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IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO:
AN ATTACHMENT PERSPECTIVE EXPLORING WOMEN'S AND MEN'S RELATIONSHIP AGGRESSION

by

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ABSTRACT

Attachment theory suggests that the strength of attachment bonds is independent of the quality of the attachment relationship. In this study I explored how attachment security, and different patterns of insecurity, were associated with men's and women's childhood experiences and experiences of relationship aggression in adulthood. A telephone survey assessed levels of psychological and physical aggression in a community sample of 1249 Vancouver residents. A subsample of 128 participants completed a self-report measure of recollections of childhood, and the History of Attachments Interview which explored experiences in interpersonal relationships. Results indicated that positive childhood experiences were associated with greater security in adulthood, while negative experiences were associated with greater fearfulness and preoccupation. Further, preoccupation in adulthood was associated with both the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression, particularly for men. Finally, men's (but not women's) childhood experiences were associated with both the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression. The findings are discussed in the context of attachment theory.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Ashley C. Reber

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I'd like to thank Kim Bartholomew, my supervisor, mentor, and friend, for seeing me through the long haul and making my graduate school experience a positive, and indeed pleasurable one. Thank you for your knowledge, the generous commitment of your time, and your belief in me and this project. I would also like to thank Shanna Trinke, my co-researcher, who worked with me, encouraged me, and respected me throughout this endeavour that we embarked on together. Thanks are also due to my parents Ann and Lyman Henderson for their unending support. And thank you to my husband Frank - my safe haven and eternal secure base.

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It Takes Two To Tango:
An Attachment Perspective Exploring Women's And Men's Relationship Aggression

INTRODUCTION

There is a substantial, albeit controversial, body of research indicating that both women and men perpetrate and receive relationship aggression (e.g., Kwong & Bartholomew, 1998; Magdol et al., 1997; Straus & Gelles, 1986). Rather than enter into the debate about whether women or men are the primary victims of this aggression, it was my goal to explore beyond the reported prevalence rates and examine in what ways women's and men's relationship aggression might differ. I used an attachment model to do this, exploring how attachment security, and different patterns of insecurity, might be associated with both women's and men's experiences of relationship aggression.

Two important tenets of attachment theory make it a valuable construct for examining the perpetration and receipt of relationship aggression. First, Bowlby maintains that attachment occurs as an adaptive function, fulfilling a basic need for survival (1988). Thus, the tenacity of the attachment bond is dependent more on maintaining the link to the attachment figure, who is perceived as providing a safe haven, than to the quality of the attachment relationship. Secondly, because of that same instinctual need, individuals whose attachment needs have been frustrated throughout their relationship experiences and who feel particularly vulnerable to the potential loss of an attachment figure may, as one possible response, strike out with violence in order to regain proximity to an intimate partner.

In the following sections I will outline the current controversies concerning women's and men's relationship aggression, introduce attachment theory, and review previous research on relationship aggression from an attachment perspective.

Current Controversies Concerning Women's and Men's Aggression

Findings from survey research related to women's aggression and the bi-directional nature of domestic violence have tended to be suppressed (e.g., DeKeseredy, & Ellis,

1995; Kennedy & Dutton, 1989), in part, because of the problem of conflating two different data sources. Survey results tend to indicate fairly high rates of low level violence that is bi-directional in nature, whereas clinical studies focus on unidirectional male perpetrated violence that is generally more extreme. The severity of violence reported in studies of battered women (e.g., Landenburger, 1989; Pagelow, 1981; Walker 1979; 1984), however, has often been confused with the frequency and bi-directional nature of the violence reported in surveys (e.g., Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988; Kwong & Bartholomew, 1998; Straus & Gelles, 1986). Researchers and lay people alike have recoiled at the very robust survey finding that women are equally, or slightly more, likely to aggress against their male partners than men are against their female partners (e.g., Bartholomew, Henderson, Kwong, & Trinke, 1998; Kwong & Bartholomew, 1998; O'Leary, Malone, & Tyree, 1994; Magdol et al; 1997; Straus & Gelles, 1986). This finding becomes less palatable still when we learn that these aggression rates are high. Depending on the study, rates range from 25% to 50% of men and women who have been the recipient of aggression from a romantic partner in their adult lifetime (e.g., Bartholomew et al., 1998; Kwong & Bartholomew, 1998; O'Leary, et al., 1994; Magdol et al; 1997; Straus & Gelles, 1986). And what makes these data particularly counter-intuitive is that we cannot easily overlay the salient image of the stereotypically "battered woman," that has bombarded our media images of late, onto a male victim attacked and brutalized by his female partner.

Straus (1993), one of a number of researchers who has made efforts to understand this seeming conundrum, maintains that discrepant findings arise because researchers are tapping into two distinct data sources which reflect different forms of relationship aggression. The kind of violence revealed by survey research tends to be relatively infrequent and minor, whereas violence seen in select samples and from police records is severe and chronic. He notes that researchers fall into the "representative sample fallacy" when they conclude that the relatively high rates of women's violence and bi-directional

nature of relationship aggression also apply to cases known to the police and to shelters, which are generally not captured in large scale surveys. For example, in the survey portion of this study we found that 36% of the men and 30% of the women reported ever having been the victim of violence in a romantic relationship and approximately half of those participants reported that the violence was going both ways (Bartholomew et al., 1998). Clearly, it would be inaccurate to assume that the bi-directional nature of the violence that we found in this sample would also hold true for a sample of battered women. Similarly, Straus cautions that clinical researchers fall into an equally dubious assumption, the "clinical fallacy", when they claim that the severity and unidirectional nature of assaults seen in clinical samples applies to the population at large. In other words, we cannot assume that 30% of women in the city of Vancouver have been severely battered by a male partner. In fact, in our sample only 4.2% of the women and 2.5% of the men had sustained severe injuries as a result of a conflict with a partner.

Johnston (1995) has taken Straus' premise and posited two different kinds of violence. "Patriarchal terrorism"(p. 284), which he claims is rooted in patriarchal values of men's need to dominate and control women, is almost exclusively male perpetrated. He notes that this is the kind of systematic, severe, and escalating violence, coupled with dominating and isolating control tactics, seen in samples of women from battered women's shelters, or men in treatment for spousal abuse. "Common couple violence", Johnson argues, is less severe (characterized by verbal abuse, pushing, shoving, and slapping), non-escalating, and generally bi-directional. Data about "common couple violence" has been derived from sociological and psychological research which shows that women are just as likely to be perpetrators of violence as are men, though women suffer more injury than men as a result of these conflicts (e.g., Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988; Kwong & Bartholomew, 1998; Straus & Gelles, 1986). Johnson's argument is important because it highlights the problem that the discrepant findings presented in the relationship aggression literature originate from two different data sources.

A central focus on both Straus' and Johnson's positions, and a crucial one for the future study of relationship aggression, is that the debate about which kinds of research or which kinds of data are "correct" is a futile one. Rather, there are research questions that are best answered by large scale surveys and questions better suited to select clinical samples, and each research solution implies different kinds of intervention strategies.

In the next sections I will outline the attachment model, explore how it relates to experiences of aggression in both childhood and adulthood, and review the issue of continuity of childhood attachment and behaviour patterns through to adulthood.

Attachment

According to attachment theory, the continuity of internal representations from childhood to the adult years is maintained through an active process of construction. Mental models of the self and others are incorporated into the developing personality structure and gain their own momentum, guiding the formation of later relationships outside the family (Bowlby 1973, 1980, 1982). Bowlby proposed that the quality of childhood relationships with caregivers results in internal representations or *working models* of the self and others and thereby provide the prototype for later social relations (1973, 1980, 1982).

A number of researchers have addressed the question of how these internal working models may operate in adulthood. Main developed the Adult Attachment Interview (Main & Goldwyn, 1988; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) to categorize parents into three attachment groups -- *secure*, *dismissing*, and *preoccupied* -- corresponding to the three infant attachment styles initially proposed by Ainsworth and her associates -- *secure*, *avoidant*, and *ambivalent* (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Hazan and Shaver (1987), using a self-report measure, found that attachment patterns paralleling Ainsworth's original classifications of infant attachment could also be identified in adult romantic relationships. Thus, there may be a conceptual parallel between affectional bonds that are formed between adults and affectional bonds formed between children and their caregivers.

Building on the work of Hazan and Shaver, Bartholomew has incorporated Bowlby's conception of internal representations into a model of attachment (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). The positivity of the self-dimension indicates the degree to which individuals have an internalized sense of their own self-worth. Thus, individuals with a positive self-dimension will be self-confident, rather than anxious in close relationships. The positivity of the other dimension refers to the degree to which others are seen to be supportive and trustworthy, thus contributing to an attitude in close relationships of seeking others out, rather than avoiding intimacy. Bartholomew has identified four prototypic attachment patterns in terms of the intersection of these two dimensions (see Figure 1).

The *secure* prototype (positive view of self and others) is characterized by high self-esteem, an openness and confidence about interpersonal relationships, and an ability to establish and maintain close intimate bonds with others without losing a sense of self. The *fearful* pattern (negative view of self and others) is characterized by low self-esteem and active avoidance of intimacy in close relationships due to fear of rejection. The fearful individual's strong desire for social contact coupled with extreme anxiety over perceived vulnerability to rejection sets up a frustration of attachment needs resulting in dependence and compliance in close relationships. The *preoccupied* pattern (negative view of self and positive view of others) is characterized by a sense of low self-worth, dependency on others' love and approval in close relationships, and an over-involved, over-expressive, and highly emotional approach orientation to others. The *dismissing* pattern (positive view of self and negative view of others) is characterized by a compulsive self-reliance, and a defensive downplaying of the importance of intimate relationships or personal attachment needs.

In trying to understand how attachment may operate in the cycle of aggression, it is crucial to note that Bowlby's notion of continuity of relationship patterns is not simply a set of transferred responses from previous relationships. Nor are subsequent relationships

continually constructed anew. Rather, individuals select others to recreate aspects of relationship systems previously experienced (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). By the same reasoning, attachment representations may be changed or revised in response to relationship experiences that disconfirm or encourage the reevaluation of current models. Thus Bowlby's construct of internal models can explain both continuity and discontinuity in the cycle of aggression.

Continuity in Attachment

Many researchers have provided evidence of continuity of attachment quality from infancy to the early school years (Belsky, 1988; Crittenden, 1984; Crockenburg, 1987; Egeland & Farber, 1984; Main & Goldwyn, 1988; Ricks, 1985). There has also been empirical evidence supporting a continuity of social interaction patterns from parent to child. Maltreated infants have poor social interaction skills at the preschool age, and tend not to function well with their peers (Aber & Allen, 1987; Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer, & Rosario, 1993; Sroufe, 1983). In a study comparing mother-infant and sibling-infant interactions, Crittenden (1984) found evidence of a generational effect from parent to child. When mothers displayed a maltreating pattern in their interactions with their 6 to 11 month old infant, siblings, as young as two years old, exhibited the same maltreating pattern to their younger sibling.

A study by George & Main (1979) suggests that not only are early representations internalized and carried forward to later relationships, but that these models become increasingly resistant to change. A study of physically abused and non-abused 1-3 year olds indicated that abused children avoided others more often and were more aggressive than non-abused children. Although there were no differences between abused and non-abused children on the number of approaches made toward others, abused children were more likely to withdraw when the caretaker made a friendly overture. It seems that the abused child has internalized a model of others as untrustworthy and is not able, at least in this context, to discriminate between sensitive and punitive caregivers.

There has also been much research that supports an intergenerational transmission of attachment, indicating that individuals who have had secure or insecure relationships with their parents tend to raise secure or insecure children respectively (Crowell & Feldman 1988; Fonagy, Steele, & Steele, 1991; Main & Goldwyn, 1988; Maine, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Main and her colleagues (1985), for example, found an association between caregivers' recollections of their childhood experiences, assessed in an attachment interview, and the quality of their present relationship with their own child.

Similarly, a growing body of research has emerged examining the intergenerational transmission of abuse (e.g., Crittenden, 1984; Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1988; Pianata, Egeland, & Farrell Erickson, 1989; Simons, Wu, Johnson, & Conger, 1995). In a study looking at retrospective accounts of parental history of child abuse and marital aggression in 181 community families, Doumas and colleagues (1994) found that exposure to family of origin violence was predictive of spousal and parental violence in the second and third generation for men but not predictive of aggressive behaviour in subsequent generations for women. In contrast, a study of 454 unmarried undergraduates conducted by Marshall and Rose (1990) revealed that having been abused as a child predicted women's (but not men's) perpetration and receipt of relationship violence as adults.

Cappell and Heiner (1990) examined data from the National Survey of Physical Violence in American Families (NSPVAF; Straus & Gelles, 1986) to study specific gender effects in the intergenerational transmission of aggression. They found that for both *men* and *women* witnessing parental violence and experiencing violence in the family of origin predicted becoming a victim of aggression in their adult romantic relationships but did not predict the perpetration of aggression. Women, however, were more likely to maltreat their own child if they had experienced violence from a parent in their family of origin. This relationship did not hold for the men in the sample.

Evidence of intergenerational transmission has also been illustrated in prospective longitudinal studies. Pianata and associates found that 60% of mothers who had a history of child abuse themselves were abusing their own children either physically, emotionally, or sexually at six years of age (Pianata, Egeland, & Farrell Erickson, 1989). This pattern was also consistent with women who had been sexually abused and neglected. Though the numbers of neglected mothers were too few to look at empirically, the association between childhood neglect and later maltreatment was consistent. Pianata and colleagues note that "a mother's developmental history, in particular her experience in intimate relationships, is a precursor to her own ability as a caretaker...although there is also considerable evidence that intergenerational continuity is by no means complete" (pp. 243-244).

Belsky (1984) offers one explanation for these findings proposing that parental personality, formed through each parent's particular developmental history, provides a filter through which parents view and respond to child characteristics and behaviours. Caregivers' internal models of relationship, or filters, then in turn have indirect links to their children's behaviour. Crowell and Feldman (1988) found this linkage to occur from mothers internal models to their children's behaviour in a laboratory play session, irrespective of the mother's behaviour at the time. Presumably, the links are associated with long standing interactional patterns between mother and child, patterns that then form the basis of the child's internal working models of relationships.

Discontinuity in Attachment

According to Bowlby's construct of the internal working model, individuals actively structure their experience based on evolving orientations to others in their environment. Early experiences with caregivers help to formulate initial models of self and other, but internal representations are continually modified in response to relationship experiences throughout the life span. What makes Bowlby's construct so important in understanding the cycle of abuse is that it offers not only a theoretical framework to explain continuity but also that of discontinuity. Representational models can and do change, albeit

not easily (Bowlby, 1973, 1982; Epstein, 1980). Just as maltreated individuals develop a model of themselves as unworthy, and others as untrustworthy because others have been punitive or unavailable, so too can individuals develop more positive self and other models when repeatedly confronted with supportive caregiving that contradicts these negative representations.

This notion that the influence of a supportive relationship can bring about changes in internal models has received empirical support (Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1988; Houck, & King, 1989; Hunter & Kilstrom, 1979). Egeland and colleagues (1988) followed the child care practices of women who had been abused as children from their last trimester until their children were four years old. Though these researchers found convincing evidence for an intergenerational transmission of abuse, they also noted a number of mediating factors associated with the women who did not go on to maltreat their children in spite of their abusive backgrounds. Women in the discontinuity group were more likely to have had a supportive caregiver, a supportive relationship with a spouse or partner, or to have been involved in therapy. Hunter and Kilstrom (1979), in a prospective study of 282 parents of high-risk newborns, found that parents who did not repeat the cycle of abuse had more extensive social supports, were more likely to have been abused by only one of their parents, and were more apt to report a supportive relationship with one of their parents when growing up.

Thus, though there is ample evidence to suggest continuity of both attachment and patterns of aggression, it is also crucial to understand that these internal models and patterns of behaviour are not wholly resistant to change.

Attachment and Abuse

Attachment and it's Relation to Women's Victimization

The reasons why someone could become involved in or remain in an abusive relationship become more readily understandable in the context of attachment theory. Bowlby proposed that the strength of attachment bonds are unrelated to the quality of the

attachment relationship (1973, 1980, 1982). Strong bonds are formed in conditions of threat which activate the *attachment system* causing the threatened individual to seek proximity to an attachment figure, even when that attachment figure may be the source of threat. Research has shown that abused children are attached to abusive caregivers, albeit insecurely (e.g., Crittenden, 1988, 1992). Bowlby (1982) suggested that not only will attachment behaviour persist in the face of punitive treatment from an attachment figure, but the abuse may serve to actively maintain, and even enhance, the strength of the attachment bond.

> The paradoxical finding that the more punishment a juvenile receives the stronger becomes its attachment to the punishing figure, very difficult to explain on any other theory, is compatible with the view that the function of attachment behaviour is protection from . . . danger . . . When severely threatened by an adult of its group a young monkey always seeks out the highest ranking animal available, usually a dominant male. Since this same animal is usually the one that threatened in the first place, it frequently happens that the animal that the juvenile approaches is the very animal that itself was the cause of its fear (pp. 226-227).

Bowlby also notes that this phenomenon exists in parent-child interactions, where a parent's rejection of a child's efforts to be close often evokes precisely the opposite effect to what was intended. Fearful that proximity to the parent is being jeopardized, the child becomes even more clingy in an effort to maintain that proximity.

Although Bowlby's theory may be applicable to any victimized individual, this concept has been most extensively applied to battered women. For example, Dutton and Painter (1981) have proposed a theory of traumatic bonding, which suggests that the power imbalance and intermittency of abuse, typical of abusive relationships, enhances the strength of emotional bonds to abusive partners (Dutton, 1988; Dutton & Painter, 1993). Dutton argues that in unbalanced power relationships, as the dominated person's negative self-appraisal escalates, she becomes increasingly less capable of functioning without her dominator, and thus increasingly less likely to leave the relationship. Correspondingly, the dominator develops an inflated perception of his own power which exacerbates this self-feeding cycle of power asymmetry.

Second, in abusive relationships, aggression is typically intermittent; violent episodes are often countered with affection from the perpetrator (Walker, 1979; 1984). This alternating situation of aversive and pleasant stimuli creates the well known learning paradigm of intermittent reinforcement, producing persistent patterns of behaviour that are difficult to extinguish. The attachment process thus formed "is like an elastic band which stretches with time away from the abuser and subsequently 'snaps' the woman back" (Dutton & Painter, 1993, p. 109). This theory was validated in a study by Dutton and Painter (1993) which showed that women were more attached to their partners when there was more abuse and the abuse was inconsistent.

Dutton and Painter's theory incorporates the concept of attachment processes, but their research does not specifically examine individual differences in attachment that may be associated with experiences of receipt of relationship aggression. In previous work, using Bartholomew's two dimensional model, our research team built on Dutton and Painter's work by examining how individual differences in attachment may put some women at heightened risk for ongoing abuse (Henderson, Bartholomew, & Dutton 1997). In a sample of 63 women who had recently left a long term abusive relationship, we found that relationship abuse was concurrently and negatively associated with security of attachment. As hypothesized, attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model (fearful and preoccupied) were over represented. In fact, 88% of the women in this sample had a predominant attachment pattern associated with a negative self-model, a proportion close to double what one would expect to see in a non-clinical sample. Further, our study suggested that the differing valence of the *other* model may have implications for women's ability to separate from abusive partners. Findings indicated that preoccupied women may be at increased risk for returning to abusive partners (based on their ratings of intentions and feelings), while fearful women may have more difficulty disengaging initially (based on battering relationships of longer duration).

A few other studies have looked at the relationship between attachment and relationship abuse from the perspective of women's victimization. O'Hearn and Davis (1997) looked at self-report and interview measures of attachment and emotional abuse in a sample of 427 college students. Since the numbers of men for the follow-up interview were too few to analyze statistically, results were presented for the women only (n = 61). As hypothesized, they found that security was negatively associated with both the infliction and receipt of emotional abuse, while preoccupation was positively associated with these variables. Contrary to hypotheses, fearful attachment was not associated with the infliction or receipt of abuse. However, when the interdependence between the receipt and infliction of abuse was statistically controlled, the authors' found that the more fearful women were the more likely they were to be the recipient of emotional abuse and the less likely they were to inflict it. Though these results are not consistent with research on male batterers (see Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994, discussed below) or the authors expectations, O'Hearn and Davis suggest that these findings are consistent with the degree of psychological impairment (such as loneliness, low self-esteem, alcohol abuse, and eating disorders) characteristic of highly fearful individuals.

<u>Attachment and it's Relation to Men's Perpetration</u>

There is also a burgeoning field looking at the relationship between attachment and perpetrated violence by men. In a study of 120 violent men and a demographically matched comparison group (n = 40), Dutton and associates found that assaultive men were more likely to be fearful and preoccupied and less likely to be secure than controls (Dutton et al., 1994). Further, fearfulness and preoccupation were positively correlated with psychological aggression and a constellation of dysfunctional personality traits (anger, jealousy, Borderline Personality Organization[1], and trauma), whereas secure attachment correlated negatively with these variables. Dutton and colleagues explain these findings in

[1] Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) is characterized by a tendency toward intense unstable intimate relationships, a precarious sense of self, abandonment anxiety, anger, demandingness, impulsivity, and a proclivity toward substance abuse and promiscuity (Dutton & Gollant, 1995).

terms of "intimacy anger". They suggest that a violent man's assaultive episodes represent an adult parallel to the angry protest behaviour exhibited by an infant when separated from an attachment figure. This "protest" illustrates an agentic effort to regain that attachment figure. In typically abusive relationships, a man's violence is often precipitated by the perceived loss of an attachment partner. These authors argue that both fearful and preoccupied individuals, characterized by negative self-models, anxiety with intimacy, frustrated attachment needs, and high levels of distress, are at greater potential risk for high levels of intimacy-anger.

In two consecutive studies looking at 119 violent and non-violent (distressed and non-distressed) men, Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues found that violent men were less likely to be secure and more likely to be fearful and preoccupied than non-violent men (Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, & Hutchinson, 1997), based on Bartholomew's (1990; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) self-report attachment questionnaire (RSQ). In the same study, violent men were more likely than non-violent men to be classified as preoccupied (6 men vs. 2) or unclassifiable[2] (11 vs. 2) based on Main's Adult Attachment Interview (AAI: Main & Goldwyn, 1991). Consistent with Dutton's notion of intimacy anger, these authors conclude that violent men's anxious-ambivalent attachment "leads to a dread of loneliness and a fear of losing their spouse, resulting in extreme behaviors, including violence" (p. 316).

Kesner and colleagues, in a study of 91 violent and non-violent men, demonstrated the unique effect of attachment related variables on male violence, beyond that explained by demographic variables (Kesner, Julian, & McKenry, 1997). Supporting their predictions, they found that demographic variables (race and education level) accounted for 13% of the variance in men's violence, whereas attachment variables (perceived relationship support, self-esteem, autonomy, negative event stressors, and perceived quality of early

[2] The "unclassifiable" is a new attachment classification characterized by experiences of extreme trauma (such as sexual or physicial abuse or witnessing of traumatic events) and a lack of a single manifested organized attachment category (Hesse, 1997).

mother/child relationship) accounted for an additional 27% of the variance in men's violence. Paralleling Dutton and colleagues' argument, these authors posit that a history of insecure attachment experiences, in which an attachment figure is rarely or inconsistently available, may distort a functional anger (i.e. a child's protest behaviour that serves to regain the separated attachment figure) into a dysfunctional violence against an adult partner. This violence may erupt when the male perceives that he may be losing his attachment figure or his attachment needs are otherwise not being met.

Attachment and its Relation to Victimization and Perpetration

Finally there have been a few studies that have crossed these "male batterer", "female victim" boundaries and looked at both receipt and perpetration of aggression in mixed sex, or all male samples. In a study looking at psychological aggression in young established couples, Henderson, Hienzl, and Bartholomew (1994) found that receipt and perpetration of psychological aggression was negatively associated with security of attachment for both men and women. Attachment patterns with a negative self-model, preoccupied and fearful, were positively related to both the receipt and perpetration of psychological aggression, and these associations were particularly pronounced for women.

In a study of 52 gay couples, Landolt and Dutton (1997) examined the relationship between the Abusive Personality [3] and the perpetration of psychological and physical abuse. As expected, they found that partner reports of receiving psychological abuse were negatively associated with secure attachment and positively associated with perpetrator's reports of Borderline Personality Organization, fearful and preoccupied attachment, and recollections of maternal and paternal rejection. These associations were also consistent, though weaker, when looking at the Abusive Personality and the perpetration of physical abuse (see also Dutton, 1994; and Dutton, Starzomski, & Ryan, 1996 for further work on aggression and the Abusive Personality).

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[3] The Abusive Personality is a term coined by Dutton and associates to describe a constellation of factors (Borderline Personality Organization, fearful and preoccupied attachment, and a childhood history of heightened parental rejection) which has been shown to be predictably present in male assaulters

Limitations in Attachment and Abuse Research

This body of research has provided a useful starting point for examining how attachment may mediate women's success at leaving or changing abusive relationships, as well as offering possible psychological explanations for men's perpetration of relationship violence. Several design and methodological limitations, however, hamper our ability to make meaningful interpretations regarding the complex relationship between attachment and aggression.

First, the majority of these studies examined male perpetrators and female victims and ignored the bi-directional potential of relationship aggression. By definition, when examining women in battered women's shelters, or men in treatment, the focus is centred on women's experiences of victimization, and men's assaultive behaviour, respectively. However, research tells us that the perpetration and receipt of relationship aggression is often bi-directional, (e.g., Bartholomew et al., 1998) highly correlated (e.g., Moffit et al., 1997), and at least as prevalent in same as opposite sex couples. (See Brand & Kidd, 1986; Gwat-Yong Lie & Gentlewarrior, 1991; Renzetti, 1992 on gay female violence, or Letellier, 1994; and Landolt & Dutton, 1997 on gay male violence).

A second problem centres on the select nature of the samples. To date, the bulk of our knowledge has come from extreme samples of male to female batterers (excepting the few studies noted in the previous section). In fact these samples have been selected specifically for the extremity of the violence, and its male to female direction. With the exception of some case studies (e.g., Pearson, 1997), we have no data on severe female to male violence. This selectivity problem is further exacerbated in that individuals from shelters or treatment programmes may well systematically differ from those who never enter the system, and hence rarely come to researchers' attention. In addition, we have very little in depth psychological work on populations where less severe violence is occurring, i.e. psychological aggression and lower levels of physical aggression. Research suggests that approximately 25% of North American adults have been the recipient of

aggression from a romantic partner, yet the majority of that "violence" is not severe. In our study, of those individuals reporting having received aggression, only 14% of the women and 7% of the men reported ever having sustained severe injuries as a result of that violence (Bartholomew et al., 1998). The study of less severe violence is crucial precisely because it is so prevalent and potentially impedes the healthy functioning of the society at large. Further, research suggests that psychological aggression often precipitates and accompanies physical aggression and is often perceived by victims as more harmful than physical aggression (e.g., Dutton & Golant, 1995; Follingstad et al., 1990)

Finally, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979), the abuse measure used for most of the research in this area, has been criticized for counting abusive incidents in isolation, stripped of context. It has also been accused of inadequately addressing psychological aggression, and ignoring sexual aggression (Browne, 1993; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Yllo 1988, 1993). Though critics argue that the CTS is too narrow in its scope to make meaningful interpretations about women's violence, the same argument holds for men's violence.

In summary, large scale representative surveys have provided us with needed information about prevalence rates of domestic violence, but it is unclear what that violence really means for both men and women. And when we look to clinical samples, where many of these issues of meaning have been addressed, the extreme nature of the samples and the focus solely on male perpetrators and female victims, does not generalize to the community at large.

In designing this study, I sought to integrate the *depth* of previous research on clinical samples with the *breadth* of large scale survey research. By recruiting the sample from a larger scale community survey and assessing both men's and women's experiences of perpetration and receipt of aggression I hoped to extend the generalizability of previous clinical studies. I incorporated a measure of aggression that improved substantially upon the CTS (including a more comprehensive measure of psychological and sexual

aggression) while not compromising comparability with previous research in the area. Then, through questionnaire and interview measures, I explored a subsample of men and women to develop a deeper psychological picture of the complex role of attachment in both men's and women's experiences of received and perpetrated relationship aggression. Although I had no a priori hypotheses as to how the role of attachment might play itself out differently for men and women, I expected that internalized representations of secure attachment could be a resource that individuals might draw on to avoid, leave, or change abusive situations.

Hypotheses

Childhood History and Adult Attachment

1. Attachment theory has suggested that long standing interactional patterns between a parent and child form the basis of the child's internal working models of relationships. Research has corroborated this theory in that children's internal representations of the self and other and resulting attachment security in adult peer relationships seem to be formulated, at least partially, by the internalization of experiences with primary caregivers (Feeney & Noller,1990; Hazan & Shaver,1987; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kobak & Sceery, 1988). Thus, I expected that participants' experiences of maternal and paternal acceptance, and the quality of these parent/child relationships would be positively associated with attachment security in adulthood. Conversely, I expected that experiences of maternal and paternal rejection in childhood would be negatively associated with attachment security in adulthood.

Using the same rationale looking at the insecure patterns, I expected that maternal and paternal acceptance and the quality of these parent/child relationships would be negatively associated with both fearfulness and preoccupation in adulthood. Conversely, I expected that experiences of maternal and paternal rejection would be positively associated with both fearfulness and preoccupation in adulthood. I had no specific predictions about childhood experiences and dismissingness. This attachment pattern is not necessarily

associated with a punitive or inconsistent parenting environment, but rather can be modeled from caregivers who are similarly distant, though not actively rejecting. Further, dismissing individuals are characterized by a lack of insight, limited childhood memories, and a tendency to downplay the negative effects from childhood. Thus, I would not expect them to be as precise reporters of their parental environment and may be less likely to provide explicit accounts of harsh or rejecting parenting experiences.

Attachment and the Receipt of Relationship Aggression

2a). Prototypically secure individuals have come to believe, through previous relationship experiences, that others are approachable and trustworthy and that they are worthy of that trust. Thus, they would be unlikely to tolerate aggression from a romantic partner because of an integrated sense of their own self-worth. This notion has been supported empirically, where security in relationships is positively associated with relationship satisfaction and positive relationship outcomes (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995). Consistent with previous findings looking at attachment and aggression (Henderson et al., 1994; Henderson et al., 1997), I expected security to be negatively associated with the receipt of relationship aggression.

b) In turning to the insecure attachment patterns, although both the secure and dismissing patterns are defined in terms of a positive self-model, the dismissing pattern, characterized by high self-reliance, coupled with an avoidance of intimacy in close relationships, would make these individuals particularly unlikely to remain with an abusive partner. Unlike the secure person, dismissing individuals would likely have insufficient investment to maintain commitment in problematic relationships. However, this same lack of investment may also make dismissing individuals somewhat tolerant of moderate levels of relationship dysfunction. Dismissing individuals, with a negative model of others, would not have high expectations of partners being supportive and intimate in interpersonal relationships. Thus, I did not expect dismissingness to be either positively or negatively associated with the *receipt* of relationship aggression. This expectation is also consistent with research

which has found few associations between dismissingness and the receipt or perpetration of relationship aggression (e.g., Dutton et al., 1994; Henderson et al, 1997; Landolt & Dutton, 1997).

Prototypically fearful and preoccupied individuals, characterized by a low internalized sense of self-worth and high separation anxiety in intimate relationships, would be particularly vulnerable to the receipt of relationship aggression. Our previous research indicated that women with fearful or preoccupied attachment were over-represented in a select sample of abused women (Henderson et al., 1997). Preoccupation and fearfulness have also been associated with the receipt of relationship abuse in college samples (e.g., Henderson et al., 1994).

Adult Attachment and the Perpetration of Relationship Aggression

3a) Based on a similar rationale as discussed for the receipt of aggression, I also expected security to be negatively associated with the *perpetration* of relationship aggression. Prototypically secure individuals have not only a strong sense of their own self-worth, but also value attachment relationships. Thus, they are comfortable with both autonomy and closeness in intimate relationships, and would have adaptive strategies for resolving conflict. Security has been found to be associated with higher functioning relationships, and constructive conflict strategies (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994).

b) Turning to the insecure patterns, because of the hostile attitude characteristic of the *dismissing* individual one might expect a positive association between dismissingness and perpetrated aggression. Previous research on typologies of male batterers has identified a tyrannical personality-disordered style which might parallel a highly dismissing individual (e. g., Hart, Dutton, & Newlove, 1993; Hastings & Hamberger, 1988; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994;). Attachment research, however, suggests that anxiety, rather than psychopathy, is a more common motivation for the perpetration of aggression. The separation anxiety, jealousy, and Borderline Personality Organization characteristic of the

"Abusive Personality" (Dutton & Gollant, 1995) is not typical of the dismissing individual. Rather, these individuals would be more likely to leave, rather than act out in protest, should relationships become problematic. Thus, I did not expect any associations between dismissingness and the perpetration of relationship aggression.

Previous research has suggested that fearfulness may be linked to men's perpetration of violence possibly as a form angry protest behaviour. However, in all studies to date, this link has been made in samples of men selected for their violent behaviour (e.g., Dutton et al. 1994; Kesner et al., 1997). It does not necessarily follow that fearfulness will predict higher perpetrated aggression in a community sample. In fact, I would suggest that the kind of intimacy anger that Dutton describes in his clinical sample arises from fearfulness that is pushed to the extreme edge of separation anxiety. In contrast, in research with college samples (Bartholomew,1990; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994), fearfulness is characterized by a submissive, conflict avoidant style - an unlikely profile for the perpetration of aggression. Since it is not clear what degree of feafulness will be evident in a community sample, I had no hypotheses concerning fearfulness and perpetrated aggression.

There is, however, a compelling rationale for expecting preoccupation to be related to the perpetration of relationship aggression. It is consistent with the preoccupied individual's approach orientation to be confrontational, over-involved, and sometimes volatile in their efforts to have attachment needs met. Thus I expected preoccupation to be positively associated with perpetrated aggression.

Childhood History and Receipt and Perpetration of Relationship Aggression

4) Consistent with much of the child maltreatment literature (e.g., Crittenden, 1984), I expected moderate levels of continuity of aggression from childhood to adulthood. I expected maternal and paternal warmth and acceptance and the quality of these parent child relationships to be moderately and negatively associated with the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression (Landolt & Dutton, 1997; Hotelling & Sugarman, 1986).

Similarly, I expected positive associations between the degree of maternal and paternal rejection in childhood and the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression experienced in adulthood.

Mediational Model

5) As discussed earlier, I expected to see associations between the quality of parenting experienced in one's childhood and adult attachment security. In addition, as adults carry these internalized models forward into subsequent relationship experiences, I expected associations between adult attachment security and relationship aggression in adulthood. I also expected associations between one's experiences in childhood with parents and relationship aggression in adulthood. Finally, I expected adult attachment security to mediate the association between childhood experiences and relationship aggression in adulthood (see Figure 2). In other words, I predicted that childhood experiences would be associated with relationship aggression only to the degree that they have impacted on adult attachment security. Where patterns of aggression are discontinuous from childhood to adulthood, I expected security to be the mediating factor. For example, individuals who have experienced severe parental rejection in childhood, but through later positive relationship experiences have come to have secure attachment models, would not be expected to be involved in dysfunctional relationships in adulthood.

METHOD

Overview

A telephone survey was conducted on a community sample of 614 men and 635 women in the City of Vancouver which assessed levels of experienced relationship aggression. Willing participants were asked a series of demographic questions and given a measure of psychological, physical, and sexual aggression in intimate relationships, for a total time of 15 to 20 minutes. From the initial survey, we interviewed a subsample of 68 women and 60 men in depth. The analyses and results from this study focus on this smaller sample of 128. The follow up sessions took place in various locations in the

Vancouver area to accommodate participants as much as possible: Simon Fraser's main campus in Burnaby, Simon Fraser's downtown campus, the University of British Columbia, and at Vancouver General Hospital. In two instances, where none of these locations were convenient for the participant, the follow up session was conducted in the participant's home. All participants completed self-report measures of attachment, recollections of childhood history, and other measures not directly related to this study, such as psychological health, relationship functioning, and perceived social support. Participants also took part in an in-depth attachment interview covering experiences in family, friend, and romantic relationships. Following the interview, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation. Contact numbers for support services were provided to all interested participants. The follow-up interview and questionnaire session took approximately 2.5 to 3 hours to complete, and participants were paid a $20.00 honorarium for their involvement. I and one other trained coder assessed attachment representations based on these interviews.

Participants

Six hundred and fourteen men and 635 women, 19 years or older, from the City of Vancouver, were contacted through a standard random digit dialing procedure and completed the telephone survey portion of this study. Of these participants, 666 (53.3%) agreed to be contacted for a follow-up interview. We attempted to reach 371 of the 666. Of these, 128 completed the follow-up interview session, 115 were never reached, 88 declined, and 40 other participants were scheduled but were eventually unable to take part in the follow-up. Table 1 lists the demographic characteristics of the follow-up participants. These participants ranged in age from 19 to 86, with a mean age of 37.4 (SD=12.6). A large proportion of the follow-up sample were single and never married (40.6%); 19.5% reported being married, 18.8% were living with an intimate partner, 14.1% were divorced and not living with a partner, 4.7% were separated, and 2.3% were widowed. Overall the follow-up sample was well educated: 16.4% of the sample had some

high school education, 61.8% had some college or university, and 21.8% had some post-graduate education. In terms of ethnic background, 38.3% identified a British background, 28.1% identified other European ethnicity, 5.5% claimed a Chinese/East Asian ethnicity, 3.1% identified as Latin, Central, or South American, 10.2% specified no ethnic background, and other ethnic backgrounds comprised the remaining 14.9%. The majority of respondents identified themselves as heterosexual (89.8%); 6.3% identified as gay or lesbian (9.7% of men as gay and 3.0% of women as lesbian), 2.4% identified as bisexual, and 1.6% did not answer the question. Finally, turning to income levels, 28.1% of participants reported an annual personal income of less that $20, 000, 25% reported a personal income of $20,000 to $29,900, 17.2% reported $30,00 to $39,900, 10.9% reported $40,00 to $49,900, and 16.4% reported personal income levels of over $50,000.

Overall, the survey and the follow-up samples were comparable, although there were some differences between the two samples. As the survey was translated into Mandarin and Cantonese, a larger proportion of the Chinese/East Asian participants (18.3%) were part of the larger survey sample. Since the follow-up interviews required English fluency, fewer Chinese participants were able to take part in the follow-up (5.5%). Also, the follow-up sample was overrepresented in lower income levels (53.1% < $30,00) compared to the survey sample (25.1% < $30,000). In terms of marital status, fewer of the follow-up participants were married (19.5% vs. 31.3%) and more were living with a partner (18.8% vs.10.6%). There were also sex differences in marital status between the survey and follow-up participants. For the follow-up sample, more men (25%) than women (14.7%) were married, and more women (22.1%) than men (5.0%) were divorced and not living with a partner. These sex differences were not found in the larger survey sample.

Measures

Telephone Survey Measures

Relationship Aggression Measures

Psychological Aggression Scale. This 13 item measure was developed to assess psychological aggression in romantic relationships. It was based, in part, on the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI; Tolman, 1989) and includes items from both subscales of dominance/isolation (e.g., "Have you ever limited a partner's contact with others, such as family or friends?") and verbal/emotional aggression (e.g., "Have you ever insulted or sworn at a partner?").

Physical Aggression Scale. A 14 item measure was developed from the Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) and the Conflicts Tactics Scale 2 (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) to assess the extent to which both partners in a relationship engage in physical attacks on each other. This measure includes all the items from the original CTS (using the revised wording of the CTS2 where these items have changed), and some new items, included to address previous critiques of the CTS.[4] Items range from relatively mild examples of physical conflict (e.g., "Have you ever slapped a partner?"), to incidents of more severe physical aggression ("Have you ever burned or scalded a partner on purpose?").

For each item on both the physical and psychological aggression scales participants were asked if they had ever executed a specific behaviour towards a partner (Ever Perpetration). If participants endorsed that they had, they were then asked how often this had occurred in the past year (Current Perpetration). Next, they were asked if a partner had

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[4] The original CTS has been criticized for taking a number of diverse conflict behaviours, which may have considerable variability in their meaning, and conflating these into one item. Although this problem has been addressed by Straus and colleagues (1996) in the CTS2, we felt that one item "kicked, bit, or punched a partner" needed to be further separated into three separate items ("Have you ever scratched or bitten a partner during a conflict", "Have you ever kicked a partner", and "Have you ever punched a partner"). Critics have argued (see for e.g. Browne; 1996 and Yllo, 1988;1993) that biting is more often a conflict tactic of self defense, than is kicking or punching and, thus, more likely to be endorsed by women than men.

directed the same behaviour towards them (Ever Receipt), and if so, how many times in the last year had this occurred (Current Receipt). For the present study, I computed 4 total scores of receipt of aggression (Receipt - ever and current psychological, and ever and current physical), and 4 parallel total scores of perpetration of aggression (Perpetration - ever and current psychological, and ever and current physical) for a total of 8 relationship aggression variables. The aggression scores were calculated by totaling the number of different acts endorsed, a method shown to be a reliable estimate of frequency and severity of aggression (Moffit et al., 1997). Alphas for the aggression variables used in this study were as follows: ever psychological receipt = .64, current psychological receipt = .77, ever physical receipt = .83, ever psychological perpetration = .62, current psychological perpetration = .73, and ever physical perpetration = .81.

Follow-up Measures

History of Attachments Interview (HAI)

This attachment interview is a semi-structured 1.5 to 2 hour interview combining the key components of the Family Attachment Interview (FAI; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), which focuses on relationship experiences with parents and caregivers, and the Peer Attachment Interview (PAI; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), which focuses on friendships, and past and current romantic partners. Interviewers ask respondents to review their relationship experiences with significant others, exploring, for example, how they resolve conflict with parents or peers, how they respond when distressed, and how they see themselves and perceive that others see them. The HAI asks for a chronological history of the respondent's relationship experiences starting with the family of origin and moving to questions of current peer and romantic relationships.

The interviewer (also an expert coder) rated each participant's correspondence with each of the four attachment prototypes (secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing) outlined by Bartholomew (1990; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Based on participants' actual responses and their overall coherence, fluency, and comfort with the

interview, the coder judged how well a participant fit each of the four prototypes, on a 9 point continuous scale. A second expert coder rated a subsample (41 interviews), and correlation coefficients assessing intercoder agreement were as follows: Secure = .73, Fearful = .84, Preoccupied = .75, and Dismissing = .78

Raters also coded a number of underlying dimensions from family and peer relationships, also on continuous 1 to 9 scales. Of relevance to this study were childhood history ratings of acceptance, rejection, and quality, scored separately for mothers and fathers. *Acceptance* describes the degree to which a caregiver was actively loving and accepting, including a demonstration of genuine physical and emotional affection, and an ability to comfort the child when distressed. *Rejection* indicates the degree to which a parent actively avoided or ostracized the child, or failed to meet the child's attachment needs. This could vary from a cool, emotionally distant style, with an inappropriate stress on independence, to an implied or overt indication that the parent would rather be rid of the child. *Quality* integrates a number of parental dimensions (such as acceptance, rejection, neglect, pushed to achievement, role reversal, etc.) into an overall rating of the level of functioning or goodness of the parent/child relationship. Correlation coefficients assessing reliability between the two coders were as follows: maternal acceptance (r = .80), maternal rejection (r = .76), maternal quality (r = .80), paternal acceptance (r = .75), paternal rejection (r = .71), and paternal quality (r = .86).

Egna Minnen Betraffande Uppfostran. (EMBU; Perris et al., 1980)

The EMBU is an 80 item instrument that assesses participants' memories of parental childhood rearing behaviour. Originally developed in Sweden, it has been translated and used extensively with English speaking samples (Ross, Campbell, & Clayter, 1982; Gerslma, Emmmelkamp, & Arrindell, 1990). The English version is, in all respects, similar to the original Swedish measure, has demonstrated high internal reliability, and has shown to be an excellent instrument for measuring the family environment (Ross, Campbell, & Clayter, 1982). Four factors (rejection, emotional

warmth, overprotection, and favouring subject) have been shown to be constant across cross cultural, and clinical and non-clinical samples (e.g., Arrindell & van der Ende, 1984; Arrindell et al. 1989). For the purposes of this study, I used the two subscales of parental rejection and parental warmth, scored separately for mothers and fathers. The 40 items were rated on 4 point scales from never occurred to always occurred. An example item from the rejection subscale is "My parent was mean and grudging toward me", and an example item from the warmth subscale is, "My parent was proud when I succeeded in something I had undertaken." Alphas for the 4 subscales were as follows: maternal warmth = .95, maternal rejection = .90, paternal warmth = .96, and paternal rejection = .91.

RESULTS

Analyses

Presentation of Findings by Sex

One focus of this study was to examine how the links between childhood experiences, adult attachment, and relationship aggression may operate differently for women and men. Hence, the following results will be presented separately by sex. Since my sample size did not offer enough power to test sex differences between correlations, I will be focusing on the different patterns of associations that emerged for women and men.

Presentation of Relationship Aggression Variables

In the telephone survey participants reported on experiences of ever and current relationship aggression. As I predicted that childhood history, and consequently adult attachment, would impact on current relationship functioning, I have presented findings related to current aggression. In general, however, the predicted associations with current aggression were weak. Since I examined current experiences of relationship aggression only for those individuals who were currently involved in a romantic relationship, the resulting smaller sample size compromised the power of the statistical tests. Further, many participants reported very limited or no experiences of receipt or perpetration of relationship

aggression in the past year. The resulting restricted range makes it difficult to make meaningful interpretations from these associations. Interpreting the current aggression variables were more difficult still when considering physical aggression. Because so few participants endorsed any acts of receipt or perpetration of physical aggression in the last year, the non-normal distribution compromises correlational analyses. Thus, data related to current physical aggression are not presented.

To create a more meaningful picture of the role of childhood history and attachment on adult relationship functioning, I have included the findings related to relationship aggression experienced at any point in adulthood (ever). These results appear to be consistent with the current aggression findings and are not subject to the same problem of restricted range. Thus, I will be examining associations for 6 of the relationship aggression variables: ever psychological receipt, current psychological receipt, ever physical receipt, ever psychological perpetration, current psychological perpetration, and ever physical perpetration.

Presentation of Childhood History Variables

Since the overall attachment rating and childhood history ratings are both assessed from the History of Attachments Interview, these interview childhood history variables are not independent of attachment ratings. However, I have presented these data to compliment the EMBU self-report childhood ratings and to provide a more comprehensive picture of childhood experiences. As is evident from their intercorrelations (Table 3), the interview ratings are strongly associated with the EMBU ratings. Further, the interview childhood history variables are independent from the overall attachment coding insofar as they are assessed from only childhood experiences, whereas the final attachment coding is based on each participant's current functioning.

Presentation of Partial Correlations

Although my hypotheses and results are presented separately for receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression, this division may be somewhat misleading. The strong correlation between receipt and perpetration (ranging from .60 to .76) suggests that in most cases the same individuals are both inflicting and sustaining relationship aggression, although not necessarily in the same incidents or relationship. This makes it difficult to disentangle what indeed is related to receipt, what is related to perpetration, and what is related to both. In order to clarify this picture, all the analyses concerning relationship aggression were also run as partial correlations. Specifically, the associations with the three aggression variables concerning receipt (ever psychological, current psychological, and ever physical) were run again, controlling for perpetration, and the three perpetration variables (ever psychological, current psychological, and ever physical) were run again, controlling for receipt. The partial correlations are listed in parentheses below the zero order correlations.

Descriptives

Childhood History

Childhood history experiences were assessed first by retrospective self-report ratings for maternal and paternal warmth and rejection on the EMBU measure. In addition, coder ratings from the History Of Attachments Interview assessed maternal and paternal acceptance, rejection, and the quality of each of these parent/child relationships.

The means and standard deviations of the EMBU childhood ratings and the interview ratings for women and men are presented in Table 2. There was some evidence to suggest that, overall, mothers were seen more positively than fathers, and these differences were somewhat more marked for men than women. On the EMBU ratings both men and women saw their mothers as significantly warmer than their fathers (Men t (128) = 5.02, $p < .01$, Women: t (128) = 2.84, $p < .01$). There were no significant differences between mothers and fathers on the EMBU rejection scale for men or women.

On the interview ratings, coders rated women's mothers as significantly more accepting than fathers (t (128) = 2.44, $p < .05$), and gave higher quality ratings to mother/daughter relationships than that of father/daughter relationships (t (128) = 2.25, $p < .05$). There were no significant differences between mothers and fathers on the interview rating of rejection. For men, mothers were rated as significantly more accepting (t (128) = 5.72, $p < .01$) and less rejecting than fathers (t (128) = -3.25, $p < .01$) and as having higher quality mother/son relationships than father/son relationships (t (128) = 5.56, $p < .01$).

Further, men's fathers were seen less favourably than women's fathers. On the EMBU, men reported significantly less warmth from fathers than women did (t (128) = -2.19, $p < .05$), and interview coders saw men's fathers as significantly less accepting than women's fathers (t (128) = -2.32, $p < .01$).

Adult Attachment

Attachment rating mean scores and standard deviations for women and men are presented in Table 2. Attachment ratings were comparable between women and men, with the exception that women evidenced significantly higher levels of preoccupation than men (t (128) = -2.37, $p < .05$). This finding is consistent with attachment research in college and community samples.

Relationship Aggression

The means and standard deviations for relationship aggression variables are presented in Table 2. Consistent with the survey sample (n = 1249), the levels of *receipt* of physical and psychological aggression were comparable for men and women. However, in the follow up sample (n=128), women reported *perpetrating* significantly more acts of psychological aggression ever with a romantic partner (t (128) = -2.67, $p < .01$), as well as more acts of psychological aggression within the last year (t (128) = -2.68, $p < .01$).

Intercorrelations

Intercorrelations within groups of variables of childhood history, attachment, and relationship aggression were consistent for men and women, and thus will be presented together.

Intercorrelations among Childhood History Variables

Intercorrelations for childhood history variables are presented in Table 3. As there were two different sources of childhood history variables, I have presented the EMBU self-report intercorrelations, the HA Interview intercorrelations, and finally the intercorrelations between the EMBU and the HA Interview.

EMBU Intercorrelations

The within parent correlations between the EMBU ratings of warmth and rejection were moderate to strong, ranging from r = .40 to .49 (absolute values). Correlations across parents were moderate, ranging from r = .23 to .64 (absolute values).

HA Interview Intercorrelations

The within parent correlations among the three interview ratings of acceptance, rejection, and quality were strong, ranging from r = .78 to .91 (absolute values). Correlations across parents were moderate to strong ranging from r = .33 to .69 (absolute values).

EMBU and HA Interview Intercorrelations

Within parent correlations across the two measures were strong, ranging from r = .63 to .78 (absolute values) for mothers, and ranging from r = - .48 to .74 (absolute values) for fathers. The intercorrelations between the two measures across parents were somewhat weaker, ranging from r = .21 to .53 (absolute values), but all the associations were still significant at the .01 level and all were in the expected direction.

Intercorrelations among Adult Attachment Ratings

Intercorrelations for attachment ratings are presented in Table 4. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of Bartholomew's model (Bartholomew 1990; Bartholomew &

Horowitz, 1991) there should be negative associations between attachment patterns that lie in opposite quadrants of the two dimensional model (see Figure 1). As expected, security was negatively associated with fearfulness, and dismissingness was negatively associated with preoccupation. Bartholomew's model also suggests that styles in adjacent quadrants should not be highly associated. This expectation was consistent with our sample where all the associations were low to moderate and negative, ranging from $r = -.20$ to $-.33$.

Intercorrelations among Relationship Aggression Variables

The intercorrelations among the relationship aggression variables are presented in Table 5. All associations among the three receipt of aggression variables and the three perpetration of aggression variables were moderate to strong. The intercorrelations of receipt and perpetration on similar variables were as follows: ever psychological $r = .60$ ($p < .01$), current psychological $r = .76$ ($p < .01$), and ever physical $r = .66$ ($p < .01$).

Correlational Analyses

Childhood History and Adult Attachment

Based on Bowlby's conception of the internal working model and how experiences with caregivers ongoingly serve to shape later relationship experiences, I hypothesized that participants' childhood experiences with parents would be related to their adult attachment patterns. Childhood history was assessed from the EMBU subscales of warmth and rejection and HA Interview ratings of acceptance, rejection, and quality (all scored separately for mothers and fathers).

Women

The associations between women's childhood history and adult attachment are shown in Table 6. As hypothesized, women's positive experiences of childhood were related to greater security in adulthood. Seven of the 10 childhood history variables were related to attachment security, and an additional variable showed a trend in the expected direction. Security was negatively related to EMBU ratings of maternal rejection ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$) and paternal rejection ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$), as well as the interview rating of paternal

rejection (r = -.25, $p < .05$). Security was positively related to interview ratings of maternal acceptance (r = .23, $p < .05$), maternal quality (r = .32, $p < .01$), paternal acceptance (r = .24, $p < .05$), and paternal quality (r = .31, $p < .01$). The interview rating of maternal rejection showed a trend in the expected direction.

Findings for women's insecure patterns were generally consistent with the hypothesis that negative experiences of childhood would be related to greater insecurity. In looking at *fearfulness*, 9 of the 10 childhood history variables were related to fearfulness. Fearfulness was negatively related to EMBU ratings of maternal warmth (r = -.35, $p < .01$) and paternal warmth (r = -.33, $p < .01$), and interview ratings of maternal acceptance (r = -.32, $p < .01$), maternal quality (r = -.34, $p < .01$), paternal acceptance (r = -.25, $p < .05$), and paternal quality (r = -.32, $p < .01$). Fearfulness was positively related to EMBU ratings of maternal rejection (r = .24, $p < .05$), and interview ratings of maternal rejection (r = .28, $p < .01$) and paternal rejection (r = .35, $p < .01$).

In turning to the *preoccupied* attachment pattern and its relationship to childhood experiences, 3 of the 10 childhood history variables were related to preoccupation, and 3 more variables showed trends in the expected direction. Preoccupation was positively related to EMBU paternal rejection (r = .26, $p < .05$) and the interview rating of maternal rejection (r = .22, $p < .05$). Preoccupation was negatively related to the interview rating of maternal quality (r = -.22, p = .05). The EMBU rating of maternal rejection and interview ratings of paternal rejection and quality showed trends in the expected direction.

There were no associations between childhood history variables and *dismissingness*.

Men

The associations between men's childhood history and adult attachment are shown in Table 7. The pattern of results between childhood history variables and attachment was consistent with that of the women. Nine of the 10 childhood history variables were related to attachment security. Security was positively related to EMBU ratings of maternal

warmth ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), and paternal warmth ($r = .25$, $p < .05$), and interview ratings of maternal acceptance ($r = .37$, $p < .01$), maternal quality ($r = .43$, $p < .01$), paternal acceptance ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), and paternal quality ($r = .24$, $p < .05$). Security was negatively related to the EMBU rating of paternal rejection ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$), and interview ratings of maternal rejection ($r = -.40$, $p < .01$) and paternal rejection ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$).

In turning to the insecure patterns, the hypothesis that negative childhood experiences would be related to greater insecurity was generally supported. Looking at the *fearful* pattern, 5 of the 10 childhood history variables were related to fearfulness and the remaining 5 showed trends in the expected direction. Fearfulness was positively related to the interview rating of paternal rejection ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). Fearfulness was negatively related to interview ratings of maternal acceptance ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$), maternal quality ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$), paternal acceptance ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$), and paternal quality ($r = -.33$, $p < .01$). Five other childhood history variables (EMBU ratings of maternal warmth and rejection and paternal warmth and rejection, and the interview rating of maternal rejection) showed trends in the expected direction.

Looking at the *preoccupied* pattern, 3 of the 10 childhood history variables were related to preoccupation and 2 more variables showed trends in the expected direction. Preoccupation was negatively related to EMBU maternal warmth ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$), and the interview rating of maternal quality ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$). Preoccupation was positively related to interview ratings of maternal rejection ($r = .35$, $p < .01$). Interview ratings of maternal acceptance and paternal rejection showed trends in the expected direction. Overall, this pattern suggests that preoccupation in adulthood may be more consistently linked with experiences with mothers, rather than fathers.

As with the women, there were no significant associations between childhood history variables and *dismissingness*.

Summary

Thus, overall we see a somewhat consistent picture emerging, for both women and men. Positive experiences of childhood seem to be associated with greater security, while negative experiences appear to be associated with greater fearfulness and, to a lesser extent, preoccupation. Childhood experiences, as assessed by the EMBU and interview ratings, were not associated with dismissingness for either men or women.

Attachment and Receipt and Perpetration of Relationship Aggression

Theory and research have suggested that greater security is associated with more adaptive relationship functioning, and that fearful and preoccupied attachment patterns are overrepresented in abusive and dysfunctional relationships. Thus, I expected security to be negatively associated with the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression. I did not expect to see associations between dismissingness and received or perpetrated relationship aggression. I expected fearfulness to be positively associated with received aggression. I did not make predictions about fearfulness and perpetrated aggression as I did not necessarily expect that previous research on clinical samples (Dutton et al., 1994) would replicate in a community sample. I expected preoccupation to be positively associated with received and perpetrated relationship aggression.

Women

Table 8 indicates the associations between attachment and the 6 relationship aggression variables for women. Partial correlations (receipt, controlling for perpetration, and perpetration, controlling for receipt) are presented in parentheses below.

Secure Attachment. Counter to my hypotheses, there were no significant associations between women's attachment security and experiences of relationship aggression either in the zero order or partial correlations.

Insecure attachment. *Dismissing Attachment*: There were no significant associations between dismissingness and any of the relationship aggression variables either in the zero order or partial correlations.

Fearful Attachment: Counter to my hypothesis, there were no significant associations between fearfulness and received aggression. There were only two trends, in the expected direction, linking fearfulness to ever receipt of psychological and physical aggression. This pattern was consistent in the partial correlations.

Preoccupied Attachment: There were two significant associations between preoccupation and relationship aggression. Preoccupation was positively associated with current receipt of psychological aggression ($r = .30$, $p < .05$) and with ever perpetration of psychological aggression ($r = .29$, $p < .01$). There were also 3 trends in the expected direction linking preoccupation to ever psychological receipt, current psychological perpetration, and ever physical perpetration.

In looking at the partial corelations, though the significant associations from the zero order correlations still held in the partials, the trends were washed out.

Men

Table 9 indicates the zero order and partial correlations between attachment and the 6 relationship aggression variables for men. Partial correlations are presented in parentheses below.

Secure attachment. Counter to my hypothesis, there were few significant associations between men's attachment security and experiences of relationship aggression. There was only one significant relationship between security and ever receipt of psychological aggression ($r = -.23$, $p < .05$), and one more trend (ever receipt of physical aggression) in the expected direction. The partial correlations did not change this picture. The former significant association became a trend and one new trend emerged between security and current perpetration of psychological aggression.

Insecure attachment. *Dismissing Attachment*: There were no significant associations between dismissingness and any of the relationship aggression variables in the zero order correlations or the partials.

Fearful Attachment: Counter to my hypothesis, there were no significant associations between fearful attachment and received relationship aggression. This pattern was also consistent in the partial correlations.

Preoccupied Attachment: Though I had expected associations between preoccupation and relationship aggression, I had not expected such a strong pattern as was evidenced here. Preoccupation was associated with all 6 of the relationship aggression variables. Preoccupation was positively associated with ever receipt ($r = .59$, $p < .01$) and current receipt of psychological aggression ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), and ever receipt of physical aggression ($r = .36$, $p < .01$). Looking at *perpetration* of relationship aggression, preoccupation was also positively associated with ever perpetration ($r = .41$, $p < .01$) and current perpetration ($r = .35$, $p < .05$) of psychological aggression, and ever perpetration ($r = .24$, $p < .05$) of physical aggression.

In looking at the partial corelations, an interesting picture emerges. In general, when I examined receipt, while controlling for perpetration, the original pattern of correlations remained, albeit the associations were somewhat weaker. The more preoccupied a man was the more likely he was to have received psychological and physical aggression. When I examined perpetration, controlling for receipt, however, the former moderate to strong correlations were washed out (see Table 9). A man's preoccupation was no longer related to the perpetration of relationship aggression when the effects of receiving aggression were held constant.

Summary

Overall, the links I had expected between secure and fearful attachment and relationship aggression variables did not emerge, for men or for women. The strongest link between attachment and relationship aggression concerned preoccupied attachment, and this was especially true for the men in the sample, for both the receipt and perpetration of aggression. Though the partial correlations did not change this picture appreciably for women, a rather different picture emerged for men. When the effects of perpetration were

controlled, preoccupation was still related to men's receipt of relationship aggression. When the effects of receipt were controlled, preoccupation was no longer associated with men's perpetration of relationship aggression. There were no associations between dismissingness and relationship aggression for women or men.

Childhood History and Receipt and Perpetration of Relationship Aggression

According to Bowlby, children internalize early experiences of acceptance and rejection with caregivers and incorporate these relationship experiences into their own schemas of expectations of themselves and others. These internal working models, then, set the ground rules for how later relationships may unfold and thus continue to influence relationship dynamics throughout the life span. From this theoretical perspective, I predicted that participants' childhood experiences would be related to both the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression in adulthood. Again, childhood history was assessed from warmth and rejection subscales on the EMBU, and interview ratings of acceptance, rejection, and quality for both mothers and fathers.

Women

The associations between the childhood history variables and women's experiences of relationship aggression are shown in Table 10. Partial correlations (receipt, controlling for perpetration, and perpetration, controlling for receipt) are presented in parentheses.

Receipt of relationship aggression. There were no significant associations with any of the childhood history variables and women's ever or current receipt of psychological aggression. There were only two variables (the EMBU rating of maternal rejection and interview rating of maternal quality) that showed trends in the expected direction). Similarly, there were no significant associations with any of the childhood history variables and women's ever receipt of physical aggression. There were only two variables (the interview ratings of maternal quality and paternal rejection) that showed trends in the expected direction.

In looking at the partial correlations, a different and somewhat inconsistent picture emerged. Women's ever receipt of psychological aggression was negatively related to the interview rating of maternal quality ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$), and two new trends (interview ratings of paternal rejection and quality) were revealed. Women's current receipt of psychological aggression was positively related to the EMBU rating of maternal rejection ($r = .26$, $p < .05$) and the interview rating of maternal rejection ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), and negatively related to the interview ratings of maternal acceptance ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$) and maternal quality ($r = -.29$, $p < .05$). A new trend (the interview rating of paternal quality) also emerged.

Perpetration of relationship aggression. None of the childhood history variables were significantly related to women's ever or current perpetration of psychological aggression. Looking at physical aggression, 3 of the 10 childhood variables were associated in the hypothesized directions, and one more variable showed a trend. Women's ever perpetration of physical aggression was positively associated with the EMBU ratings of maternal rejection ($r = .27$, $p < .05$) and paternal rejection ($r = .22$, $p < .05$), and negatively associated with the interview rating of maternal acceptance ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$). The interview rating of paternal rejection showed a trend in the expected direction.

In the partial correlations the picture changed in that the associations with ever perpetration of physical aggression became less strong, and new associations came to light. Specifically, the association linking women's ever perpetration of physical aggression to the EMBU rating of paternal rejection and the interview rating of maternal acceptance were lost in the partial correlation (though EMBU paternal rejection was still a trend). In looking at psychological aggression, women's current perpetration of psychological aggression was now positively associated with interview ratings of maternal acceptance ($r = .27$, $p < .05$) and quality ($r = .30$, $p < .01$), and negatively associated with the interview rating of maternal rejection ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$). One new trend also emerged. The interview

rating of paternal quality was positively linked to current perpetration of psychological aggression.

Men

The associations between the childhood history variables and men's experiences of relationship aggression are shown in Table 11. Partial correlations are presented in parentheses.

Receipt of relationship aggression. Three of the 10 childhood history variables were related to ever receipt of psychological aggression, and three more variables showed trends in the expected direction. Men's ever experienced receipt of psychological aggression was positively related to the EMBU rating of maternal rejection ($r = .28$, $p < .05$) and the interview rating of maternal rejection ($r = .38$, $p < .01$), and negatively related to interview rating of maternal quality ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$). Interview ratings of maternal acceptance, paternal rejection, and paternal quality all showed trends in the expected direction. Only one of the childhood variables, the interview rating of maternal rejection, was related to current receipt of psychological aggression ($r = .35$, $p < .05$).

Three of the 10 childhood history variables were related to ever receipt of physical aggression and 3 more variables showed trends in the expected direction. Men's ever receipt of physical aggression was positively related to the EMBU rating of maternal rejection ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) and the interview rating of maternal rejection ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), and negatively related to the interview rating of maternal quality ($r = -.28$, $p < .05$). The EMBU rating of paternal warmth and interview ratings of paternal rejection and quality showed trends in the expected direction. Overall, there seemed to be more associations with receipt of relationship aggression and experiences with mothers than with fathers.

Looking at the partials, did not change the pattern of correlations. All the former associations between childhood variables and ever and current receipt of relationship aggression remained. Although there was some movement among trends (some former

trends disappeared and other new trends emerged), the number and direction of the trends remained constant from the zero order to the partial correlations.

Perpetration of relationship aggression. The hypotheses relating the perpetration of psychological aggression with childhood variables received less support. Only the EMBU rating of paternal rejection was significantly associated with men's ever perpetration of psychological aggression ($r = .28$, $p < .05$), though 2 other childhood variables (interview ratings of maternal quality, and paternal rejection) showed trends in the expected direction. None of the childhood history variables were related to current perpetration of psychological aggression, though there were 2 trends (the EMBU rating of paternal rejection and the interview rating of maternal quality) that emerged in the expected direction.

There were no significant associations between men's ever perpetration of physical aggression and any of the childhood variables.

In the partial correlations there were some changes looking at the perpetration of relationship aggression, when receipt was held constant, but overall the picture was similar to the zero order correlations. A trend in the original analyses linking men's current perpetration of psychological aggression to the EMBU rating of paternal rejection became significant in the partial correlation ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). Two new associations also emerged in the partial correlation that were not evident in the zero order correlation. Men's ever perpetration of physical aggression was negatively associated with the EMBU rating of maternal rejection ($r = -.23$, $p < .05$), and the interview rating of maternal rejection ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$).

Summary

For women, the pattern of associations between childhood history and relationship aggression was weak. Only three significant associations linked childhood variables to the perpetration of physical aggression. In the partial correlations, the results were scattered. Some new associations came to light but these correlations were not consistently in the

predicted direction. The pattern of results, however, do suggest that experiences with mothers may play a more important role than that of fathers in regards to current relationship functioning. Childhood variables related to mothers accounted for all but one of the significant associations.

In contrast, for men, a somewhat consistent picture emerged linking childhood history variables to experiences of relationship aggression. This picture also remained consistent when looking at the partial correlations, controlling for perpetration and receipt respectively. Again, men's experiences with their mothers seemed to play a more important role in their current relationship functioning than experiences with fathers. Childhood variables related to mothers accounted for 7 of the 8 significant associations here. The correlations also suggested that negative experiences may have more impact on current functioning than positive ones. In spite of the fact that most of the childhood history variables were concerned with positive childhood experiences, it was parental rejection that accounted for all but one of the significant associations.

Mediational Model

Individuals from punitive parental environments do not always become perpetrators or victims of aggression in their adult relationships. Similarly, individuals from seemingly secure family environments can find themselves in dysfunctional relationships in adulthood. Attachment theory's notion that relationship experiences are filtered through "internal working models," which are reshaped by relationship experiences throughout life, is a particularly relevant construct for understanding these examples of discontinuity (Bowlby,1979). I had predicted that childhood experiences would be related to adult relationship aggression only insofar as those experiences were mediated by current attachment patterns.

I planned a series of hierarchical regressions to assess the degree to which attachment security made an independent contribution to the relationship between childhood history and the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression (see Figure 2). I

predicted that variations in childhood history would significantly account for variations in attachment security (path a), that variations in attachment security would significantly account for variations in relationship aggression (path b), and when attachment security is controlled, a previously significant association between childhood history and relationship aggression would no longer be significant.

However, a variable can only function as a mediator when all of the variables (predictor, criterion, and mediator) are significantly correlated with each other (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Although there were some significant links between childhood history and attachment, between attachment and relationship aggression, and between childhood history and relationship aggression, there was no one set of variables that was consistently associated throughout the three links. Further, since the interview childhood history variables were not independent of attachment ratings, I was limited to looking only at the self-report EMBU childhood variables in these analyses in order to maintain independence between childhood history and attachment.

When trying to formulate this model, I found, for example, that the less secure men were the more likely they were to have received psychological aggression from a partner. And the more maternal rejection evident from their childhood experiences, the more likely they were to have received psychological aggression from a partner. However, there was no link between maternal rejection and their current security. Therefore it was not reasonable to test the hypothesis that security mediated the relationship between maternal rejection and received psychological aggression. Similarly, although men's levels of preoccupation showed the strongest link with relationship aggression, preoccupation was generally not related to men's childhood experiences. Again no one set of variables was consistently associated throughout the three paths. This was also true for the women's data. Thus, it was not possible to test the mediational model I had hypothesized.

Exploratory Analyses

In an effort to understand why my mediational model was not testable, I looked again at my measures, the sample, and the theoretical model itself. The measure of recollections of childhood experiences, the EMBU, has attained acceptable levels of reliability in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Similarly, though this was the first time we had used the History of Attachments Interview, both the Family Attachments Interview and Peer Attachment Interview from which it is derived have been used extensively in various populations. Further, the two coders on this project had extensive coding experience and our inter-rater reliability was high. As I will explain at more length in the discussion section, there were reasons to suspect that individuals in my sample may have had lower levels of attachment security than one might see in other community samples. However, I did not feel that the range of security evidenced in this sample was restricted to the point that the results would have been compromised.

Since I did find some associations in the zero order correlations between childhood history and attachment, attachment and relationship aggression, and childhood history and relationship aggression, I felt that my model could still be potentially useful. It is possible, however, that the model may have been too simple to capture the theoretical associations I was trying to make. Thus in an exploratory analyses I conducted a series of hierarchical regressions using all four EMBU childhood variables (warmth and rejection from mothers and fathers) and all four attachment ratings (secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing) to assess the extent to which each of these groups of variables independently predicted the receipt and perpetration of psychological aggression. As with the original analyses, I ran these analyses separately for women and men.

Women

In the first analysis, using perpetration as my criterion variable, I examined the independent contribution of the four attachment ratings as a group to perpetrated psychological aggression. On the second step, I examined the independent contribution of

the EMBU childhood history variables. In general these associations were not significant. Attachment ratings accounted for 12% of the variance in perpetrated aggression (F (4, 62) = 2.27, $p < .10$). When the effects of attachment were partialled out, EMBU childhood variables contributed only 1% additional variance in perpetrated aggression (F (4, 58) = .11, n.s.). Reversing the order of entry, EMBU childhood variables accounted for only 3% of the variance (F (4, 62) = .46, n.s.), and attachment ratings, entered on the second step, accounted for an additional 11% of the variance in perpetrated aggression (F (4, 58) = 1.77, n.s.). When looking at received psychological aggression as the criterion variable, a very similar pattern emerged. In general, it seems that attachment may potentially be a somewhat stronger predictor of perpetrated and received psychological aggression than childhood history variables. But experiences of childhood history do not seem to be predictive of perpetrated or received psychological aggression.

Men

As with the women, in the first analysis, using perpetration as my criterion variable, I examined the independent contribution of the four attachment ratings as a group to perpetrated psychological aggression. On the second step, I examined the independent contribution of the EMBU childhood variables. Attachment ratings, entered on the first step, accounted for 18% of the variance (F (4, 55) = 3.09, $p < .05$). On the second step, EMBU childhood variables accounted for only 7% additional variance in perpetrated aggression (F (4, 51) = 1.13, n.s.). Reversing the order of entry, in the second analysis, EMBU childhood variables accounted for 9% of the variance in perpetrated aggression (F (4, 55) = 1.43, n.s.). Attachment ratings, entered on the second step, accounted for an additional 16% of the variance (F (4, 51) = 2.65 $p < .05$.)

When looking at received psychological aggression as the criterion variable, a similar and somewhat stronger pattern emerged. The four attachment ratings, entered on the first step, accounted for 35% of the variance in received aggression (F (4,55) = 7.50,

$p < .001$). The contribution of EMBU childhood variables, entered on the second step, was marginally significant, accounting for an additional 9% of the variance (F (4, 51) = 2.10, $p < .10$). In the next analysis I reversed the order of entry. Here, childhood variables accounted for 9% of the variance in received psychological aggression (F (4, 55) = 1.40, n.s.). Attachment ratings, entered on the second step, accounted for 35% of the variance in received aggression (F (4, 51) = 8.09, $p < .001$).

Overall, these analyses suggest that attachment is a more important predictor of perpetrated and received psychological aggression than childhood history variables. Further, to the extent that childhood history variables do predict psychological aggression, clearly this relationship is not being mediated by attachment.

I next looked at the beta weights to examine what factors were making a specific contribution to these associations. Not surprisingly, given the strength of the zero order correlations, the only attachment variable that was independently predicting perpetrated or received psychological aggression was preoccupation (For received aggression: Beta = .34, t (4,55) = 2.94, $p < .01$). Looking at the beta weights in the EMBU childhood variables it was clear that to the extent that there were associations between childhood variables and perpetrated or received aggression, it was maternal rejection that was driving this association (received aggression: Beta = .358, t (4,55) = 2.75, $p < .01$). This finding was consistent with earlier analyses that indicated that experiences with mothers seemed to have more impact on current relationship aggression and attachment, that rejection was a more important predictor than acceptance, and that these effects were more consistent for men than for women.

I was curious to discover whether the path linking experiences of maternal rejection to received psychological aggression was possibly reflective of a reporting bias. To explore this, I conducted another regression, substituting the set of childhood history interview variables, which are coded by expert coders, in place of the EMBU self-reported variables, using received psychological aggression as my criterion variable. Interestingly,

in this analysis, there was no significant link between the maternal rejection interview variable (nor any of the childhood interview variables) and received psychological aggression. It is possible that men's current experiences of received aggression from their female partners are negatively biasing their memories of childhood experiences with their mothers.

DISCUSSION

Though past research looking solely at prevalence rates of abuse has sampled randomly in large scale national surveys, research looking at psychological variables in greater depth has typically sought victims of abuse from transition houses and shelters (e.g., Dutton & Painter, 1993; Henderson et al., 1997), and perpetrators of abuse from court mandated treatment programs (Dutton et al., 1994; Hart, Dutton, & Newlove, 1993). This study is one of the first projects to take an in depth look at both men's and women's attachment representations and relationship aggression in a community sample. It also makes an important contribution towards bridging the gap between feminist and psychological perspectives on relationship aggression. Some feminist researchers have critiqued earlier sociological and psychological studies on spousal violence, particularly those studies relying on the CTS for their data source, for not taking into consideration the broader cultural context in which spousal violence occurs. They contend that by focusing on psychological variables we excuse perpetrators, blame victims, and, by relegating batterers to the realm of deviants, de-emphasize the coercive cultural forces that allow this oppression to exist. (Bograd, 1988; Bowker, 1983; 1993; Dobash & Dobash 1988, Dobash et al. 1992; Hoff, 1990).

In this study, I too have relied on data from a somewhat broader, albeit still limited, self-report measure of aggression that cannot tap the meaning, antecedents, or consequences of women's and men's aggression. However, I have also attempted to address some of the contextual questions surrounding spousal violence. I feel that our measures of relationship aggression make the best compromise between thoughtfully

addressing earlier critiques, and staying close enough to the original CTS to make prevalence rates comparable with previous research. The follow-up allowed me to look at the context of aggression in more depth and so begin to understand some of the psychological variables that may be associated with men's and women's aggression.

The HA Interview, in particular, offers a unique method in which to understand the context of aggression. For example, originally I had proposed to look at only women's experiences of received violence in order to understand how attachment may play a role in women's decisions to leave or remain in abusive relationships. After a number of interviews with women it became clear that my research questions did not fit with participants experiences. First, the "violence" was not extreme, consisting of varying levels of psychological aggression and, for the most part, low levels of physical aggression. Very few of the women were experiencing, or had ever experienced, "abusive relationships" even in cases where some physical aggression had taken place. It was also evident that the aggression was going both ways - that women were just as likely to be psychologically aggressive or to occasionally push, shove, or slap a partner as vice versa. And it was also clear that this kind of aggression, or relationship dysfunction, was damaging to men as well as to women. My original question of why women stay with abusive partners was meaningless in this context. The interviewing process helped me understand that I needed to include men's experiences of aggression, and that I needed different research questions implying different intervention solutions. And I changed the design accordingly.

A further advantage of this design was the attachment construct itself. Looking at aggression from an attachment perspective allows us to be sensitive to the environmental context in which psychological variables develop, and the antecedent/consequence dichotomy becomes less polarized. Attachment offers the potential to understand psychological variables as antecedents of aggression since attachment representations are formulated, at least in part, within parent-child relationships. It also allows us to

understand psychological variables as a consequence of aggression as both positive and negative relationship experiences continue to modify internal attachment representations throughout the life span. Some critics have argued that studying the individual psychology of victims is dangerous because associations between maladaptive personality variables and the receipt of aggression could potentially shift the onus of responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim (e.g., Bograd, 1988; Bowker, 1993; Dobash & Dobash, 1988). Attachment, however, proposes that maladaptive internal models are formed throughout the life-span and thus incorporate both what one brings into a relationship as well as the immediate impact of that relationship upon one's current models. For example, results indicating that preoccupation may be associated with relationship aggression do not translate to the simple notion that preoccupied individuals choose or create conflictual relationships because of their poorly integrated sense of self-worth. Being the recipient of aggression from one's partner will most certainly have a negative impact on even the most positive self-models. In all likelihood, both past and current relationship experiences serve to maintain, shape, and change internal working models.

In the following sections I will review the associations I found between childhood history, adult attachment, and relationship aggression, and how these patterns of associations differ for men and women. As well, I will discuss some of the limitations of this project, and the implications this work may have for future study.

Childhood History and Adult Attachment

There was some support for the hypotheses linking experiences of one's childhood history to current adult attachment, for both men and women. As predicted, individuals with greater security had more positive experiences of childhood while less security was associated with experiences of childhood rejection. There was also some support for the hypothesis that fearfulness would be positively related to experiences of childhood rejection and negatively related to positive childhood experiences. In contrast, there was only limited support for the hypothesis that preoccupation, like fearfulness, would be positively

related to experiences of childhood rejection and negatively related to positive childhood experiences. There were no significant associations linking dismissingness to experiences in childhood for either men or women.

It is curious that the pattern of associations linking preoccupation to experiences with caregivers in childhood was not consistent with predictions. It is possible that the EMBU subscales of acceptance and rejection give a global rating of "good" and "bad" parenting but are not sensitive enough to differentiate various styles of bad parenting that might be associated with the different insecure attachment patterns. Attachment research suggests that harsh rejecting parenting may lead to more fearful attachment, whereas inconsistent parenting would lead to preoccupied or ambivalent attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978). With the EMBU measure, I was able to capture the associations between participants' reconstructions of "good" parenting and security, and "bad" parenting and fearfulness, but not the associations with "inconsistent" parenting and preoccupation. In contrast, the HA Interview measure does include dimensions that tease out these various kinds of bad parenting. For example, preoccupation and fearfulness are both strongly related to interview measures of maternal and paternal rejection. However, preoccupation is positively related to parental role reversal and negatively related to parental consistency whereas fearfulness is not related to these variables. Fearfulness is positively related to parental dominance, and negatively related to parental closeness, where preoccupation is not associated with these variables. However, these parenting dimensions are not independent of the attachment ratings, as they were rated by the same coder in the same interview, and therefore do not offer a distinct measure of various styles of poor parenting.

Adult Attachment and Relationship Aggression

The expected associations between attachment and relationship aggression were only partially supported. There was no support for the hypotheses that greater security would be related to less receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression, and that greater fearfulness would be related to more receipt of relationship aggression, for either men or

women. The only strong and consistent support for the attachment and relationship aggression hypotheses were the strong positive correlations between preoccupation and the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression. This pattern was especially strong for men.

Why attachment security would not be related to experiences of relationship aggression is difficult to explain. Certainly theory and previous research have suggested that security is related to greater satisfaction, trust, intimacy, commitment, and passion in romantic relationships (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Simpson, 1990). Security has also been shown to be negatively related to experiences of relationship aggression (Henderson et al., 1994; O'Hearn & Davis, 1997) even with the restricted range often evidenced in predominantly insecure clinical samples (e.g., Dutton et al., 1994; Henderson et al., 1997). In looking at physical aggression it may be that the expected associations with attachment security are not evident because of the relatively low levels of physical aggression that we saw in this sample. In many cases participants experience of "physical aggression" was a past incident of having once slapped a partner or perhaps having being pushed by a partner in the heat of an argument. In these cases there would be no reason to expect these isolated and anomalous acts to have any bearing on participants' overall security of attachment. In a study of 84 college women selected for high conflict and low conflict relationships, Morgan and Pietromonaco (1994) found that self-reported attachment style did not predict levels of abuse. Although these researchers do not remark on the severity of abuse evidenced in this sample, it is possible that the lack of expected associations between attachment and abuse may have been due to a similar problem of restricted range.

Our study's paucity of associations with psychological aggression, however, is even less clear. One possible explanation for this discrepant finding could be that the lack of defensiveness characteristic of secure individuals may make them more frank in their responses about relationship aggression and thus they may endorse more acts of lower

levels of psychological and even physical aggression than a less secure and more defensive person might. The above average education level of the participants in this sample may have made them particularly sensitized to issues of aggression and consequently more candid in their responses.

It is also difficult to explain why I did not see the expected associations between fearfulness and relationship aggression. Though I had not made specific predictions that greater fearfulness would be related to the perpetration of relationship aggression, I had expected that fearfulness would be related to the receipt of aggression. Perhaps fearfulness is not linked so strongly with received or perpetrated aggression in non-clinical samples where the levels of fearfulness are less extreme. A fearful individual from a college sample is typically shy, passive, and exceedingly compliant. This kind of behaviour, unlike the angry protest behaviour of fearful individuals from clinical samples (e.g., Dutton et al.,1994), may serve to dissipate rather than intensify the rage of an aggressive partner. Though fearfulness has been shown to be associated with received and perpetrated aggression in clinical samples (e.g., Dutton et al., 1994), the findings from non-clinical samples have been less consistent. In previous work with a college sample, we found a link between fearfulness and receipt of relationship aggression (Henderson et al., 1994), but O'Hearn and Davis (1997), with a similar sample, did not find this association in their original analyses. When they controlled for the interdependency between receipt and perpetration they found that fearfulness was positively related to the receipt of abuse and negatively related to the infliction of abuse.

Finally, it is interesting to note the strong and consistent pattern of results linking preoccupation to the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression, particularly for men. It may be that having one partner with a preoccupied style sets the environment for relationship aggression to occur. The preoccupied individual is characterized by conflict. Torn between a desperate need for love and endorsement from others and the terror of

never having that need gratified, the preoccupied individual becomes increasingly more demanding and potentially aggressive when attachment needs are not fulfilled.

This conflict orientation, however, explains the perpetration of aggression; but what of receipt? The men's partial correlations indicated that preoccupation may predict receipt of aggression independently of perpetration. One potential explanation comes from a study by Pietromonaco and Barrett (1997). These researchers hypothesized that individual differences in attachment models might explain participants' differing responses to everyday social interactions, specifically to attachment relevant interactions. Seventy university undergraduates were asked to keep diary records over a one week period of their emotional reactions and feelings following all social interactions. The most striking differences among the four attachment groups arose in high conflict situations where preoccupied individuals tended to disclose more, to judge the interaction as more intimate, and to feel more satisfied immediately following the interaction than did secure, fearful, or dismissing individuals. These authors comment:

> In situations that most people are likely to find unpleasant, or even aversive, preoccupied people seem to show some psychological benefits . . . Preoccupied people expect and desire a high degree of intimacy and personal disclosures. In high-conflict situations, partners are apt to pay attention and respond to the interaction . . . even if their responses convey anger or disappointment. Preoccupied people may interpret these responses as evidence that their partner is engaged and responsive and thus believe that they have moved toward their goal of achieving intimacy.

These authors also comment that although conflict may serve to satisfy attachment needs for preoccupied individuals, the same may not hold true for their partners. "Thus conflictual interactions may create further difficulties in the relationship. Indeed, the more favorable reactions of preoccupied people may make them particularly susceptible to remaining in conflict-ridden or even abusive relationships" (p.1420). Further, because of the preoccupied individual's tendency to idealize partners they may be more likely to hold unrealistic expectations of their partners' ability to change. Consider the following except from a 29 year old woman from our sample who, in spite of years of rejection and

increasing withdrawal by her partner, still believed that she could make her partner care about her more.

> I kept on thinking if I believed in him, his life would be OK, he would be OK, he'd have, you know, lots of self-esteem and everything else... because for all the....I always thought I could fix things and I could help him, in like the white knight kind of thing. I kept on saying, "Even if you don't want to marry me, at least let me help you do this. "

This same idealization may also make preoccupied individuals more vulnerable to aggression because of their tendency to excuse or rationalize aggression from their partners. The following 32 year old male participant was the recipient of extreme psychological and physical abuse from his partner and though he recognized that the relationship was abusive he was able to reinterpret his partner's aggression as aspects of her deeper love. When asked about the positive aspects of this relationship, he admitted that there was only 1.5 to 2 hours in the 5 year relationship that had been positive.

> About an hour and a half to two hours when she was giving birth to our daughter. It was the only time that I felt she was honest and intimate with me. And she told me how she loved me and how she cared about me. And there was just a feeling of closeness. And I told her this at one point and she sort of mocked me and said "Well I was stoned at the time. Don't you know I was on drugs?" And I thought about that. And I'm not sure yet...But I think what they give them is sodium pentithol, which, as it turns out, is truth serum. So I know she had revealed her true intimacy to me then.

Preoccupied individuals may also be vulnerable to the receipt of aggression because a potentially aggressive partner may find the relentless approach orientation of the preoccupied individual particularly provocative. In the following example the participant's partner had clearly ended the relationship. He left the country and the participant knew that he was living with someone else. In spite of this, her insatiable desire for closeness was overwhelming.

> He never called me for three months, and so I just bought a ticket down to California and basically bought a one way ticket and figured, if he's gonna get rid of me he's gonna have to send me home. He's gonna have to go out and buy the ticket...I'm not gonna make it that easy for him."

In their study of intergenerational transmission of aggression Cappell and Heiner (1990) have tried to puzzle out the question of continuity of aggression through generations. They suggest that a *vulnerability* to aggression may be the factor that is intergenerationally transmitted rather than the transferring of specific aggressive roles.

> Men and women do not learn to behave aggressively toward their spouses in their family of origin; instead, they learn or socially inherit vulnerability ...Vulnerability might involve learning to provoke violence; learning to tolerate violence; learning to select aggressive partners for marriage; or failing to inherit the psychological, social, and material resources sufficient to escape being vulnerable" (p. 148).

Perhaps the preoccupied individual has learned a particular kind of vulnerability from their parental environment. It would be important in future work to examine which aspects of this vulnerability are particularly relevant.

Finally, preoccupied individuals may simply underreport their own perpetrated aggression and possibly overreport the aggression they receive. Consistent with their style, they may perceive their own aggressive behaviours as reasonable demands to have attachment needs met, while being highly sensitive to aggressive demands placed upon them by their partners.

Childhood History and Relationship Aggression

In a traditional Western parenting environment mothers take a more active parenting role and are generally more involved in their children's lives than fathers. It does not seem surprising then to find that mothers were generally seen more positively than fathers. Consistent with previous college samples (Henderson & Scharfe, 1995) this study indicated that mothers were seen as warmer and more accepting than fathers, and that the quality of the mother/child relationship was higher than that with fathers. This finding was more consistent for men than for women.

Further, there was some support for the hypotheses linking one's experiences in childhood to adult experiences of relationship aggression for men, and only very limited support for these associations for women. Experiences with mothers, rather than fathers, were more consistently related to adult relationship functioning, suggesting that mothers

may be more important in this process than fathers. Again, this pattern appeared more consistently for men than for women. Though the literature is far from conclusive on this point, these findings are consistent with some previous research indicating that exposure to aggressive behaviour in the family of origin (both received and witnessed) predicts aggression in current intimate relationships for males, whereas this continuity is less consistent for females (e.g., Doumas et al., 1994; O'Leary, et al., 1994). For example, in a longitudinal study assessing physical aggression one month prior to, and 18 and 30 months after marriage, O'Leary and colleagues (1994) found that men's experiences of physical violence in the family of origin predicted physical violence against their spouses, even when there was little evidence of psychological aggression or marital discord. For women, family of origin violence was not a predictive factor in their perpetration of marital violence.

Perhaps the mere proximity of mothers makes them more accessible role models for their children. In addition, theory and research have suggested that although both parents may contribute to individuals' beliefs about themselves and their social worlds, the opposite-sex parent may be more influential as a model for formulating beliefs about heterosexual relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Chodorow, 1978). This could explain why mothers may have more impact on their son's adult relationships than their daughters.

Mediational Model

To test the extent to which attachment mediates the relationship between childhood history and current experiences of relationship aggression I had hoped to examine the role of attachment in a mediational model. Unfortunately, because of the particular pattern of results that I found, this was not possible. My exploratory analyses using a more complex model suggested that the association between childhood history and relationship aggression is not being mediated by attachment. For men, childhood history contributed 9% of the variance in received aggression, regardless of whether the effects of attachment were controlled or not. Further, this association was driven almost entirely by recollections of

maternal rejection. That maternal rejection would have such a robust association with men's received aggression from their female partners makes intuitive sense. But why this association would hold when the effects of attachment were partialled out is more difficult to explain. A theory of social modeling, suggesting that behaviours in childhood are learned and reenacted in adulthood without becoming part of an internalized attachment system, might explain perpetrated aggression but becomes a less convincing model to explain the receipt of aggression. Alternatively, self-verification theory (Swann, 1983) would suggest that men who have rejecting experiences with mothers in childhood unconsciously choose rejecting partners in adulthood in order to create an environment that confirms their self-conceptions. However, this theory, like attachment, is based on the premise that self-perceptions are woven into an internalized personality structure. Thus it does not explain how the relationship between maternal rejection and received aggression holds, independently of attachment. It may be that this relationship is simply an anomaly of a self-reported memory bias, since this association did not hold when coded ratings of parental acceptance and rejection were substituted for the self-reported ratings. Possibly, as retrospective memory bias research would suggest, the current psychological aggression that men are experiencing from their female partners is casting a somewhat negative veil over their recollections of experiences with their mothers. Clearly, we would want to discover more about these associations using multiple measures before making strong conclusions about these findings.

It is worth noting that even the more complex model used in the exploratory analyses portrays an oversimplification of the links between childhood history, attachment, and aggression. Clearly, childhood relationships with parents are not the only relationships to have an impact on adult attachment. Other relationships (peer, alternative adult figures, siblings etc.) as well as situational factors (such as experienced loss, separation, or the impact of therapy) would all be expected to influence adult attachment. Similarly, there are also numerous factors other than attachment that would be expected to have an impact on

received and perpetrated relationship aggression. In particular, external variables (such as substance abuse, employment status, income, SES, or life event stressors) would all be expected to have an impact on relationship aggression.

Gender Differences in the Associations Between Childhood History, Adult Attachment, and Relationship Aggression

Overall, neither childhood history, nor current attachment, appear to be related to received or perpetrated relationship aggression for women. For men, however, we see somewhat more evidence for a link between childhood history variables and relationship aggression, and more evidence of a link between current attachment, namely preoccupied attachment, and relationship aggression. The more preoccupied men were the more likely they were to perpetrate and receive relationship aggression. For women, preoccupation was also related to the perpetration and receipt of relationship aggression, but the pattern of results was not as consistent, nor were the correlations as strong.

A possible explanation of these findings may come from a longitudinal study of a birth cohort of 861 21 year olds (Magdol et al., 1997). These researchers found that although women were just as likely to be violent as men, men's violence was associated with a psychopathological profile whereas this association was not apparent for women. Magdol and associates explain these findings in terms of "rational choice theory" (Cornish and Clarke, 1986 as cited in Magdol et al., 1997) which claims that individuals who are violent in spite of social constraints and the potential consequences they face, do so because they are unable to make a rational choice. In Magdol's sample men may have made this "irrational choice" because of the pathology or stressful situational forces from which they were suffering. These researchers suggest that violence for women represents a more "rational choice" than it does for men as there are fewer social constraints or consequences for doing so. A similar process may be operating in my study where the link between aversive childhood experiences, insecure attachment, and subsequent relationship violence was found more consistently for men than for women. Perhaps men are aggressive in their

current relationships as a result of punitive childhood experiences whereas women's aggression exists because there are fewer social sanctions against it. Further, women may be more likely to assume that they are physically incapable of hurting a man which may further alleviate inhibitions against aggressing towards a male partner.

The results from this study and from previous research illustrate the importance of examining the antecedents of relationship aggression separately for men and women, as effective intervention is dependent on understanding the gender specific ways in which that aggression develops (O'Leary et al., 1994).

Limitations

This study set out to take an in depth look women and men's experiences of relationship aggression from an attachment perspective. By looking at the associations among experiences from childhood, adult attachment, and varying experiences of psychological and physical aggression it was my hope to shed some light on how men's and women's relationship aggression might differ. It was my goal to use attachment theory to try to understand the meaning of this aggression and perhaps tell a different story for men and for women. Unfortunately, science isn't always cooperative and the story is not that clear.

One limitation of this study was its inability to study the relationship dynamics of couples. It may be less useful to look at one partner's relationship experience without considering it in the context of the "couple" that creates that experience. Certainly a pressing controversy in the current attachment literature focuses on the extent to which attachment should be viewed as a relatively enduring personality trait intrinsic to the individual, or as an interaction style that is specific to a particular relationship (e.g., Bretherton, 1985). In this study I have explored the continuity of attachment throughout various relationship experiences from childhood to adulthood and thus would appear to endorse the trait model of attachment. However, as many of our interviews would suggest, it is conceivable that even an individual not predisposed to violence could become

violent under particular circumstances with a particular partner. Future research needs to study both members of a couple in order to better understand the nature and antecedents of both attachment patterns and aggression.

Clearly, in order to fully understand the complex interaction of childhood history, attachment patterns, and relationship aggression a longitudinal design is required. To what extent does a preoccupied individual's sense of low self-worth put him or her at risk for becoming involved in a conflictual relationship? And to what extent does the experience of repeated psychological or physical maltreatment contribute to greater preoccupation? This cross-sectional design cannot answer these questions directly. Further, my measures of childhood experiences were based on retrospective reports and thus only capture participants' recollections of childhood experiences. Naturally these "recollections" are vulnerable to memory biases and the resulting data must be viewed in that light. Since internal representations are considered to be resistant to change, an ideal research design would follow the course of individuals' lives for several years before the first incidents of aggression had taken place and throughout subsequent relationships.

A further limitation in this study was that the restricted range of the current relationship aggression variables did not allow me to make meaningful interpretations about how childhood experiences and subsequent adult attachment influence an individual's current functioning in romantic relationships. This problem was further exacerbated by the resulting smaller sample size when looking only at individuals currently in relationships. Ideally, I would have preferred to look at these sets of variables in the chronology that the theory implies. Childhood experiences form internal working models of self and other that guide the formation of one's adult attachment patterns. These attachment patterns then form the base for our current relationship functioning. However, current relationships continue to influence, albeit with difficulty, existing models of self and other. In this study I was not able to look strictly at "current" relationships and thus was not able to examine the reciprocal relationship between attachment and relationship aggression.

Another drawback concerns the inherent limitations of self-report data, particularly in regards to the aggression measure. Needing to include all of the original CTS items for comparison purposes while still trying to keep the measure brief (since one is limited by the amount of time that participants are willing give to a telephone survey) compromised our measure. Though I felt we had a sufficient coverage of different kinds of acts of physical, psychological and sexual aggression, ideally I would have liked to explore more fully issues of antecedents, consequences, meaning, and context of aggressive acts. For example, it would have been useful to explore to what degree aggression is motivated by control, retaliation, or self-defense, and how this differs for men and women. Admittedly, in a survey format this could only be done at a very superficial level, and then pursued in more depth with the interview. For example, a study by Cascardi and Vivian (1995), provides an interesting illustration of examining the meaning of violence (such as antecedent events, current stressors, background and situational variables, reasons, and outcomes) in a structured interview format.

I made compromises with the survey questionnaire with the understanding that I could follow-up incidents of physical aggression in more depth in the interview. In retrospect, considering the lower levels of physical aggression that we saw in this sample, it might have been better to explore psychological aggression more extensively (both in the survey and the interview) even at the expense of having less data on physical aggression. Since the original design was set up to look at physical aggression, the context of psychological aggression was not explored as fully as it might have been. In future research, the HA Interview offers an ideal way to examine the meaning, antecedents and consequences of psychological aggression, as well as how the kind of psychological aggression used, or the impact of that aggression, may differ for men and women.

Finally, it was one of the primary goals of this project to extend the generalizability of previous work on clinical populations by sampling from the community at large. Our sample covered the full spectrum of age, marital status, education, ethnicity, income, and

sexual orientation, and there were few demographic differences between the larger survey and the follow-up. However, a "representative" sample can only ever hope to be representative of the people who agree to participate in the study. And the more onerous the requested task (in this study, quite) the more select the sample becomes. Thus, though we can know how the follow-up sample differs demographically from the larger survey, we cannot know how participants may differ psychologically. The relatively lower ratings of security and higher ratings of insecurity evidenced in our sample suggest that our participants may not be as representative as I had hoped. In fact, my impressions from conducting the interviews, particularly with the men, was that insecure men were overrepresented in this sample. The design of the study - a three hour session discussing interpersonal relationships with a female interviewer - may have been appealing to men who were lonely, depressed, or possibly hoping to participate in something more than pure research. What is disturbing about this kind of selection is that the researcher has virtually no way of understanding in what way the sample is "select". Our last question in the interview asks participants what encouraged them to come in to do the session. Though not all our participants were so open in their responses, this following excerpt from a 32 year old man that I interviewed captures the climate that Shanna (my co-researcher) and I were often feeling when interviewing the men.

> Well I guess it was Shanna when she called. I was kind of bored, kind of lonely...Nothing better to do. And it was very interesting...Um ... um ...um ... And, and some of the questions that I responded to ... There's nothing specific, like specific words ... But maybe it was the tone that she took. That she seemed to be ... um ... um ... intrigued, if that's the word, or curious, or maybe just clinically curious .... which I found ... don't get me wrong ... not from a biologic [sic] point, but from an intellectual viewpoint ... I was ... aroused. I thought it was interesting. I'd always kind of thought if I'd gone to school, to university, I'd have met nice girls, like Shanna ... I just wanted to know what she was like.

Implications

Survey research has provided us with an excellent starting point to examine prevalence rates of male and female aggression, but clearly more research is warranted if we are to understand the psychological and cultural context and meaning of that violence.

The findings from this project suggest that we may need different intervention strategies for male to female aggression than we do for female to male aggression, as there may well be different antecedents at the root of that aggression. As O'Leary and colleagues comment, for intervention strategies to be effective in dealing with aggression they need to take into consideration the various causes of that aggression (O'Leary et al., 1994), causes which may well be different for women and for men.

Second, although there has been much emphasis, and indeed warranted emphasis, on the study of severe relationship violence, it is also crucial to continue our study of lower level aggression as was seen in this community sample. Researchers have suggested that psychological abuse may be equally as damaging to individuals' self-esteem and well-being as physical abuse (Folingstad et al., 1990), and that psychological aggression and more minor forms of physical aggression may lead to marital deterioration at best and escalate to more serious and dangerous abuse at worst (e.g., Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). O'Leary and associates (1994) note that this latter finding can be invaluable for marital therapists who can then focus on changing negative interaction patterns between spouses before the onset of physical violence. For example, O'Leary and colleagues have seen promising results from a five session education curriculum employed in New York State highschools. Not only have rates of dating violence decreased in schools using the programme, but controlled studies indicate that students who participated in the programme became significantly less tolerant of relationship aggression than students who did not participate. Further, programme participants developed more sophisticated conflict resolution skills, and exhibited less jealous and dominating behaviours (Scott , 1998).

Information gleaned from this research can guide our intervention efforts to foster greater security in individuals receiving or perpetrating relationship aggression - through building a secure relationship in the therapist/client dynamic, or helping these individuals to foster more secure social support networks in the broader context of their lives. In addition, our knowledge about different kinds of insecurity can inform our intervention as

to how different individuals need to change their internal models in order to move towards greater relationship security.

For example, what may make preoccupied individuals particularly vulnerable to experiences of relationship aggression is their simultaneous longing for closeness and comfort from an attachment figure and their continual struggle with the deficit of never feeling satiated in this regard. The following participant illustrates the kind of relentless neediness, typical of the preoccupied individual, that sets the climate for relationship aggression to occur. This woman said she felt it was her responsibility to take care of her partner's happiness. She felt "loving and nurturing" towards an abusive partner during their relationship and long after it had ended. In her current relationship she is equally enmeshed. She cannot bear the thought of her husband having any life without her, even a life before she met him. She is so jealous of his previous relationships that she desperately wishes that she could have been in his life earlier. She spends all of her time with him and becomes quite anxious if they are separated for more than an hour. They say I love you to each other "every couple of hours" and she insists that her partner "Do something special for me every single day." It appears that intervention efforts may need to provide the preoccupied individual with more adaptive skills in getting their attachment needs met and to foster the kind of relationship in the therapeutic environment where the preoccupied client can finally experience this much needed sense of satiation.

Finally, this study offers a promising outlook on the potential impact of early intervention. Though there was some support in this study for the notion of continuity from childhood experiences to adult attachment and subsequent relationship aggression (particularly for men), in general, the pattern of associations was not strong or convincingly consistent. In fact, contrary to my expectations, the pattern of results indicated as much evidence for discontinuity as for continuity. And though discontinuity suggests that internal models can become more or *less* secure, this susceptibility to change provides an optimistic perspective for the potential effectiveness of intervention. In the

course of the interviews I heard numerous examples of participants who had experienced rejecting parental environments but, through therapy or the support of a loving partner, came to change their internal models of self and other and experience greater security in adulthood.

The following story of a 49 year old woman from this project illustrates the impact that a supportive and loving partner can have in slowly changing even very negative internal representations. This participant lived in terror of her father's unpredictable and increasingly violent rages. Rather than being able to turn to her mother as refuge, the children made it their job to try to protect their mother from their father's violence. As a child, this participant was fearful, felt she was worthless, and was highly distrustful of others. Her wariness has carried through into her adult relationships as well. In discussing her early years with her current partner she says, "I was afraid I wouldn't stay happy with him...I never thought I could really care about anybody." But her 21 year relationship with a man who adores her and consistently believes in her has moved her towards greater security. She admits that she still can't tell him she loves him though he says it to her. When asked how he felt about this, she states, "He's very understanding. He persists no matter what...It doesn't seem to matter what I'm like. He's happy with the way I am...It's his nature." Her husband's ability to provide this participant with the proverbial "secure base" that was so lacking in her childhood is best illustrated with the following excerpt.

> [My father] could turn just like that, so you never really felt safe with him...I had nightmares for years...recurring nightmares. And this lion would be in the house chasing me. And sometimes the lion would turn out to be a humourous or kind of cartoon lion, but sometimes it would be one that would eat you. I had that dream right up until I married [John]...I used to have it over and over. After [John] I stopped having those nightmares. Like I could trust him, but I couldn't trust before that.

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Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Follow-up Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Proportion
Marital Status	
Single and never married	40.6%
Married	19.5%
Living with a partner	18.8%
Divorced and not living with a partner	14.1%
Separated	4.7%
Widowed	2.3%
Education	
High school	16.4%
College or university	61.8%
Post-graduate	21.8%
Ethnic Background	
British	38.3%
Other European	28.1%
Chinese/East Asian	5.5%
Latin, Central, or South American	3.1%
Not specified	10.2%
Other	14.9%
Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual	89.8%
Gay or lesbian	6.3%
Bisexual	2.4%
Not specified	1.6%
Personal Income	
Less than $20,000	28.1%
$20,000 to $29,900	25.0%
$30,000 to 39,900	17.2%
$40,000 to $49,900	10.9%
More than $50,000	16.4%

n = 128 (68 women and 60 men)

Table 2

Mean Scores for Childhood History, Adult Attachment, and Relationship Aggression

Variables	Women	Men
Childhood History Variables		
EMBU		
Maternal Warmth	2.78 (.79)	2.71 (.82)
Maternal Rejection	1.50 (.45)	1.39 (.37)
Paternal Warmth	2.56 (.79)	2.23 (.86)
Paternal Rejection	1.48 (.46)	1.45 (.46)
Interview		
Maternal Acceptance	5.06 (1.97)	4.97 (1.86)
Maternal Rejection	4.16 (2.20)	3.61 (1.88)
Maternal Quality	4.56 (1.98)	4.63 (1.76)
Paternal Acceptance	4.51 (2.14)	3.71 (1.74)
Paternal Rejection	4.36 (1.98)	4.56 (2.14)
Paternal Quality	4.18 (2.01)	4.66 (1.67)
Attachment Ratings		
Secure	4.13 (1.36)	3.68 (1.42)
Fearful	3.41 (1.78)	3.83 (1.98)
Preoccupied	3.88 (1.65)	3.15 (1.82)
Dismissing	3.07 (1.51)	3.57 (1.66)
Relationship Aggression Variables		
Receipt		
Ever Psychological	6.28 (3.51)	5.55 (3.20)
Current Psychological	2.44 (2.45)	2.08 (2.24)
Ever Physical	2.15 (2.81)	2.08 (2.70)
Perpetration		
Ever Psychological	5.15 (2.19)	4.08 (2.30)
Current Psychological	2.60 (2.40)	1.60 (1.72)
Ever Physical	1.15 (1.89)	.85 (1.60)

Note. Standard Deviations are in parentheses.

Table 3

Intercorrelations among Childhood History Variables

	EMBU Ratings			
	Maternal		Paternal	
EMBU Ratings	Warmth	Rejection	Warmth	Rejection
Maternal Warmth	1.00	-.49 **	.64 **	-.23 **
Maternal Rejection		1.00	-.19 *	.38 **
Paternal Warmth			1.00	-.40 **
Paternal Rejection				1.00

	Interview Ratings					
	Maternal			Paternal		
Interview Ratings	Accept	Reject	Quality	Accept	Reject	Quality
Maternal Accept	1.00	-.78 **	.91 **	.58 **	-.43 **	.61 **
Maternal Reject		1.00	-.81 **	-.33 **	.44 **	-.44 **
Maternal Quality			1.00	.58 **	-.51 **	.69 **
Paternal Accept				1.00	-.71 **	.89 **
Paternal Reject					1.00	-.77 **
Paternal Quality						1.00

	Interview Ratings					
	Maternal			Paternal		
EMBU Ratings	Accept	Reject	Quality	Accept	Reject	Quality
Maternal Warmth	.78 **	-.63 **	.73 **	.42 **	-.36 **	.48 **
Maternal Rejection	-.66 **	.70 **	-.68 **	-.25 **	.30 **	-.35 **
Paternal Warmth	.53 **	-.30 **	.52 **	.74 **	-.62 **	.74 **
Paternal Rejection	-.30 **	.21 **	-.34 **	-.48 **	.60 **	-.54 **

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Note. Accept = Acceptance; Reject = Rejection

Table 4

Intercorrelations among Attachment Ratings

Attachment Ratings	Attachment Ratings			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Secure	1.00	-.46 **	-.33 **	-.30 **
Fearful		1.00	-.22 **	-.20 *
Preoccupied			1.00	-.25 **
Dismissing				1.00

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Intercorrelations of Relationship Aggression Variables

	Receipt			Perpetration		
	Ever Psych	Current Psych	Ever Physical	Ever Psych	Current Psych	Ever Physical
Receipt						
Ever Psych	1.00	.28 **	.60 **	.60 **	.09	.35 **
Current Psych		1.00	.26 **	.30 **	.76 **	.20 *
Ever Physical			1.00	.41 **	.15 +	.66 **
Perpetration						
Ever Psych				1.00	.45 **	.48 **
Current Psych					1.00	.24 **
Ever Physical						1.00

n = 128

Note. + $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Note. Psych = Psychological

Table 6

Women's Childhood History and Attachment Ratings

Childhood History Variables	Attachment Ratings			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
EMBU Variables				
Maternal Warmth	.14	-.35 **	.10	-.02
Maternal Rejection	-.22 *	.24 *	.18 +	-.16 +
Paternal Warmth	.12	-.33 **	.13	.02
Paternal Rejection	-.22 *	.11	.26 *	-.18 +
Interview Variables				
Maternal Acceptance	.23 *	-.32 **	-.16	-.17 +
Maternal Rejection	-.19 +	.28 **	.22 *	-.16 +
Maternal Quality	.32 **	-.34 **	-.22 *	.10
Paternal Acceptance	.24 *	-.25 *	-.09	.07
Paternal Rejection	-.25 *	.35 **	.18 +	-.03
Paternal Quality	.31**	-.32 **	-.17 +	.14

n = 68

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 7

Men's Childhood History and Attachment Ratings

Childhood History Variables	Attachment Ratings			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
EMBU Variables				
Maternal Warmth	.36 **	-.19 +	-.26 *	.07
Maternal Rejection	-.16	.21 +	.10	-.14
Paternal Warmth	.25 *	-.21 +	-.10	-.14
Paternal Rejection	-.26 *	.18 +	.12	-.04
Interview Variables				
Maternal Acceptance	.37 **	-.30 **	-.18 +	.10
Maternal Rejection	-.40 **	.18 +	.35 **	-.12
Maternal Quality	.43 **	-.32 **	-.26 *	.10
Paternal Acceptance	.23 *	-.32 **	.01	-.04
Paternal Rejection	-.31 **	.31 **	.21 +	-.14
Paternal Quality	.24 *	-.33 **	-.14	.07

n = 60

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 8

Women's Attachment Ratings and Relationship Aggression: Bivariate and Partial Correlations

Relationship Aggression Variables	Attachment Ratings			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Receipt of Aggression				
Ever Psychological	-.13	.17 +	.19 +	-.18 +
Controlling for Perpetration	(-.11)	(.18 +)	(.03)	(-.16)
Current Psychological	-.11	-.02	.30 *	-.09
Controlling for Perpetration	(-.09)	(.10)	(.27 *)	(-.20 +)
Ever Physical	-.19 +	.16 +	.12	.09
Controlling for Perpetration	(-.17 +)	(.16 +)	(.02)	(.12)
Perpetration of Aggression				
Ever Psychological	-.06	.03	.29 **	-.08
Controlling for Receipt	(.02)	(-.08)	(.22 *)	(.02)
Current Psychological	-.07	-.11	.17 +	.04
Controlling for Receipt	(.02)	(-.15)	(-.10)	(.18)
Ever Physical	-.09	.05	.19 +	-.02
Controlling for Receipt	(.02)	(-.05)	(.15)	(-.08)

Note: Correlations with Current Psychological Receipt and Current Psychological Perpetration were calculated for women in relationships only (n = 49). All other correlations were calculated on the total sample (n = 68).

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Men's Attachment Ratings and Relationship Aggression: Bivariate and Partial Correlations

Relationship Aggression Variables	Attachment Ratings			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Receipt of Aggression				
Ever Psychological	-.23 *	-.16	.59 **	-.02
Controlling for Perpetration	(-.18 +)	(-.01)	(.46 **)	(.04)
Current Psychological	-.06	-.07	.41 **	-.21 +
Controlling for Perpetration	(.13)	(-.04)	(.24 +)	(-.25 +)
Ever Physical	-.19 +	-.09	.36 **	.03
Controlling for Perpetration	(-.18 +)	(.07)	(.28 *)	(-.14)
Perpetration of Aggression				
Ever Psychological	-.15	-.13	.41 **	-.09
Controlling for Receipt	(-.02)	(-.04)	(.09)	(-.09)
Current Psychological	-.21	-.06	.35 *	-.06
Controlling for Receipt	(-.24 +)	(-.01)	(.09)	(.14)
Ever Physical	-.10	-.16	.24 *	.13
Controlling for Receipt	(.09)	(-.15)	(.15)	(.19 +)

Note: Correlations with Current Psychological Receipt and Current Psychological Perpetration were calculated for men in relationships only ($n = 34$). All other correlations were calculated on the total sample ($n = 60$).

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 10

Women's Childhood History and Relationship Aggression: Bivariate and Partial Correlations

Childhood History Variables	Relationship Aggression Variables					
	Receipt			Perpetration		
EMBU Variables	Ever Psych n =68	Current Psych n = 49	Ever Physical n = 68	Ever Psych n = 68	Current Psych n = 49	Ever Physical n = 68
Maternal Warmth	-.11 (-.11)	.05 (-.10)	-.16 (-.12)	-.02 (.05)	.15 (.17)	-.11 (-.01)
Maternal Rejection	.12 (.07)	.21 + (.26 *)	.12 (-.04)	.13 (.06)	.06 (-.16)	.27 * (.24 *)
Paternal Warmth	-.02 (-.06)	.15 (.06)	-.12 (-.07)	.04 (.06)	.15 (.05)	-.11 (-.05)
Paternal Rejection	.10 (.09)	.13 (.18)	.15 (-.02)	.06 (-.01)	.01 (-.13)	.22 * (.16 +)
Interview Variables						
Maternal Acceptance	-.15 (-.16)	-.05 (-.24 *)	-.13 (-.05)	-.06 (.04)	.13 (.27 *)	-.22 * (-.14)
Maternal Rejection	.15 (.15)	.18 (.35 **)	.08 (.07)	.09 (-.01)	-.05 (-.30 *)	.12 (.04)
Maternal Quality	-.17 + (-.21 *)	-.08 (-.29 *)	-.18 + (-.16 +)	-.03 (.10)	.13 (.30 *)	-.15 (-.02)
Paternal Acceptance	-.06 (-.16)	.09 (-.07)	-.01 (.02)	.08 (.17 +)	.18 (.17)	-.15 (-.11)
Paternal Rejection	.11 (.18 +)	.06 (.13)	.17 + (.17 +)	-.01 (-.11)	-.03 (-.12)	.19 + (.04)
Paternal Quality	-.08 (-.18+)	-.02 (-.19 +)	-.03 (-.07)	-.06 (.16)	.14 (.24 +)	.10 (-.02)

Note: Correlations with Current Psychological Receipt and Current Psychological Perpetration were calculated for women in relationships only (n = 49). All other correlations were calculated on the total sample (n = 68).
Note: Partial Correlations (Receipt, controlling for Perpetration and Perpetration, controlling for Receipt) are indicated in parentheses below the zero order correlations.
+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 11

Men's Childhood History and Relationship Aggression: Bivariate and Partial Correlations

Childhood History Variables	Relationship Aggression Variables					
	Receipt			Perpetration		
EMBU Variables	Ever Psych n =60	Current Psych n = 34	Ever Physical n = 60	Ever Psych n = 60	Current Psych n = 34	Ever Physical n = 60
Maternal Warmth	-.16 (-.09)	-.01 (-.04)	-.15 (-.15)	-.14 (-.06)	.02 (.03)	-.07 (.08)
Maternal Rejection	.28 * (.25 *)	.21 (.23)	.33 ** (.37 **)	.14 (-.04)	.09 (-.09)	.15 (-.23 *)
Paternal Warmth	-.13 (-.12)	.06 (-.03)	-.18 + (-.14)	.06 (.02)	.08 (.05)	-.12 (.05)
Paternal Rejection	.10 (-.10)	-.04 (-.31 *)	.14 (.15)	.28 * (.28 *)	.24 + (.40 **)	.07 (-.09)
Interview Variables						
Maternal Acceptance	-.19 + (-.20 +)	-.14 (-.21)	-.14 (-.21 +)	-.05 (.08)	-.02 (.11)	-.02 (.16)
Maternal Rejection	.38 ** (.36 **)	.35 * (.26 +)	.32 ** (.42 **)	.16 (-.08)	.24 + (-.01)	.09 (-.30 *)
Maternal Quality	-.32 ** (-.27 *)	-.18 (-.27 +)	-.28 * (-.27 *)	-.18 + (.01)	-.03 (.14)	-.15 (.14)
Paternal Acceptance	-.10 (-.07)	.09 (.06)	-.15 (-.05)	-.05 (.00)	.03 (-.08)	-.15 (-.04)
Paternal Rejection	.20 + (.11)	.03 (-.08)	.17 + (.09)	.20 + (.09)	.12 (.14)	.15 (.02)
Paternal Quality	-.19 + (-.14)	.04 (-.05)	.17 + (-.10)	-.13 (-.02)	.05 (.01)	-.14 (.00)

+ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Note: Correlations with current psychological receipt and current psychological perpetration were calculated for men in relationships only (n = 34). All other correlations were calculated on the total sample (n = 60).

Note: Partial Correlations (receipt, controlling for perpetration and perpetration, controlling for receipt) are indicated in parentheses below the zero order correlations.

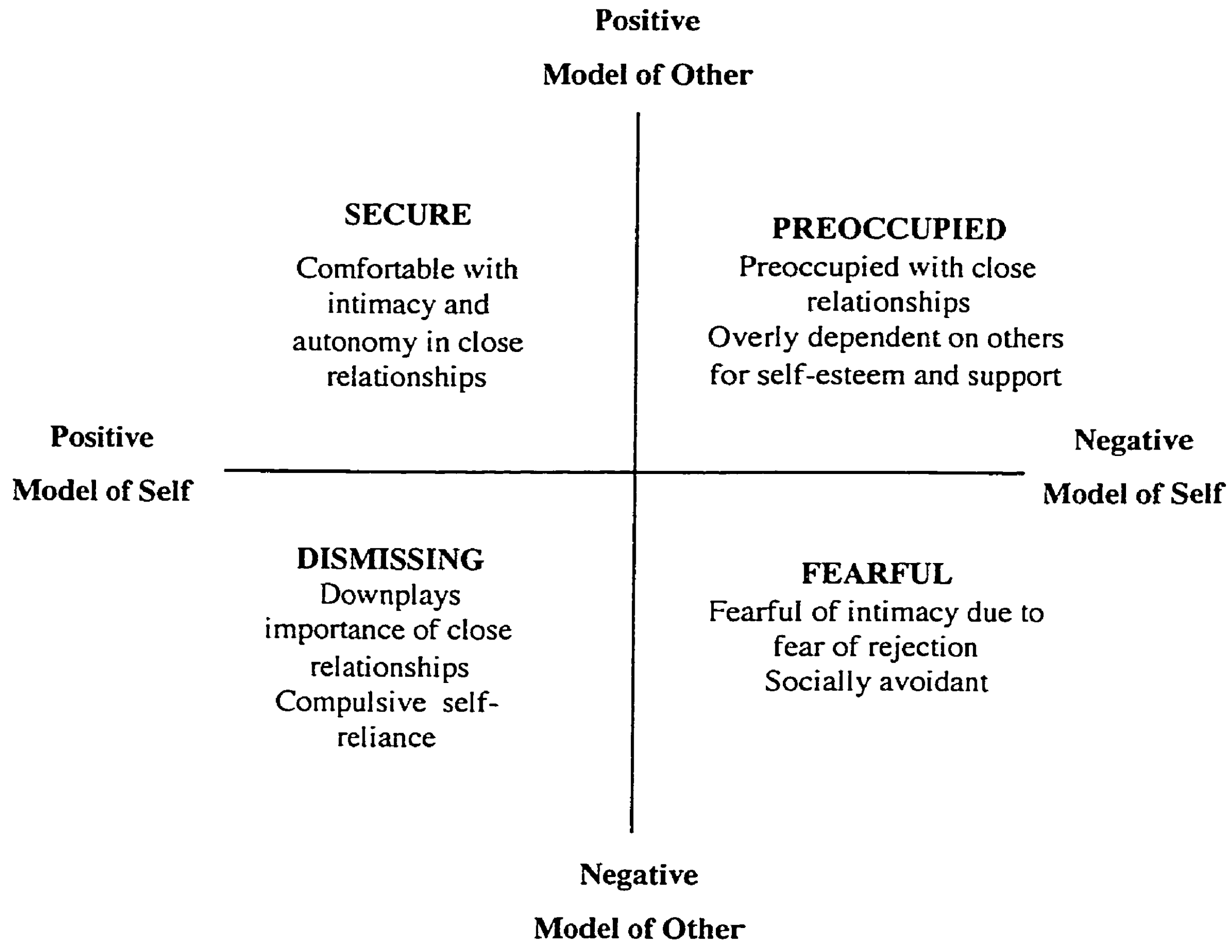


Figure 1. Four Category Model of Attachment

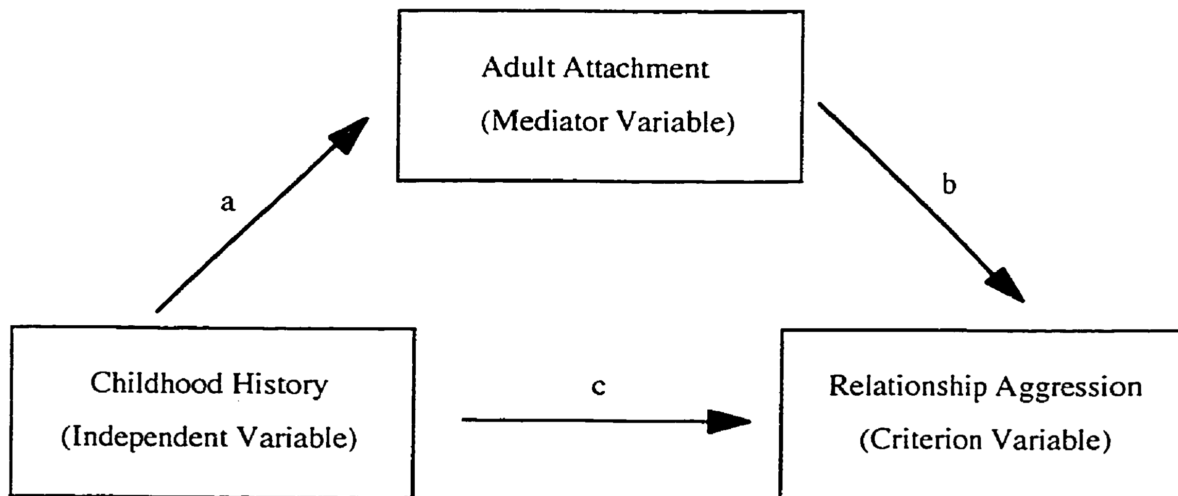
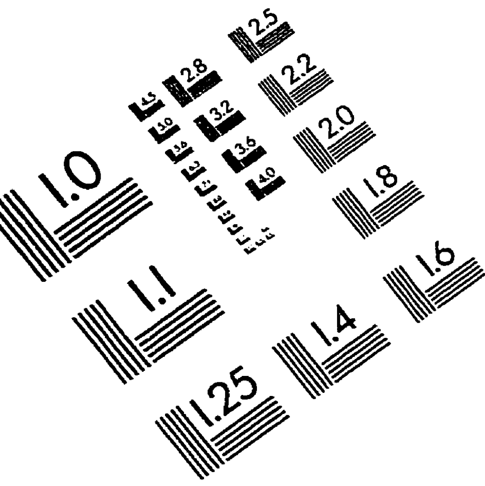
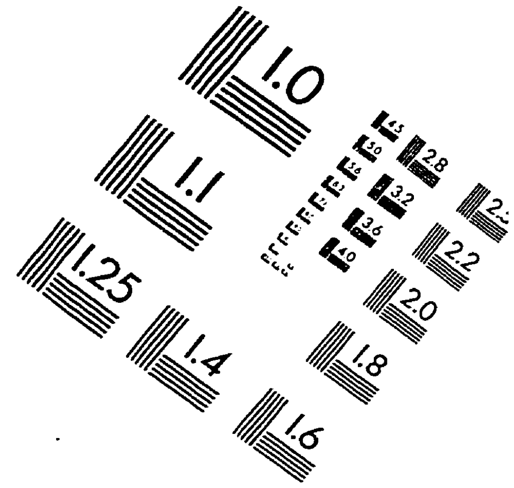
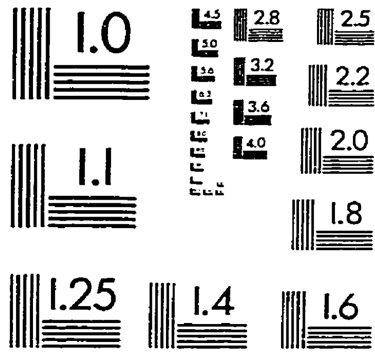
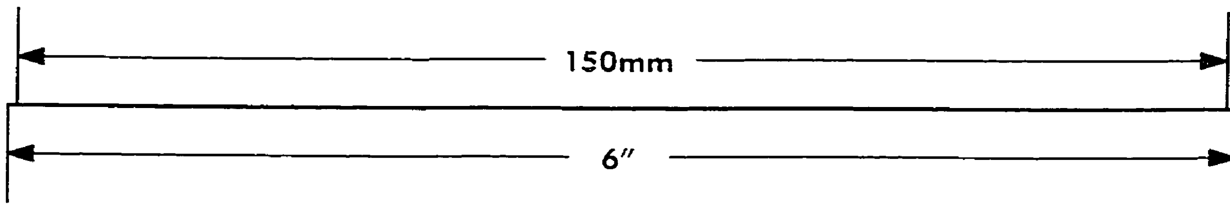
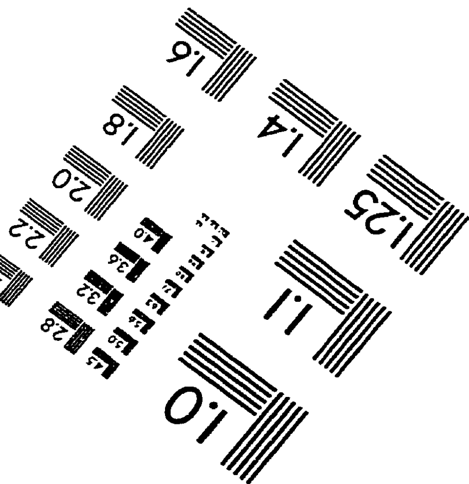


Figure 2. Mediational Model of Attachment

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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