

ATTACHMENT STYLES AND SOCIAL GROUPS: REVIEW OF A DECADE

GIULIO BOCCATO
UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO

DORA CAPOZZA
UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA

Attachment theory states that the quality of interaction experienced in early childhood with primary caregivers contributes to form trust beliefs in adulthood. Securely attached individuals embrace positive self-esteem and trust others; insecurely attached individuals may lack this sense of confidence in oneself (anxiety) or, alternatively, in others (avoidance). Beyond the impact of attachment on a variety of social situations, from romantic to caregiving partnerships, in recent years, attachment theory has been introduced to explain some of the psychological mechanisms involved in group dynamics. The present paper aims to review published studies examining the role of adult attachment in shaping group relations, cognitions, and behaviors. Despite its recency, research on attachment styles and social groups provides a set of convincing results, which are here presented and briefly summarized in the general discussion to suggest future avenues for research, on both group and organizational psychology.

Key words: Attachment styles; Social identification; Group processes; Intergroup relations; Contact hypothesis.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dora Capozza, Dipartimento di Psicologia Applicata, Università di Padova, Via Venezia, 8, 35131 Padova, Italy. E-mail: dora.capozza@unipd.it and giulio.boccatto@unibg.it

“Because there has been relatively little communication and cross-fertilization between the two major lines of research on adult attachment, (...), we here explain and review recent work based on a combination of self-reports and other kinds of method.”
(Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002)

The above sentence is taken from a review on adult attachment that strives to combine two separate lines of research: that of developmental psychology and the line of social psychology. Investigators working within one tradition have so far tended to ignore the contribution of the other.

The main aim of this paper was to rely on an interdisciplinary approach, combining attachment styles with group processes, to support the view that, despite fundamental differences between interpersonal and intergroup relations, attachment theory may be relevant to understand group-related cognitions and behaviors. About ten years ago, some studies have started to show that attachment styles affect the way people form psychological ties with their ingroups (Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999). Our goal was to review this evidence, in order to offer a picture of the links existing between interpersonal attachment and group-related processes.

The current paper is organized as follows. First, attachment theory is introduced, with a special emphasis to its social concerns. This introduction aims to explain why attachment theory is

relevant for understanding group-related concepts. Second, the empirical studies addressing the relation between attachment styles and group-related cognitions and behaviors are briefly summarized. Studies are presented in three main sections: social identification, intragroup processes, and intergroup relations; within each section, studies are described in chronological order. Third, in the discussion, on the basis of the results found in the literature, a link between group processes and attachment styles is attempted; avenues for future research in this field are also proposed.

ATTACHMENT IS A FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL ISSUE

Human beings are equipped with an attachment and caregiving behavioral system: during evolution, attachment to caregivers (e.g., parents) and care of dependent others (e.g., infants or impaired others) enhanced evolutionary success. A behavioral system may be viewed as an innate neural program that guides individual behavior in order to favor survival and reproductive functions (Belsky, 1999). The role of the attachment system is to assure protection and support by maintaining proximity to caregivers; attachment is mainly important in time of need and distress, but also during exploration of unfamiliar environments. On the other hand, the caregiving system is designed to provide protection and support to dependent others.

Attachment and caregiving systems are most evident in the relationship between parents and their offspring. In his pioneering work, Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1988), observing infants' reactions to their mothers' temporary absence, postulated that an adaptive attachment and caregiving system has evolved to ensure proximity between infants, who need nourishment and protection, and primary caregivers, who protect and nurture infants. Attachment theory stresses that early attachment experiences contribute to building mental representations of the self as either positive or negative, and of others as either trustworthy or unreliable. Through frequent activation across the lifespan, these mental schemata become stable representations of oneself and other people ("working models") that color cognitions, emotions, and behaviors in a predictable way.

Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) identified three different attachment styles, corresponding to different reactions shown by infants to brief separations from their mother: secure (the infant appears to be comfortable), anxious (the infant continues to ask for support, even after his/her mother's return), and avoidant (the infant remains "cold," indifferent to his/her mother's return).¹ A few years later, Hazan and Shaver (1987), in their analysis of romantic relationships, identified three adult attachment styles, which parallel those of Ainsworth et al. The secure attachment is characterized by a general sense of comfort in close relationships; both oneself and others are perceived positively. The anxious attachment style is defined by an exasperated need for approval and unjustified concerns when experiencing intimate relationships; the self is perceived as unworthy, while others are perceived as positive but inconsistent. The avoidant style features a sense of discomfort when living close relationships, and a chronic reliance on the self; the self is regarded as positive and autonomous, while others are perceived as untrustworthy. Since Hazan and Shaver's seminal work, an impressive amount of research has documented the impact of adult attachment styles on emotions and behaviors in close relationships, reporting better outcomes for securely attached individuals (Reis & Patrick, 1996).

Personality and social psychologists, rather than relying on a typological approach, generally consider attachment in terms of two underlying continuous dimensions: anxiety and avoidance

(Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Fraley & Waller, 1998).² The anxiety dimension reflects worries about relationships: individuals scoring high on anxiety have a negative image of themselves, and are anxious about other people's readiness to respond. Avoidance reflects dismissal of intimate relationships: individuals scoring high on this dimension hold a negative image of others and strive to maintain autonomy. Individuals scoring low on both dimensions are classified as secure. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) explained anxiety and avoidance dimensions in terms of activation (hyperactivation and deactivation, respectively) of the attachment system under stress conditions. Hyperactivation refers to compulsive efforts to attain security and protection. Deactivation refers to the inhibition of any proximity-seeking tendency by maximizing the distance from others.

Attachment styles, assessed by two-dimensional self-report measures, have been found to affect a number of variables relevant to social relations, different from intimate ties. Westmaas and Silver (2001) found that higher scores on anxiety and avoidance were associated with less inclination to care for a confederate of the experimenter who had been diagnosed with cancer. Gillath et al. (2005) revealed a negative association between avoidance and time devoted to voluntary work. Secure attachment (e.g., low scores on both anxiety and avoidance) was found to enhance the endorsement of self-transcendent values, benevolence, and altruism (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Security is also associated with empathy in 2-3-year-old children (Kestenbaum, Farber, & Sroufe, 1989) and adults (Mikulincer et al., 2001). Overall, these results suggest that attachment security provides a basis for compassion and prosociality, whereas the two major forms of insecurity, attachment anxiety and avoidance, interfere with emphatic responses.

Although attachment theory is usually applied in the context of individual relationships, it may be relevant also for explaining group relationships. From an evolutionary perspective, closeness to a group is as fundamental as closeness to an individual caregiver. Our ancestors would not have survived if they had not included in a group (Brewer & Caporael, 2006; Caporael, 1997): food attainment, children nurture, protection from wild beasts, exploration of primitive environments are all activities that were favored by group inclusion. As a result, group belonging has become a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Because of its fundamental importance for individuals' survival, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that individual attachment system evolved so as to regulate, in some way, not only the interactions between individuals, but also the interactions between groups. Moreover, according to Rom and Mikulincer (2003), also the relationships in terms of group membership may satisfy the definitional criteria for attachment, in fact, (a) a group can be the target of search for proximity, especially in times of need; (b) a group can satisfy the needs for support, aid, and care; (c) a group can facilitate exploration and the practice of social and emotional skills. On this basis, it seems reasonable to apply attachment theory to group contexts, and to investigate the impact of attachment styles on group-related cognitions and behaviors.

ATTACHMENT AND GROUPS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Social Identification

On the basis of the assumption that social groups may satisfy basic human needs, such as closeness and belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), Smith et al. (1999) examined the parallel between attachment in close relationships and group identification in a seminal study. In-

deed, people have mental models of themselves as group members and of groups as sources of identity and self-esteem; the interplay of these mental models may reflect different patterns of attachment to groups. Similar to interpersonal attachment, anxiety and avoidance are expected to emerge as underlying dimensions also in the case of attachment to groups. Smith et al. used a modified version of the Romantic Partner Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990) to refer to social groups rather than to intimate partners. In three studies, they consistently found that the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance described unique aspects of people's ties to groups.³ Overall, individuals who scored high in anxiety displayed an over-preoccupation with acceptance by valued groups; as a consequence, they tried to conform to the group prototypes. In contrast, individuals who scored high in group avoidance considered closeness to groups as undesirable, and tended to avoid ties or dependence by acting independently. Individuals scoring low on both dimensions, defined secure, perceived group membership as valuable and expected acceptance and trust from ingroupers.

Smith and colleagues (1999) also found that group-related anxiety and avoidance were positively correlated with the respective dimension of interpersonal attachment (r s between .33 and .70). This result indicates that attachment to groups shares some variance with interpersonal attachment, but the two constructs are clearly distinct. Conversely, both anxiety and avoidance in attachment to groups were negatively correlated with the standard measures of group identification (correlations ranging between $r = -.20$ and $r = -.75$), indicating that insecure individuals experience some difficulties in identifying with social ingroups.⁴

Crisp and colleagues (2009) argued that, following a threat to a romantic relationship, individuals scoring lower in attachment anxiety (interpersonal) should seek social support beyond the primary attachment figure (the romantic partner), namely in social ingroups, whereas individuals scoring higher in attachment anxiety should remain linked to the attachment figure. In the context of two studies, following a threat to a romantic relationship, participants higher in attachment anxiety were more likely to experience fear and less likely to identify (both explicitly and implicitly) with groups or to report approach tendencies to groups; all other relationships were foregone in favor of the primary attachment figure. In contrast, at lower levels of attachment anxiety, participants tended to additionally identify with groups; they used an adaptive strategy: seeking additional sources of support when they needed approval (see Shaver & Mikulincer, 2004). In the no-threat condition, anxiously attached individuals identified with groups; however, this only happened when they were high in avoidance. For these individuals, groups offered an ideal source of support, given the lower interpersonal closeness within a group.

Intragroup Relations

In four studies, Rom and Mikulincer (2003) examined attachment style differences in group-related cognitions and behaviors. In the first two studies, the impact of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance was examined with regard to key aspects of within-group relations: group efficacy, emotional states in group settings, personal goals in task-oriented groups, memories of group interactions. The effect of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance was examined in a naturalistic setting as well. Results generally confirmed that attachment strategies characterizing anxious and avoidant persons, may account for cognitions and behaviors in group settings.

With regard to anxiously attached individuals, their negative representation of themselves as group members, together with the perception of threat and the experience of unpleasant emotions (Studies 1 and 2), seems to be a reflection of their low personal self-esteem. Pursuit of security-love goals in group interactions (Study 2) and impaired performance in group tasks (Studies 3 and 4) derive from their chronic search for approval, that diverts resources from performance. As for avoidant individuals, the deactivation of the attachment system may account for the unfavorable attitudes toward ingroupers, and the pursuit of self-relevant goals (Studies 1 and 2). Their negative model of others and their self-reliance may account for their poor contribution to both socioemotional and instrumental functioning during group tasks (Studies 3 and 4).

Carvallo and Gabriel (2006) examined avoidant individuals' reactions to acceptance from a group. According to the need to belong theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), all human beings need to form and maintain social bonds; the survival value of interdependence has evolved into the desire to be included into social groups. Avoidant individuals, described as devaluing the importance of relationships, seem to contradict the belongingness hypothesis. Alternatively, it is possible that, despite their strong need to belong, avoidant individuals have learnt to inhibit their belongingness desire as a defense mechanism against potential rejection, so as to prevent damage to their self-esteem. In Study 1, high-avoidant participants took part in a study on social interaction in a chat room. After a 15-minute chat activity with other three bogus participants, they learned that the others strongly preferred them as an interaction partner; in the control condition, participants received no feedback relevant to social inclusion. Compared to control participants, high-avoidant experimental participants reported higher levels of positive affect and state self-esteem. Results suggest that, despite their own claim of not being sensitive to others' evaluations, avoidant individuals are sensitive and do care about social connections.

Erez et al. (2009) applied attachment theory to the study of small group dynamics, and examined how individual attachment style affects people's reactions to signals of respect versus disrespect from ingroupers. According to the group-value theory (Tyler & Blader, 2000; Tyler & Lind, 1992), group interactions, leading people to feel respected as group members, both reinforce commitment to the group and increase efforts in group tasks. Signals of group disrespect should have opposite effects on commitment and effort expenditure. Actually, Sleebos, Ellemers, and de Gilder (2006a, 2006b) found that individuals receiving signals of disrespect, decrease commitment to the group but still increase efforts in group tasks. Despite the fact that disrespected individuals do not want to remain members of the group, the need to restore their self image acts as a motivation to enhance efforts, as a means to recover self-esteem. Erez and colleagues argued that group disrespect can remind anxiously attached individuals of their self-esteem worries and strengthen their hyper-sensitivity to social approval, thus exacerbating the reactions observed by Sleebos et al., namely, reduced commitment, but increased efforts in favor of the rejecting group. Indeed, compared to low-anxiety participants, for participants scoring high on attachment anxiety, induction of group respect led to higher group commitment and more efforts in favor of the group. Conversely, induction of group disrespect led these participants to lower group commitment, but still to exert stronger efforts in favor of the group. As predicted, attachment anxiety, but not attachment avoidance, moderated the effects of group respect and disrespect. Attachment avoidance, which is usually associated with dismissal of others' approval, had no effects on the reactions to group respect or disrespect.

Intergroup Relations

In five studies, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) examined the effects of activation of the secure scheme of attachment on reactions to people belonging to an outgroup. Past findings (Mikulincer, 1998) showed that attachment security is associated with positive self-esteem, less negative appraisal of threatening events, the use of more constructive strategies of coping — three processes involved in reactions to outgroups (see Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Thus, the activation of a secure scheme of attachment should foster a more tolerant attitude toward unfamiliarity and reduce negative reactions to outgroups. Indeed, in Studies 1 and 2, subliminal words that exemplified a security scheme attenuated intergroup bias: compared to participants in the control condition, participants primed with security-related words showed less negative reactions toward an outgroup; in contrast, no significant effects on reactions to ingroup were revealed. In Study 3, the positive effect of the secure scheme was found to be mediated by appraisal of the outgroup as less threatening: priming security words led to lower appraisals of threat, which was reflected in less outgroup derogation. Finally, in Studies 4 and 5, priming the security scheme eliminated the negative effects of threat on both personal and collective self-esteem. Importantly, the effects of priming security on outgroup evaluation did not depend on individual's attachment style, assessed with a self-report measure. If anything, although attachment avoidance was unrelated to reactions toward outgroups, attachment anxiety was negatively related to outgroup evaluation: the higher the attachment anxiety, the more negative the reactions to outgroups.

Hofstra, Van Oudenhoven, and Buunk (2005; Van Oudenhoven & Hofstra, 2006) examined the way attachment styles influence the attitudes toward immigrants' acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997). Attachment styles are social interaction tendencies which influence several aspects of social functioning, such as the way we approach unfamiliar others, for example outgroups. Secure individuals have a positive image of themselves and trust others; therefore, they should not experience threat in contact with other cultures. In contrast, avoidant individuals have a positive image of themselves but feel threatened by others; therefore, avoidance should be negatively related to acculturation strategies involving contact with other cultures (e.g., integration, assimilation). Anxious individuals have a negative image of themselves but they trust others: they worry about being disliked and wish to be accepted by others; their reaction to contact with other cultures should reflect such ambivalence. In the context of two studies, attachment styles of participants from the hosting group and their attitudes toward acculturation strategies of immigrants were assessed. The secure attachment style appeared to be positively related with integration. The avoidant attachment was negatively related to integration and positively to segregation. The anxious attachment showed a more confused pattern of results: it was negatively correlated with both segregation and assimilation.

Van Oudenhoven and Hofstra (2006) also compared the relation between attachment styles and acculturation attitudes of immigrants and majority members. Participants were immigrants (Study 1) or members of the host community (Study 2); they rated their affective reactions to four different scenarios depicting immigrants in ways corresponding to the four acculturation strategies (assimilation, integration, separation, marginalization). Findings showed that, independent of group membership, the more secure individuals were, the more they accepted the integration scenario. Avoidant individuals showed an opposite pattern: the higher the avoidance attachment, the lower the preference for integration. In addition, avoidant immigrants preferred a

separation scenario, in which they had no contact with the host community. Anxious individuals, depending on group membership, reacted differently to the separation scenario, due to their fear of being rejected by others. Anxious majority members reacted negatively to separation, maybe because separation implies some sort of rejection by immigrants. Anxious immigrants reacted positively to separation, probably because it implies lack of interaction which, in turn, prevents them from feeling rejected. Thus, attachment styles affect the acculturation orientations for both immigrants and members of the host community.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Attachment theory initially inspired developmental psychologists. Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1988) insights were applied to investigate the relation between infant and caregivers. This primary relation shapes the infant's affective development: interactions with available and responsive attachment figures promote a sense of attachment security, and result in the formation of positive mental representations of self and others; when attachment figures are not supportive, security is not achieved, and the child is likely to form negative representations of self or others. According to Bowlby, attachment is relevant for explaining individual relationships across the entire life span. Main (1991) and other researchers, therefore, extended the study of attachment to later childhood and adulthood: the mental representations of childhood affective experiences with primary caregivers were shown to affect the quality of friendship and romantic relationships, during both adolescence and adulthood (for reviews, see Feeney, 1999; Hesse, 1999).

Do attachment styles matter to social psychologists? Durkin (2001) identified at least three reasons why attachment merits attention from social psychology. The first is that attachment is bidirectional: it is important not only for the child but also for the caregiver. Parenthood involves significant changes in people's life, namely, cognitive and affective changes that may impact parents' lives. The second reason why attachment deserves attention from social psychologists is that individuals continue to form attachment relations with parents, family, friends throughout their lifetime (Berlin & Cassidy, 1999). Relationships of secure attachments help individuals to face environmental stress. Moreover, as noted by Hazan and Shaver (1987), adults' romantic relations can be categorized in patterns similar to attachment styles, and, just like infants, secure attached partners have personal benefits. Third, attachment was shown to impact on the individual's orientation to more general societal matters, such as future career (Silverberg, Vazsonyi, Schlegel, & Schmidt, 1998), voluntary work (Gillath et al., 2005), reactions to distress caused by war attacks (Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993).

Do attachment styles matter to group psychology? Attachment is relevant not only to the understanding of interpersonal relations, but also to the understanding of individual bonds to groups. Parallels between attachment in partnership and attachment in group belonging may be easily drawn: the need for proximity and support when facing environmental hazards may be satisfied both by close partners and by groups. In favor of this view, Smith and colleagues (1999) found that people's perceptions of group membership vary with the type of attachment they develop with ingroup: some individuals are securely attached, and perceive their group belonging positively, while others are insecurely attached, and, as infants with parents, experience anxiety or avoidance feelings.

The aim of this article was to review studies investigating the impact of attachment styles on group processes. This line of research started about ten years ago, with the publication of Smith and colleagues' original (1999) study on the application of the attachment construct to the group domain. The past decade has seen a moderate but steady increase in investigations in this field; all in all, what we have acquired is the awareness that attachment styles do matter to group psychology, and, importantly, an initial picture of the way in which the three adult attachment styles may shape group identification, intragroup, and intergroup relations.

Securely attached individuals seem to have benefits in the group domain, just like in interpersonal relations. Concerning identification, secure individuals are inclined to form secure attachment ties with groups: they perceive themselves as valuable group members and others as trustworthy ingroupers; when threatened at an individual level, they rely on group membership as a source of additional support (Crisp et al., 2009). As for intergroup relations, security is associated with harmonious relations with outgroups, as consistently shown by research on attitudes and acculturation orientations. Indeed, the activation of a secure attachment scheme was shown to trigger less negative reactions to outgroups (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). Moreover, securely attached individuals, both immigrants and members of the host community, emerged as the most positive toward the acculturation strategy of integration (Hofstra et al., 2005). To our knowledge, there are no studies to date on attachment security and intragroup processes.

In sharp contrast, insecurely attached individuals depict a less favorable picture. Both anxious and avoidant individuals display some difficulties in identifying with groups. Anxiously attached individuals lack the adaptive tendency to seek support from social groups after interpersonal distress. Avoidant individuals, despite their claim to the contrary, appear most satisfied after acceptance from other group members, thus indicating that avoidance may be conceived as a defensive mechanism, aimed to protect themselves from others' rejection (Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006). Findings from studies examining intragroup processes confirm the predictable impaired functioning in group tasks: anxious individuals, excessively pursuing security-love goals, jeopardize instrumental performance, while avoidant individuals, too concentrated on pursuing distance goals, damage both the socioemotional and the instrumental performance (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). In addition, attachment anxiety was found to moderate the effects of feedback from other group members: feedback of respect induced higher commitment and efforts in aid of the group; disrespect, instead, led to lower commitment but stronger efforts, as a means to restore one's self-image (Erez et al., 2009). At the intergroup level, the scenario for insecure individuals is rather incomplete. However, what seems to emerge from studies examining acculturation strategies is that attachment anxiety and avoidance are related, to some extent, to attitudes toward the outgroup. For the hosting group, the higher the anxiety, the less individuals accept separation, an acculturation strategy implying some sort of rejection from the immigrant community; moreover, the higher the avoidance, the less individuals accept integration, in order to avoid contact with members of the immigrant group. For the hosted group, the higher the anxiety, the more immigrants prefer separation, probably to prevent feelings of rejection from the host community; concerning avoidance, the higher this style, the lower the preference for integration, and, conversely, the higher the preference for separation (Van Oudenhoven & Hofstra, 2006).

Although compelling, studies investigating the role of attachment styles in the group domain show some limitations. Attachment theory still lacks a convincing theoretical integration with group psychology. The aim of future research will be to reconcile existing and future find-

ings in an original theory, able to explain, in specific and predictable ways, the interplay between attachment styles and group processes.

From a methodological point of view, the empirical evidence reviewed here show a limit, namely, causality; actually, most of the studies reviewed are correlational in nature. Only in the domain of intergroup relations, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) tried to experimentally manipulate attachment styles by priming participants with security-related words (i.e., closeness, love, hug, support), compared to priming positive words, unrelated to attachment (i.e., happiness, honesty, luck, success). Despite the valuable effort to manipulate attachment, it remains unclear whether words, such as closeness, love, and support, really activated secure attachment; actually, what the authors primed could be an interpersonal goal of kindness and compassion or, maybe, positive self-esteem. An alternative procedure to rely on could be a combination of methodological approaches, that is, initial correlational data, supported by data obtained with priming techniques. In future research, this multi-method approach could be useful to explore the impact of attachment on a variety of processes involved in intergroup relations, such as the emotional and cognitive processes triggered by intergroup contact.

The contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) suggests that the interaction between members of different groups, under optimal conditions, decreases intergroup prejudice; this hypothesis was supported by a number of studies (see, e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Contact between members of unfamiliar groups, however, raises some problems: for instance, intergroup relations may be anxiety-provoking (see Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and anxiety does not foster harmonious intergroup relationships. Recently, West, Shelton, and Trail (2009) showed that intergroup anxiety may be contagious: the feelings of anxiety experienced by an individual, in the context of daily interactions with an outgroup member, were predicted by both one's and outgroup member's anxiety as experienced on the previous day. Importantly, feelings of anxiety negatively predicted interest to pursue intergroup contact. Attachment theory may be useful to explain underlying psychological mechanisms at work during initial contact between members of different groups. Indeed, attachment theory stresses the importance of having a secure style in order to explore, without anxiety, unfamiliar and novel contexts. It has been shown that secure children are more likely to interact positively with strangers (Moss, Gosselin, Parent, Rousseau, & Dumont, 1997). The study by Mikulincer and Shaver (2001), showing that priming security leads to less negative reactions to outgroups, supports this view. Thus, it seems profitable to examine the role of attachment styles in the context of intergroup contact; future research should investigate whether secure attachment increases both quality and quantity of contact, resulting in a more positive evaluation of the general outgroup.

A renewed interest in the interplay between social context and individual differences is at the core of a recent study by Thomsen, Green, and Sidanius (2008). These authors found that the intentions of aggression against immigrants are differently associated with social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1998). Social dominators react negatively to a scenario in which immigrants aspire to assimilation, because assimilation involves the inclusion of the subordinate group into the dominant group, and the removal of social hierarchy. In contrast, authoritarians react negatively to immigrants who refuse assimilation because they perceive ingroup's norms as rejected. It would be interesting to explore the mediating role of attachment styles in the relation between social dominance, authoritarianism, and acculturation strategies. It is possible that social dominants prefer

segregation through the mediation of an avoidant attachment style, and authoritarians prefer assimilation through the mediation of an insecure style. In a similar vein, Roccato (2008) provided initial evidence that attachment styles, directly or indirectly, may affect SDO and RWA. Future research will clarify this point.

As a final remark, it seems possible to apply attachment theory also in the context of organizational psychology (see Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Indeed, organizations may be conceived as groups, which have a key role in individuals' lives. Securely attached individuals, embracing a positive self-image and trusting others, in organizations should display higher perceptions of self-efficacy in job performance (Bandura, 2001) and higher perceptions of organizational support (POS; Eisenberger, Hunnington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Organizational support theory states that, on the basis of a reciprocity norm, perceptions of support should enhance organizational commitment (see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It would be interesting to examine whether attachment styles affect POS: it may be the case that secure individuals' feeling of trust toward others enhances POS, with the consequence of enhancing organizational commitment and overall job satisfaction. Research on POS has little examined the role of dispositional variables. The introduction of attachment theory in the study of POS may, therefore, start a new and fruitful research line (for an investigation concerning the effects of secure attachment on prosocial behaviors see Desivilya, Sabag, & Ashton, 2006).

NOTES

1. To avoid confusion, attachment styles will be systematically labeled as secure, anxious, and avoidant, throughout the whole text.
2. But see Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) for a model of attachment involving four discrete types of attachment (secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful).
3. The Social Group Attachment Scale included 25 items assessing experiences in social groups. Sample items are: "I often worry that my group does not really accept me" and "It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient."
4. The group identification scales used were: the Psychological Attachment Instrument (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), a measure of group identification drawn from organizational psychology, and the group identification scale by Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, and Williams (1986).

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