SELECTED ABSTRACTS
Recently published or in press manuscripts


This study examined self-reported romantic attachment style and Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) states of mind regarding early attachment relationships, personality dimensions, and psychopathology in a psychiatric sample of trauma survivors. Inpatients (N = 80) admitted to a hospital trauma treatment program were administered the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, AAI, Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory – III, Dissociative Experiences Scale, and Dissociative Disorder Interview Schedule. Self-report and AAI attachment classifications were not related and different results emerged for the two measures. Self-reported romantic attachment style was significantly associated with personality dimensions, with Fearful adults showing the most maladaptive personality profiles. Findings suggested that self-report dimensions of self and other independently contribute to different forms of psychological dysfunction. AAI Unresolved Trauma was uniquely associated with dissociation and PTSD, whereas Unresolved Trauma and Unresolved Loss jointly contributed to schizotypal and borderline personality disorder scores. The differences in findings between the two measures are discussed with a view toward the developmental and clinical implications.


This study explored how adult attachment style, HIV-related stigma and psychological distress in a diverse sample of HIV+ adults. Participants (N = 288) recruited from AIDS service organizations were administered the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, CES-D, HIV Stigma Scale, and a health information questionnaire. Adult romantic attachment style was significantly associated with perceived stress, depression, and HIV-related stigma. Results of regression analyses supported contentions that in addition to HIV symptomatology, other psychosocial risk factors such as attachment style and stigma contribute to perceived stress and depression among HIV+ men and women.


Following suggestions that attachment theory might shed light on this question, we asked doctoral level psychology interns (N = 87) to complete an online survey regarding attachment processes and supervision experiences. Findings indicated that perceived supervisor attachment style was significantly associated with supervision task and bond. Regardless of their own attachment style, participants reporting secure supervisors rated the supervisory bond higher than participants reporting insecure supervisors. Results of path analyses suggested that parental indifference, compulsive
self-reliance, and perceived supervisor attachment style may be particularly important in shaping the supervisory alliance. Implications for training and supervision are discussed.


The primary aim of this study was to determine the relative contributions of early family environment and adult attachment style to psychopathological outcomes after controlling for parental dysfunction and abuse characteristics. The mediation effects of attachment style on associations between family environment and psychopathological outcomes were also assessed. Eighty inpatients admitted to a specialized trauma treatment program were assessed for clinical diagnosis by their attending physician and administered a multi-scale questionnaire. Hierarchical regression analyses were used to answer the primary research question, and subsequently results were examined to determine mediation effects. Full regression models were significant for DID, substance abuse, anxiety disorder, symptoms of post-traumatic stress and somatization, and six personality disorder dimensions. Adult attachment styles were significant predictors of most outcome variables. Of particular note was the strong contribution of attachment avoidance to DID. Family environment scales also contributed to various psychopathological outcomes, but often dropped to non-significance in the final models. An exception was the strong association between dependent personality and family independence, conflict, and organization. Early family environment and adult attachment style play an important role in explaining different long-term outcomes among child abuse survivors beyond parental dysfunction and multi-type abuse. Evidence emerged supporting a mediating role for attachment style in the link between family independence and five personality disorder dimensions.


The current study explored vicarious trauma among therapist trainees in relation to history of trauma, experience level, trauma-specific training, and defense style. Students in graduate clinical and counseling psychology training programs (N = 129) completed the Trauma Symptom Inventory, Defense Style Questionnaire, and an experience questionnaire. Results indicated trauma symptoms were significantly associated with defense style, which appeared to moderate personal trauma history and experience level. Trauma-specific training was also independently related to trauma symptoms. Notably, over half the sample reported a Self-sacrificing defense style, which was a risk factor for vicarious trauma. Training implications of the findings are discussed.


Cognitive distortions, empathy, childhood trauma and adult attachment style were examined in a sample of paroled sex offenders and community controls. T-tests indicated that sex offenders displayed higher levels of cognitive distortions regarding adult-child sex, higher attachment anxiety, and less empathy for victims of sexual assault, but no
differences on measures of general empathy or attachment avoidance. Results of a logistic regression model accounting for 56% of the variance showed that childhood trauma, attachment anxiety, cognitive distortions and both types of empathy were significant predictors of sex offending status. The findings suggest that cognitive distortions and victim empathy of sex offenders should be continually monitored, regardless if offenders have completed treatment. The results also provide support that attachment theory may be useful in the treatment of sex offenders.

ONGOING STUDIES

**An attachment perspective on the relation of individual factors to early marital functioning.** Funded by a UNT REP grant for 2003-2004. The purpose of this project is to explore the relative association of aspects of individual functioning (romantic attachment style, current parent-child relationship, emotional well-being) to aspects of current marital functioning (satisfaction, attachment behaviors in partners, & conflict) in a middle-class community sample. Data collection for 96 couples was completed in May of 2005. Using this dataset, two students have defended their thesis/dissertation and one dissertation is underway.

**Moderators and mediators of associations between early family experiences and adult relationship adjustment.** Funded by a UNT REP grant for 2004-2005. This project consists of two online surveys to collect data from college students during 2004 and 2006. The study was designed to test mediation effects of adult attachment style and mental health on associations of relationship functioning among dating couples with parent-child attachment experiences and inter-parental conflict. The moderation effects of parental divorce and childhood trauma will also be examined. In collaboration with two students in their thesis research, two manuscripts are currently underway.

**Family System and Subsystem Predictors of Behavior Problems in Middle Childhood.** Funded by UNT ROP grant and a larger external grant from the Timberlawn Psychiatric Research Foundation, the purpose of this study is to investigate the psychological well-being of 8-10 year-old children in relation to multiple systemic levels of the family unit (i.e., individual parent mental health, parent-child attachment, marital quality, coparenting, whole family system). Results will have implications for future research on attachment processes in middle-childhood and provide pilot data for a federal research proposal. Data collection begins in November of 2007 with a target completion date of summer 2009. Currently, the Family Attachment Lab research team consists of 7 graduate students and 10 undergraduate students.