

## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

This study examined the relationship between childhood fearfulness, adulthood fearfulness, parenting behavior (bonding) and attachment style. Six hypotheses were tested: Three hypotheses (one, two, and three) examined the relationship between fearfulness in childhood, parenting behavior (PBI) and security of attachment (RQ, ASI). Hypotheses four, five, and six examined fearfulness in adulthood in terms of these same parenting behaviors and attachment styles.

A consistent pattern of results emerged: First, childhood fearfulness was highly correlated with adulthood fearfulness. Hypotheses dealing with childhood fearfulness paralleled those hypotheses dealing with adulthood fearfulness and a similar pattern of results emerged between these two sets of hypotheses.

Second, trait anxiety, state anxiety, and gender were significantly correlated with fearfulness and were treated as covariates. Anxious participants reported more childhood and adulthood fearfulness. Trait anxiety seemed to be a more significant factor in affecting adulthood fearfulness than childhood fearfulness (Hypotheses two and four). Additionally, female participants reported more fearfulness than did male participants.

Third, the hypotheses generally were supported in the direction predicted. In terms of parenting behavior, participants who reported most fearfulness in childhood and adulthood also reported having mothers who were high in protection and fathers who were low in care. However, for adulthood fears, both trait and state anxiety altered the findings with regards to view of fathers.

In terms of current attachment styles (Hypotheses two and five), participants who were categorized as having preoccupied attachment reported more childhood fears than participants in the dismissing group. This result held when controlling for state anxiety but not trait anxiety. There were opposite findings for current attachment styles and adulthood fears. Without the covariates of anxiety and gender, there were no significant differences in adulthood fears between the different styles of attachment.

A consistent pattern of results for childhood attachment style is that the rough measure of security of attachment is related to fewer childhood and adulthood fears. Those participants who report higher security of attachment report fewer fears. This result holds for both mothers and fathers and even after controlling for anxiety and gender.

In examining specific types of fears reported, participants were generally more fearful of failure and criticism in childhood and threats to the self in adulthood. Other fears that came up frequently in childhood were minor injury and small animals and medical fears.

This discussion is organized around these areas.

### *Childhood and Adulthood Fearfulness*

Childhood and adulthood fearfulness were highly correlated ( $r=.82$ ). There are a number of reasons that may account for this high correlation.

There exists the possibility that the high correlation is due to testing error. Answering questions about childhood fears may have primed participants to remember adulthood fears more vividly. However, there are a number of reasons to argue against this interpretation. First of all, the two measures tapped into different types of fears.

Second, individuals tend to remember those things that are salient and relevant. Virginia Axline (1981) commented that “the important things are what we remember after we have forgotten everything else.” When fears are remembered, they are most certainly significant. And as Adler (1958) wrote, “there are no chance memories: out of the incalculable number of impressions which meet an individual, he chooses to remember only those which he feels however darkly, to have a bearing on his situation” (p.18). Memories of fears are likely to be stimuli that have affected an individual for a particular reason such as striking a chord in the person’s unconscious.

Emotional stimuli are better remembered than unemotional stimuli (Revelle & Loftus, 1990) and at the time of encoding, research has found that intense emotion improves memory for central details (Heuer & Reisberg, 1992). Winograd and Neisser (1992) talk of vivid memories, “flashbulb memories” that occur in conjunction with trauma. Fears sometimes result from traumatic events. Fear is a highly intense, vivid emotion and therefore the presence of it will cause memory to be well encoded. It can be safely assumed that adults do accurately remember and report childhood fearfulness.

Additional research suggests that childhood memories reflect one’s enduring personality characteristics, experience of the world and sense of self and others (Rosenheim & Mane, 1984). Being fearful can be a defining feature of one’s life and so is easily remembered. A dissertation done by E. Hernandez (2003) highly corroborated children’s reports of memories with parental reports of the events in question. The factors contributing to accurate recall were intellectual ability, language development, and the characteristics of the events recalled (i.e., affective quality, rehearsal of the event). It is likely that the current sample, consisting of university students, had at least average

intellectual ability and language development. Additionally, the affective quality of fears is another factor that makes fears likely to be remembered.

Alternatively, the high correlation between childhood and adulthood fears may be related to continuity and discontinuity in development. These participants were college students who were on average 20 years old. Given their age, one would expect greater continuity than discontinuity between childhood fearfulness and adulthood fearfulness because these participants have not as yet had the opportunity or experiences to develop more mature coping styles and strategies for dealing with fears. Moreover, they have not yet formed the type of relationships in which they can shift their secure base from parents to partners. It may be that those participants who are highly fearful, as they mature or find partners who provide a secure base, will become less fearful and show discontinuity of fearfulness between their childhood and adulthood. Future research should examine how childhood fearfulness changes as a function of age during the adult years.

*Hypothesis Testing: Types of Fearfulness and Views of Parenting and Attachment Style*

The hypotheses concerned the relationship between childhood and adulthood fearfulness and views of parents and attachment style. The hypotheses were generally supported in the predicted direction. The following issues are discussed: (1) how fearfulness is related to different aspects of parenting and the parenting of mothers and fathers; (2) how the different styles of attachment relate to fearfulness; (3) why in childhood, fearfulness was primarily related to criticism and failure, and in adulthood, to threats to the self. Interwoven in these issues are the effects of anxiety and gender.

*Anxiety and fear.* A discussion of the findings must be considered in light of the effects of anxiety on fears. A major finding of the study is that trait /state anxiety were

moderately correlated with childhood and adulthood fears. This is hardly surprising. Researchers tend to hyphenate fear as fear/anxiety (Kemper, 2000; Frijda, 2000; Ohman, 2000) reflecting that these two components are so closely linked as to make them almost inseparable, irreducible to their component parts.

When considering emotions, the current thinking is that emotion is a multi-component phenomenon comprising a representation of the object of the emotion, the state of arousal, and the behavioral action based on some evaluative or appraisal process (Frijda, 2000; White, 2000). In the case of fear, the objects of fear are the stimuli taken as noxious or threatening, the state of arousal is often feelings of anxiety, and the behavior is escape or avoidance.

These theories of fear highlight differences in how these components operate together. The differences are based on what the underlying assumptions are that affect emotions (Frijda, 2000). Do the components operate as an irreducible whole or are people disposed to reacting in a certain way (i.e., trait anxiety), does one component trigger or activate the other components (i.e. moderate correlations among components)? The mechanism of how the components work together remains unclear.

Ohman (2000) distinguished between anxiety and fear. Anxiety is “prestimulus” (i.e. anticipatory to threatening stimuli) and fear is “poststimulus” (i.e. elicited by a defined fear stimulus). Fear is related to coping behavior, particularly escape and avoidance. However, when coping attempts fail, fear turns into anxiety. Ohman (2000) quotes Epstein (1972) “fear is an avoidance motive. If there were no restraints, internal or external, fear would support the action of flight. Anxiety can be defined as unresolved fear, or alternatively as a state of undirected arousal following the perception of a threat.”

(p. 311). When responses to fear are blocked, fear turns into anxiety. Another type of anxiety occurs when there is arousal but no consciously known source of fear. The individual knows that something is wrong but cannot pinpoint a clear cause for it. The anxiety may be channeled into fear if escape is used as a response.

Since trait anxiety and state anxiety are not perfectly correlated, it is clear that they can be considered distinguishable. An individual who reports high state anxiety may be simply experiencing a momentary and transient phenomenon based on recent events, and not long term anxiety. Furthermore an individual can be low on trait anxiety and still be fearful of specific stimuli. Conversely, an individual can be generally anxious and not have specific fears. Additionally, Matthews, Gelder and Johnston (1981) report that people with high trait anxiety may be genetically predisposed to report anxiety in many situations and generally respond to threatening situations with heightened generalized fear.

*Gender and fear.* Females reported more fearfulness than males and so gender is a key issue. Why are trait anxiety and gender so highly related to fearfulness?

Although females were more fearful than males, and gender was a significant covariate, gender did not affect how attachment styles were related to fearfulness, whereas anxiety did. This was determined by running the analysis only with anxiety and comparing the coefficients when both anxiety and gender were controlled. The coefficients remained unchanged when the effects of gender were removed from the correlations. This effect may have been due to the relatively small number of men in the sample.

Bowlby (1969) states that male fearlessness has an evolutionary advantage. In animals, males defend females and infants from attacks. So too, in humans, males are the ones who fight wars while women do not usually engage in active combat. Females seek the protection of either males or proximity to groups. Gender was found to be a significant factor in overall fearfulness and in specific types of fear as well such as small animals (Gulas, Mc Clanahan & Poetter, 1975). Wilson (1967) also showed that males have lower scores on the FSS but had no significant differences upon measurement by Galvanic Skin Responses. Wilson attributed this finding to the social desirability factor of males feeling they cannot express their fearfulness.

*Views of parenting and fearfulness.* (Hypotheses one and four). Hypotheses one and four examined how different types of parenting related to childhood fearfulness (H1) and adulthood fearfulness (H4). For both childhood and adulthood fearfulness, participants who reported greater fearfulness also reported having mothers who were high in protection and/or fathers who were low in care. Thus, participants are differentially affected by their mother's and father's parenting behavior.

For childhood fears, when trait anxiety and gender were accounted for, the results remained the same, but significance could not be attributed to any one subscale. When state anxiety and gender were covaried, the results remained the same as without covariates. For adulthood fears, trait/state anxiety and gender altered the results for fathers only. The mean differences in adulthood fears between those groups who report having fathers low in care or high in care were no longer significant.

The issues are: why is fearfulness related to having mothers who are high in protection and/or fathers who are low in care and why does accounting for the effects of

trait/state anxiety and gender remove the significance of the relationship between paternal care and adulthood fearfulness?

The primary issue of the relationship between view of parents and fearfulness will be addressed first. This finding is consistent with the well known literature that mothers and fathers parent their children very differently. Moreover, children are affected by these differences. Recall that the cut-off scores suggested by Parker were used to classify mothers into high and low protection. High protection is considered overprotectiveness. Thus, participants who reported having overprotective mothers were the most fearful. There are several reasons to explain why overprotectiveness in mothers is related to reports of greater fearfulness. Symbiotic maternal ties and over protection have been found to be related to fearfulness (Thorpe & Burns, 1983). One possible reason for the connection is that an overprotective mother may herself be highly fearful and may model or communicate fearfulness as suggested by Social Learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Another possibility is that mother's overprotectiveness may be a response to a fearful child. She may have been conditioned by her child to respond in this way in order to protect that child. It also may be that overprotective mothers are hyper-vigilant and in being hyper-vigilant they do not help their child develop skills of emotional self-regulation. These participants may have never learned how to effectively neutralize or minimize fears through self-soothing practices.

This study also found that fathers play an important and unique role in affecting their child's fearfulness. Participants who reported fearfulness also reported having fathers who were low in care. The cut-off score of low care may indicate neglectful or absent fathering. Care, as measured on the PBI, tapped into such behaviors as emotional



availability, understanding of worries and problems, and display of affection. When fathers are emotionally available and affectionate, children may interpret these behaviors to mean that they are worthwhile individuals and therefore have the competence and skill to deal with situations that are perceived to be threatening. In contrast, when fathers are low in care these participants, as children, may have felt unlovable and therefore lack the capacity to take care of themselves.

Finally, it is interesting that high protection (i.e. hyper-vigilance) from mothers and low care (i.e. neglect) from fathers have the same effect on participants (greater childhood and adulthood fearfulness) which is consistent with the notion of equifinality (i.e., two different pathways can lead to the same outcome) in system theory.

In terms of the reasons for the strong effects of the covariates of trait/state anxiety and gender on paternal care and current fearfulness, but not on paternal care and childhood fearfulness, there are two possibilities. It may be that fathers' influence begins to wane particularly as individuals enter young adulthood years and therefore have less of an influence on adulthood fears than childhood fears. Another possibility may relate to the relationship between young adults and their fathers. Recall the majority of the participants were female. It is well known that women tend to separate and de-identify with mothers later than their fathers. Therefore the effects of mothers continues well into the late adolescent years.

*Current attachment style and fearfulness.* (Hypotheses two and five). Hypotheses two and five examined how the different types of attachment styles (secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) (Bartholomew & Griffen, 1991) related to childhood fearfulness (H2) and adulthood fearfulness (H5). For childhood fearfulness, as predicted,

participants who reported having preoccupied attachment styles also reported greater fearfulness than participants reporting dismissing attachment styles. Participants reporting secure attachment styles often reported some, but not extreme fearfulness. When trait anxiety was accounted for, the results were no longer significant, but when state anxiety was accounted for, the results remained significant. In comparison, for adulthood attachment style, with and without state anxiety, there was no significant main effect. However, when trait anxiety was accounted for, participants reporting preoccupied attachment styles also reported fears of threats to the self.

Why do participants reporting preoccupied attachment styles also report more fearfulness than participants reporting other types of attachment styles? How does anxiety affect fearfulness and attachment styles?

In addressing the first issue, it is important to understand what type of parenting is associated with insecure attachment. Both preoccupied and dismissing attachment styles result, in part, from pathological parenting. Bowlby (1978) reports that individuals with insecure attachment have been exposed to pathological parenting of varying kinds which includes one or more of the following: (1) Persistent unresponsiveness to the child's care-eliciting behavior and/or active disparagement and rejection by one or both parents. (2) Discontinuity of parenting involving periods of time away from the child. (3) Persistent threats of parent not to love the child, as a means of control. (4) Threats to abandon the family, used as a method of discipline (5) Threats to desert or kill the other or to commit suicide. (6) Induction of guilt in a child by claiming that his/her behavior will be responsible for the parents' death. The presence of one or more of these behaviors over a period of time may have contributed to insecure attachment styles.

The nature of preoccupied attachment style in particular provides an important clue to understanding this finding. It is clear that individuals reporting insecure attachment styles did not trust their parents to be a secure base, however how the lack of a secure base is dealt with differs among attachment styles. Individuals with preoccupied attachment styles become preoccupied with their parents, do not trust themselves and keep hoping that parents will be responsive, while individuals with dismissing attachment styles rely on themselves and no one else. It is likely that individuals with preoccupied attachment styles will have greater fearfulness, while individuals with dismissing attachment styles will avoid the feelings of vulnerability caused by fearfulness.

The findings from this study that individuals reporting preoccupied attachment styles have more fearfulness than individuals reporting dismissing attachment styles are consistent with Bowlby's (1973) theory. Bowlby predicted that an individual will have a heightened fear response to stimuli when there is no secure attachment figure available. Recall that the fear/waring system (one of the five behavioral control systems) serves to activate the attachment system and it is only the attachment system that can "turn off" the fear/waring system. Preoccupied attachment style in specific results from an inconsistency in parenting behaviors. Sometimes the parent responds to the child's needs and sometimes does not. Individuals with preoccupied attachment styles live in a fearful world that is full of the fear of abandonment. According to Brennan et al. (1998) individuals with preoccupied attachment have anxiety present but do not use interpersonal avoidance as a coping mechanism. Therefore, individuals with preoccupied attachment style search incessantly to get their safety needs met. According to Stein et al.

(1998), such individuals are emotionally reactive and expressive and tend to be in heightened states of arousal, which makes fearfulness difficult to regulate.

Individuals reporting dismissing attachment styles had parents who did not respond to their needs but react by denying vulnerabilities, including fearfulness and respond to threats by minimizing, ignoring or denying emotional distress. According to Brennan et al. (1998) individuals with dismissing attachment styles combine avoidant behavior with apparent lack of anxiety about abandonment. Such individuals are reluctant to rely on others and to count on them for emotional support. Those who report dismissing attachment styles are denying their lack of security and fears about the world being an unsafe place and therefore as predicted, reported the least amount of fearfulness in childhood and adulthood.

Individuals who are securely attached have a low amount of fears because they do not defensively deny fears and also are not overwhelmed by fear. This finding is consistent with attachment theory that predicts that individuals with secure attachment will have some fearfulness, but not disproportionately so and will have developed the coping mechanisms to effectively manage threat.

In addressing the second issue, trait/state anxiety and gender had a different effect on childhood and adulthood fears. The effect of anxiety on fearfulness is that if a person is anxious, regardless of current attachment style, will report fearfulness in childhood and adulthood. When anxiety is accounted for, attachment style doesn't matter. A possible reason for this finding is that this study consisted of a sample of college students, who are not yet independent adults. Most college students are not yet secure in long term

relationships, such as occur later in life through marriage and so primary attachment figure and attachment styles and can change.

*Reported Childhood Attachment Styles and Fearfulness:* (Hypotheses three and six). Hypotheses three and six predicted that there would be a relationship between reported childhood attachment styles, childhood fearfulness (H3) and adulthood fearfulness (H6).

For childhood fearfulness, participants who rated themselves high on insecure attachment styles (avoidant, hostile, ambivalent) in childhood to mothers and fathers also reported higher fearfulness. Participants who rated themselves high on secure attachment or on the rough measure of security of attachment, also reported lower fearfulness. When state anxiety and gender are controlled in the correlations between attachment style to mothers and childhood fearfulness, the results remain generally unchanged. On the other hand, with fathers, the results do change somewhat, specifically for the relationship between insecure attachment styles and fearfulness. Importantly, there are no significant alterations between the rough measure of security of attachment and fearfulness.

For adulthood fearfulness, participants who rated themselves as high on insecure attachment style to mother in childhood of the avoidant, hostile and ambivalent subtypes also reported overall higher fearfulness. Participants reporting secure attachment styles and overall security on the rough measure of attachment consistently reported lower levels of fearfulness. Participants reporting insecure attachment in childhood to father of the hostile and ambivalent subtypes scored higher on fearfulness and participants reporting overall security on the rough measure of attachment scored lower on fearfulness. When trait/state anxiety were accounted for, the results remained generally

unchanged, although type of insecure attachment rated highly shifts from all three types to the hostile and ambivalent attachment styles.

The issue here is why participants reporting all three insecure attachment styles also report higher fearfulness in childhood and adulthood and participants reporting secure attachment styles scored lower on fearfulness.

In this study, childhood attachment style is a continuous variable and each subject rates themselves on each attachment style and the rough measure of security of attachment. Each participant has some elements of secure and insecure attachment. There was no comparison among groups, rather ratings of security or insecurity of attachment on all subtypes were correlated with fearfulness. Participants rating themselves higher on all three insecure attachment styles also reported higher fearfulness. This finding was as expected from participants reporting hostile and ambivalent attachment styles, and was found mostly when these attachment styles were rated highly.

Occasionally, participants rating themselves higher on avoidant attachment also rated themselves higher on fearfulness. On the surface, this was unexpected because according to attachment theory, individuals with avoidant attachment style defensively deny fearfulness. A possible explanation for this finding involves the difference between an individual acknowledging fearfulness in retrospect as this study requests, and how an individual copes when confronted with threatening stimuli. Everyone has fears, even if fearfulness is denied, so the issue is not the presence of fears, but coping mechanisms for fearfulness. Individuals rating themselves higher on avoidant attachment may have defensively denied fears when confronted with them in childhood, but this is not addressed by the current study. What is addressed by the current study is how adults

recall their childhood fearfulness and report current fearfulness. As adults, even participants rating themselves higher on avoidant attachment style can recall that the items that they identified on the questionnaires were things of which they were or are afraid. In terms of adulthood fearfulness, participants rating themselves higher on avoidant attachment do not rate themselves higher on fearfulness, which is as predicted.

An important finding of this hypothesis is that participants rating themselves high on the rough measure of security of attachment reported low levels of fearfulness. This finding held even when trait and state anxiety were controlled. This finding suggests that those who felt securely attached also felt protected and less vulnerable than those who rate themselves lower on security of attachment. Even among individuals who were anxious by state or trait, having an attachment figure to rely upon mitigated fearfulness. When individuals were anxious and did not have a secure attachment figure, fearfulness is elevated. Therefore, the importance of security of attachment is highlighted by this finding.

*Specific types of fearfulness.* Participants who reported more childhood fearfulness often did so in the area of failure and criticism. Participants reporting adulthood fearfulness, often did so in the area of threats to the self. These two areas of fearfulness both deal with a physical or emotional assault to the self and reflect anxiety about one's well being. This finding was consistent across the different parenting and attachment measures and for both father and mother. Other types of fears that were prevalent are also discussed here.

On the PBI measure related to mothers, fear of failure and criticism can be understood in the following manner: Overprotective mothers may be critical of their

children, feeling the need to control and criticize many elements of that child's life. It is also possible that highly protective mothers protect their children by being fearful and hence over critical of their child in order to ensure safety. Hence, children of overprotective mothers have more fear of failure and criticism.

On the PBI measure related to fathers, the specific fear of failure and criticism can be understood in the following manner. A child who feels uncared for by father also fears failure and criticism, possibly because fathers who are uncaring are also critical, or because a fearful child will elicit more criticism from their father.

On the RQ, participants reporting preoccupied attachment style also endorsed fear of failure and criticism. Possible reasons for the occurrence of this specific fear are as follows. Participants reporting preoccupied attachment styles have negative models of self and positive models of other. The self is devalued while the other and opinions held by the other are highly valued. Therefore, individuals with preoccupied attachment style are likely to be very sensitive to criticism which is a negative reflection of the self given by a highly valued other and which confirms a negative self view. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fact that individuals with preoccupied attachment trust other's opinions more than their own. Therefore, failure and criticism is a major source of fearfulness.

On the ASI, fear of failure and criticism reported by participants with insecure attachment styles can be understood in the following manner: When parents are critical and love is conditional upon success, children become insecurely attached and fearful of their parents and the world. Fear of failure and criticism reflects a view of the world as a hostile place and therefore any threat to self is magnified. More specifically, individuals



with hostile and ambivalent attachment styles may have anger with their parents for being inconsistent. That anger may be also projected onto the world and result in fearfulness. Participants rating themselves high on avoidant attachment style also reported high fear of failure and criticism, because even though they avoid depending on parents to provide a secure base doesn't mean they are immune from wanting parent's approval. Such individuals, while denying many fears, are still vulnerable to attacks on the self.

A general link between attachment theory (for both childhood and current attachment styles) and fear of failure and criticism is as per Bowlby (1978). He states that parents who criticize their child harshly are likely to engender hostile feelings in the child and therefore insecure attachment. It follows that the child will also come to fear failure and criticism and threats to the self. The quote from Bowlby is as follows.

a parent perceives the child to be replica of himself, especially those aspects of himself which he had endeavored to stamp out, and then strives to stamp them out in his child. In these efforts the parent is likely to use a version of the same methods of discipline- perhaps crude and violent, perhaps censorious or sarcastic, perhaps guilt inducing - to which he himself was subjected as a child and which resulted in his developing the very problem he is now striving so inappropriately to prevent or cure in his child. (p. 54).

Bowlby (1978) also stated that individuals who are subject to pathological parenting tend to have "anger against (his) parents but also inhibit its expression." (p.56) The result is much partially unconscious resentment. In Bowlby's view, the most common source of anger in children is the frustration of the desire for protection, reassurance and care. Individuals with all insecure attachment styles may have this anger and anxiety, whether it is conscious or not. Anxiety reflects uncertainty about the caretaker's continued availability. Additionally, fear of failure and criticism and of threats to the self, fits in with the concept of working models, in which a child creates an

internal working model of the caretaker in order to predict future care-taking behavior. A key feature of this model is that the child develops a notion of the self as being either acceptable or unacceptable in the eyes of the caretaker. The result is that the child feels unwanted by his/her parents and generalizes that feeling to include being unwanted by anyone. An insecurely attached child will fear rejection, failure and criticism by parents, or any stimuli that can be perceived as possibly threatening to the self. The opposite effect occurs for a child who feels well loved, confident of his/her parent's love and that others will love him/her as well.

Additionally, Bowlby stated that in the face of external threat, a child seeks comfort with its caretakers. However, when the threat comes from the caretaker in the form of criticism, a child cannot receive comfort and feel safe. The child remains in a state of intense fear. Therefore, children who feel criticized by their parents are also likely to feel more overall fearfulness and in particular, more fear of failure and criticism. The feeling of security that comes with being loved by the parent is mediated by the condition of pleasing the parent.

Threats to the self in adulthood fearfulness, as reported by individuals with insecure attachment styles, similarly represents an endangerment of one's well being. An individual who does not feel cared for, will feel unsafe in the world and worried about physical survival.

Other highly reported fears in childhood among participants reporting insecure attachment styles, were fears of minor injury and small animals, medical fears and danger and death.

Participants reporting current preoccupied attachment styles also reported medical fears. Participants rating themselves high on all three insecure childhood attachment styles (avoidant, hostile, ambivalent) also reported medical fears. Medical fears represent mistrust of authority figures as well as fear of something beyond one's control being done, resulting in feelings of vulnerability. Therefore, children who perceive their parents as unavailable and uncaring are afraid of the authority their parents represent and do not trust anything foisted upon them by authority figures. Medical care may seem scary to a child who does not understand how it may be helpful (e.g. an injection). The fearfulness in participants with avoidant attachment styles makes sense because fearfulness does surface occasionally. Medical fears can represent a fear of bodily harm, vulnerability and distrust of authority, which are likely to be highly associated with avoidant attachment style.

Fear of minor injury and small animals reflects sensitivity to small and not truly dangerous stimuli. Individuals with preoccupied and ambivalent attachment have enhanced sensitivity to any kind of injury, even if it is negligible. Similarly, fear of danger and death is reported by individuals with preoccupied attachment styles because such individuals have negative models of self and are sensitive to anything that may threaten the self. Danger and death represents the most significant danger to the self and therefore is a fear reported by individuals with preoccupied and hostile attachment styles. Individuals who are insecurely attached feel that the world is an unsafe place, and are afraid of possible threats to the self.

### *Exploratory Analyses*

The results of the regression predicting childhood fearfulness from current attachment style was that participants reporting preoccupied attachment styles also reported more childhood fear on overall fear, fear of failure and criticism, minor injury and small animals and medical fears and overall fearfulness. Current fearfulness was predicted from fear of threats to the self. These findings are as similar to those found for the RQ (without covariates) and can be understood similarly.

The pattern of results for the AFQC and AFQA were consistent to the pattern of results for the FSSC and FSS and can be understood similarly. The factor that was most prevalent in childhood fearfulness was that of sensitivity to criticism, which is similar to the subscale on the FSSC of Failure and Criticism.

A moderate correlation was found between state and trait anxiety and reported parental anxiety. Either parental modeling is the cause, or being anxious can color many areas in life and therefore participants reporting anxiety would also report parents as having anxiety.

The results that were not significant dealt with the ameliorating effects of therapy and the link between anxiety in mothers and overprotection. Having been in therapy did not influence childhood or adulthood fearfulness. It was thought that overprotective mothers may also be reported as anxious because anxious mothers would protect their children even when there was no dangerous situation. No significant interaction between overprotectiveness and reports of anxiety was found. It is unclear why these findings were not significant.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

The limitations of this study mostly concern demographics. The sample consisted of college aged students, from one particular college. All subjects had the same level of education and similar income. Adelphi University is a private school and therefore may draw only students who can afford tuition or already live in the relatively affluent neighborhood. Adjustment to college can be a particularly stressful time because it is the first real separation from family of origin. The stress of this period of life may exacerbate anxiety or adulthood fears.

Subjects were only drawn from psychology classes, which may or may not affect the results, since there was a mix between introductory courses and higher level courses. Finally, the vast majority of the subjects were female  $n=128$  versus male  $n=25$ . This issue was controlled for in the present study, but a more balanced sample would be preferable. Finally, most of the sample were Caucasian and Catholic and unmarried due to the nature of the student population at Adelphi University.

Additionally, more questions should be asked about subject's views of their parent's fearfulness. Although this question was asked, many subjects misinterpreted the question and responded with an answer about how fear-evoking their parents were, also interesting, but not the targeted data.

Any self report study has the inherent limitations of social desirability and participant bias in responding to Likert scales. Some individuals always rate items more or less highly than other individuals.

#### *Directions for Future Research*

New studies on childhood fears should be conducted using a sample of children, with measures of reported childhood attachment and childhood fearfulness. It is also important to assess in depth the impact of parental modeling by asking about the fearfulness of participant's parents and details about those fears to see if they coincide with subjects reported fears. Questions about how scary participants find their parents to be are also interesting. Future studies can use projective testing such as the Rorschach or TAT, to get beyond denial and idealization.

Another interesting area for future study is the fearfulness of children of parents with varying attachment styles. It may be that parents with one type of attachment style (e.g. avoidant attachment) have children with a different but specific type of attachment style (e.g. preoccupied attachment) which is associated with fearfulness. In other words, a parent's attachment style may predict how fearful their child will be.

Additional research may also focus more on the role of fantasy in fearfulness and which types of fears have more of a fantasy component. The issue of anger, both a parent's anger with a child and a child's anger with a parent would provide an interesting topic for study. This study looked particularly at fearfulness, but phobias are interesting to study. Finally, trait/state anxiety were a significant covariate in all analyses and should be included in future research on fearfulness. Further research should explore the link between anxiety and fearfulness more closely.