

Attachment theory and emotions in close relationships: Exploring the attachment-related dynamics of emotional reactions to relational events

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Abstract

Attachment theory is a powerful framework for understanding affect regulation. In this article, we examine the role played by attachment orientation in shaping emotional reactions to interpersonal transactions within close relationships. Using our recent integrative model of attachment-system activation and dynamics as a guide (M. Mikulincer & P. R. Shaver, 2003), we review relevant evidence, present new findings, and propose hypotheses concerning how people with different attachment styles are likely to react emotionally to relational events. Specifically, we focus on attachment-related variations in the emotional states elicited by a relationship partner's positive and negative behaviors and by signals of a partner's (relationship relevant or relationship irrelevant) distress or pleasure. In so doing, we organize existing knowledge and point the way to future research on attachment-related emotions in close relationships.

One of the hallmarks of close relationships is *emotion*, both positive and negative. Where else but in close relationships do people experience such diverse and intense feelings as acceptance, security, love, joy, gratitude, and pride—on the positive side, and frustration, rage, hatred, fear of rejection, humiliation, grinding disappointment, jealousy, grief, and despair—on the negative side? Close relationships not only arouse emotions, but are also affected by the way partners react emotionally to positive and negative relational events. Theory and research have clearly

documented the motivational consequences of emotions (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Within relational contexts, a person's emotions can affect not only his or her own action tendencies, but also the partner's responses and the resulting quality of the dyadic interaction. In fact, basic emotions, such as anger, fear, and joy can motivate particular kinds of behavior toward a relationship partner (e.g., attacking, distancing, approaching), which in turn can elicit various kinds of relational responses from the partner. Close relationships also provide some of the most important supports for and disruptors of affect regulation, a process that is increasingly being viewed as a central theme in developmental, social, and clinical psychology (Schore, 2003).

In all three of these fields, Bowlby's (1969/1982, 1973) attachment theory is one of the major conceptual frameworks for understanding affect regulation. Bowlby

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(1969/1982, 1973) highlighted the anxiety-buffering and physical protection functions of close relationships, conceptualized proximity seeking as a fundamental means of regulating distress, and emphasized the importance of attachment history for understanding individual differences in affect-regulation strategies across the life span. Most importantly for subsequent research, Bowlby (1973) delineated alternative attachment-related strategies of affect regulation that result from different patterns of interactions with attachment figures. In this article, we focus on these strategies and elaborate on their emotional consequences for close relationships. Specifically, we review relevant evidence, present new findings from our laboratories, and propose new ideas about the ways in which attachment-related strategies shape a person's emotional state during positive and negative transactions with close relationship partners.

Attachment Theory: Basic Concepts

Bowlby (1969/1982) claimed that human beings are born with an innate psychobiological system (the *attachment behavioral system*) that motivates them to seek proximity to significant others (*attachment figures*) in times of need. This system accomplishes basic regulatory functions (protection from threats and alleviation of distress) in human beings of all ages but is most directly and transparently observable during infancy (Bowlby, 1988). Bowlby (1973) also described important individual differences in attachment-system functioning. Interactions with attachment figures who are available and responsive in times of need facilitate the optimal functioning of the attachment system, promote a relatively stable sense of attachment security, and heighten confidence in support seeking as a distress-regulation strategy. When a person's attachment figures are not reliably available and supportive, however, proximity seeking fails to relieve distress, a sense of attachment security is not attained, and strategies of affect regulation other than proximity seeking (*secondary attachment strategies*, conceptualized in terms of two major dimensions, *avoidance* and *anxiety*) are developed.

In studies of adolescents and adults, tests of these theoretical ideas have generally focused on a person's *attachment style*—the systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors that results from internalization of a particular history of attachment experiences (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Initially, research was based on Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall's (1978) three-category typology of attachment styles in infancy—secure, anxious, and avoidant—and Hazan and Shaver's (1987) conceptualization of similar adult styles in the romantic relationship domain. Subsequent studies (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) revealed, however, that attachment styles are more appropriately conceptualized as regions in a two-dimensional space. The first dimension, typically called *attachment avoidance*, reflects the extent to which a person distrusts relationship partners' goodwill and strives to maintain behavioral independence and emotional distance from partners. The second dimension, typically called *attachment anxiety*, reflects the degree to which a person worries that a partner will not be available in times of need. The two dimensions can be measured with reliable and valid self-report scales (e.g., Brennan et al., 1998) and are associated in theoretically predictable ways with relationship quality and adjustment (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Clark, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1993, for reviews).

Based on an extensive review of adult attachment studies, we (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002) proposed a three-phase model of attachment-system activation and dynamics, which we will summarize briefly here. Following Bowlby (1969/1982), we assume that the routine monitoring of experiences and events results in activation of the attachment system when a potential or actual threat is perceived. Once the attachment system is activated, an affirmative answer to the question "Is an attachment figure available and likely to be responsive to my needs?" results in attachment security and facilitates the application of security-based strategies of affect regulation (Shaver &

Mikulincer). These strategies are aimed at alleviating distress; maintaining comfortable, supportive intimate relationships; and increasing personal adjustment. They consist of optimistic beliefs about distress management, trusting beliefs about others' goodwill, and a sense of self-efficacy about dealing with threats (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Security-based strategies also involve acknowledgment and display of distress without personal disorganization, support seeking, and instrumental problem solving (Mikulincer & Shaver). These tendencies are characteristic of people (called *securely attached*) who score relatively low on attachment anxiety and avoidance.

Perceived unavailability of an attachment figure results in attachment insecurity, which forces a decision about the viability of proximity seeking as a protective strategy. The appraisal of proximity as viable or essential—because of attachment history, temperamental factors, or contextual cues—can result in energetic, insistent attempts to attain proximity, support, and love. In the literature on attachment, these intense attempts are called *hyperactivating strategies* (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988) because they involve constant concern and prodigious effort until an attachment figure is perceived to be available and a sense of security is attained. Hyperactivating strategies are indicated by attempts to elicit a partner's involvement and support through clinging and controlling responses (Shaver & Hazan, 1993), overdependence on relationship partners as a source of protection (Shaver & Hazan), and perception of oneself as relatively helpless and incompetent at affect regulation (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998).

According to Shaver and Mikulincer (2002), hyperactivating strategies involve increased vigilance to threat-related cues and a reduction in the threshold for detecting cues of attachment figures' unavailability—the two kinds of cues that activate the attachment system (Bowlby, 1973). They also intensify negative emotional responses to threatening events and heighten rumination on threat-related concerns, keeping these concerns active in working memory. As a result, minimal threat-related cues are easily

detected, the attachment system is chronically activated, and psychological pain related to the unavailability of attachment figures is exacerbated. These concomitants of attachment-system hyperactivation account for many of the psychological correlates of attachment anxiety (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

Appraising proximity seeking as unlikely to alleviate distress results in inhibition of the quest for support and active attempts to handle distress alone. These secondary approaches to affect regulation are called *deactivating strategies* (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988) because their primary goal is to keep the attachment system deactivated in order to avoid frustration and further distress caused by attachment-figure unavailability. These strategies involve denial of attachment needs and avoidance of emotional involvement, intimacy, and dependence in close relationships. They also involve the dismissal of threat- and attachment-related cues and the suppression of threat- and attachment-related thoughts. These tendencies are further reinforced by assuming a self-reliant attitude that decreases dependence on others and discourages acknowledgment of personal faults. These aspects of deactivation account for the psychological manifestations of attachment avoidance (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

In summary, each attachment-related strategy has a regulatory goal, and cognitive and affective processes are shaped to facilitate goal attainment. We believe these strategies can also shape the quality of emotional experiences both in general and specifically within close relationships. In the next section, we present ideas and review research findings concerning attachment-related variations in emotional reactions to relational episodes.

Attachment-Related Variations in Emotional Reactions to Relational Episodes

In order to analyze the possible involvement of attachment-related strategies of affect regulation in determining the quality of a person's emotional reactions within close relationships, we focus on four broad categories of

emotion-eliciting relational events. Specifically, we elaborate on attachment-related variations in the emotional states elicited by a relationship partner's positive or negative behaviors and by signals of the partner's (relationship relevant or relationship irrelevant) distress or happiness. In other words, we consider two ways in which a partner can evoke emotion in a target person: by acting in certain ways and by expressing certain emotions of his or her own. Table 1 presents an integrative overview of our ideas about attachment-related variations in emotional reactions to the various kinds of relational events.

Emotional responses to a partner's negative behaviors

One strong source of emotions in close relationships is behavior on the part of one relationship partner that interferes with the other's goals or that either actually or potentially damages the other's welfare or relationship quality. A common response to such

threats and injuries is anger. According to Lazarus (1991), the core relational theme of anger is "... a demeaning offense against me and mine" (p. 222), an assault or threat to one's identity or to other important personal goals and possessions. Researchers with other theoretical perspectives also view anger as a signal that something important is being threatened in one's interpersonal interactions, often in what is perceived to be an illegitimate way, and that some coping action should be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat, repair the damage, or prevent further assaults (e.g., Izard & Kobak, 1991; Shaver et al., 1987). In the second volume of his classic *Attachment and Loss* trilogy, Bowlby (1973) argued that anger is also the most common response to a partner's attachment-relevant negative behaviors—for example, a partner's signs of unavailability, detachment, or rejection—that threaten a person's attachment needs and sense of security.

Anger is not, however, a simple or monolithic emotional response. Rather, it is a complex, multifaceted emotion that can be

Table 1. *An integrative summary of attachment-related variations in emotional reactions to different kinds of relational events*

Relational events	Attachment security	Attachment avoidance	Attachment anxiety
Partner's negative behaviors	Functional anger	Suppressed anger, resentment, hostility	Resentment, hostility, dysfunctional anger, despair, sadness
Partner's positive behaviors	Happiness, joy, love, gratitude	Indifference, detachment	Ambivalent feelings of happiness, love, fear, anxiety
Partner's relationship-relevant distress	Guilt, reparation	Resentment, hostility	Shame, despair
Partner's relationship-irrelevant distress	Empathic compassion	Pity, hostility, contempt, gloating	Personal distress, despair
Partner's relationship-relevant happiness	Happiness, joy, love, pride	<i>Hubris</i>	Ambivalent feelings of happiness, anxiety, fear of success
Partner's relationship-irrelevant happiness	Empathic happiness, respect, admiration	Hostile envy	Ambivalent mixture of happiness, fear of separation, jealousy

associated with different goals, expressed in different ways, and result in different and even antagonistic relational outcomes (e.g., Averill, 1982; Mikulincer, 1998; Tangney et al., 1996). According to Tangney et al., anger can be motivated by either constructive or destructive goals, be expressed in functional or dysfunctional ways, result in positive or negative relational behaviors, elicit positive or negative responses from a relationship partner, and have positive or negative consequences for relationship quality.

Functional manifestations of anger are motivated by constructive goals such as, maintaining a relationship, asserting one's needs, or bringing about a change in a relationship partner's behavior (Averill, 1982). In such cases, anger is typically expressed in a controlled manner and does not entail animosity, hostility, or hateful attitudes toward the partner. In fact, this kind of anger is not intended to hurt or destroy the partner but only to discourage his or her negative behavior and to reestablish a warm and satisfactory relationship (Averill). Hence, functional manifestations of anger do not usually lead to physical or verbal aggression, vengeful criticism, vicious retaliation, or deeply hurtful accusations. Rather, they take the form of focused complaints and problem-solving discussions (Tangney et al., 1996).

In contrast, dysfunctional manifestations of anger include continuing resentment toward one's partner, hurting the partner emotionally or physically, and seeking revenge, which can easily result in lasting "attachment injuries" (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001) and weaken relational bonds (Tangney et al., 1996). These manifestations of anger are likely to include animosity, hostility, and hatred; when intense, they may lead to uncontrollable aggression and even violence (Averill, 1982). In some cases, however, these dysfunctional manifestations of anger may be suppressed or redirected, to avoid a confrontation with the partner, and the anger can then take subtle forms (Tangney et al.). In such cases, the unexpressed anger may persist in diffuse feelings of resentment and hostile attitudes toward the partner or may be internalized and directed toward the self.

When redirected toward the self, the angry person may stew over feelings of self-disgust, helplessness, vulnerability, and despair, which, in turn, produce a mixture of anger, sadness, and depression (Averill; Siegel; Tangney et al.).

In his discussion of emotional reactions to attachment-related negative behaviors, Bowlby (1973, 1988) also differentiated between functional and dysfunctional manifestations of anger. According to Bowlby (1973), anger is originally a functional response directed toward protesting separation from an attachment figure or reproaching an attachment figure for not being available. It is functional in the sense that it is directed toward either overcoming obstacles to reunion or discouraging the loved person from going away again. However, Bowlby (1973, 1988) also noted that anger can sometimes become dysfunctional in various ways, including becoming so intense that it alienates the partner or becoming vengeful rather than corrective. In particular, Bowlby (1988) discussed how much of family violence can be understood as distorted and exaggerated versions of potentially functional behavior. For example, he characterizes various coercive behaviors within close relationships (including battering) as strategies designed to control the other and keep him or her from departing. In Bowlby's (1988) view, although violent and uncontrollable outbursts of anger may have an instrumental function (to discourage a partner's future negative behaviors), it is dysfunctional in its extremity and in its potential to escalate conflict and destroy the relationship.

This analysis of anger as a complex, multifaceted emotion provides a preliminary framework for conceptualizing attachment-related variations in emotional reactions to a partner's negative behavior. In the following pages, we present several working hypotheses and review relevant studies concerning the ways in which attachment-related strategies shape angry reactions to a relationship partner's behavior.

Attachment security. The security-based attachment strategies that characterize securely attached individuals include reacting to a partner's negative behavior with functional manifestations of anger. The main goal of security-based strategies is to deal with

threats in a constructive, transformational manner and to maintain stable, reliable, satisfactory, and intimate relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). These strategies are based on beliefs that relationship partners generally have good intentions, that others' negative behaviors are temporary and reversible, and that one possesses suitable means for dealing constructively with the offense or misunderstanding (Mikulincer & Shaver). As a result, when threatened by a partner's negative behavior, secure people should generally express anger in a controlled manner, without extreme hatred or hostility, and should attempt to resolve conflicts constructively, with positive effects on relationship quality.

In support of this theoretical analysis, Mikulincer (1998) found that, when confronted with a partner's negative actions, securely attached individuals held optimistic expectations about the partner's subsequent behavior and made well-differentiated, reality-attuned appraisals of the partner's intentions. Only when there were clear contextual cues provided by the experimenter, indicating that a partner actually acted with hostile intent did secure people attribute hostility to the partner and react with anger. Furthermore, secure participants' memories of their reactions to a partner's negative behaviors were characterized by the constructive goal of repairing the relationship, engaging in adaptive problem solving, and experiencing positive affect following these episodes.

The functional nature of secure individuals' angry reactions has also been documented in a recent study conducted by Zimmermann, Maier, Winter, and Grossmann (2001). In this study, adolescents who had previously been classified as securely or insecurely attached based on the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) performed a frustrating, difficult cognitive task with the help of a friend, and their reports of disappointment and anger during task performance, as well as the occurrence of disruptive behavior toward the friend (e.g., rejection of the friend's suggestions without discussion), were assessed. The study revealed that reports of disappointment and anger were associated with more frequent disruptive behavior only among insecurely

attached adolescents. Among securely attached adolescents, these emotions were associated with less rather than more disruptive behavior. Therefore, secure people's anger seems more regulated and more functionally channeled in useful directions.

Attachment avoidance. According to our model, the deactivating strategies of avoidant individuals include reacting to a partner's negative behavior with more dysfunctional manifestations of anger. Avoidant individuals' attempts to inhibit every emotional state that is incongruent with their goal of attachment-system deactivation may include suppressing anger from awareness because angry feelings are associated with threat-related thoughts that can reactivate attachment needs. In addition, anger implies emotional investment and involvement in a relationship, which is incongruent with an avoidant person's preference for interpersonal distance (Cassidy, 1994). As a result, an avoidant person's anger can be expressed only in unconscious or unattended ways (which may be physiologically measurable) or can take the form of nonspecific hostility or hateful attitudes toward a partner. This hostility can be further exacerbated by avoidant individuals' lack of confidence in their relationship partners' goodwill (Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

Adult attachment studies have consistently shown that this mixture of suppressed anger and high levels of hostility (what Mikulincer, 1998, labeled "dissociated anger") is correlated with attachment avoidance. For example, Mikulincer found that although individuals scoring high on attachment avoidance did not report overly intense anger in reaction to a partner's negative behavior, they reported heightened hostility and exhibited intense physiological arousal during these episodes. They also used distancing strategies to cope with the partner's negative behavior and displayed a tendency to attribute hostility to a partner even when there were clear contextual cues about the partner's nonhostile intent. Signs of heightened hostility have also been reported in other studies where attachment avoidance has been assessed with self-report measures (e.g., Buunk, 1997; Mikulincer,

Florian, & Weller, 1993, Mikulincer, Horesh, Eilati, & Kotler, 1999). Using the AAI, Kobak and Sceery (1988) found that dismissively avoidant attachment was related to greater dispositional hostility (as reported by friends), and Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gillies, Fleming, and Gamble (1993) reported that avoidant teens displayed more dysfunctional anger than did secure teens toward their mothers and engaged in less cooperative dialogue during a problem-solving interaction.

The dysfunctional nature of avoidant individuals' anger toward a relationship partner has also been documented during the process of support seeking in a study by Rholes, Simpson, and Orina (1999). In this study, women were told they would engage in an anxiety-provoking activity and were asked to wait with their dating partners for the activity to begin. During this 5-min "stress" period, the reactions of the support seekers (women) and support providers (men) were videotaped. Women's avoidance, as assessed by a self-report scale, was associated with more intense anger toward the partner, and this was especially the case when women were more distressed and received less support from their partners. It seems that avoidant women's lack of confidence in their partner's support might have elicited disappointment and anger while they were seeking support.

In a recent study of forgiveness within close relationships, Shaver and Mikulincer (2003) provided further evidence about avoidant individuals' hostile reactions to their partners' negative behavior. As compared with less avoidant individuals, people who scored high on avoidance were less likely to forgive a partner who had hurt them, as assessed by McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal's (1997) forgiveness scale. Instead, they were more likely to have a strong desire for revenge and to escape from the situation following a partner's transgression, as assessed by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (McCullough et al., 1998). Moreover, when avoidant individuals were asked to recall an episode in which they forgave a relationship partner who had hurt them, their feelings and thoughts were colored by hostility, resentment, and

lack of actual forgiveness. Specifically, avoidant people evinced a negative construal of the events calling for forgiveness; their reactions were characterized by narcissistic wounds, thoughts about relationship deterioration, and lack of understanding of a partner's hurtful actions. Avoidant individuals' disinclination to forgive was also noted in a subsequent daily diary study in which participants were asked to report their reactions to their partner's negative behaviors over a period of 21 days (Shaver & Mikulincer).

Attachment anxiety. In our view, the hyperactivating strategies of anxiously attached individuals also include reacting to a partner's negative behavior with more dysfunctional manifestations of anger. Anxiously attached individuals' tendencies to intensify the experience of negative emotions and ruminate on threat-related thoughts may help fuel intense and prolonged bouts of anger toward a relationship partner. However, their fear of separation, desperate desire for a partner's love, and overly dependent attitude may hold in check the intense resentment and anger and redirect it toward the self. This self-directed anger can be further exacerbated by anxious persons' doubts about their self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), which may provide the context for blaming themselves for the partner's negative behavior and reproaching themselves for endangering the relationship. As a result, anxious persons may react to a partner's negative behaviors with a complex mixture of resentment, hostility, anger, self-criticism, fear, sadness, and depression.

There is already some evidence for this perspective on anxiously attached individuals' reactions to a partner's negative behavior. For example, Mikulincer (1998) found that anxious people's recollections of their responses to a partner's negative behavior included an uncontrollable flood of angry feelings, persistent rumination on these feelings, and sadness and despair following conflictual episodes. Mikulincer also reported that participants scoring high on attachment anxiety held negative expectations about their partner's responses during anger episodes and

tended to make undifferentiated, negatively biased appraisals of the partner's intentions. They attributed hostility to their partner and reacted in kind, even when there were ambiguous cues (in the experiment) concerning the hostile intent. Using a rather different method, Woike, Osier, and Candela (1996) found that self-reported attachment anxiety was associated with writing more violent projective stories in response to Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) cards.

The dysfunctional nature of anxious people's anger has also been noted in observational studies of dyadic behavior. Simpson, Rholes, and Phillips (1996) found that self-reports of attachment anxiety were associated with displaying and reporting more anger, hostility, and distress while discussing with a dating partner an unresolved problem in the relationship. In their study of support seeking, Rholes et al. (1999) found no significant association between attachment anxiety and anger toward a dating partner while waiting for an anxiety-provoking activity ("stress period"). However, after the participant was told that she would not really have to undergo the expected stress ("recovery" period), higher scores on attachment anxiety were associated with more intense anger toward the partner. Interestingly, this was particularly true if participants had been more upset during the stress period and had sought more support from their partner. It seems that anxious participants' strong need for reassurance counteracted, or led to suppression of, angry feelings during support seeking. But after support was no longer necessary, the angry feelings surfaced, reflecting chronic hyperactivating strategies that tend to perpetuate distress-related feelings.

Another recent study on couple interactions provided important information about anxiously attached people's emotional reactions to a partner's insensitive behavior (Mikulincer, Florian, & Hirschberger, 2002). In this study, newly wed couples completed a daily questionnaire each evening for a period of 21 days. Each day, participants rated the extent to which their feelings toward their spouse were positive or negative and then indicated which behaviors (from a list pro-

vided by the researchers) their partner had exhibited that day. As compared with those scoring low on the attachment anxiety dimension, people who scored high produced a stronger association, day by day, between partner's negative behaviors and depression-related feelings. They reported more intense feelings of depression, weakness, and despair as a direct function of their perception of their partner's negativity on a particular day. This finding remained significant even after controlling for the intensity of anger-related feelings on a particular day.

Emotional reactions to a partner's positive behaviors

Another strong source of emotions in close relationships is positive behavior on the part of the partner that satisfies one's needs, improves one's welfare, or advances the stability or quality of the relationship. From an attachment perspective, a partner's positive behaviors signal availability, responsiveness, support, and love; lead a person to feel protected, accepted, and valued; and are crucial for the development of secure attachment bonds (Bowlby, 1973; Shaver & Hazan, 1994). Considered in relation to the emotions, these behaviors are a source of joy, happiness, and gratitude. They intensify feelings of love for and being loved by the available, supportive partner; foster approach action tendencies toward the partner; and motivate the person to be sensitive and responsive to the partner's needs. All these reactions further encourage the partner to be attentive and responsive to one's needs, help to sustain a dyadic cycle of positive interpersonal behaviors, and thereby strengthen the relational bond.

Scholars with different theoretical perspectives agree that the most common emotional response to a partner's positive behaviors is a blend of joy (being pleased about having obtained a desirable relational outcome), respect and admiration (viewing the partner's actions as praiseworthy), and love (regarding the partner in a warm, positive way), which may also induce feelings of gratitude (e.g., Frei & Shaver, 2002; Heider, 1958; Ortony,

Clore, & Collins, 1987). For example, Weiner (1985) claimed that people feel grateful within close relationships when they feel happy about receiving a positive outcome and recognize that their partner was responsible for it. Research has also consistently shown that when people are asked to recall a favorable situation attributed to another person's behavior, their most frequent responses are happiness and gratitude (e.g., Overwalle, Mervielde, & De Schuyter, 1995; Walker & Pitts, 1998).

Although at first sight the links between a partner's positive behavior and feelings of joy, love, and gratitude seem intuitively natural, automatic, and likely to be universal, they—just like the different forms of anger we examined—depend on a person's interaction goals and interpersonal cognitions. One precondition for experiencing joy, love, and gratitude following a partner's supportive behavior is appraisal of these behaviors as positive relational outcomes (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985). That is, people react to a partner's positive behavior with gratitude and happiness mainly when they perceive these behaviors as congruent with their personal goals. Another prerequisite for experiencing gratitude is recognition that a partner's positive behavior reflects his or her good intentions and is altruistically motivated (e.g., Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; Weiner, 1985). Therefore, people are likely to experience gratitude mainly when they attribute their partner's positive behavior to internal, stable factors and believe that these behaviors are altruistically motivated.

This reasoning suggests that attachment-style differences should be relevant to understanding individual variations in emotional reactions to a partner's positive behavior. For securely attached persons, whose security-based strategies include positive beliefs about their partner's goodwill and are aimed at maintaining warm and intimate relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), a partner's positive behavior naturally and automatically evokes feelings of joy, love, and gratitude. In contrast, avoidant individuals may react with less joy, love, and gratitude to a partner's kind, generous behavior. They tend not to believe in their partner's goodwill and do not

wish to depend on or be supported by their partner (Mikulincer & Shaver). Moreover, expression of affection toward a partner can be interpreted as a sign of closeness, which is incongruent with an avoidant person's preference for emotional distance.

People who score high on attachment anxiety may have ambivalent reactions to a partner's positive behavior. We believe this ambivalence results from hyperactivating strategies that strengthen the desire for support and love, intensify the appraisal of potential threats, and heighten doubts about self-worth and self-efficacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Anxiously attached people may believe they do not deserve a partner's kindness and will not be able to reciprocate it fully or meet a partner's needs and expectations, which in turn may muddy happiness and gratitude with fear and anxiety. In addition, for anxiously attached persons, positive interpersonal experiences may be reminiscent of previous experiences that began well but ended painfully. Once attuned to negative memories, the anxious mind may suffer from a spread of negative affect that interferes with the experience of happiness and gratitude.

Although adult attachment research has yet to provide a systematic examination of attachment-style differences in emotional reactions to a partner's positive behavior, there are a few important pieces of evidence concerning associations between attachment orientations and the arousal and experience of positive emotions. For example, research has consistently shown that securely attached people score higher on self-report measures of joy, happiness, interest, love, and affection than do insecurely attached people (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review). For example, in two diary studies, each lasting a week, participants completed the Rochester Interaction Record every time they engaged in a social interaction lasting 10 minutes or longer. Both sets of investigators, Tidwell, Reis, and Shaver (1996) and Pietromonaco and Barrett (1997), found that anxious and avoidant participants experienced fewer positive emotions than secure participants. Moreover, Rom and Mikulincer (2003)

reported that both attachment anxiety and avoidance were associated with relatively low positive emotional tone during group interactions, and Horppu and Ikonen-Varila (2001) found that a combination of high anxiety and high avoidance (fearful avoidance) was associated with fewer positive emotions during a college entrance interview.

Attachment-style differences in the experience of positive emotions have also been documented in studies examining the encoding of emotion in facial expressions. For example, Magai, Hunziker, Mesias, and Culver (2000) found that attachment security was associated with more facial expressions of joy, and Spangler and Zimmermann (1999) found that avoidant participants (assessed by the AAI) exhibited relatively low activation of "smile" muscles while watching a positive emotional film. In addition, several studies have revealed that high attachment avoidance is related to low scores on scales assessing expression of positive emotions (Ducharme, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2002; Searle & Meara, 1999; Tucker & Anders, 1999) and to high scores on scales assessing control over positive emotions—the tendency to bottle up positive emotions and conceal them from a relationship partner (Feeney, 1995, 1999). Adult attachment studies have also documented attachment-style differences in affective reactions to positive relational episodes, such as reunion with a close relationship partner following a prolonged separation. In Medway, Davis, Cafferty, and Chappell's (1995) study of marital separation due to overseas deployment of husbands during war, securely attached spouses reported more positive emotions and less conflict upon reunion than anxious and avoidant spouses.

Recently, Shaver and Mikulincer (2003) presented more direct evidence of attachment-style differences in emotional reactions to a partner's positive behaviors. Compared to less avoidant people, those scoring high on attachment avoidance were less disposed to feel gratitude, as assessed by the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002). Moreover, when avoidant people were asked to recall an episode in which they felt grateful to a relationship part-

ner, they tended to remember negative experiences, involving more narcissistic threats and distrust and less happiness and love. People scoring high on attachment anxiety tended to remember more ambivalent experiences of gratitude-eliciting episodes. Specifically, anxiously attached people recalled relatively high levels of security-related feelings, happiness, and love, together with relatively high levels of narcissistic threats and inferiority feelings.

In a diary study in which 55 newly wed couples reported their emotional reactions to a partner's positive actions every day for a period of 21 days (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2003), daily feelings of gratitude were significantly related to the partner's (perceived) behaviors on that day: The higher the level of a partner's positive behaviors, the higher the feelings of gratitude a participant reported experiencing toward the partner. In addition, attachment orientations were related to daily feelings of gratitude toward a partner: The higher the attachment avoidance, the less the gratitude across the 21 days. More important, attachment avoidance moderated the association between partner's behavior and self's gratitude: People scoring high on avoidance experienced relatively low levels of gratitude even on days when they perceived the partner's behavior as positive. Stated in reverse, a partner's positive behaviors elicited gratitude mainly among participants who were not avoidant.

Emotional reactions to a partner's distress

We turn now to another kind of emotion-eliciting episode within close relationships—a partner's appraisal of threats or damages to his or her identity, possessions, or goals and the consequent expression of distress. According to Clark, Fitness, and Brissette (2001), a partner's experience of stress and distress is a potent source of one's own emotions within communal, interdependent relationships because most people feel at least somewhat responsible for their partner's welfare and may be strongly affected by changes in the partner's emotional states. This

is a natural consequence of the *caregiving* system being part of romantic love (e.g., Collins & Feeney, 2000; Kuncie & Shaver, 1994; Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). In these cases, it is important to differentiate between two kinds of relational events according to the source of a partner's distress: (a) relationship-relevant partner distress—episodes in which the partner's distress results from one's own negative behavior (e.g., unavailability, rejection, disinterest, criticism, aggression, betrayal) and (b) relationship-irrelevant partner distress—episodes in which the partner's distress results from threats and losses that have nothing to do with the relationship itself (e.g., health problems, work problems). This differentiation is important for analyzing attachment-style differences in emotions within close relationships because the two kinds of episodes differ in the emotional responses they typically elicit.

Relationship-relevant partner distress. Relationship episodes in which a person behaves badly toward a partner, fails to meet the partner's needs and expectations, or actually or potentially damages a partner's well-being or relationship quality can elicit a wide array of emotional responses, ranging from self-conscious emotions, such as guilt and shame, through fear of punishment or retaliation, to anger and hostile attitudes toward the damaged partner (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 2000; Tangney, 1990, 1992). We believe that these emotions may have particular significance for attachment-related dynamics and may be related to a person's attachment orientation.

Consider the case of the self-conscious emotions of guilt and shame. Occurrence of these emotions implies that threatening or harming a partner's welfare is appraised as an undesirable failure to live up to one's standards and ideals (Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 2000; Tangney, 1992). People who react to their own relationship-damaging behaviors with guilt or shame are likely to favor the creation of warm and supportive relationships and to view protection of their partner's welfare and the maintenance of relationship quality as being among their most important

interaction goals. In fact, these emotions are inhibited when people minimize interdependence and responsibility for the fate of their partner and relationship (Clark et al., 2001).

This seems to be the case for avoidant individuals, who prefer to minimize emotional involvement and interdependence in their relationships and who often distance themselves from their partner's needs (Shaver & Clark, 1994; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). For such people, relationship-relevant partner distress may not be perceived as sharply goal incongruent and therefore may not instigate negative self-conscious emotions.

Although avoidant people may not believe they have done anything wrong when their partner expresses distress or injury, they may nevertheless harbor angry, hostile feelings toward the partner. These feelings include resentment of the partner's accusations and are likely to occur when the avoidant person perceives the partner as deserving the discomfort and perceives his or her own destructive behavior as a reasonable payback for the partner's previous transgressions (Lazarus, 1991). In such cases, an avoidant person may blame his or her partner for evoking the self's hurtful behavior, attribute the negative relational outcomes to the partner's negative traits (rather than the self's), and feel angry toward the partner for causing the self to behave so badly.

Attachment-related dynamics are also important for distinguishing between shame and guilt. Although these two self-conscious emotions have often been viewed as similar and functionally interchangeable, current theories highlight differences between them in attentional focus, causal attributions, and action tendencies (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 2000; Tangney, 1992). Shame involves attentional focus on one's objectionable personality traits (which Janoff-Bulman, 1979, called "characterological self-blame") and attribution of one's own negative behavior to global, stable, and uncontrollable aspects of the self. Moreover, shame seems to be related to feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, and helplessness as well as a tendency to withdraw and hide from interactions with the offended partner. In contrast, guilt involves

attentional focus on the negative behavior itself (a reaction Janoff-Bulman, 1979, called "behavioral self-blame") and attribution of the negative behavior to specific, unstable, and controllable aspects of self. In addition, guilt seems to be related to feelings of potency and mastery and to a tendency to make reparative actions to restore a partner's welfare and relationship quality.

Based on this conceptualization of shame and guilt, it is reasonable to suggest that attachment anxiety will be related to individual variations in the propensity to experience each of these emotions. Although both securely and anxiously attached individuals are motivated to maintain strong attachment bonds, seek interdependence and emotional involvement, and react with self-conscious emotions when their actions hurt a relationship or relationship partner, the two different kinds of people diverge in their sense of self-worth and self-efficacy (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003) and therefore may experience and express different self-conscious emotions. Whereas secure people, who enjoy a stable sense of self-worth and frequent feelings of potency and mastery, may react to their own disagreeable behavior with guilt and the corresponding tendency to repair the damage, anxiously attached people, who often feel worthless and helpless, may attribute their hurtful behavior to personal deficiencies, perceive no way out of the disagreeable situation, and hence feel overwhelmed by shame.

Although few adult attachment studies have examined differences in emotional reactions to relationship-relevant partner distress, there is some evidence that attachment orientations are involved in the arousal of shame, guilt, and hostility toward an aggrieved partner. For example, Lopez et al. (1997) discovered correlations between self-reported attachment orientations and a scale measuring shame proneness and guilt proneness (Test of Self-Conscious Affect). Whereas attachment security was associated with guilt proneness, a combination of high anxiety and high avoidance (fearful avoidance) was positively associated with shame proneness, and a combination of high avoidance and low anxiety (dismissing avoidance) was negatively associ-

ated with shame proneness. Similarly, Gross and Hansen (2000) found that people who score high on both attachment anxiety and avoidance were relatively shame prone (as revealed by the Brief Shame Rating scale) compared with their secure and dismissively avoidant counterparts, and Magai et al. (2000) found attachment anxiety to be positively associated with facial expressions of shame. Moreover, in a study by Lutwak and Ferrari (1997), recall of negative experiences with primary attachment figures was associated with higher levels of reported shame.

In a recent study, we attempted to examine attachment-style differences in emotional reactions to one's own destructive behavior toward a romantic partner. Sixty-five Israeli university students (41 women and 24 men), each of whom was involved in a serious romantic relationship, completed the Experiences in Close Relationships scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998) tapping attachment anxiety and avoidance and were asked to recall an episode in which they hurt their romantic partner or failed to meet the partner's needs. Then, after writing a brief description of the episode, they rated the extent to which the recalled episode caused them to feel guilty, ashamed, or hostile toward the partner (as assessed by the State Shame and Guilt scale and the Hostility subscale of the Multidimensional Anger Inventory). We found that high scores on the attachment anxiety dimension were positively associated with shame, $r(63) = .39, p < .01$, and less intense guilt, $r(63) = -.42, p < .01$. In addition, attachment avoidance was associated with hostility toward the aggrieved partner, $r(63) = .40, p < .01$, less guilt, $r(63) = -.43, p < .01$, and less shame, $r(63) = -.35, p < .01$. No significant interaction was found between the anxiety and avoidance dimensions. Overall, our findings imply that whereas attachment-anxious individuals tend to feel ashamed in response to partner distress, avoidant individuals tend to feel hostile toward their distressed partner without being aware of any self-conscious emotions.

Relationship-irrelevant partner distress. When a close relationship partner feels dis-

tressed because of relationship-irrelevant threats or losses, people may adopt either an approach or an avoidance orientation to the partner's needs—either attending and responding to the distress or distancing themselves from it. Theory and research have connected these tendencies with three related but distinct emotional responses: empathy or compassion, personal distress, and pity (e.g., Batson, 1991; Ben-Ze'ev, 2000; Lazarus, 1991). Empathic compassion involves attending to the partner's needs and providing a partner-sensitive response; it includes feelings of sympathy, attachment, and tenderness and fosters supportive behavior designed to alleviate a partner's suffering (Batson). This kind of response, which Bowlby (1969/1982) and his followers (e.g., Collins & Feeney, 2000; Kuncie & Shaver, 1994) conceptualize in terms of the caregiving behavioral system, is based on a genuinely altruistic concern for the partner's plight, which motivates the provision of support and care (Ben-Ze'ev).

Being personally distressed is also compatible with an approach orientation toward a partner's needs, but it includes self-protective concerns that arouse fear, sadness, and distress in relation to a partner's plight (Batson, 1991). Personal distress involves strong identification with the suffering partner as well as a sense of helplessness and inability to alleviate the partner's suffering, which can interfere with taking action to soothe and support the partner. Research on parental caregiving styles (summarized by George & Solomon, 1999) clearly shows that an attentional shift from a child's needs to a parent's own distress impairs caregiving and encourages intergenerational transmission of anxious and disorganized attachment. We expect similar dysfunctional consequences of personal distress in close relationships between adults.

Unlike empathic compassion and personal distress, pity reflects an avoidant orientation toward a partner's distress. According to Ben-Ze'ev (2000) and Snow (1991), pity is based on perceiving the distressed other as inferior; reflects a passive, detached attitude toward the partner's suffering; allows one to maintain a safe emotional distance from the

other's suffering; and sometimes stems from a disinclination to share, or get involved with, another person's painful predicament. According to Lazarus (1991), pity is "... a disdainful or contemptuous feeling, in which the other person is regarded as reprehensible, inferior, or responsible for his/her own suffering. In pity, the person holds himself or herself apart from the afflicted person" (p. 288). Thus, pity seems to be a blend of condescension (feeling superior to the sufferer), insecurity (fearing the possibility of being in the same situation as the sufferer), and distancing (avoiding involvement with the distressed partner).

Although attachment theory deals mainly with results of a partner's responses to one's own needs (with the partner being conceptualized as an attachment figure), the theory is also extremely relevant for explaining one's own emotional reactions to a partner's needs. Consider the sense of attachment security. It is an inner resource that encourages an approach orientation to a partner's distress, promotes empathic compassion, and inhibits personal distress. In Bowlby's (1969/1982) analysis of the attachment system, he argued that a sense of attachment security allows people to direct attention and energy to other behavioral systems. As a result, securely attached people can devote more psychological resources to a partner's needs and therefore provide more sensitive support and care. In short, security is a foundation for caregiving.

Secure people's interaction goals and interpersonal cognitions also foster empathic compassion and the reduction of personal distress. Their comfort with closeness and interdependence (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) facilitates approach to a distressed partner because such a partner typically seeks closeness and needs to depend on others (Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986). A secure person's expectation that other people will be available and caring may make it easier to construe a distressed partner as deserving sympathy and compassion, and so may motivate the secure person to provide needed comfort to the partner. The secure person's feelings of potency and mastery may help him or her to maintain emotional equanimity while addressing a

partner's needs, a task that can otherwise generate a great deal of tension and distress (e.g., Batson, 1987).

Insecurely attached people may be less inclined to feel empathic compassion toward a distressed partner. Whereas an anxious person's egoistic focus on personal threats and unsatisfied attachment needs may draw important resources away from altruistically attending to a partner's needs, an avoidant person's lack of comfort with closeness and hostile outlook on others may interfere with altruistic inclinations and inhibit compassionate responses to a partner's plight. This does not mean, however, that anxious and avoidant people will react in the same way to a partner's distress. Whereas the anxious person's hyperactivating strategies may intensify the experience of personal distress, the avoidant person's deactivating strategies may encourage feelings of disdain and pity.

Anxiously attached people may become emotionally overwhelmed in response to a partner's distress. Their hyperactivating strategies may facilitate the associative reactivation of self-focused worries and increase attentional focus on both the partner's suffering and the self's personal distress. Despite their focus on the partner's suffering, however, anxious people's lack of self-other differentiation (Mikulincer & Horeish, 1999) may prevent them from reacting with functional empathy and compassion. (There is a similar distinction in Buddhist psychology between effective and ineffective empathic compassion; Dalai Lama, 1999.) In fact, Batson (1991) claimed that empathic compassion involves self-other distinctiveness and a corresponding ability to distinguish between the other person's welfare and one's own.

Avoidant, deactivating strategies—distancing oneself from threats and suppressing painful thoughts (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002)—may encourage emotional detachment from a partner's plight, inhibit both empathic compassion and personal distress, and favor the arousal of pity. For avoidant persons, a distressed partner can act as a mirror that makes salient the self's own weaknesses and vulnerability to life's adversities. Deactivation may require suppression of the sense

of vulnerability and distancing of the self from the source of distress. As a result, the avoidant person may defensively attempt to feel superior to his or her distressed partner, less weak and vulnerable ("I am immune to such misfortunes"), and hence experience only disdainful pity for the suffering partner. In some cases, avoidant persons' hostile attitudes toward a partner may transform pity into contemptuous gloating—actual enjoyment of a partner's ill fate (in German, *scha-denfreude*). In fact, Whitman and Alexander (1968) argued that gloating implies resentment toward a distressed partner combined with a boost of one's own sense of superiority.

Although these ideas are somewhat speculative, recent studies of adult attachment provide preliminary evidence compatible with them. For example, Florian, Mikulincer, and Hirschberger (2000) reported that whereas self-reports of attachment security were associated with empathic compassion, self-reports of attachment avoidance were associated with pity in response to others' needs. In Westmaas and Silver's (2001) study of reactions to a person who had purportedly been diagnosed with cancer, attachment avoidance was associated with less empathic compassion and less support for the afflicted confederate. Attachment anxiety was related to greater distress during an interaction with the confederate.

In a series of five experiments, Mikulincer et al. (2001) documented the facilitatory effects of attachment security on empathic compassion for others' needs. First, both attachment anxiety and avoidance (as assessed by the ECR) were associated with less empathic compassion, and attachment anxiety was associated with more personal distress in response to another person's needs. Second, contextual heightening of the sense of attachment security (asking participants to recollect personal memories, read a story, or watch a picture of supportive others or subliminally exposing them to proximity-related words) increased reports of empathic compassion and reduced reports of personal distress. In contrast, contextual activation of attachment anxiety or avoidance (asking participants to recall personal memories of relational episodes in which they felt attachment

anxiety or avoidance) reduced empathic compassion.

Emotional reactions to a partner's happiness

In this section, we focus on emotions that occur in response to a partner's appraisal of progress toward personal goals and the resulting expression of happiness. Again, we wish to distinguish between two kinds of partner happiness based on its apparent cause: (a) relationship-relevant partner happiness—cases in which the partner's happiness results from one's own relationship-enhancing behavior (e.g., being available and supportive) and (b) relationship-irrelevant partner happiness—cases in which the partner's happiness results from attaining goals outside the relationship (e.g., career-related achievements, personal accomplishments).

Relationship-relevant partner happiness. The most common emotional response to a partner's relationship-relevant happiness is presumably an increase in one's own happiness, love, and pride. In such cases, one's own behavior promotes a partner's welfare, meets the partner's needs and expectations, and enhances relationship quality and satisfaction. As a result, the person who behaves beneficially toward his or her partner is likely to feel good about the positive outcomes obtained by the partner; if a person takes some of the credit for the partner's desirable outcome, he or she is likely to experience pride (Lazarus, 1991; Lewis, 2000). These positive reactions can, in turn, further motivate people to approach their partner and promote his or her welfare, thereby contributing to relationship quality and stability.

As in the previous examples we have considered, however, this straightforward linkage may depend on a person's attachment orientation. For avoidant persons, who do not view promotion of a partner's welfare and maintenance of a warm and comfortably interdependent relationship as personal goals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), a partner's relationship-relevant happiness may not engender one's own happiness and love. According to Lewis (2000), people may experience these positive emotions mainly

when they view promotion of the partner's welfare and maintenance of relationship quality as desirable personal goals. For anxiously attached persons, who harbor serious doubts about their value and potency (Mikulincer & Shaver), engendering a partner's happiness may not result in a feeling of pride because they cannot take credit for a partner's happiness and attribute the partner's good outcome to their own positive qualities. In fact, it seems possible that only securely attached individuals experience the full measure of joy, love, and pride, which fit well with their interaction goals, stable sense of self-worth, and feelings of potency and mastery (Mikulincer & Shaver).

We suspect that avoidant individuals may experience pride of a particular kind, which the ancient Greeks called *hubris*, described by Lewis (2000) as exaggerated pride resulting not from success in enhancing a partner's welfare but from confirming one's own brilliance, superiority, and grandiosity. This emotion is related to narcissistic construal of oneself as especially worthy of praise and success (Morrison, 1989), which is one of the main goals of the avoidant individual's deactivating strategies.

In sharp contrast, anxiously attached individuals may react to their apparent contributions to a partner's good outcomes with "fear of success" feelings—distress related to doubts about their worthiness to claim credit for the partner's welfare. These people's fragile sense of self-worth may cause them to fear that their current success in meeting their partner's needs will increase the partner's expectations, leading to uncertainty and worry about future performance.

Unfortunately, adult attachment researchers have not yet examined the possible role of attachment orientation in shaping emotional reactions to a partner's relationship-relevant happiness. In a study described in the previous section of this chapter, however, we did attempt to fill part of this empirical gap by collecting preliminary data on the attachment-related dynamics of emotional reactions to a partner's happiness. Participants were asked to recall an episode in which they made their partner happy. Then, after writing

a brief description of the episode, they rated the extent to which the recalled episode elicited pride, positive emotions, and distress-related emotions (as assessed by the pride subscale of the State Shame and Guilt scale and a brief version of the Positive and Negative Affect scale). The results were clear: Attachment anxiety was associated with distress-related feelings, $r(63) = .41, p < .01$, and less pride and positive emotion, $r(63) = -.33, p < .01$ and $r(63) = -.35, p < .01$. Attachment avoidance was also associated with less positive emotion, $r(63) = -.37, p < .01$. No significant interaction was found between the two attachment dimensions.

The findings imply that whereas anxiously attached individuals are prone to express distress rather than happiness and pride in response to a partner's relationship-relevant happiness, avoidant individuals are less likely to express personal happiness in reaction to a happy partner. This is only a tentative conclusion, however. More systematic research should be conducted on how people with different attachment styles react to relational episodes in which their own actions make their partners happy.

Relationship-irrelevant partner happiness. Although there is not a single empirical study dealing with attachment-style differences in reactions to a partner's accomplishments, we want to propose some tentative ideas about the way attachment orientations might shape emotional responses to this kind of situation. When a partner feels good about attaining positive outcomes outside the relationship, the most common response is what Clark et al. (2001) called "empathic happiness." This reaction includes a sense of closeness and common fate along with joy and admiration for a partner's progress toward his or her goals. Like other emotional reactions to a partner's fate, however, empathic happiness depends on the extent to which a person feels comfortable with closeness and positively inclined toward warm, intimate, and interdependent relationships (Clark et al.). As a result, secure people, who feel comfortable with closeness, may be more likely than insecure people to

experience empathic happiness in response to a partner's successes.

A partner's accomplishments may not elicit happiness in avoidant individuals because their tendency to maintain emotional distance may inhibit identification with and empathic feelings toward the successful partner. Rather, such people may appraise the partner's accomplishments as a threat to their own grandiose self because the partner's successes threaten to blur the illusory asymmetry between partner and self. This threat can increase avoidant individuals' hostile feelings and hateful attitudes toward their partners and provoke hostile envy—wanting what the partner has accomplished or destroying/devaluing the partner's identity or possessions. Hostile envy is a negative, destructive emotion that involves feelings of discontent and resentment, occurs in situations in which others' accomplishments threaten a person's self-evaluation and cause feelings of inferiority, and promotes aggressive responses toward the successful other (e.g., Ben-Ze'ev, 2000; Ortony et al., 1987; Smith, 1991). Among avoidant people, this kind of envy may be a defensive attempt to restore a shattered sense of superiority over the partner. Of course, this account is particularly viable for dismissively avoidant individuals who do not suffer from attachment anxieties and self-related doubts. However, it may be less applicable to fearfully avoidant people who suffer from a negative self-image.

For anxiously attached people, a partner's accomplishments may evoke a more ambivalent emotional response. For them, a partner's accomplishments signal that the partner is a "stronger, wiser" person—the defining feature of the kind of security-providing attachment figure anxious people long for (Bowlby, 1988). As a result, anxious individuals may feel happy and enjoy their partner's accomplishments because they may feel more confident in the security and support this strong partner can provide in times of need. At the same time, however, an anxious person may appraise the partner's accomplishments as a potential threat to relationship maintenance because the successful partner may search for a more attractive and

successful partner. As a result, these accomplishments may fuel the anxious person's fears of separation and abandonment as well as worries about imaginary rivals who can poach his or her successful partner (Schachner & Shaver, 2002). Again, anxious people's hyperactivating strategies may not allow them to fully enjoy a partner's successes because they raise the specter of separation and abandonment.

An Integrative Summary and Some Concluding Remarks

An integration of the various emotional reactions to relational events reveals that securely attached individuals display the most differentiated pattern of emotions, ranging from happiness, admiration, gratitude, and pride to compassion, guilt, and anger (see Table 1). In addition, their emotional reactions reflect a strong tendency to maintain and enhance relationship quality and a partner's welfare, overcome relational obstacles, restore emotional equanimity and relationship stability in times of need, and encourage a partner's personal development. These are all qualities that attachment researchers have found to be associated with security-inducing parental care, supporting our belief that, in the adult attachment realm as well, a person's own attachment security is an important foundation for his or her provision of high quality care to others. In contrast, insecurely attached individuals exhibit a narrower range of emotions, which are consistently biased by defensive hyperactivation or deactivation of the attachment system. Whereas an avoidant person's emotional makeup consists largely of different kinds of defensive self-enhancement and negative feelings toward a partner (e.g., hostility, resentment, pity, gloating, contempt, hostile envy) regardless of the nature of the relational event, the anxiously attached person tends to be overwhelmed by distress-related feelings during negative relational episodes and to express ambivalent blends of positive and negative emotions during what we would expect to be positive relational episodes.

Despite what we believe is its considerable heuristic value, this integrative summary

should be viewed as a tentative, nonexhaustive schematic representation of attachment-related variations in emotional experience within close relationships and as a preliminary guide for further research. As mentioned earlier, adult attachment research has focused mainly on a person's emotional reactions to his or her partner's negative behaviors. We need more systematic research on the attachment-related dynamics of emotional reactions to other kinds of relational events. In addition, more research is needed on the way combinations of anxiety and avoidance can shape emotional reactions. As observed throughout our review of relevant findings, some emotions, such as hostile envy or shame, seem to vary according to specific combinations of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance.

In this article, we have focused mainly on the role of dispositional attachment orientations in understanding emotional reactions within close relationships. However, a person's attachment orientation within the specific relationship in which the emotions arise might also be predictive of his or her emotional reactions. Future studies should assess both dispositional and relationship-specific attachment orientations and assess their unique contributions to emotional reactions. Future studies should also consider the attachment orientations of both partners in a relationship and examine whether a person's emotional reactions are affected by the partner's attachment orientation. When both partners are fully represented in the equation, we will have a foundation on which to build a systemic model of attachment dynamics at both the personal and the interpersonal levels, that is, a foundation for understanding dyad-composition effects on emotional experiences within close relationships. We hope the current article stimulates research by other investigators, and together we will create a more complete and powerful theory of attachment and emotion in close relationships.

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