

## **AFFECTIVE BONDING OF ADOLESCENTS IN PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS**

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**Biljana Žuvela**

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade University  
e-mail: beba011@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** *The paper explores affectional bonding of adolescents in emotional partner relationships. The research aimed at identifying the four types of attachment, defined by the four-category attachment model (Kim Bartholomew, 1990) – secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful – in intimate partner relationships on a sample of Belgrade adolescents, as well as the relatedness of these types to the variables child-parent relationship, sex, marital status of parents, and an early-childhood separation experience. The sample included 231 adolescents of both sexes, aged 17-19. To assess the types of bonding we used the multi-item scale of self-evaluation – Intimate Relationships Experience Scale (Brennan, Clark and Shaver, 1998) which allows for assessing the type of bonding of the examinee on the basis of general attitudes, beliefs, and expectations from the partner and intimate relationship, the feeling of pleasure or discomfort caused by intimacy, as well as on the basis of usual behaviour towards the intimate partner. The perception of the relationship with the parents was assessed by applying a modified version of the SRDI scale (modified by Opacic and Kos, 1988), while the data on the marital status of the parents and an early-childhood separation experience were assessed by applying a questionnaire specially designed for the purpose of this research. The results confirmed the presence of four main types of bonding in partner relationships on the sample of Belgrade adolescents. The fearful type of bonding is significantly more present in the girls. It was observed that there was a combination of dimensions of the perceived relationship with the parents which accurately discriminates between the four types of adolescent bonding in intimate partner relationships: unrealistic expectations, control and neglect on the part of the father, lack of intimacy with him, unrealistic expectations and control on the part of the mother. There are significant differences between boys and girls with respect to the relatedness of partner bonding to the perceived relationship with the parents: the perceived quality of their relationship with the parents in girls corresponds to the quality of later bonding in partner relationships, while in boys it is not the case. No significant relatedness was determined between the types of bonding in partner relationships of adolescents on one hand and the variables such as the marital status of the parents and an early-childhood separation experience on the other.*

**Key words:** *types of bonding in adolescents, intimate partner relationships, perceived relationship with parents, gender differences*

As Philippe Malrieu states in the "imaginary" discussion on attachment behavior, initiated by Rene Zazo, the issue of affectional bonds between human beings, undoubtedly initiated one of the most important reflections on human behavior (Zazo, 1973). Attachment theory, as developed by John Bowlby (1973, 1980, 1982), explicitly defines the origin of these bonds: attachment is the primary need of every human being and it is neither the result of the analysis, as it was stated by psychoanalysis, nor of the learning process, as it was stated by social learning theorists. There are two major hypotheses, which make attachment theory being recognized as a life span developmental theory:

- Attachment behavior characterizes human beings throughout life
- Attachment patterns established in early childhood parent-child relationship tend to structure the quality of later adult-adult relationship (Bartholomew, 1993).

#### ATTACHMENT IN CHILDHOOD

Attachment, as conceptualized by Bowlby, is neither a mere synonym for the concept of "social bond", nor can it be applied to every aspect of parent-child relationship (Bretherton, 1985). Moreover, Bowlby uses different ways to describe attachment: as a need, disposition, behavior and relationship. According to his opinion, a need for attachment is a basic need, as well as the need for food or sex, and of no less importance for survival (Grossman and Grossman, 1991). Furthermore, Bowlby describes attachment, as a highly distinctive disposition of a person to seek proximity and contact with particular other, clearly identified individual and to do so particularly in specific conditions of danger or threat. Thus, attachment as a disposition presents a persisting attribute of the attached person himself/herself, which is difficult to change over time and by the situation of the moment. On the other hand, Bowlby defines attachment behavior as a cybernetically organized behavior, which monitors proximity to the attachment figure and reacts on the approaching information, so that a child can regulate his/her sense of security, by seeking contact with the attachment figure. In Bowlby's opinion, attachment behavior refers to any form of behavior, which results in attaining and maintaining nearness to other, clearly identified individual, who is considered as better able to cope with the world (Bowlby, 1988). Most frequently, the other, clearly identified individual is a parent. The biological function of this behavior is protection. Moreover, support and accessibility of the parental figure contribute to a strong sense of both physical and psychological security of a child in a unique way and Bowlby defines the bonds developed in this relationship as "attachment". In order to define relationship between a child and parents as attachment, four behavioral components must be present: proximity-seeking, separation anxiety, safe haven and secure base (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Hazan and Zafman, 1994; Weiss, 1991). These components are observable in infants' behavior toward their attachment figures. Infants seek proximity to their attachment figure; they tend to stay within the protective field with the attachment figure; they refer to the attachment figure as a source of security when distressed and they protest when threatened with separation from the attachment figure.

In order to test Bowlby's ideas, Ainsworth and Witting designed a laboratory procedure – "Strange Situation Assessment", to observe the quality of attachment relationships between infants who were twelve months old and their mothers under conditions of increasing stress and separation anxiety. The procedure was designed in 1969. Three distinct patterns of infant attachment were identified: secure, anxious ambivalent and anxious avoidant attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, 1978; Bartholomew, 1993). Two criteria were used for the classification of infants' attachment: how much infants explore when with mother or without her and how they treat mother when she is present, departs and when she returns. Based on the findings of this experimental procedure, Ainsworth made conclusions in compliance with Bowlby's attachment theory, that the quality of early attachment relationship is rooted in the history of interaction between infants and their parents (attachment figures) and that the degree to which infant learnt to rely on the attachment figure is a source of his/her security (Bartholomew, 1993; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). According to Ainsworth's opinion, all children manifest attachment behavior, but the quality and the organization of this behavior will differ according to the variation in the quality of their interaction with the attachment figure(s) (Main, 1999).

Ainsworth's three-category model of attachment, as well as her experimental procedure, "Strange Situation Assessment", became a standard for researches on the individual differences in infant, early childhood and attachment in adulthood.

#### ATTACHMENT IN ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD

Bowlby conceptualizes attachment as a life-span construct. His theory emphasizes that the attachment system continues to be important not only in childhood, but throughout the life span. Bowlby states that "an individual's attachment behavior becomes organized within his personality and determines the pattern of affectional bonds he makes during his life" (Bowlby, 1980). From Weiss's viewpoint (1991), the same behavioral components define attachment relationships both in the years of infancy, early childhood and adolescence and adulthood: proximity-seeking, secure base, safe haven and separation anxiety. Namely, both adolescents and adults seek proximity to their attachment figures, especially when distressed. They also demonstrate increased contentment in the attachment figure's presence, anxiety when the attachment figure is not available and comfort and joy at reunion (Shaver et al., 1988; Weiss, 1991; Hazan and Zeifman, 1994). Loss of the attachment figure results in grief (Bowlby, 1980; Weiss, 1991). Weiss (1994) makes distinction between six categories of relationships based on what a person gets from them. In this classification, attachment relationship is defined as a relationship which provides a person with a feeling of security, comfort and belonging. When this sense of security exists in the relationship, the secure base from which a person can make sorties into the outside world is provided and he/she is able to take part in other activities with confidence (Weiss, 1994). This is suggested criteria for making distinction between attachment and other affectional bonds (Weiss, 1994). This approach supports Mary Ainsworth's ideas of attachment relationship (1991).

Bowlby assumes that by developing romantic relationships in adulthood, romantic partners take the lead in the hierarchy of the attachment figures. Yet attachment theory does not specify when this transition happens and what the underlying process in this alteration is. Additionally, romantic attachment relationships in adulthood are considered to be functional equivalents to the attachment relationships in childhood.

In order to explain the tendency for the pattern of child-parent attachment increasingly becoming a property of the child himself and shifting from relational to individual attribute, Bowlby adopted the concept of "working models" from cognitive psychology. He believes that a child internalizes his/her experience with the attachment figure(s) and consequently builds "working models" of close relationships, self, other and self-in-relation-to-other with respect to attachment. These working models are hypothesized to be located in a long-term memory. Patterns of interaction influenced by these working models are expected to generalize, to operate outside of conscious and to assimilate new relationship related information (Bowlby, 1988). As a result, individual differences in attachment behavior and styles, both in childhood, adolescence and adulthood, are assumed to reflect expectations and beliefs about close relationships and related benefits (Bowlby, 1973, 1981; Bretherton, 1980, 1985; Main et al., 1985). Consistent with this position, individuals are likely to bring a history of their social experiences to their romantic relationships as a unique set of memories, beliefs, expectations and strategies. This unique set affects their cognitive, emotional and behavioral patterns of reactions, as well as their interactions and construction of their social world (Collin and Read, 1994).

Although attachment theory emphasizes a significant influence of attachment related experience in childhood on the experience and behavior in romantic relationships in adolescence and adulthood, researchers have been mainly focused on studying child-parent, most frequently child-mother attachment relationships, and particularly in early childhood. Attachment in preschool years, adolescence and adulthood has been more thoroughly investigated since mid eighties. Main, Kaplan and Casidy initiated the first research study on adults' attachment relationships in 1985. The goal of the study was to explore not only children/infants' attachment styles, but also their parents'. Their focus on working models, as concepts, which are active and important throughout the life span and their methodology designed to explore adults' attachment styles inspired a new phase in development of the attachment theory and related research. Following the same line, Shaver and Hazan (1987) initiated a series of research studies on attachment styles in romantic relationships. They conceptualized romantic love as an attachment process and developed a self-report procedure to differentiate adults' romantic attachment styles into three categories that correspond to three main infant attachment styles identified through the Ainsworth's "Strange Situation" procedure (1987, 1990). Their self-report measure contains descriptions of each of three attachment styles and they are actually extrapolations of the three attachment patterns identified in early childhood and defined by Ainsworth (1978). Attachment style descriptions include characteristic wishes, beliefs, feelings, behavior and expectations towards oneself and romantic partner in romantic relationships; conscious beliefs about romantic relationships that are assumed to be influenced by attachment working models.

#### FOUR CATEGORY MODEL OF ADULT ATTACHMENT

Kim Bartholomew was very inspired by Hazan and Shaver, Mary Main and her collaborators' ideas about attachment in romantic relationships. In order to build up, integrate and organize a fruitful range of empirical work in the field of attachment relationships in adolescence and adulthood, she developed a four category model of adult attachment

patterns in 1990. The model is derived from the Bowlby's theoretical postulations that there are two distinct working models - the model of self and the model of other. Since both models are assumed to be dichotomized as positive and negative, then their combinations result in four main attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful. Each attachment style includes a distinctive approach to close relationships and different strategies of emotional regulation and interpersonal behavior (Bartholomew, 1993).

The positivity of the self-model indicates the degree of an internalized sense of worthiness, which is not dependent on ongoing external validation. The positivity of the other-model indicates the degree of expectations that others are generally available and supportive, and it reflects expectations of others' availability and supportiveness (Bartholomew, 1993; Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994).

The secure attachment style is defined both by the positive model of self and other (low anxiety and low avoidance). Individuals with this attachment style are characterized by internalized self-regard and they are comfortable with developing closeness to others and able to enjoy both personal autonomy and satisfying close relations with them. The fearful attachment style represents a combination of the negative model of self and the negative model of other (high anxiety and high avoidance), while the dismissing style is defined by the positive model of self and the negative model of other (low anxiety and high avoidance). Individuals with the fearful attachment style are highly dependant on others' ongoing acceptance because their positive self-regard is not established internally. At the same time, they have a negative expectation that others will be rejecting and in order to protect themselves against anticipated loss or rejection they intend to avoid close involvement with others. Individuals with the dismissing attachment style also have negative expectations that others will be negatively disposed and intend to avoid close involvement with them. However, they maintain a positive self-regard by defensively denying the value of close relations and by emphasizing the value of personal autonomy. The preoccupied attachment style is characterized by the negative model of self and the positive model of other (high anxiety and low avoidance). Consequently, they have a highly outstanding sense of unworthiness, as well as fearfully attached persons. Both the fearful and the preoccupied attachment styles imply a dependency on others to maintain a positive self-regard, but they differ in their readiness to become involved in close relations with others. The positive model of other motivates individuals with the preoccupied attachment style to find self-validation in intimate relationships. On the other hand, individuals with the fearful attachment style avoid intimacy in order to minimize possible disappointment. Each of the main attachment styles, identified by the four category model of adult attachment, is conceptualized as a theoretical ideal or prototype. Attachment styles of different people might correspond with them to different degrees.

After conducting an empirical validation of her model, Kim Bartholomew (1993) made a conclusion that the model is applicable to both close peer relationships (friendships and romantic relationships) and attachment related experience in the family.

#### OVERVIEW

The theme and objectives of this research study were defined on the bases of the theoretical framework established by Kim Bartholomew's four category model of attachment and relevant empirical work in the field of attachment in adolescence and adulthood. The

goal of the study was to explore the existence of the four adolescent romantic attachment styles on the sample of adolescents from Belgrade; a correlation between adolescents' attachment styles and their perception of childhood parent-child relationships. In addition, the research was aimed at studying the following:

- A distribution of participants from Belgrade adolescent sample across the romantic attachment styles
- Sex differences in adolescents' romantic attachment styles
- A correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and their perception of childhood parent-child interaction
- A degree to which the perception of the various dimensions of parent-child relationships accounted for the overall discrimination between the four attachment groups
- Sex differences in a correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and their perception of the parent-child relationships
- A correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and the variables of parental marital status and early separation experience.

#### HYPOTHESES

In accordance with the research objectives, the study tested the following hypotheses:

1. The four main romantic attachment styles were expected to be identified on the sample of adolescents from Belgrade. According to the empirical evidence from several other research studies (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Brennan and Shaver, 1989, etc.) the secure attachment style could be expected to be predominant in the distribution of adolescents' romantic attachment styles.
2. No sex differences were expected in adolescents' romantic attachment styles
3. A correlation between adolescents' perception of the parent-child interaction and their romantic attachment styles was expected. Adolescents with the secure romantic attachment style were expected to describe their parents as loving and responsive, while adolescents with the insecure attachment styles were expected to describe their parents as less responsive and rejecting.
4. As attachment theory does not study or predict sex differences in regard to the correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and perceived parent-child relationships, this study can be considered explorative. Therefore, there was no hypothesis defined. Instead, the research effort was directed to answer the question if there were sex differences in the correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and perceived parent-child relationships.
5. A correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and parental marital status was expected. It was expected that adolescents with the insecure romantic attachment styles had parental divorce in their history more often than their peers with the secure attachment style. The same correlation was expected regarding the insecure adolescents' attachment styles and early separation experience.

## SAMPLE

Students from three Belgrade high schools (grammar schools VI, XI and XII), age-range 17 to 19, constituted the target sample. A convenience sampling strategy was used and 231 adolescents took part in the study. Ninety-nine (42.9%) were male and 132 (57.1%) female students. Regarding the age structure of the sample, 39.4% were 17, 45% 18, and 15.6% 19 years old. Concerning their parents' marital status, parents of 88.3% of the adolescents were married, while 11.7% of adolescents reported living with divorced parents. The largest percentage of the adolescents from the sample – 78.8% (182) reported having previous romantic experience, whereas 21.2% (49) had never been involved in romantic relationships.

## PROCEDURE

Data collection was conducted in Belgrade in May 2001. Adolescents' romantic attachment styles were assessed by multi-item self-report scale ERC – Experience in Close Relationships Scale (Kelly A. Brennan, Catherine L. Clarke and Phillip R. Shaver, 1998). This self-report scale consists of 36 items, which are relevant for estimating romantic attachment (two subscales - Avoidance and Anxiety – both with 18 items). Four romantic attachment styles were operationalized based on general attitudes, beliefs and expectations related to the romantic partners and romantic relationships, typical romantic behavior and feeling comfortable or uncomfortable with close emotional relationships. Respondents were asked to make ratings on a 7-point Likert-type scale of the degree to which the items corresponded with their experience in romantic relationships. The pilot study with 36 adolescents was conducted before the research study in order to assess test - retest reliability of the instrument and coherency of its translation. An estimated internal consistency of the scale was high (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.84$ ), and test – retest reliability was statistically significant ( $r = 0.55$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

The perception of parent-child interaction was obtained with a modified version of SRDI scale (Opacic and Kos, 1988). This self-report scale consists of six subscales that measure six dimensions of adolescent-parent relationships: **intimacy** – supportive, close and open relationship with parents; **disregard** – irresponsive parents, lack of intimacy, interest, time and attention; **dedication** – dedicated parents, motivated to support and help; **punishment** – parents' disciplinary techniques, either verbal or physical, with or without apparent reasons for punishment; **demands** – parents' expectations and demands related to the children's achievements and success; **control** – parents' prohibitions and limitations, stimulation or restraint of children's autonomy. Thus, the first three above mentioned subscales refer to the emotional aspects of parent-child relationships, whereas the remaining three refer to the functional aspects, such as discipline, control and demands. Respondents were asked to make ratings on a 5-point Likert-type scale of the degree to which the items corresponded with their experience in childhood parent-child interaction. A choice for administering this scale in the study was based on its high internal reliability of and possibility for measuring relationship with mother and father separately. Information on parental marital status and early separation experience were obtained with the questionnaire specially created for the purpose of this study.

## RESULTS

**Romantic attachment styles distribution**

The findings confirmed the first research hypothesis, the existence of the four main romantic attachment styles in the sample of Belgrade adolescents. Romantic attachment style of the largest number of the adolescents from the sample was classified as secure (71 respondents – 30.7%). A distribution of adolescents' romantic attachment styles is presented in Figure 1.

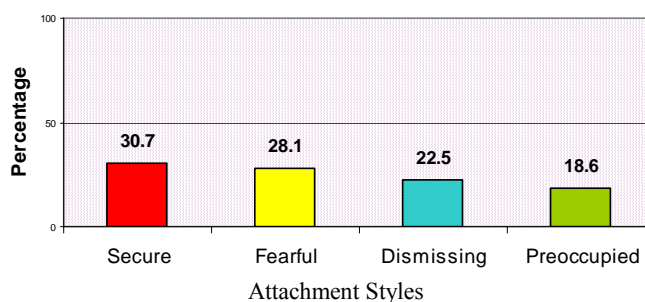


Fig. 1. Distribution of Adolescents' Romantic Attachment Styles

**Sex differences in romantic attachment styles**

A Chi-square was calculated in order to test the hypothesis about sex differences in adolescents' romantic attachment styles. The results are presented in Figure 2.

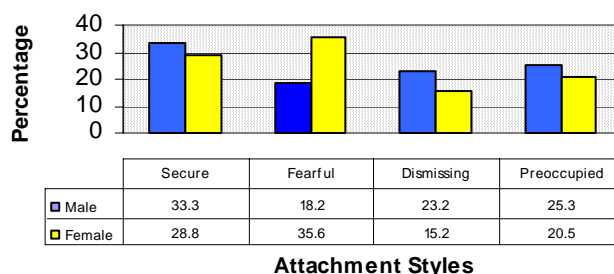


Fig. 2. Sex Differences in Romantic Attachment Styles

The obtained value of  $\chi^2$  ( $df = 3$ ,  $N = 231$ ) = 9.047,  $p < 0.05$ , implied that there were significant sex differences in the romantic attachment styles of the adolescents from the Belgrade sample. Female respondents were significantly more often classified as fearful regarding the romantic attachment style than male respondents. Initial hypothesis based on theory that there were no sex differences in adolescents' romantic attachment styles was not confirmed.



### **Adolescents' romantic attachment styles and their perception of parent-child interaction**

An analysis of variance (ANOVA), with the attachment style as independent variable, as well as a discriminant analysis, confirmed the initial hypothesis that particular dimensions of perceived parent-child relationships accounted for the overall discrimination between the four attachment groups. The discriminant analysis resulted in one significant discriminant function ( $\chi^2$  (df = 18, N = 231) = 34.308,  $p < 0.05$ ), which implied that there was a combination of perceived parent-child relationships that differentiated the four adolescents' romantic attachment styles. The resulted discriminant function explained 76% of variance, and its content was defined by: father's high demands, control and disregard, combined with lack of closeness with him and mother's high demands and control. The evaluation of the discriminant function for groups means (centroids) clearly revealed that romantic attachment styles with the positive model of self were positioned on the opposite pole of the function in relation to the attachment styles with the negative model of self. That is, the secure (-0.434) and the dismissing (-0.166) attachment styles were located on the negative pole and the fearful (0.386) and the preoccupied (0.308) ones on the opposite, positive pole of the function.

The findings implied that adolescents with the secure romantic attachment style from the Belgrade sample in general perceived to have close relationships with their fathers who were characterized as responsive and with realistic expectations and demands combined with mothers' realistic expectations and demands and both parents' supportiveness in regard to their autonomy. In contrast to them, adolescents with the fearful romantic style described their relationships with their parents in terms of the lack of intimacy with their fathers who were described as irresponsive, with high demands, control and disregard and combined with mothers' high demands and control. The remaining two romantic attachment styles were positioned in between the secure and the fearful styles on the discriminant function. The dismissing attachment style was nearer to the secure, while the preoccupied was closer to the fearful attachment style. Apparently, described combination of different dimensions of child-parent relationship accounted for variations in adolescents' romantic attachment styles. However, the predictive power of this combination has to be described as modest, since the value of the canonical correlation was 0.332, and 45.5 percent of the adolescents from the sample were correctly classified in one of the four romantic attachment styles based on the obtained discriminant function.

### **Sex differences in a correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and their perception of the parent-child relationships**

An analysis of variance (ANOVA), with the attachment style as the independent variable, revealed an existence of sex differences. In female respondents of the sample, the quality of perceived parent-child relationships significantly correlated with the romantic attachment styles. This finding was not confirmed for male respondents. A discriminant analyses was conducted on the female sub-sample and it resulted in one significant discriminant function ( $\chi^2$  (df = 27, N = 132) = 43.242,  $p < 0.05$ ). The resulted discriminant function explained 73.3% of variance, and its content was almost identical as the one obtained for the whole sample: high dedication, low demands and avoidance of punishment for the father, a sense of intimacy with both parents, combined with mothers' low

demands and control. The evaluation of the discriminant function for groups means (centroids) clearly revealed the same picture as for the entire sample. Romantic attachment styles with the positive and the negative model of self were positioned on the opposite poles of the discriminant function. The secure (0.680) and the dismissing (0.136) attachment styles were on the positive pole, whereas the fearful (-0.264) and the preoccupied (-0.854) were located on the opposite pole of the function.

Taking into account the findings received on the male sub-sample indicating that there were no dimensions of perceived child-parents relationships of a strong predictive power in relation to adolescents' romantic attachment styles, a discriminative analysis was not performed for males respondents.

#### **Adolescents' romantic attachment styles, parental marital status and early separation experience**

A conclusion that there is no significant correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and parental marital status was made based on the value of Chi-square:  $\chi^2$  (df = 3, N = 231) = 0.122,  $p > 0.05$ . The analysis also indicated that adolescents' romantic attachment styles were not correlated with their early separation experience -  $\chi^2$  (df = 3, N = 231) = 3.552,  $p > 0.05$ .

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Five initial hypotheses for this study were derived from Bowlby's attachment theory, the four category model of adolescence and adulthood attachment (Bartholomew, 1990) and relevant empirical work in this field.

The first hypothesis, which stated that the four attachment styles (secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) were expected to be identified in the sample of Belgrade adolescents, was confirmed. The study revealed that the secure attachment style was predominant in the distribution of adolescents' romantic attachment styles compared to the three insecure styles. It is worth noting, however, that the distribution of participants from Belgrade sample of adolescents across the romantic attachment styles was slightly different from some other research studies done on samples from different cultural backgrounds (primarily American). In these studies, approximately a half of the respondents were classified as secure regarding to their attachment style (47.9% – Brennan and Shaver, 1998; 57% and 47% – Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; 56% – Hazan and Shaver, 1987) and the other half of the respondents were distributed across the three insecure attachment styles. Even though a direct comparison of findings obtained on different samples from different cultures is not completely suitable, it might initiate reflections on possibilities of cultural conditioning of attachment or of sensitivity of attachment measures to cultural differences.

The second hypothesis, which claimed that differences in a distribution of adolescents' romantic attachment styles can not be expected, was not verified. To be precise, female respondents from the Belgrade sample were significantly more often classified as fearful with regard to their romantic attachment style than male respondents. Attachment theory itself does not provide a material that could be helpful in interpreting these findings, given that it does not predict an existence of this kind of the differences. The same applies for

the available empirical work in the field of attachment. Yet, characteristics of the fearful attachment style indicate a possibility of using culturally created differences in sex-role development of young people as a foundation for the interpretation. In our culture, traditionally, passivity, shyness and greater orientation towards investing in relationships were established as a standard for an acceptable female role. Besides, romantic relationships present a context for adolescents' sexual activity, and there is still a very restrictive attitude regarding the sexual behavior of young girls in our culture. For that reason, it is likely that existing sex-role stereotypes and prejudices in our culture, as well as double standards for acceptable sexual behavior for young girls and boys, might have an influence on girls' general expectations, beliefs and experiences in romantic relationships, causing their confusion, anxiety and ambivalence. Since young girls in our culture are very often overwhelmed with the messages that warn them of a risk of early pregnancy, it is more frequent for them than for the boys to associate sexual activity with a threat, and consequently to feel ambivalent, rather than comfortable with romantic intimacy.

The findings of the study partially supported the third hypothesis. This hypothesis was defined on the bases of one of the key assumptions of attachment theory, i.e. that attachment patterns established in early parent-child relationship tend to structure the quality of later adult-adult relationship. Like a few of other studies (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Feeney and Noller, 1990; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Owens et al., 1995; Brennan and Shaver, 1998), this study demonstrated that the perception of child-parent relationships was important in shaping the quality of later romantic relationships. However, these two variables correlated moderately and they were fairly independent. The study revealed the combination of six dimensions of perceived child-parent relations, which made an obvious distinction between four romantic attachment styles. This combination included: father's unrealistic demands, control and disregard, lack of closeness with him, mother's unrealistic demands and control. Two attachment styles with the positive model of self (secure and dismissing) were located on the opposite poles of this dimension in relation to the attachment styles with the negative model of self (fearful and preoccupied). Two most distant attachment styles in this dimension were secure and fearful. These findings are compatible with the results of Brennan and Shaver's research study (1998). The finding that suggested resemblance of a combination of perceived dimensions of parent-child interaction for the secure and the dismissing attachment styles could be interpreted in terms of defensive tendency of dismissing individuals to describe their relationships with parents as more positive. As some attachment researchers commented and some research studies suggested they tend to idealize their relations with parents in order to protect themselves from the negative feelings associated with these relations (Main, 1985; Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Cassidy and Kobak, 1988; Brennan and Shaver, 1991). It is worth noticing that the study revealed no significant dimensions of perceived child-mother relationships (particularly an emotional aspect of this relation, such as intimacy, disregard and dedication) to significantly determine the quality of the romantic attachment styles of the adolescents from the sample. This might be considered incompatible with the major postulations of the attachment theory, especially with its early formulation, when mother's role in determining the quality of children attachment was particularly emphasized. Since there was a lower variability in adolescents' answers regarding the perception of their relationships with the mother, reasons for this incompatibility might be statistical. A lower variability in answers might decrease a correlation

between adolescents' attachment styles and their perception of the child-mother relationships. Alternatively, the reasons could be found in the differences derived from the different roles of the mother and the father. According to Steinberg (1996), adolescents more often perceive their mothers as more loving, responsive and supportive parents, with whom they develop close relationships. On the other hand, the fathers are more frequently perceived as a distant authority, and parents who are less supportive and involved in solving emotional problems (Collins and Russel, 1991, according to Steinberg, 1996). The differences in the parental role in related socializing processes for females and males were considered a source for the differences in adolescents' perception of their parents. The mother's role both in western cultures and ours, implies more emotional expressiveness or emotional components in developing relationships with her children. Also, the mother's role is associated with a greater dedication and closeness with children, and her social recognition depends on her success to play this role. The father's role, however, is more "instrumental", because it is more associated with providing for the family. Since it is less expected from the fathers in our culture to establish closeness with their children and to be more emotionally expressive, it is more likely that there will be more variability in their emotional relations with their children. For that reason, we can speculate that variations in adolescents' perceptions of emotional aspect of child-father relationships and child-father relations in general are more critical in determining variations in the quality of adolescents' romantic relationships in their later life. Following the same line of thinking, a greater variations in adolescents' estimations of two aspects of their relationships with their mothers – control and expectations – could be a base for interpreting a significant correlation between adolescents' perceptions of these two dimensions and differences in romantic attachment styles. Apparently, this kind of speculation needs to be empirically verified, and the correlation between perceived relationships with the mother and adolescent's attachment styles needs to be tested. Other variables, such as parents' social status, education, mother's employment/unemployment, distribution of roles within a family, etc., have to be included.

Unexpectedly, the findings provided an affirmative answer to the initial question about the sex differences in the correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and their perception of the parent-child relationships. Attachment theory discussed the concept of attachment as universal, as a characteristic of all human beings, regardless of either cultural or sex related influences. Thus, it does not provide a foundation for interpreting obtained sex differences. As the current empirical work in the field of attachment does not provide the basis for interpretations either, further research studies, which would include various relational experiences with other potential important attachment figures, such as siblings, grandparents, peers etc., need to be conducted to clarify this correlation.

The fifth hypothesis that implied the correlation between adolescents' romantic attachment styles and two variables - parental marital status and early separation experience, was not verified. The reason for that might be statistical, because the number of adolescents from divorced families (11.7%), was considerably smaller than the number of adolescents from intact families (88.3%). Besides, a small number of adolescents reported on early separation from their parents (19.9%).

After analyzing the findings of this study, we can make a conclusion, which is in compliance with Levitt's opinion (1991) that the development of attachment relationships throughout the life-span is not linear and the quality of adult attachment is not a mere re-

flection of the quality of early parent-child relationships. The quality of adult attachment is influenced not only by parent-child relationship, but also by a broader social experience. The expectations, beliefs, feelings and interaction strategies in close relationships are derived from the previous experience in close relationships, including an early attachment to parents, only to some extent. General social cognitive development, perception of social norms and standards related to the close romantic relations, such as romantic partners' acceptable behavior, sex-role socialization, dominant social ideology – traditional, egalitarian, feminism etc., are also very influential. On the other hand, since there are family members other than parents, like siblings or grandparents, who might provide important support and comfort to a child during the childhood, it is not realistic to expect that the working models of attachment reflect no more than the quality of child-parent relationships (Hazan, 1992; Hazan and Zeifman, 1994). Furthermore, the interaction between the quality of early and later close relations is manifold and every new relationship includes the developmental history of both partners. It seems that a variety of determinants are involved in the process of developing attachment relationships. Hence, it is unlikely to believe that this process is determined just by the quality of early child-parent relationships.

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## **AFEKTIVNA VEZANOST ADOLESCENATA U PARTNERSKIM ODNOSIMA**

**Biljana Žuvela**

*U radu je proučavana afektivna vezanost adolescenata u emotivnim partnerskim odnosima. Istraživanje je imalo za cilj identifikovanje četiri stila vezanosti, definisanih četirikategorijalnim modelom vezanosti Kim Bartholomew (1990) – sigurni, bojažljivi, preokupirani i povlačeći - u bliskim partnerskim odnosima na beogradskom uzorku adolescenata, kao i povezanost stilova sa varijablama odnos roditelj-dete, pol, bračni status roditelja i iskustvo separacije na ranom uzrastu. Uzorkom je obuhvaćen 231 adolescent, oba pola, uzrasta 17 do 19 godina. Za procenu stilova vezanosti adolescenata korišćena je višestajemska skala samoprocene – Skala iskustava u bliskim odnosima (autora Brennan, Clark i Shaver, 1998), kojom se na osnovu opštih stavova, verovanja i očekivanja od partnera i bliskih odnosa, osećanja prijatnosti ili neprijatnosti usled ostvarivanja bliskosti i na osnovu uobičajenog ponašanja u odnosu sa emotivnim partnerom*

*procenjuje stil vezanosti ispitanika. Opažanje odnosa sa roditeljima je procenjeno primenom modifikovane verzije SRDI skale (autori modifikacije Opačić i Kos, 1988), a podaci o bračnom statusu roditelja i iskustvu separacije na ranom uzrastu, putem upitnika specijalno konstruisanog za potrebe ovog istraživanja. Rezultati su potvrdili postojanje četiri glavna stila vezanosti u partnerskim odnosima na uzorku beogradskih adolescenata. Kod devojaka je značajno zastupljeniji bojažljivi stil vezanosti u odnosu na mladiće. Utvrđeno je da postoji kombinacija dimenzija percipiranog odnosa sa roditeljima, koja dobro diskriminiše četiri stila vezanosti adolescenata u bliskim partnerskim odnosima: nerealni zahtevi, kontrola i zanemarivanje od strane oca, nedostatak bliskosti sa njim, nerealni zahtevi i kontrola od strane majke. Postoje značajne razlike između devojaka i mladića u pogledu povezanosti partnerske vezanosti sa percipiranim odnosom sa roditeljima: kod devojaka je opaženi kvalitet odnosa sa roditeljima povezan sa kvalitetom kasnije vezanosti u partnerskim odnosima, a kod mladića nije. Nije utvrđena značajna povezanost između stilova vezanosti u partnerskim odnosima adolescenata i varijabli bračni status roditelja i iskustvo separacije na ranom uzrastu.*

**Ključne reči:** *stilovi vezanosti adolescenata, bliski partnerski odnosi, percipirani odnos sa roditeljima, polne razlike.*