enduring love, generally find others trustworthy, and have confidence that the self is likable.
- B. **Avoidant** types should be more doubtful of the existence or durability of romantic love and believe that they do not need a love partner in order to be happy.
- C. **Anxious/ambivalent** types should fall in love frequently and easily but have difficulty finding true love.

### IV. Parallels with childhood parent relationships:

- A. **Secure** respondents should remember their mothers as dependably responsive and caring;
- B. **avoidant** respondents should report that their mothers were generally cold and rejecting; and
- C. **anxious/ambivalent** respondents should remember a mixture of positive and negative experiences with their mothers.

### V. Greater loneliness in insecure subjects:

- A. **Avoidant** subjects showed an interesting pattern of admitting distance but not loneliness, which the authors couldn't fully evaluate as genuine or defensive.

B. **Anxious/ambivalent** subjects showed higher loneliness on both trait and state measures.

Hazan & Shaver also mention some caveats:

*In general, we have probably overemphasized the degree to which attachment style and attachment-related feelings are traits rather than products of unique person-situation interactions.*

- *Attachment researchers often vacillate between using the terms secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent to describe relationships and using them to categorize people.*
- *We have focused here on personal continuity, but we do not wish to deny that **relationships are complex, powerful phenomena** with causal effects beyond those predictable from personality variables alone.*
- *A secure person trying to build a relationship with an anxious/ambivalent person might be pushed to feel and act avoidant. An avoidant person might cause a secure partner to feel and act anxious, and so on. These kinds of interactions deserve study in their own right.*

*Our measures were limited in terms of number of items and simplicity of answer alternatives, and this should be corrected in future work. However, there are reasons to suspect that no amount of psychometric improvement will solve all the problems associated with self-report assessment of attachment-related variables.*

- **First of all**, subjects may be unable to articulate exactly how they feel in love relationships.
- **Second**, subjects are unlikely to have anything like perfect memory for their love experiences or for the nature of their relationships with parents, especially those during the preschool years.
- **Third**, subjects are likely to be defensive and self-serving in their recall and description of some of the events we wish to inquire about.

<sup>29</sup> "This last style is similar to what Hindy and Schwarz (1984) called anxious romantic attachment and Tennov (1979) called limerence" - Hazan & Shaver

## LATER ATTACHMENT THEORY:

This was already kinda covered earlier but just to rearticulate<sup>30</sup> it, (1990) Collins & Read<sup>31</sup>:

- *explored the role of attachment style dimensions in three aspects of ongoing dating relationships:*
  - *partner matching on attachment dimensions;*
  - *similarity between the attachment of one's partner and caregiving style of one's parents; and*
  - *relationship quality, including communication, trust, and satisfaction.*
- *Evidence was obtained for partner matching and for similarity between one's partner and one's parents, particularly for one's opposite-sex parent.*
- *Dimensions of attachment style were strongly related to how each partner perceived the relationship, although the dimension of attachment that best predicted quality differed for men and women.*
- **For women**, the extent to which their partner was comfortable with closeness was the best predictor of relationship quality, whereas the best predictor **for men** was the extent to which their partner was anxious about being abandoned or unloved.

(1991) Bartholomew & Horowitz<sup>32</sup>:

- **Secure (comfortable with intimacy and autonomy):** positive model of self, positive model of other
- **Preoccupied (preoccupied with relationships):** negative model of self, positive model of other
- **Dismissing/Dismissive-Avoidant (dismissing of intimacy, counter-dependent):** positive model of self, negative model of other
- **Fearful/Fearful-Avoidant (fearful of intimacy, socially avoidant<sup>33</sup>):** negative model of self, negative model of other

(1994) Griffin & Bartholomew<sup>34</sup>:

Pretty much just reiterates what essentially has already been said but just wanted to leave a citation if you wanted to explore more attachment theory or a different way of looking at it.

(1998) Brennan, Clark & Shaver<sup>35</sup>:

I wasn't able to find a copy of this paper so \\_(\`)/ but here's their abstract (I think):

*The authors present the results of a large-scale study (Ss were 1,086 male and female 16–50 yr olds) designed to develop more reliable self-report scales of adult attachment styles based on items from several existing self-report scales. Corroborating previous research, the authors find that 2 primary dimensions underlie responses to these self-report items: **Avoidance and Anxiety**. They suggest that future research using self-report attachment measures should assess these 2 dimensions.*

<sup>30</sup> This word is not needed, I just thought it's fun to say.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990)

<sup>32</sup> Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991)

<sup>33</sup> Bartholomew & Horowitz stated "socially avoidant" in their paper whereas other papers state Fearful-avoidant individuals want intimacy but fear rejection. They're not avoidant of social contact per se. This is an important distinction from dismissive-avoidants, who genuinely devalue closeness.

<sup>34</sup> Griffin, D. W., & Bartholomew, K. (1994)

<sup>35</sup> Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998)

- **The Anxiety Axis:** How much you worry about being rejected or abandoned.
- **The Avoidance Axis:** How much you feel uncomfortable with intimacy and vulnerability.

**(2000) Fraley, Waller & Brennan<sup>36</sup>:**

Their main concern was about discrimination across the full range of attachment security.

Existing scales didn't measure differences well across the *entire spectrum* (not just at the extremes).

It was great at identifying people who were extremely anxious or avoidant, but not as good at telling the difference between someone who was *secure* and someone who was *mostly secure*.

- Item Response Theory (IRT): *The rubric "item response theory" refers to a diverse family of models designed to represent the relation between an individual's item response and an underlying latent trait (van der Linden & Hambleton, 1997).*
  - *A major advantage of IRT models is that they are based on an explicit measurement model that characterizes the relation between a latent trait and an observable manifestation of the trait.*
- ECR-R (Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised)<sup>37</sup>:
  - *In other words, the properties of the items in the item pool prevented us from creating scales that simultaneously covered a wide trait range and had a high degree of precision.*

- *Given this constraint, we decided to select items on the basis of their discrimination values alone. For each scale, we chose the 18 items with the highest discrimination values.*
- *Thirteen of the 18 Anxiety items (72%) were in the original ECR Anxiety scale. Seven of the 18 Avoidance items (39%) were in the original ECR Avoidance scale.*
- *Because there is some degree of overlap between the new items and the original ECR items, we refer to these two new 18-item scales as the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire - Revised (ECR-R).*

## VARIOUS DIFFERENT QUESTIONNAIRES AND MODELS<sup>38</sup>:

- **Brennan et al.'s (1998) Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire (ECR):** *The ECR assesses two dimensions: Anxiety and Avoidance. An 18-item subscale measures each dimension.*
- **Collins and Read's (1990) Adult Attachment Scale (AAS):** *The AAS assesses three dimensions: Close, Depend, and Anxiety. Six items are used to assess each dimension.*
- **Griffin and Bartholomew's (1994) Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ):** *The RSQ measures a person's relative fit to four theoretical attachment types: Secure, Fearful, Preoccupied, and Dismissing. The inventory consists of four subscales, with 4 to 5 items each.*

<sup>36</sup> Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000)

<sup>37</sup> "The ECR-R scales, like the other attachment scales examined here, assess high levels of security (i.e., low Anxiety and low Avoidance) with considerably less precision than insecurity.... Items represented in existing attachment inventories apparently do not assess security with the same degree of fidelity as insecurity." Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000)

<sup>38</sup> Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000).

- **Simpson's (1990) (unnamed) attachment questionnaire:** *The Simpson inventory assesses people's relative fit to three attachment types: Secure, Avoidant, and Anxious attachment. Each subscale consists of 4 to 5 items.*

## — CONTEXT SECTION —

### TIMELINE

- I. **(1969, 1973, 1980) Bowlby's Trilogy:** Attachment; Separation, Anxiety and Anger; Loss, Sadness and Depression.
- II. **Infant Attachment Research:**
  - A. **(1978) Ainsworth, et al.:** Attachment styles for infants (Secure, Anxious, Avoidant)
  - B. **(1986, 1990) Main & Solomon:** Infant style number 4: disorganized
- III. **(1987) Hazan & Shaver:** Infant to Adult Attachment Theory
- IV. **(1991) Bartholomew & Horowitz:** Adult Attachment Styles
- V. **(1998, 2000) Anxiety vs. avoidance scales and Experiences in Close Relationships– Revised scale for adult attachment theory**
  - A. *Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview.*
  - B. *Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment.*

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE ECR-R

(Page 361 from Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000).

#### Anxiety Items:

- I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
- I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
- I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
- I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
- I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
- I worry a lot about my relationships.
- When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.

#### Avoidance Items:

- I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
- I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
- I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
- I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
- I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
- I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
- I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.

### CITATIONS

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). **Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation.** Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.



Bartholomew, K. (1990). **Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective.** *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 7(2), 147–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407590072001>

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). **Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model.** *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(2), 226–244. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.61.2.226>

Bowlby, J. (1969). **Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment.** Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). **Attachment and loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and anger.** Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1980). **Attachment and loss: Vol. 3. Loss: Sadness and depression.** Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1988). **A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development.** Basic Books.

Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). **Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview.** In J. A. Simpson & W. S. Rholes (Eds.), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 46–76). Guilford Press.

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), 644–663. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.4.644>

Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). **An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment.** *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2), 350–365. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.350>

Griffin, D. W., & Bartholomew, K. (1994). **Models of the self and other: Fundamental dimensions underlying measures of adult attachment.** *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(3), 430–445. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.3.430>

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). **Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process.**

*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(3), 511–524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511>

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1986). **Discovery of an insecure-disorganized/disoriented attachment pattern.** In T. B. Brazelton & M. W. Yogman (Eds.), *Affective development in infancy* (pp. 95–124). Ablex Publishing.

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1990). **Procedures for identifying infants as disorganized/disoriented during the Ainsworth Strange Situation.** In M. T. Greenberg, D. Cicchetti, & E. M. Cummings (Eds.), *Attachment in the preschool years: Theory, research, and intervention* (pp. 121–160). University of Chicago Press.

Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). **Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation.** *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 50(1–2), 66–104. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3333827>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). **Latent.** In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved February 12, 2026, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/latent>

Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2016). **Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change (2nd ed.).** Guilford Press.

Schopenhauer, A. (2004). **Studies in pessimism** (T. B. Saunders, Trans.). Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10732/10732-h/10732-h.htm> (Original work published 1851)

## CC BY 4.0:

### You are free to:

- Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially.
- Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

- 
- The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

**Under the following terms:**

- Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

**Notices:**

- You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.
- No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Please tag me on the corresponding social media platform or send me over your video/article if you choose to make one!