

Introduction

Social-cognitive research has suggested that individuals form cognitive structures that represent patterns of interpersonal relatedness known as relational schemas. According to Baldwin (1992), relational schemas are thought to play a central role in the developing individual's capacity to interpret and interact with others. Relational schemas shows how past social experiences affect current ones, and based on experience, the individual learns how his or her actions will impact novel situations.

Many theorists have proposed that examining children's attachment patterns is one way to use the relational schema to understand social cognition (Baldwin, 1992, 1993; Finnegan, Hodges, & Perry, 1996; Yunger, Corby, & Perry, 2005). The schema that children have with their mother, can transfer over into their social world and impact how they view and respond to others in given situations. Although secure and insecure attachment patterns have been shown to produce predictable associations, it may be the case that by preadolescence boys and girls with different attachment styles interact with peers in specific ways.

Hypothesis

The present study will examine the associations between attachment patterns and psychosocial variables over the course of one school year to determine whether boys and girls with certain attachment patterns relate to peers differently.

RESULTS

Intercorrelations of Measures From Time 1 to Time 2

Measure	Time1									Time2								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Preoccupied T1	--	-.50	.15*	-.04	-.05	.03	.05	.15*	.01	.55	-.31	.15*	-.04	-.04	.02	-.09	-.07	-.03
2. Avoidant T1	-.52	--	-.49	.01	-.09	-.21	-.09	.04	.06	-.32	.45	-.30	.00	-.09	-.10	-.06	.07	.01
3. Secure T1	.13	-.49	--	.05	.17*	.36	-.11	-.02	-.17*	.10	-.24	.44	.13	.08	.15*	-.07	-.06	-.05
4. Most liked by peers T1	.05	-.04	.04	--	.06	.01	-.25	-.11	-.26	.01	-.06	.05	.69	.14*	-.04	-.13	.03	-.07
5. Least liked by peers T1	.02	-.02	-.07	.02	--	.07	.13	.23	.04	-.06	.02	.00	.07	.59	-.04	.27	.20	.19
6. Self-Esteem T1	.03	-.30	.30	.16*	-.04	--	-.16*	-.02	-.11	-.01	.01	.18	.14*	-.01	.39	-.07	.00	-.07
7. Peer Victimization T1	.09	-.04	-.04	-.28	.32	-.05	--	.05	.74	.05	-.02	-.08	-.23	.16*	-.18	.53	-.11	.41
8. Aggression T1	-.01	.10	.03	-.16*	.10	-.06	.03	--	-.06	.07	.00	.01	-.07	.22	-.05	-.03	.54	-.13
9. Internalizing T1	.09	-.05	-.06	-.28	.25	-.04	.79	.01	--	.09	.08	-.15*	-.25	.07	-.11	.45	-.18	.50
10. Preoccupied T2	.46	-.24	.01	.03	-.01	.04	.00	-.06	.13	--	-.61	.30	-.11	-.07	-.03	.02	-.09	.09
11. Avoidant T2	-.26	.46	-.29	-.11	.04	-.19	-.02	.09	-.03	-.42	--	-.59	.04	.07	-.05	.06	.10	.04
12. Secure T2	.10	-.33	.41	.18*	-.10	.30	-.03	-.02	-.08	.02	-.56	--	.01	-.08	.36	-.13	-.07	-.12
13. Most liked by peers T2	-.02	.01	.04	.65	.05	.08	-.30	-.05	-.31*	-.05	-.08	.17*	--	.12	-.06	-.19	.04	-.17
14. Least liked by peers T2	.09	-.04	-.16*	-.02	.53	-.04	.34	.11	.35	.15*	-.04	-.04	-.13	--	-.07	.28	.34	.22
15. Self-Esteem T2	.03	-.19	.23	.16*	.05	.37	.03	-.02	.04	-.03	-.16*	.29	.14	.01	--	-.14	-.07	-.13
16. Peer Victimization T2	.03	-.04	-.08	-.28	.32	-.13	.68	.07	.57	-.07	.03	-.01	-.26	.46	.00	--	.11	.68
17. Aggression T2	-.08	.21	-.12	-.05	.13	-.23	-.07	.51	-.05	.06	.09	.09	.00	.20	-.12	.12	--	-.09
18. Internalizing T2	.04	-.01	-.19	-.19	.32	-.09	.57	.06	.60	.05	.05	-.14*	-.19	.53*	-.13	.80	.16*	--

Note: Correlations for girls are above the diagonal; correlations for boys are below the diagonal. Bold print signifies a correlation that is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* signifies a correlation that is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Secure Attachment -- positively linked to increased self-esteem ($r = .15, p < .05$, for girls; $r = .23, p < .01$, for boys), and reduced internalizing for both sexes ($r = -.17, p < .05$, for girls; $r = -.19, p < .01$, for boys).

Preoccupied Attachment -- For girls, but not for boys, preoccupied attachment was positively associated with aggression at Time 1 ($r = .15, p < .05$).

Avoidant Attachment -- For boys, but not for girls, avoidant attachment was moderately negatively correlated with self-esteem at Time 2 ($r = -.19, p < .01$), and moderately positively associated with aggression at Time 2 ($r = .21, p < .01$).

Method

- ❑ Participants were 407 children (mean age 11.1 years; 213 girls) from the southeastern United States.
- ❑ The sample was representative of the community (50.4% White, 28% African American, 20.1% Hispanic, 1% Asian, .5% Other).
- ❑ Children were tested in the winter of their fourth grade year and then a year later in the winter of their fifth grade year.
- ❑ Peer nominations assessed aggression, victimization, liking, and internalizing.
- ❑ Scores on secure, avoidant, and preoccupied attachment styles were obtained using the self-reported Coping Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ)
- ❑ Self-esteem was measured using Harter's (1985) global self-worth scale.

Conclusions

Results suggest that preoccupied attachment is associated positively with peer aggression for girls only. Thus, a clingy, preoccupied attachment style may lead girls to be aggressive, maybe in an attempt to keep friends closer and enemies further. For boys, avoidant attachment is associated with increased aggression and decreased self-esteem over time. Thus, boys may be using aggression to remain distant from close or intimate relationships with others, and over time, this inhibition may affect boys' self-esteem. These findings expand on our understanding of individual differences between the sexes and psychosocial adjustment in children.