

Theses of PhD Dissertation

**THE ATTACHMENT-THEORETICAL
APPROACH OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
RELIGION**

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2012, Debrecen

I. The goal of the dissertation

The attachment-theory as a theoretical framework of the psychology of religion

Present dissertation would like to contribute to empirical attachment-theoretical investigation of some actual problem of psychology of religion. The attachment –theoretical approach, as a theoretical framework, has an important role in linking the very diverse researches in these field, and in the integrating psychology of religion into the mainstream psychology (KIRKPATRICK, 2005; GRANQVIST, 2006).

The basic tenets of attachment-theory

In the center of this psychological viewpoint developed by BOWLBY (1969, 2009) is the ethological-psychological goal-corrected attachment system. The aim of this behavioural structure is to maintain or achieve proximity to caregiver providing security for infant. In the situations of external or internal distress the attachment system is activated: the infant looks for and calls the caregiver, moves to her/him to reestablish the contact with her/him. The person, who answers these signals regularly and reliably becomes special for the infant: this person will be the attachment figure, and her/his proximity will be very important for the infants. The attachment figure has three determinative attributes. The first one is, that she/he can provide *haven of safety* for the infant in stressful situation. The second one is, that the attachment figure can prevent the separation of the infant and *maintain the proximity*. The third one is, that this caregiver can be a *secure base* for the infant; with this background the infant can move apart from the attachment figure, explore her/his environment confidently, and return for emotional charge (HAZAN, SHAVER, 1994).

Before the end of the first year mental models, internal representations are developed in the infants' mind due to the experiences with their caregiver. These internal working models (IWM) contain representation about herself/himself, caregiver and their relationship, and influence the expectations about others, perceptions and interpretations of others' behaviour and the respond to them. The IWM-s are depend on the quality of nurturing (is the caregiver consistently responsive and attentive?) and remain relative stable across the life-span.

The IWM-s are manifested as attachment styles on the level of behaviour. There are different models to measure the attachment styles. One of them is the two-dimensions

approach of BARTHOLOMEW and HOROWITZ (1991). The first dimension expresses how the person sees herself/himself in the situations related to attachment (Model of Self), the second one expresses the image of other persons, the feelings, expectations, thoughts linked others (Model of Other). The negative Model of Self associated with anxiety, while the negative Model of Other connected to avoidance tendency. Four attachment patterns can be distinguished from the two dimensions of this model (table 1.)

Table 1.: Attachment patterns according to model of Bartholomew and Horowitz

		Model of Other	
		positive	negative
Model of Self	positive	<i>Secure attachment</i>	<i>Dismissing attachment</i>
	negative	<i>Preoccupant attachment</i>	<i>Fearful attachment</i>

Religiosity as attachment relationship

The attachment-theoretical approach in the psychology of religion is based on the fact that the religious experiences are related with a particular relationship (at least in Christianity). The generality of Christians primarily live their faith as a relationship with God (e.g. JAMES, 1994; KIRKPATRICK, 2005).

The attachment-theoretical approach considers religion not only as a relationship, but emphasises that it's an attachment relationship what differs from other forms of human relationships, e.g. from romantic love. In the attachment relationship God appears as attachment figure of the person. The application of Bowlby's theory for religiosity was suggested first by theologians. REED (1978, cited in KIRKPATRICK, 2005, 52) has drawn attention to the analogy that „every form of attachment behaviour, and of the behaviour of the attachment figure, identified by Bowlby, has its close counterpart in the image of the relationship between Israel (or the Worshiper) and God which we find in, for example, the psalms”. Even according to Kaufman (1981, cited in KIRKPATRICK, 2005, 53) the idea of God can be considered as „the idea of an absolutely adequate attachment-figure... God is thought of as a protective and caring parent who is always reliable and available to its children when they are in need”.

God can be considered as an attachment-figure also in attachment-theoretical point of view because God bears the determinative attributes of the construct of attachment-figure. Numerous psychological studies provide evidences that God can be haven of safety for the believers in the stressful situation, satisfies their needs to be close to Him (proximity maintenance), and God as a secure base can allow the autonomy in the lifestyle of believers and their return for emotional charge.

Two dominant hypotheses was developed for interpreting the connection between the attachment styles (or internal working models) and adult religiosity. Under the *correspondence hypothesis* the image of god suits to the IWM-s created by the experiences with the primary caregiver (the positive Model of Other correlates with the image of loving and nurturing God). However, from the *compensation hypothesis* God is a substitute attachment figure (AINSWORTH, 1985): people who haven't found the secure base and haven of safety in their primary attachment figures (mainly in their parents) seek God, and often have sudden and dramatic religious conversion experience. Both hypotheses was supported by numerous investigations (KIRKPATRICK és SHAVER, 1990; KIRKPATRICK és SHAVER, 1992; KIRKPATRICK, 1997; KIRKPATRICK, 1998; KIRKPATRICK, 2005). According to GRANQVIST (1998)), in turn, the formation of religiosity is primarily connected with socialization processes and the religiosity of the mother, therefore the attachment style and IWM-s play secondary role: the secure attachment facilitates the religious socialization. Granqvist named this phenomenon *socialized correspondence*.

Overall, we can say that from attachment-theoretical point of view the adult religiosity is related two different processes. The first one is the religion developing gradually, in which the children acquire the belief of their parents step by step. In this socialization process the children are securely attached, and this process takes place accordingly to correspondence hypothesis. The second type of religiosity is linked to insecurely attached children who sometime find a trustworthy attachment figure mostly in their teens. They often experience sudden and dramatic conversion; this process takes place accordingly to compensation hypothesis. These two processes create the two-process model of religious change.

(KIRKPATRICK, 2005), which is analogue of W. JAMES' (1994) description about the types of religiosity: he has distinguished the religiosity of once born men (*healthy-mindedness*) and the twice born men (*morbid-mindnesses*) (VASADY, 1927).

The global goals of present dissertation

In the majority of former investigations of connection between adult religiosity and attachment style the religiosity was measured by one-dimensional instruments. In our studies, in turn, we tried to complete previous works by using more complex, multi-dimensional instrument for measurement of religiosity.

We carried out two different studies (one with religious, and the other with religious and non-religious participants), which were linked by the identical measures of religiosity and attachment.

II. Study 1

The aim of the study

The study dealt with three issues. Two of them were made to prepare the real goal of the study. The first issue was the controlling of validity of our two main tools, the Post Critical Belief Scale (to measure the religiosity) and the Attachment Style Questionnaire (to measure the attachment). The second one was some additional investigations: the instruments used in the validity controlling allowed to inquire into relationship between parental bonding, psychological well-being and religiosity. The third issue contained the central problem of our study: the relationship between attachment style and the dimensions of religiosity. Our study intended to contribute to testing the correspondence and the compensation hypotheses.

Hypotheses

A) Validity testing of Post Critical Belief Scale and Attachment Style Questionnaire

Post Critical Belief Scale:

Hypothesis A/1.:

The religious attitudes measured by the Post Critical Belief Scale differs from each other significantly regarding to different indexes of religiosity; the scale „Inclusion of transcendence” is in strong correlation with other indexes of religion, but doesn't the scale „Symbolic interpretation”.

Attachment Style Questionnaire:

Hypothesis A/2.:

The scales of Attachment Style Questionnaire have suitable convergent validity (measured by the scales of Parental Bonding Questionnaire).

Hypothesis A/3.:

The scales of Attachment Style Questionnaire regarding to Model of Self are in strong correlation with self-esteem and satisfaction with life.

Hypothesis A/4.:

The four attachment styles in the model of Bartholomew and Horowitz can be identified by the scales of Attachment Style Questionnaire in the Hungarian sample, too.

Hypothesis A/5.:

The four attachment styles differ from each other significantly regarding to parental bonding.

Hypothesis A/6.:

The four attachment styles differ from each other significantly regarding to psychological well-being, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life.

B) Additional investigations

Hypothesis B/1.:

The different indexes of religiosity correlate positively with self-esteem and satisfaction with life, because the religiosity enables person to have an attachment figure in God, who can be a secure base.

Hypothesis B/2.:

The positive parental bonding correlates positively with religiosity, because it is followed by IWM-s, which can be grounds of experiences God as a nurturing attachment figure.

C) Testing the correspondence and the compensation hypotheses.

Hypothesis C/1.:

The four attachment styles differ from each other significantly regarding to the indexes of religiosity, which are directly related with the relationship of God (the scales „Inclusion of transcendence”, „Intrinsic religiosity”, and „Extrinsic-personal religiosity”), that is to say attachment style influences the religiosity. If the secure attachment style would link to higher rates of religiosity, it would be an argument besides the correspondence hypothesis; if the insecure attachment styles would connect to higher religiosity, it would be an argument besides the compensation hypothesis.

Hypothesis C/2.:

The four attachment styles don't differ from each other significantly regarding to the indexes of religiosity, which aren't directly related with the relationship of God (the scales of „Symbolic interpretation” and „Extrinsic-social religiosity”).

Methods

Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ)

Attachment was measured by the *Attachment Style Questionnaire* (FEENEY és mtsai, 1994). This tool consists of five scales (Confidence, Discomfort with closeness, Need for approval, Preoccupation with relationships, Relationships as secondary) which are appropriate to indentify (by cluster-analysis) the attachment styles in the model of Bartholomew and Horowitz.

Post-Critical Belief Scale (PCBS)

Post-Critical Belief Scale was used to measure the multi-dimensional religiosity (HUTSEBAUT, 1996). This instrument was developed by HUTSEBAUT (1996) on the basis of WULFF'S (1997) work. According to Wulff there are two independent dimensions underlying attitudes toward religion. The first one is the scale „Inclusion of transcendence”; it measures the extent to which the person believe int he transcendent reality. The second one is the scale „Symbolic interpretation”, it expresses whether the person interprets religious statements and texts literally or symbolically.

Parental Bonding Inventory (PBI)

Parental Bonding Inventory was developed (PARKER et al., 1979) to measure the important parental factors in the child-parent-interactions. In the Hungarian version there are three factors underlying the items of the questionnaire: care, overprotecting, and restriction (TÓTH, GERVAI, 1999).

Rosenberg Global Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

Rosenberg Global Self-Esteem Scale was partly used to test the convergent validity of Attachment Style Questionnaire. The most current measure of the construct of global self-esteem was developed by ROSENBERG (1965).

The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

The impact of religiosity for psychological well-being was measured by this instrument (DIENER et al., 1985).

Age-Universal I-E Scale – 12

The Maltby Age-Universal I-E Scale – 12 was partly used to test the convergent validity of Post-Critical Belief Scale (MALTBY, 1999). This instrument consists of three scales: intrinsic, extrinsic-personal, and extrinsic-social religiosity. The discrimination of the constructs intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity is based on the distinction between mature and immature religion (ALLPORT, 1950).

The religiosity was also measured by a worldwide index of frequency of church attendance.

Online-form was used in the questionnaire recording.

The statistical analyses were carried out by SPSS 14.

Participants

The participant of this study were reached through the assistance of students of PPKE BTK. In the sample of our study were 381 persons (267 women and 214 men, mean age was 27 years). Most of participants had secondary education (a quarter of them had higher education, in greater proportion among men). The 47 percent of men and 30 percent of women weren't religious, and the 16 percent of men and 26 percent of women were religious but didn't belong to any denomination. Most of religious participants were catholic (men's quarters and thirds of women). The quarter of participants often went to church, the most part of participants (81 percent of men and 75 percent of women) rarely or never went to church.

Main results

I. One part of the hypotheses concerned the testing validity of instrument used in the study.

1. The Post-Critical Belief Scale was able to identify two independent dimensions of religiosity and four attitudes toward religion. The „Inclusion of transcendence” was in strong correlation with other indexes of religiousness, while the „Symbolic interpretation” proved to be an irrespective dimension. We have found respect to the attitudes that the second naiveté (characterized by high rates of both the „Inclusion of transcendence” and the „Symbolic

interpretation” scales) was in connection with „extrinsic-social” religiosity. The openness to different mentalities and values are central in the second naiveté, therefore the aspect of religiosity appearing in theology as world-openness (Weltoffenheit) (PANNENBERG, 1991) is expressed in this attitude.

2. We have confirmed that Attachment Style Questionnaire is able to identify the four attachment styles in the model of BARTHOLOMEW and HOROWITZ (1991). These styles differ from each other significantly respect to the indexes of parental bonding and psychological well-being in accordance with the theoretical model.

II. The second part of hypotheses concerned the relationship between the parental bonding and psychological well-being.

1. We have found that isn't correlation between the global self-esteem and the religiosity, the satisfaction with life, in turn, is weak connection with „Inclusion of transcendence”, „Intrinsic religiosity”, and frequency of church attendance.

2. The parental bonding was connected with religiosity differently in women and men, over and above belonging and not belonging to a certain denomination. The women who belong to a denomination were less committed to their religion, if their parents were more controlling; for the men who belong to a denomination paternal bonding proved to be significant: the boys of more controlling and restrictive fathers reached higher scores on the „Extrinsic-personal” religiosity scale, while the boys of more careful fathers reached lower scores on it. This may mean that the „Extrinsic-personal” religiosity, i.e. the personal-hedonistic aspect of religiosity, is linked to the compensation of paternal control (maybe the consequence of conflicts with the father); this finding can also be interpreted in other way: the personal-hedonistic religiosity can be considered as the submission to the power of the controlling religious father. Another interesting result was that the boys of cold and controlling fathers reached higher scores on the „Symbolic interpretation” scale.

III. The third part of hypotheses concerned the testing the correspondence and the compensation hypotheses.

1. We haven't found any differences between the four attachment styles in regard to scale of „Symbolic interpretation”.

2. We have found the highest scores of the scales of „Inclusion of transcendence” and frequency of church attendance in the secure and preoccupied attachment style, while the lowest scores in the dismissing attachment style. The connection between secure attachment

(most of the Catholics belonged to this style) and religiosity supports the correspondence hypothesis. The connection between preoccupied attachment (Protestant belonged to this style in larger part than Catholics did) and religiosity may support the compensation hypothesis at first glance; however, this finding can mean that the relationship with God may fit the pattern of preoccupied attachment style (further studies are needed to investigate this hypothesis, eg. research of the style of attachment to God). The connection between dismissing attachment and religiosity also harmonize with the correspondence hypothesis: in this insecure attachment style we haven't found any signs of compensation mechanism. At last fearful attachment connected with average extent of religiosity; the highest scores of the scale of „Extrinsic-personal” religiosity were, in turn, in this insecure attachment style, which supports the compensation hypothesis.

3. The scales of „Inclusion of transcendence” and „Extrinsic-personal religiosity” also differed from each other, because „Inclusion of transcendence” was in positive correlation with scales of Model of Other, while „Extrinsic-personal religiosity” was in positive correlation with scales of Model of Self. It means that in the background of these two dimensions of religiosity there are different patterns of internal working models.

II. Study 2

The aim of the study

In our second study the research of relationship between attachment and religiosity was continued respect to two another factors: namely the role of the parental religiosity (ie religious socialization), and the religious doubt. Our objectives was testing the correspondence and the compensation hypotheses of attachment-theoretical psychology of religion regard to the religious doubt, and investigation the problem of priority of attachment versus religious socialization in the development of adult religiosity.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1.:

The religiosity of the parents is in strong positive correlation with the religiosity of their adult children.

Hypothesis 2.:

The attitudes toward religiosity identified through the Post-Critical Belief Scale differs from each other regarding to religious doubt. If „religious exploration” (one consequence of experience secure base) plays important role in the phenomenon of religious doubt, then

persons belonging to the attitude of „second naiveté” will reach higher values on the doubt scale, than people in the attitude of „ortodoxy”. If religious doubt expresses rather rejection of religiosity, then people belonging to the attitude of „second naiveté” will reach the highest values on the doubt scale.

Hypothesis 3.:

If the religious doubt is connected with mistrust, then it will correlate positively with factors of Model of Other, ie with the Relationships as secondary and Discomfort with closeness scales of Attachment Style Questionnaire, and it will correlate negatively with the Confidence scale.

Hypothesis 4.:

Our data will support KIRKPATRICK’S (2005) results, and we expect, that the children of religious parents are more religious, if the children are attached securely, the children of non-religious parents, in turn, are more religious, if they are attached insecurely (especially, if they are fearful attached).

Methods

The religiosity was measured in several ways. Our main instrument was the Hungarian shortened version of Post-Critical Belief Scale (MARTOS et al, 2009), however some other question about the religiosity were used:

1. To what extent do you consider yourself to be religious?
2. How important is the relationship with God to you?
3. How often do you attend church services?

We also asked the parents’ religiosity:

1. Please indicate to what extent your mother is religious?
2. Please indicate to what extent your father is religious?

Religious Doubts Scale

In our study we used the Religious Doubts Scale developed by Altemeyer (HILL, HOOD, 1999). This scale measures the extent to which people experience doubts about traditional religious teaching. The questionnaire contains items expressing doubts based both on experiences and theoretical considerations.

The attachment was measured through Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) (FEENEY et al, 1994).

The statistical analyses were carried out by SPSS 14.

Participants

The participant of this study were reached through the assistance of students of PPKE BTK and Sapientia College of Theology of Religious Order. The questionnaires were completed by these students and persons reached by them. In the sample of the study were 674 persons (466 women and 208 men, mean age was 26 years). The vast majority of participants were catholic and committed to religious belief.

Main results

I. In accordance with previous researches we have found that generally both the paternal and maternal religiosity are in strong correlation with the religiousness of their children. This is true respect to scales of „Inclusion of transcendence”, religious doubts, and the scales of self-reported religiosity; the „Symbolic interpretation”, in turn, is independent from parental religiosity.

II. The religious doubt was in very strong negative correlation with „Inclusion of transcendence”, and it was independent from the „Symbolic interpretation”.

III. In examination of the relationship of religious doubt and attachment we have found characteristic gender differences. The religious doubt was connected with negative Model of Self in women; in men, in turn, it was connected with negative Model of Other. From attachment-theoretical point of view this findings means that there are different deep structure underlying the religious doubts in women and men. The female doubts can be characterized primarily as anxiety and ambivalence, however in the doubts of men the keeping distance from religion and God plays an important role.

IV. Regarding to the connections of indexes of religiousness with parental religiosity, attachment style and gender we have found the following results:

1. The scale value of „Inclusion of transcendent” was primarily influenced by parental religiosity in both sexes: if both parents were religious, their children reached high values on

this scale, if neither parent was religious, the children reached very low values. However, in women there was an important exception: the dismissively attached persons reached have proved to be very religious by this scale, even if neither of their parents were religious. This means that in the case of dismissing attachment evidences of compensation hypothesis were found (in contrast the results of the first study).

If only the mother was religious, women characterized by negative Model of Self were more religious, however, men characterized by negative Model of Other were less religious. This means that in the case of negative Model of Self women tended to resemble their mothers more than their fathers, while in the case of negative Model of Other men resembled their father more. Accordingly we can say that adult religiosity are influenced both attachment style and religious socialization in these insecure attachment styles. (In secure attachment style we have found average values on the „Inclusion of transcendence” scale.)

2. The scale of „Symbolic interpretation” were primarily influenced by attachment style in both sexes (also in contrast the results of the first study). We have found higher values on this scale in both styles associated to positive Model of Other in women, in men, in turn, only in the preoccupied attachment style (independent from the parental religiosity). However, in case of negative Model of Other: the fearful attachment style was connected with lower values on this scale in men, independent from the parental religiosity). In women, in turn, the fearful attachment was connected with lower values only if the mother was religious and father wasn't. In the dismissing attachment the „Symbolic interpretation” was average in both sexes; however, if neither parent was religious, men reached higher, while women reached lower values on this scale.

We found the highest values of „Symbolic interpretation” scale in both sexes, if the persons attached securely and only their mother was religious. In this situation the persons probably have to evaluate the different views of their parents, and to find solution to reduce anxiety caused by loyalty conflict.

3. The scale of Religious doubts were primarily influenced by parental religiosity, while the attachment also plays an important role in it (especially in men). If both parents are religious and the Model of Other is positive, the values of this scale are very low in both sexes. However, if the persons have preoccupied attachment style (it's one of the two styles connecting with positive Model of Other) and non-religious parents, they doubt very strongly. In the cases of dismissing attachment we have also found strong doubts in men (mainly if their mother is non-religious), in women, in turn, we have found merely average doubts, independent from parental religiosity. Finally, in the cases of fearful attachment style we have

found similar results, but if both parents were religious, the men reached low values of the doubts scale.

III. Summary

In our studies we have shown that *neither hypotheses of attachment-theoretical approach of psychology of religion are generally valid*. It's important to examine the different patterns of dimensions of religiosity, attachment styles, socialization effects, and gender roles to understand the relationship between attachment and religiousness.

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V. Publications connected to the subject of the dissertation

Journal articles:

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URBÁN SZABOLCS; MARTOS TAMÁS (2009) *The Use of the Social Cognition and Object Relations Scale (SCORS) in the Field of Psychology of Religion*. Congress of International Association for the Psychology of Religion, Vienna

URBÁN SZABOLCS (2006) *Kísérlet vallással kapcsolatos kifejezések megítélésére alkalmas szemantikus differenciáliskálák kialakítására és alkalmazására*. MPT XVII. Országos Nagygyűlése, Budapest

VI. Other publications

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