

The Influence of Personality Shaping on Romantic Relationships in Early Adulthood

Zihan Zhou *

Xiamen Foreign Language School, Fujian, China

* Corresponding Author Email: zhouzihan@whsu.edu.cn

Abstract. Intimacy is a type of interpersonal relationship that refers to a subjectively experienced emotional or physical closeness. In the modern society of individualization, the focus on emotional communication and confession, mutual knowledge, and understanding are at the heart of modern, intimate relationships. Patterns in intimate relationships are often related to the individual's personality. Research has shown that personality building in infancy and early adulthood has important implications for romantic relationships, including attachment relationships, self-expansion, mindfulness, and changing established work patterns. Owing to the existent relevant academy of factors influencing romantic relationships is extensive, and the factors appear relatively independent, this literature review tries to reduce this confusing status quo by presenting a neoteric perspective. This literature review will provide empirical and conceptual insights from (i) an overview of the definitions and mechanisms of action of different theories and (ii) an analysis of the links between different factors.

Keywords: Romantic relationship; attachment theory; self-expansion model; mindfulness; cognition behavior therapy.

1. Introduction

People say, "When you set out to find true love, you embark on a journey of self-discovery." Intimacy is an important issue throughout an individual's life. The different behavioral mechanisms that arise in our relationship with intimacy reflect individuals' personalities. Almost all clinical psychologists focus on how adaptive patterns are shaped and have been trying to explore from a variety of perspectives because people form a stable set of mental behavior patterns that then influence our feelings, attitudes, choices, and behaviors.

Attachment relationships in early childhood often play an important role in an individual's adult romantic relationships. Bowlby believes that the experience of early parent-child relationships shapes people's "internal work patterns." [1]. Meanwhile, Hazan and Shaver believe that romantic relationships in adults are a process of attachment, similar to how infants form attachments to their parents in early childhood [2]. There are four types of attachment relationships in early childhood: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, anxious ambivalent attachment, and chaotic attachment. Correspondingly, in the adult romantic relationships of these individuals, they may exhibit different behaviors.

Therefore, two questions are asked: (1) Can adult romantic relationships only be passively determined by attachment patterns in childhood? (2) Can individuals exert their initiative to change behavior patterns in romantic relationships?

Self-expansion refers to adding various details to the self-concept, including fresh identities, knowledge, and social parts. The researchers divide self-expansion theory into self-expansion motivation and inclusion of others in the self: self-expansion motivation refers to people's motivation to expand potential efficacy and improve their ability to achieve goals [3]. People who include others in them self-refer to themselves in relationships and achieve self-expansion by incorporating the resources, ideas, and identities of others into the self [4]. Studies have shown that self-expansion is beneficial in promoting romantic relationships [5], for example, improving self-worth and self-esteem and growing with romantic partners [6].

Not only that, but by correcting improper mental patterns, individuals can help improve romantic relationships. In the ABC model proposed by Ellis, A stands for a provoking event, individual behavior, or attitude; B represents the individual's belief in A; C stands for the emotional or behavioral outcome produced. In the conventional view, A directly causes C, but B causes C. In Cognition Behavior Therapy, psychologists change the outcome of an emotion or behavior by correcting an individual's improper perception of something.

2. Methodology

The database Google Scholar was used to carry out a comprehensive literature search. The following search words (and their derivatives) are associated with romantic relationships in adults: "attachment," "intimacy," "Adult Attachment Scale," "self-expansion," "mindfulness," "Ellis ABC model," and "cognitive behavioral therapy." On the side, more studies came from complementary sources like CNKI and were added to facilitate a more inclusive literature review. The author selected the studies according to the inclusion criteria below. Research must (i) include experimental data, (ii) reference patterns of use, and (iii) include some analysis related to the causes of intimacy.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Attachment Theory

3.1.1 Overview of Attachment Theory

In the first year of life, Spitz defined two phases. Among them, the first stage is the kinesthetic stage. The kinesthetic stage is when babies must be fed, held, and looked at in order for them to develop some attachment relationships. Children deprived of hugs during feeding grow up and will never be able to give up their bottle. When they grew up, the contents of that bottle became nothing more than alcohol.

A baby's attachment to its parents is a strong and enduring emotional connection. According to the traditional attachment theory, attachment may be viewed in terms of evolution. According to Bowlby [1], Infant attachment relationships are physiological as soon as they are born in order to develop and adapt. Children will make an effort to separate from at least one person they feel is better equipped to handle life and satisfy their needs. These are known as attachment behaviors, and they include crying or searching for their partner while they are apart. The attachment picture is inaccessible. This pattern of conduct will progressively become ingrained in the person's personality structure through time, impacting their cognition and behavior. Ainsworth developed the three categories of attachment behavior based on this theory: safe, ambivalent, and avoidant [7, 8].

3.1.2 Attachment Theory and Romantic Relationship

The importance of attachment theory is that we can see that in the development of modern psychoanalytic theory, it is actually about the relationship between attachment and brain development. High-quality maternal care can promote the cerebrum growth and psychic growth of infants and young children, while the lack of maternal care can harm the cerebrum growth and psychic growth of infants and young children [9]. Based on these modern brain imaging techniques, such as MRI, it has been found that some decisive relationships between early caregivers and infants can have an important impact on an individual's brain development. The study found that attachment emotional information has different brain activation patterns than non-attachment emotional information, and attachment emotional information promotes attachment system activation [10].

Based on Bowlby's attachment theory and the three infantile tendencies proposed, Hazan and Shaver proposed three "attachment styles" of love relationships, which are the processes of establishing a love connection between partners, just as infants and young children establish attachment emotional connections with their parents in early childhood [1, 2]. "Secure attachment" refers to long-lasting, trusting, and supportive relationships between partners. "Attachment avoidance"

is the dread of and avoidance of romantic closeness. “Anxiety and contradictory attachment”: frequently exhibits emotional instability, intense reactions, aptitude for jealousy, and a desire for a mutually beneficial relationship with the partner. The proportion of the three different love attachment styles in adults was found to be quite close to the proportion of infant attachment style surveys, and the love attachment style of adult subjects could be predicted from their subjective perception of their relationship with their parents. As a result, Hazan and Shaver theorize that the love attachment style of adults may be an interpersonal orientation that starts to develop in infancy and early childhood.

At the same time, traditional theory contends that links between childhood attachment patterns and adult social interaction patterns exist. In discussing the effects of childhood emotional neglect, the researchers hold that a person's attachment experience shapes their capacity to identify and comprehend other people's emotions and that childhood emotional neglect influences their degree of attachment avoidance in adulthood [2, 8].

Intimate Relationship Experience Scale and Relationship Scale, two adult attachment measures, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, and the Other View Scale were used by Li and Jiateng to examine the individuals' performance in intimate relationships. He discovered a substantial relationship between the two EC measures and the associated anxious and avoidant personality trait components [11]. State anxiety, trait anxiety, and social anxiety are all connected to attachment anxiety, as are other types of anxiety. The most concrete proof comes from the outcomes of lovers' mutual evaluation, which shows a substantial positive link between self-reported attachment avoidance and the avoidance behavior assessed by lovers over the course of love.

3.2. Early Adulthood

3.2.1 Overview of Self-Expansion Theory

In the self-expansion theory model, researchers consider love as a desire to expand the self by incorporating others into us and connecting them with specific others. This model not only provides important metaphors for explaining the universal human experience of love but also has a unique focus compared to other approaches to love [5].

3.2.2 Self-Expansion and Romantic Relationship

In the light of the self-expansion model, gaining fresh identities, abilities, perspectives, and resources occurs primarily in romantic relationships, and self-expansion movement benefit relationships [12]. This means that in love relationships, individuals have the opportunity to develop themselves through interaction with others, expanding their identity and abilities. At the same time, this self-expansion also helps deepen our connection and understanding with our partner. By incorporating others within us, people can better understand each other and gain new perspectives and experiences from them. This process of mutual influence and mutual growth can enhance our intimate relationships and bring us more happiness and satisfaction. In addition, self-expansion activities can help us gain access to more resources and opportunities. In a relationship, people can use their partner's support and cooperation to achieve personal goals, and by sharing resources with each other, people can have more opportunities to pursue their dreams.

All in all, the self-expanding model offers a whole new perspective on understanding love relationships. It emphasizes the importance of individuals influencing and growing together with others and argues that by expanding oneself, one can gain more happiness, satisfaction, and opportunities to achieve personal goals [12].

As predicted, in romantic relationships, there are greater changes in the self-concept domain, greater diversity, and increased self-efficacy and self-esteem [6].

3.3. Interventions

3.3.1 Mindfulness

Non-judgmental attention into interactions with those at our side is a manifestation of mindfulness that can be used to foster relationships [13]. The researchers assessed participants on traits of

mindfulness, partnership acceptance, and relationship satisfaction using self-report measures. They found that trait mindfulness was related to partner acceptance, and trait mindfulness and relationship satisfaction were directly positively correlated [14].

3.3.2 Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

According to Albert Ellis's view of human nature, he supposes that people inherently have the potential for rational, correct thinking and irrational, distorted thinking [15]. Human nature makes every individual susceptible to psychological disorders, which are provoked by certain biological and social factors.

Therefore, based on the theoretical hypothesis that "people create or internalize many unreasonable beliefs, and these unreasonable beliefs will cause emotional distress and behavioral problems after encountering provoking events," he proposed the ABC model: A stands for provoking events, individual behaviors or attitudes; B represents the individual's belief in A; C stands for the emotional or behavioral outcome produced. In the conventional view, people think that A directly causes C, but B causes C. For example, a person who says that divorce makes him (or her) frustrated. In the conventional view, people think that divorce causes depression, but it is actually self-defeating belief systems that cause depression.

Applied to adult romantic relationships, this theory can explain some phenomena. For example, the individual carefully prepares a hearty dinner, and the partner only says: It is delicious. This makes this individual angry. If "elaborate dinner is prepared and the partner simply compliments" is taken as A, then C is "the individual is angry." In this case, B is "the individual thinks that if I put in a lot of effort, the partner should respond accordingly."

3.3.3 Cognitive Behavior Therapy

If rational emotional behavior therapy is a theory that faces everyone, then Beck's cognitive behavioral therapy is an analysis of the individual. Unlike Freud's interpretation of negative emotions (in psychoanalysis, Freud believed that anger projected into dreams produces deformation), Aaron Beck argues that people make some peculiar "logical mistakes" because our feelings and actions are influenced by the process of perceiving and constructing our own experiences. Cognitive behavior therapy treats psychological problems as misthinking: making false inferences based on wrong or incomplete information and confusing the results of processes such as thought with reality. Therefore, Beck emphasizes identifying and changing negative thoughts and maladaptive beliefs in individuals.

In the cognitive model of depression, Beck proposed that negative and distorted cognition is the core process of depression. Depressed patients have negative perceptions of themselves, the world, and the future. The predisposing factors of depressed individuals are derived from the stimulation of early maladaptive schemas. Maladaptive schemas are highly personified structures with considerable stability derived from the reality that children construct through their early experiences with their environment, especially their relationships with significant others. When negative events are stimulated, individuals maintain this maladaptive pattern by classifying, selecting, and encoding information, causing negative cognition to dominate the brain of depressed individuals so that when interpreting and remembering their own experiences, a negative distortion of systematic lines is formed, so that positive aspects cannot be seen. The authors suspect that the mechanism of action of maladaptive schemas can also be applied to romantic relationships. For example, individuals with anxious attachment tend to show excessive emotional responses and dependent demands on a temporary absence from a partner (such as a business trip). These individuals may have a tendency to be abandoned in their parent-child relationship in childhood, leading them to form a "leave equals abandon" schema. In romantic relationships, when the partner is briefly away, these individuals unconsciously and automatically operate this schema, thus showing excessive emotions and needs. Baker believes that when poorly adapted schemas are stimulated, the core schema is reconstructed, and the individual's separation anxiety may improve.

4. Conclusion

Through research, this paper finds that personality building in infancy and early adulthood is strongly related to romantic relationships in adults. In infancy, one of the most significant factors affecting personality is attachment. An important point about attachment theory is that research shows that the type of attachment affects not only an individual's future adult life, but also adult attachment and intimacy. In early adulthood, studies have found that individuals can promote adult romantic relationships through external interventions. Therefore, positive personality shaping has a promoting effect on adult romantic relationships. Conversely, improper personality formation hinders romantic relationships in adults. This study focuses on the impact of positive personality shaping in early adulthood of an individual whose attachment relationship is a non-secure attachment in early adulthood. Attachment traits in adults are very similar to his or her attachment style in early life. Individuals with non-secure attachment tend to show too much or too few emotional responses in romantic relationships. Bowlby argues that attachment is actually a system that is built from an internal idea of work, so the type of attachment itself is a strong force for resistance to change. Combined with the theory of cognitive behavioral therapy, attachment styles are “difficult to change” because the individual has developed a highly developed personality, that is, schema. The schema operates imperceptible to the individual because it has been internalized into a fixed pattern of behavior. If treatment can be intervened while the schema is working, as the number of treatments increases, the individual will perceive the inappropriate schema more and more quickly and correct it. In addition, changing the way individuals and others are treated through self-expansion and mindfulness can also promote romantic relationships. The major dedication of this article is the integration of factors that influence romantic relationships in an individual's early childhood and adulthood. Much of the current literature analyzes the influence of a certain way on romantic relationships over a certain period. This paper analyzes the important influence of attachment relationships in infancy from the perspective of psychoanalysis, and explores the changes in attachment relationships in early adulthood from the perspective of cognitive behavioral therapy. The shortcomings of the current study are that (i) it ignores the impact of personality formation on romantic relationships between infancy and early adulthood and (ii) it only explores positive personality changes in early adulthood. There is no categorical inquiry into the stages of personality development. Future research can comprehensively consider the effects on romantic relationships in addition to early childhood attachment relationships, such as genetics, major trauma during growth, and cultural environment.

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