

Psych

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Psychology Newsletter

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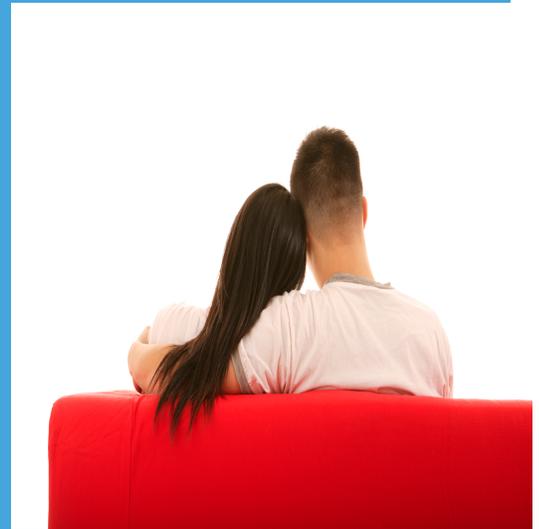
Meet our Psych
ACCESS spot light
faculty: Dr. Martha
Ann Bell

This issue:

Social interactions are part of our daily life: romantic, work, and caregiver relationships often predict how we navigate our own social world.

The following articles provide some insight into the complexity of social relationships!

Psych Access Authors



Stay In Love Or Run Away From Your Partner

“Do you love me?” “Yes, I do.” “How much do you love me?” “I love you with all my heart.” “Can you love me more?” “I said I loved you with all my heart (grrr...)!”

The endless questions from your girlfriend may drive you crazy. You have no idea of why your girlfriend keeps asking the same questions over and over again even though she has clearly knows the answers. To make sense of our relationship, we need to understand how people form attachments to each other. If you are single and looking for love, this knowledge may help you find your best match. If you have been in a relationship, this may help you understand why you act in a certain manner and help to improve your relationship quality.

A romantic relationship is a deep emotional bond with another person, and this psychological connectedness is regarded as the basic need for human beings. As it is suggested by Ainsworth (1978) through her work of observing the infants' responses to the strangers, we are categorized into three attachment types: anxious, avoidant, and secure.

Anxious: you are very sensitive to your partner and relationship, and try to stay as close as you can to your partner. You may often complain that your partner does not want to be as close as you do. You worry that your partner does not really love you, and over-interpret a minor emotional cue from him/her. Your partner may tell you that you are too clingy, and this desire sometimes scares him/her away. If you do

not hear from your partner on time, you may:

1. Call, text, or send email to your partner 5, 5×5, 5×5²... times until he/she tells you where he/she is and what he/she is doing;
2. Blame your partner for ignoring you and not providing security for you;
3. Tell your partner about other guys/girls you were with before to make him/her feel jealous;
4. Test how much your partner loves you by threatening to leave.

Avoidant: you care about the personal space.

You do love your partner and want to be close to him/her, but you are afraid of losing the independence and autonomy. Your partner may complain that you are not open enough and tend to try and avoid the closeness. You are a person:

1. Who protects yourself from potential heartbreak, and artificially create the distance from your partner;
2. Who finds it difficult to completely trust your partner and rely on him/her;
3. Who would rather stay together with your partner for years instead of forming a deep psychological connection and committing to a serious relationship or potentially marriage.

Secure: it is safe for you to stay in relationships; however you are also okay with being single. You find it easy to get close to your partner, and are comfortable with intimacy. When your partner is “needy,” you are the first one to respond and help. You are fully open up to your partner, and are able to share both the happiness and sadness with him/her. You are:

1. Comfortable with physical intimacy and enjoy sex;
2. Calm and keep things transparent in relationship;
3. Use your partner as a secure base.

An intriguing question is why we have significantly different attachment styles and exhibit a diversity of behavioral characteristics? The way we interact with our partner may be shaped by the way our primary caretaker (i.e. mother) interacts with us. Bowlby (1969), the attachment theorist, proposed that earliest attachments formed by the infant and mother had a considerably significant impact on development and behavior later in life. A recent study showed that maternal sensitivity was associated with infant attachment security (Finger, Hans, Bernstein, & Cox, 2009). For instance, if a mother responded to her infant promptly and provided care for the infant in a consistent manner, this infant was more likely to be securely attached with the mother and even the partner later in life (Cassidy, 2008). However, if the mother sometimes responded to the infant's needs and sometimes did not, this would lead to a disorganized attachment of the infant, such as avoidance and resistance around the mother. Possibility this will lead to the problem of the infant's emotional bond with his/her significant other when the infant reaches adulthood.

If you are an anxious person and you are single, just try to avoid the "avoider". Otherwise, you will be stuck in a situation in which you always try to get closer whereas he/she tries to get away. If you are an avoidant person, you need to learn how to trust people and not to look him/her up and down in distance. If you are a secure person, please do not be stingy to provide love, care, and security and let your desperate anxious/avoidant partner rely on your shoulder.

BY JOY (QIONG) WU

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Are you in an office with a 'Queen Bee'? - Make sure you don't get stung

The Association for Psychological Science issued a press release today suggesting female leaders in the workplace actually do more to harm than help for other female employees in the office - The Myth of the 'Queen Bee': Work and Sexism - Association for Psychological Science .

Are you working for a "Queen-Bee" According to the article, "Queen Bees" are female managers who display masculine behaviors in order to move-up the career ladder. Once a Queen Bee gets to her corner office, she spends little time mentoring future female leaders and denies the existence of gender discrimination in the workplace, and as a result, does nothing more than promote stereotypes of leaders who are domineering, overly-confident, directive, AND male. If this sounds familiar, read on to find out some of the factors that may induce some female managers to take on this persona.

The Research Findings Belle Derks, along with her colleagues, Colette van Laar, Naomi Ellemers, and Kim De Groot (from the Leiden University in the Netherlands) are well-known for their research in sexual discrimination in the workplace. Examining the "Queen-Bee Syndrome", they found that a male-



Health & Loneliness: Evidence for the Importance of Relationships



dominated workplace was an important factor in whether or not women displayed stereotypically male behaviors when in positions of leadership.

According to the Association for Psychological Science's press release: "Women who had been primed to think about gender bias answered like Queen Bees— that they had a masculine leadership style, that gender bias wasn't a problem—only if they had started out by saying they identified weakly with women at work. Those who identified strongly with their gender at work had the opposite response – when they thought about gender bias, they said afterwards that they were motivated to mentor other women." The authors concluded that putting a few "token" women in positions of power in a male-dominated workplace only solidifies male-leadership behaviors (e.g., dominance and competitiveness) and may actually harm women, especially those trying to get promoted. Therefore, organizations and businesses concerned for their female employee's welfare would be wise to not only promote women but also consider the environment and whether or not it encourages leadership behaviors typical of females (e.g., collaboration and peace-making).

Things to Consider When taking that giant leap from Virginia Tech into the business world, recent female graduates should be cognizant of the organizational climate of their future workplaces. Are there females in positions of power? Are there opportunities to have one of these females mentor you? Are there social networking groups within the organization that promote collaboration and service among and for females? The answers to each of these questions may provide insight on whether this will be a positive or negative work environment.

BY SARAH ALLGOOD

As humans, we are social creatures. It has been reported that for the average person spends almost 80% of their waking hours with others (Emler, 1994). People also generally value this time as more inherently rewarding (Kahneman et al., 2004). College is especially a time when individuals seem to have a surplus of social relationships. However, this multitude of relationships often does not persist through life. It is important not to take friends and family for granted, because much research has demonstrated the deleterious health effects of being alone or to be socially rejected. Another important factor to attend to is that loneliness is related to perceived social isolation, not objective social isolation. Therefore, you, or people that you may know are capable of having many friends, but still feel socially isolated.

Loneliness is a common experience. As many as 80% of those under 18 years of age and 40% of adults report being lonely at least sometimes, and 15–30% of the general population reports loneliness to be a chronic state. A great deal of research has been generated over the past decade, which demonstrates the negative health effects for social rejection and isolation.



A recent study simulated experiences where the subjects would be socially rejected by the ones they care for. Directly after the rejection, the subjects tended to experience a pronounced slowing of heart rate (or a “heart break”), especially if they were expecting a positive response. This finding suggests that social rejection literally results in bodily responses reflecting social hurt (Gunther Moor et al., 2010). Loneliness and social rejection have been shown to have negative effects on cardiovascular function as early as in one’s 20s (Caspi et al., 2006) and becomes more exaggerated as individuals get older (Hawley & Cacioppo, 2007). These studies showed that the greater number of times that people were rated as lonely, the greater number of averse health effects such as: high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, higher obesity rates, as well as higher overall concentrations of hormones associated with stress responses.

In addition, another review showed that loneliness affects both cognitive and emotional processing evidenced by increases in depressive symptoms as well and impaired cognitive performance (Cacioppo & Hawley, 2009). “Loneliness not only increases depressive symptoms, but also increases perceived stress, fear of negative evaluation, anxiety, and anger, and diminishes optimism and self-esteem. Lonely individuals see the social world as a more threatening place, expect more negative social interactions, and remember more negative social information” (Cacioppo et al., 2006).

What can be done?

Fortunately, clinical research has shown four main types of interventions have proven successful in dealing with loneliness (Hawley & Cacioppo, 2010). These interventions have focused on: (1) enhancing social skills; (2) providing social support; (3) increasing opportunities for social interaction; and (4) addressing maladaptive social cognition. Therapy and support groups are often helpful, but even just increasing opportunities for engaging in social interactions has proven effective. If you see individuals suffering from loneliness, try to find ways to help them out. And most importantly for yourself, cherish the relationships that you have today. Appreciate what you have, because research has demonstrated that merely spending time appreciating of things and people in your life leads to better health outcomes (Berger, 2000).

BY JARED MCGINLEY

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Dr. Martha Ann Bell

How did you get interested in developmental psychology?

I was a Home Economics major in college and my favorite class I took the entire four years was "child development". We studied developmental theories and principles in the classroom and we did observations in the newborn nursery of the local hospital, in the department's preschool, and in local kindergarten classrooms. Even better, we also did rotations as teacher's helpers and lead teacher in the departmental preschool. I loved it!

Can you tell us about your program of research?

I have always been fascinated by cognitive development, early on by object permanence and more recently by the executive functions and general self-regulation. The foundation of all the work in our lab is individual differences in cognitive development. We consider many different contributors to individual differences: electrophysiology (EEG measures of power, coherence, and laterality; ECG measures of HR, HRV, and RSA), temperament, emotion regulation, parenting, and as children get older: language. With Kirby Deater-Deckard, we are examining maternal executive function as a contributor of individual differences in infant and child cognitive development. Our hypothesis is that these contributors to individual differences in cognition vary across early development. We have begun working with Jungmeen Kim-Spoon to figure out how to examine different developmental trajectories.



Why is it important to study infants?

Infants reveal so much about the foundations of more sophisticated cognitive skills. We can observe as infants develop and learn from their experiences and maturing brains. That's why I enjoy longitudinal research so much. Not only do you get to watch these little ones show amazing cognitive changes, you also get to develop wonderful relationships with the infants and their families.



In this issue of the newsletter, we are talking about relationships (e.g., work, family); do you study relationships in your research with infants?"

We began studying infant - mother relationships with our current longitudinal study. I had never done that type of research previously but was convinced it would give us valuable information about individual differences in cognitive development. Setting up the infant - mother interactions in the research lab was easy. Coding the interaction proved extremely difficult, but Cindy Smith in VT Human Development helped us develop the coding scheme and taught us how to train coders and keep them reliable. We have coded these interactions across 5 waves of data collection from infancy through age 4 and have just begun to analyze those data. We have one manuscript under review where we show maternal positive affect during infant-mother interactions (along with some infant variables) positively predicts performance on executive functions tasks during early childhood. So, I'm eager to see what else our child-mother interaction data tell us about cognitive development.

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JIWON CHOI, Editor, is a senior at Virginia Tech majoring in Psychology. After graduation, she is interested in pursuing a graduate degree in Clinical Psychology and working with children.

*All pictures included in this newsletter were obtained from Google Images.