Impact of maternal attachment security on emotional expression in young males

Noemi Ramirez

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IMPACT OF MATERNAL ATTACHMENT SECURITY ON EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN YOUNG MALES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Psychology:
Clinical Counseling

by
Noemi Ramirez
March 2006
IMPACT OF MATERNAL ATTACHMENT SECURITY ON
EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN YOUNG MALES

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Approved by:

Laura Kampfer, Chair, Psychology

David Chavez

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between early maternal attachment security and verbal emotional expression in males. Whereas attachment has been found to be related to the development of emotional competence, little research has examined the relationship of attachment security to emotional expression in boys. It was hypothesized that males with higher attachment security would be better able to express their emotions verbally. Participants were 115 male college students aged 18- to 25 years (M = 20.0 yrs.) who completed a questionnaire comprised of two measures of early maternal attachment security (Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment [Armsden & Greenberg, 1987] and Parental Attachment Questionnaire [Kenny, 1987]), two measures of emotional expression (Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 [Bagby et al., 1994] and Ambivalence Over Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire [King & Emmons, 1990]), and demographic items. Results showed a low to moderate relationship between early attachment security and verbal emotional expression. While findings provide some support for the literature linking early attachment security and subsequent emotional competence, it is suggested that an insufficient assessment instrument of
verbal emotional expression, a modest sample size, and a constricted age sample size may have contributed to a lower than expected relationship between these two constructs.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My gratitude to Dr. Laura Kamptner for her support, guidance, and dedication to this study. Your constant encouragement and assistance steered me through this project. It has been a pleasure and honor to work with you. I would also like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. David Chavez and Dr. Faith McClure for their encouragement and valuable input. Thanks to my family for their love. Special thanks to Dean Papas, without your love and support this project would not have been possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................. iii  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................... v  
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................ viii  

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- Emotional Competence ........................................ 1  
  - Categories of Emotional Competence ..................... 2  
  - Why is Emotional Competence Important? ............... 4  
- Reaction to Children’s Emotions ............................ 7  
- Discussion of Emotions ....................................... 7  
- Emotional Expressiveness ................................. 8  
- Attachment ...................................................... 8  
- Gender and Emotional Socialization ...................... 10  
  - Parental Influences on Gender Differences in Emotional Expression ................. 11  
  - Consequences of Gender Differences in Emotional Socialization for Boys .......... 17  
- Summary and Purpose of Study ............................ 20  

## CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

- Participants ..................................................... 23  
- Measures ......................................................... 23  
  - Maternal Attachment ...................................... 24  
  - Verbal Expression of Emotions ......................... 25  
- Demographics .................................................... 27  

vi


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Analyses</th>
<th>28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyses</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Analysis</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploratory Analyses: Ethnicity and Social Economic Status</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Directions for Future Studies</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPENDIX A: THE INVENTORY OF PARENT AND PEER ATTACHMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX B: PARENTAL ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
<th>53</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**APPENDIX C: TORONTO ALEXITHYMIA SCALE-20: DIFFICULTY DESCRIBING FEELINGS SUBSCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX D: AMBIVALENCE OVER EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
<th>60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**APPENDIX E: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

| REFERENCES | 65 |
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Definitions, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Maternal Attachment and Verbal Emotional Expression Scales ...... 28

Table 2. Correlations between Attachment and Verbal Expression Of Emotions Scales ....... 30

Table 3. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment (IPPA) Groups on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales ............... 31

Table 4. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment Groups (for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire: Affective Subscale) on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales ................. 33

Table 5. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment Groups (for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire: Individuality Subscale) on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales ....................... 34

Table 6. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment Groups (for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire: Support Subscale) on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales ......................... 35

Table 7. One-Way Analysis of Variance Comparing Ethnic Groups on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales ....................... 36

Table 8. T-Test Comparing Socio-Economic Status and Verbal Emotional Expression Scores ...... 37
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Recent trends indicate an increasing interest in the social and emotional development of boys, and especially society’s influence in steering boys away from emotional connections with others. Books like Real Boys (Pollack, 1999) and Raising Cain (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000) are part of an effort to educate people about the impact of culture on boys’ development. The purpose of the current study is to add to this literature by exploring how the quality of boys’ attachment security to their mothers impacts their emotional development, specifically their capacity for verbally expressing their emotions.

Emotional Competence

In recent decades the study of emotions and their importance in human development has intensified (Dunham, 1998; Saarni, 1990). The idea that developing emotional skills has a positive impact throughout life has become a relevant topic of research (e.g., Raver, 2002). One area of this research focuses on the specific emotional skills individuals need for well-being throughout the lifespan, e.g., emotional regulation, the appropriate expression of emotions, and understanding one’s own and others’
feelings. These are all part of what is referred to as emotional competence or emotional intelligence.

**Categories of Emotional Competence**

There are several ways researchers have defined emotional competence. Generally, emotional competence refers to a number of emotion-related skills including emotional regulation, emotional expression, and the understanding of emotions (Dunham, 1998; Lewis, 1993; Saarni, 1990; Thompson, 1994). These researchers define emotional regulation as the way people modify, monitor, and evaluate an emotional response, while emotional expression refers to the representation of emotional experience through different modalities, i.e., facial, postural, vocal, and locomotor. Finally, understanding emotions refers to the range of different cognitive-emotional skills such as the labeling of emotional expressions, the comprehension of causes and consequences of emotional response, and the use of language to describe one’s own experience and to clarify that of others. The ability to manage one’s emotions in these three fundamental ways is referred to as emotional competence.

Emotional competence has also been defined as “emotional intelligence” (EI), i.e., the grouping of
emotionally-related skills. Developed in the early 1990s with the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is defined as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), emotional intelligence is composed of four main branches which operate in a cognitive system: emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding, and managing emotions. Emotional perception involves the ability to perceive and express feelings, while emotional integration refers to the way people use emotions and how emotions can be used to alter thoughts to allow for different points of view. Emotional understanding involves the ability to recognize and label emotions, as well as a general understanding of what causes them. Finally, managing emotions refers to the capacity to cope with emotions within one's self and others.

Finally, Daniel Goleman (1995) has elaborated on the above and has identified five main characteristics of emotional intelligence: knowing one's emotions, managing one's emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships. Knowing one's
component of developing relationships (Izard, 1991) and the effectiveness with which we utilize emotional skills plays a role in social and personal adjustment.

In childhood, the importance of emotional competence is clear. Children who are well-adjusted emotionally do better socially (Saarni, 1990). Research shows that children who develop such emotional skills as understanding and regulating their emotions have better relationships with both teachers and peers (Denham & Burton, 1996). Emotions are also important for school success. Studies have found, for example, that children who are well-adjusted emotionally do better in school compared to those with emotional difficulties (Izard et al., 2001; Raver, 2000).

Research on the adult years also shows the benefits of possessing emotional competence. A strong predictor of successful interpersonal relationships as well as success in the workplace is the ability to handle one's emotions (Goleman, 1995). People who possess emotional intelligence perform better in the workplace, especially in the areas of leadership and cognitive-based performance (Goleman, 1998; Lam & Kirby, 2002). Adults who are better able to regulate their emotions have more stable and happier marriages (Fitness, 2001). Deficits in emotional
competence may result in depression, high-risk behaviors, and eating disorders (Goleman, 1995). In addition, alexithymia (i.e., difficulty in identifying and describing feelings) is closely related to psychiatric disorders such as substance abuse, eating disorders, anxiety, and depressive disorders (Taylor, 2001). Recently, research has also revealed that emotional skills are connected to adult physical well-being. For example, the self-regulation of emotions has been found related to physical well-being regarding heart disease with people who are unable to manage emotions being more prone to heart failure (Salovey, 2001).

**Emotional Socialization: Where Does Emotional Competence Come From?**

The family provides a primary context for children to learn emotional competence (Ginott, 1967; Gottman et al., 1997). In the complex, multifaceted process of emotional socialization, parents can influence children’s emotional competence through a number of emotion-related parenting practices (Eisenberg, 1998). These practices include reactions to children’s emotions, the discussing of emotions, emotional expressiveness, and the degree of attachment fostered.
Reaction to Children’s Emotions

Studies show that parental reactions to children’s emotions influence children’s social functioning and emotional competence (Eisenberg, 1996). Parents who respond with minimization or punitive reactions to children’s negative emotions tend to have children who rate lower in social functioning (i.e., social skills, peer acceptance, and prosocial behaviors) compared to those children whose parents exhibit supportive responses (i.e., encouraging the expression of emotions, helping children problem solve, and comforting the child) (Eisenberg, 1996). Research also shows that when children themselves expect a negative reaction from parents when they express emotions (e.g., parent’s not being understanding, kind, or warm), they are less likely to communicate their emotions (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988). These studies show that parental responses to children’s emotions influence both children’s social competence and the communication of their internal, affective states.

Discussion of Emotions

Discussion about emotions also plays a role in the development of children’s emotional competence. Parental discussion about emotions has been related to children’s understanding of emotions (Dunn et al., 1991). Children of
mothers who discuss feelings when children are experiencing negative emotions (e.g., anger) do better on tests of emotional understanding compared to those children whose mothers do not (Dunn & Brown, 1994). This is an important aspect of emotional competence because it has been shown that children who are able to discuss and understand their emotions are more likely to regulate their emotions in stressful situations (Kopp, 1992).

**Emotional Expressiveness**

Emotional expressiveness is yet another parenting practice that influences emotional competence. Research shows a positive relationship between emotional expressiveness in the family and children's ability to regulate emotions. Garner (1995), for example, found that parents who were emotionally expressive (with both positive and negative emotions) had children who exhibited emotion-regulating behaviors (e.g., self-soothing) in stressful situations.

**Attachment**

Research indicates that children with secure attachments regulate emotions better and also show better emotional understanding (both important emotional related skills of emotional competence) compared to insecurely attached children (Gilliom et al., 2002; Laible &
According to attachment research, when a child is provided with warm, sensitive, and consistent care, the child develops a secure attachment to the parent. In the parent-child relationship, the parent’s role, according to Bowlby (1998), is to serve as a secure base. This base represents the relationship from which the child departs to explore his or her world, knowing that he can always come back to this secure base to meet his needs. These needs include physical as well as emotional needs.

In attachment relationships, communication plays an important role. As indicated by Bretherton (1990; 1996), children and adults with different attachment styles communicate differently: securely attached children are able to communicate their emotions and feeling states more clearly than insecurely attached children. According to Bretherton (1996), when the caregiver is sensitive and responsive to the child’s communication of his or her needs, it allows the child to develop an expectation (internal working model) that others are emotionally available. This allows for the child to be able to communicate openly about his or her emotions and feeling states. This finding is further supported by Main et al. (1985) who found that children that classified as securely
attached were able to communicate more openly about drawings of parent-child separation scenes. Research also shows that adults classified as securely attached will display greater self-disclosure to others (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991).

In sum, parents provide a context of socialization which impacts the development of emotional competence. Through parents’ responses and reactions to their children’s emotions as well as the fostering of secure attachment, parents serve as important social agents through whom children learn about their emotions and those of others, and the appropriate expression and regulation of emotions.

Gender and Emotional Socialization

Research shows that boys tend to be less emotionally expressive than girls. Not only are boys less emotionally expressive, but as boys get older they often become even less expressive with their emotions while the opposite tends to occur with girls (Brody, 1996). In the case of adults, research shows that females are more expressive facially and verbally while males tend to be more behaviorally expressive (Brody, 1996).

Despite these findings, an interesting gender-blind study conducted by Cunningham and Shapiro (as cited by
Brody, 1996) indicates that infant males are actually judged to be more emotionally expressive compared to females. Thus, it seems that there is a change in the course of a boy’s development that leads to a decline in emotional expressiveness.

**Parental Influences on Gender Differences in Emotional Expression**

Where do these gender differences then originate? Fuchs and Thelen (1998) suggest that as boys get older they tend to become cautious of the expression of their emotions (especially sadness), and if they don’t expect a positive outcome of expressing their emotions they report a lower likelihood of expressing their emotions. Kindlon and Thompson (1999) indicate that while girls are encouraged by our culture from a very early age to talk about their feelings and emotions, boys are steered away from expressing their emotions. Parents encourage this gender difference by the ways they discuss emotions with daughters as opposed to their sons, how they model or display emotional expression, how they react to their daughters’ and sons’ emotional expressions, and how they support the early emotional separation of boys.

First, research indicates that parents differ in their discussions of emotions depending on the child’s gender. A study conducted by Fivush (1989) found that when
discussing emotional content of past events, mothers of daughters focus more on positive emotions compared to mothers of sons. Moreover, the study showed that mothers of sons discussed emotions such as anger, as opposed to mothers of daughters who never discussed being angry. Consistent with this last finding, Cervantes and Callaman (1998) found that mothers talked more about feeling states and labeled more emotions with girls while they gave more emotional explanations to boys when playing out a story with emotional content in a dollhouse game. These studies indicate that boys are socialized to use less positive emotional words and more negative emotional words (i.e., "angry") compared to girls. Furthermore, studies show that mothers encourage more communication about feelings with girls than with boys (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987).

Second, mothers and fathers have been found to be more emotionally expressive and use a wider range of emotions with daughters than with their sons (Brody & Hall, 1993). For example, in a study conducted by Griefe, Alvarez, and Ulman (1981; as cited in Brody & Hall, 1993), when wordless storybooks were given to parents to interpret to their preschool sons and daughters, fathers used more emotion words in telling the stories to their daughters compared to their sons. Mothers avoided using
the word "angry" when "reading" the story to their daughters, but did use it with their sons. Research also shows that mothers express more positive emotions in the presence of their daughters in comparison to their sons (Garner et al., 1997).

Third, research also points to the different reactions parents have to their sons' and daughters' emotional expression. In Fuchs and Thelen's (1988) study, it was shown that boys were less likely to express emotions such as sadness than were girls. This was thought by the authors to be due to the expectation of their parents' responses to their expression: boys expect their fathers to be more disapproving of their expression of sadness. Thus, at a young age boys are receiving the message that certain feelings should be suppressed.

Finally, parents--especially mothers--also reinforce the gender difference by forcing an early separation on boys. Ideally, a mother-son relationship is a delicate balance between relatedness and separateness that is referred to as synchronous (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). This allows for a boy to "leave his mother without losing her completely and return to her without losing himself" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 116). In our society, a boy's early separation from his mother is viewed as
normal. While it is true that children individuate from mothers as a part of healthy development, this process is not allowed to occur naturally for boys: they are forced to separate too early in an almost forceful way due to cultural “rules” (Pollack, 1999). These rules state that “a boy needs to be disciplined, toughened up, made to act like a “real man,” be independent, keep emotions in check” (Pollack, 1999, p. 11). Beginning at a very young age, these rules are communicated to boys through messages they receive from such different social agents as parents, media, and peers. These messages affect boys’ connections to mothers, and mothers feel pressed by these cultural messages as well. Mothers often feel that if they remain too close to their sons, they will turn out to be a “mama’s boy” or a “sissy” (Kindlon & Thomas, 2000). A boy also experiences a dilemma when he is faced with the need to remain close to his mother but fears being dependent on her because of these cultural rules (Krugman, 1995). It is a threat to a boy’s developing identity in our culture to show his vulnerability. A twelve-year-old talks about crying in the passage below:

...But sometimes boys won’t show when they’re sad. Girls will, because they don’t care. If I was upset by something at school, I might not
cry there because the other boys will stare at me. Or they might call me ‘girly’. So boys will save their crying for home. At home, I will cry in my own room. Then my mom will come in and say, ‘what’s the problem? Don’t worry. Take a nap. You will get over it.’ At home, you only have to hold your crying for a second because no one will tease you there. But in school you can’t do that. You have to live with it. At school, there will be a rumor that ‘He cried. He cried for this stupid little thing.’ (Pollack, 2000)

This forced separation occurs most notably at two different stages of a boy’s development: during early childhood and again during adolescence (Pollack, 1999). During early childhood, it is normal for a young boy to start expanding his central attachment from his mother to others (e.g., father, teachers, coach, etc.) as he naturally starts to explore more and become more independent. A problem arises, however, when the mother-son relationship is threatened by social myths that encourage mothers to disconnect from their sons in a forced manner (Pollack, 1999). The second separation occurs when boys reach adolescence and mothers are again
encouraged to separate from their sons. While it is normal for there to be a healthy individuation from parents at this time, it is problematic when a healthy individuation results in a disconnection because of the messages adolescent boys and their mothers receive about their relationship. Societal expectations of what young males "should" be often disrupt this synchrony. Society is confused about how close or intimate a mother’s relationship should be with a sexually maturing son (Pollack, 1999). For example, physical affection between a mother and her son is often governed by societal rules: "Some mothers fear that physically affectionate mothering may make a boy homosexual or a ‘mama’s boy’ or that their physical closeness will send “the wrong message” (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

In sum, while it is normal for a boy to gradually individuate from his mother, society alters this individuation process with the cultural “rules” it provides for boys. With messages like, “don’t be a mama’s boy” or “boys don’t cry,” boys are forced to separate from their mothers because of the negative consequences attached to not living up to these societal rules (e.g., being teased). These societal rules place boys in a predicament: if they don’t adhere to these rules, they are
often made to feel that they are not a "man". On the other hand, by following these rules, boys are left emotionally disconnected from mothers and others, because showing vulnerable emotions is not one of the societal "manly" rules.

Consequences of Gender Differences in Emotional Socialization for Boys

Parents socialize their children to what is considered to be culturally "appropriate" according to their child's gender. By using more emotion words (as indicated previously by Cervantes and Callanman [1998]) when interacting with their daughters as well as communicating about feeling states more openly and responding more positively to girls' expressions of emotions, girls may learn at an early age that it is acceptable to be verbally expressive about their emotions. Boys, on the other hand, receive a different message. It seems that through boys' interactions with their mothers and fathers, they learn that only some negative emotions such as anger are acceptable; however, the open communication of feelings is not, leaving boys with less of a repertoire in their emotional competence. Boys experience a socialization process that many times leaves them with limited resources with which to handle some of their life conflicts: "...it is training away from
healthful attachment and emotional understanding and expression and it affects even the youngest boy, who learns quickly, for instance, that he must hide his feelings and silence his fears” (Kindlon & Thomas, 1999).

The socialization messages that cut boys off from an emotional connection is further carried out by a “forced separation” steered by myths of what a boy “should” be. This socialization process often leaves boys without an emotional vocabulary by which to express vulnerable feelings. Studies support the idea that boys are less likely to express vulnerable feelings such as sadness and fear (e.g. Fuchs & Thelen, 1988). According to Krugman (1995), a boy often finds himself in a double bind: on the one hand, he has a need to protect against susceptible feelings, and on the other hand, he has a need for emotional connection. Krugman (1995) explains that the consequence of these social messages is that a boy becomes emotionally isolated.

Therefore, when we look at the young male population, there is a high potential for high-risk behaviors and depression (Kindlon & Thompson 2000; Pollack, 1999; Real, 1997). Pollack (1999) argues that due to boys’ disconnection from feeling and expressing vulnerable emotions (brought about by boys’ socialization process),
boys learn to deal with vulnerable emotions in unhealthy ways that leads to depression or high risk-behavior. Research also shows that in adult population, men are more likely cope with emotional distress with substance abuse (Aneshensel, 1992).

The consequences related to socialization of emotional expressiveness that boys experience are extended into adulthood. This is supported by gender conflict theory, which explains that men who adhere to traditionally socialized masculine roles experience more difficulty expressing their emotions (Jakupcak et al., 2003; Levant, 1995; Robertson et al., 2001). In general, men are found to be less emotionally expressive than females (Brody & Hall, 1993; Gross & John, 1995). However, even though research shows that men are less likely to verbally express and talk about their emotions, studies show no significant difference in their experience of emotions compared to females (Jakupcak et al., 2003; Kring & Gordon, 1998). In other words, men do feel their emotions, but they have difficulty verbally expressing them, confirming the argument of this study that boys’ socialization makes it more difficult to develop a language with which to express their emotions (and creates a need to hide or “mask” their feelings, particularly
vulnerable ones). Because of the connection between boys' socialization of verbal emotional expression and the extension of its consequences into adulthood, the current study will look at adult male emotional expression.

Summary and Purpose of Study

In sum, boys experience a socialization process that often does not allow them to learn skills such as the expression of emotions, in particular those of vulnerable feelings. From an early age, boys are steered by social rules such as "boys don't cry" and "don't be a mama's boy" which teaches boys to "mask" their feelings as well as to disconnect from their mothers. Research also points out that parents, particularly the mother (who tends to be the primary caregiver and therefore has a significant impact on boys development), play an important part in carrying out these social rules.

Attachment research, on the other hand, shows that early maternal attachment security is related to the development of emotional competence in children since it allows children to develop an expectation (i.e., internal working model) that others will be emotionally available to them. The attachment literature has pointed out that secure attachment is positively related to emotional regulation, emotional understanding, and expression of
emotions. However, little research has been done connecting attachment security to emotional expression in boys. This is of particular interest because boys experience a socialization process that seems to alienate them from being open and expressive about their feelings. Impact of this socialization is carried out into adulthood and it would be of interest to explore the implications of this legacy for men. The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between attachment and emotional expression in young men. It is expected that there will be a positive and significant relationship between attachment security and verbal expression of emotions.

This study will add to the body of research related to both attachment and emotional intelligence. I speculate that the type of attachment boys have to their primary caregiver will serve as a buffer to the socialization processes boys experience regarding emotions. For example, although society gives the message “boys don’t cry,” I hypothesize that if a boy has a secure attachment to the caregiver, this “societal rule” will have less of an impact on that boy than on those boys who have an insecure attachment. It is expected that this study will serve to increase parents’ awareness regarding raising their boys
in a culture that does not promote what is best for boys’ development, as well as enhance our understanding of the role that attachment plays in boys’ emotional development.
CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Participants

Participants consisted of 115 male college students whose ages ranged from 18 to 25 years (x = 20.0 yrs.). This age range was selected to provide a more homogenous sample who could also easily recall their parents' parenting behaviors. Participants were volunteers who were primarily from undergraduate psychology courses from two midsize southwestern colleges. The ethnicity of the participants was as follows: 37.4% Caucasian, 37.4% Hispanic, 6.1% African American, 9.6% Asian, and 9.6% "other". While the sample could generally be described as lower-middle to middle class (based on father's education level) with 59% of fathers having finished high school or completed some college /trade school, it was also diverse: 14% of fathers had not finished high school and 27% had a B.A. or higher degree.

Measures

A questionnaire consisting of the following measures of maternal attachment and verbal expression of emotions was used.
Maternal Attachment

The following two scales were used to assess maternal attachment. First, the maternal attachment scale from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was used (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The IPPA is a self-report assessment designed to measure aspects of adolescents' or young adults' relationship with their parents and peers (Appendix A). Attachment theory as defined by Bowlby was the main theoretical framework used. The IPPA consists of three general scales: Trust (i.e., the perceived availability and responsiveness of parental figure to the emotional needs), Communication, and Anger/Alienation (i.e., anger towards attachment figure due to emotional detachment or disruption of attachment bond) which can be combined to form a global score. In the current study the global score was used. Questions are answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (Almost Never or Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, and Almost Always or Always). A factor analysis reveals good internal consistency. For the parent scale the alpha coefficients were: Trust = .91, Communication= .91, and Alienation= .86. Test-retest reliability for the parent attachment scale was .93.

The second measure of attachment used was the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ). The PAQ (Kenny,
1987) was designed to measure security of parental attachment in adolescence and early adulthood (Appendix B). The PAQ is a self-report measure responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Not at All, 5 = Very Much). The measure contains three scales for a total of 55 items designed to measure three aspects of an attachment relationship: Affective Quality of Relationship (e.g., "In general my parents are sensitive to my feelings and needs"), Parents as Facilitators of Independence (e.g., "My parents do things for me that I could do for myself"), and Parents as a Source of Support (e.g., "My parents in general support my goals and interests"). For the current study, the word "mother" was used in place of "parents". The Cronbach alpha was .93 for male sample and .95 for female sample.

Verbal Expression of Emotions

The following two measures were used to assess verbal expression of emotions.

The first measure of emotional expression used was the 5-item Difficulty Describing Feelings scale from the Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20) (Bagby et al., 1994), a commonly used measure for the construct of alexithymia (i.e., difficulty identifying and describing feelings) (Appendix C). This subscale contains such items
as: "It is difficult for me to find the right words for my feelings". The TAS-20 has good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .81), with test re-test reliability reportedly .77. The TAS-20 has also been found to have high convergent validity (Bagby et al., 1994).

The second measurement of emotional expression used was the Ambivalence Over Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire (AEQ) (King & Emmons, 1990). The EAQ is a 28-item self-report measure designed to assess the ambivalence over emotional expression and emotional expressiveness (Appendix D). The measure is responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never feels what the statement indicates; 5 = frequently feels the way the statement suggests). The AEQ consists of two factors: the first factor (16 items) measures ambivalence over expressing emotions that might lead to vulnerability (e.g., "I often cannot bring myself to express what I'm really feeling"). The second factor (12 items) is concerned with measuring ambivalence over expressing negative emotions (i.e., anger, jealousy), e.g., "I feel guilty after I have expressed anger to someone." The AEQ has good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .89). Test-retest was conducted over a period of six weeks. The correlation showed to be .78.
Demographics

Participants were also asked to complete demographic questions regarding their age, socio-economic status, and marital status (Appendix E).

Procedure

Questionnaires were handed out to participants in their classes. They completed them at home and returned them to the experimenter the next scheduled class.
CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

The definitions, means, and standard deviations for the variables used in this study are shown below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Definitions, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Maternal Attachment and Verbal Emotional Expression Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Maternal Subscale of the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA)</td>
<td>Maternal attachment security as defined by Bowlby's attachment theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global scale</td>
<td>Aspects of attachment such as communication, trust, and alienation</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>(19.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ)</td>
<td>Security of maternal attachment in adolescents and early adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscales:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Affective Quality of Relationship</td>
<td>Perceived maternal understanding, acceptance, and affect towards mother</td>
<td>105.9</td>
<td>(19.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Facilitators of Independence (Mother)</td>
<td>Perceived respect of mother for supporting individuality and facilitation of independence</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>(9.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Mother as a Source of Support</td>
<td>Perceived maternal availability and help-seeking behavior in situations of stress</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>(9.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Expression:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20)</td>
<td>Extent of difficulty in expressing feelings</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>(2.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variables | Definition | X | SD
--- | --- | --- | ---
2. Ambivalence Over Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire (AEQ) | Ambivalence over emotional expression and emotional expressiveness. | | |
- a) Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotions | Ambivalence over expressing emotions that might lead to feeling vulnerable | 35.8 | (10.0)
- b) Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions | Ambivalence over expressing negative emotions (i.e., anger, jealousy) | 16.5 | (4.3)

Analyses

The hypothesis stated that if males have secure attachments to their caregivers, they would be more likely to express their emotions verbally. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation was first run on the maternal attachment and verbal expression of emotions scales. Results showed some support for the hypothesis: there were low to moderate (but significant) correlations in the expected direction for some of the correlations (Table 2) but not for the Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20. In other words, higher scores on most of the attachment measures resulted in participants being more confident over expressing vulnerable and negative emotions.
Table 2. Correlations between Attachment and Verbal Expression Of Emotions Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Verbal Emotional Expression</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toranto Alexithymia (TAS-20)</td>
<td>Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable (AEQ)</td>
<td>Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions (AEQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Maternal Subscale of the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA)</td>
<td>Global Scale -0.02</td>
<td>-0.19*</td>
<td>-0.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ)</td>
<td>a) Affective -0.01</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Independence -0.10</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>-0.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Support -0.07</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05
**p ≤ .01
***p ≤ .001

Next, a trimeidan split was employed to create high, medium, and low groups for the attachment scales (i.e., the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment [IPPA] and the three Parental Attachment Questionnaire [PAQ] subscales). For each of the two attachment scales, t-tests were then utilized to compare the high vs. low attachment groups on each of the verbal emotional expression scales (i.e., Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS) and the two Ambivalence Over Emotional Expressiveness (AEQ) subscales). Not surprisingly (given the outcome of the correlation analysis), results showed that there was a
significant difference between the IPPA attachment groups for Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotion subscale (Table 3). However, there was no significant difference between the two attachment groups for the Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions subscale or the TAS (Table 3). In other words, participants who scored higher on maternal attachment (as indicated by the IPPA) were less ambivalent over expressing vulnerable (but not negative) emotions compared to those who scored in the lowest third on attachment. As anticipated, there were no differences between the high vs. low attachment groups for the TAS.

Table 3. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment (IPPA) Groups on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment (IPPA) Group 1 (Low Attachment)</th>
<th>Group 2 (High Attachment)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Emotional Expression Scales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.8 (3.5)</td>
<td>12.5 (4.3)</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ABQ:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotions</td>
<td>37.4 (7.8)</td>
<td>32.5 (12.6)</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions</td>
<td>17.1 (4.2)</td>
<td>15.4 (4.7)</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05
**p ≤ .01
***p ≤ .001
Next, t-tests were conducted to compare high and low attachment groups on the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) on the verbal emotional expression scales. Not surprisingly, results showed a significant difference between the high vs. low attachment groups for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) subscales for both of the AEQ subscales, (i.e., Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotions and Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions) on the Affective and Individuality subscales (Tables 4 and 5). No significance difference was found for the PAQ Support subscale (Table 6). In other words, participants who perceived their mothers as understanding, accepting, and affective as well as someone who respects their individuality and independence were less ambivalent over expressing vulnerable and negative emotions (Tables 4 and 5). However, maternal availability did not impact their verbal expression of emotion (Table 6).
Table 4. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment Groups (for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire: Affective Subscale) on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Emotional Expression Scales</th>
<th>Group 1 (Low Attachment)</th>
<th>Group 2 (High Attachment)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS)</td>
<td>13.0 (3.8)</td>
<td>12.9 (4.3)</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AEQ:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ambivalence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotions</td>
<td>37.6 (7.4)</td>
<td>32.1 (12.5)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambivalence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Expressing Negative Emotions</td>
<td>17.5 (4.0)</td>
<td>14.4 (4.1)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05
**p ≤ .01
***p ≤ .001
Table 5. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment Groups (for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire: Individuality Subscale) on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Emotional Expression Scales</th>
<th>Group 1 (Low Attachment)</th>
<th>Group 2 (High Attachment)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20)</td>
<td>14.2 (3.7)</td>
<td>12.5 (4.4)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AEQ:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ambivalence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Expressing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.5 (7.0)</td>
<td>33.7 (12.8)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.04*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambivalence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Expressing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.7 (4.1)</td>
<td>15.2 (4.6)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05  
**p ≤ .01  
***p ≤ .001
Table 6. T-Test Comparing High versus Low Attachment Groups (for the Parental Attachment Questionnaire: Support Subscale) on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Emotional Expression Scales</th>
<th>Group 1 (Low) X (SD)</th>
<th>Group 2 (High) X (SD)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20)</td>
<td>13.4 (3.7)</td>
<td>12.9 (4.4)</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AEQ:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotions</td>
<td>36.7 (8.6)</td>
<td>33.4 (11.9)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions</td>
<td>17.1 (4.0)</td>
<td>15.7 (5.0)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05  
**p ≤ .01  
***p ≤ .001

Additional Analysis

To examine whether such demographic factors as ethnicity and socio-economic status (SES) might be impacting the results, additional analyses were conducted. First, to examine whether ethnicity impacted the verbal expression of emotions, an exploratory one-way analysis of variance was performed on the ethnic groups for each of the verbal emotional expression scales. Results were significant for the Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions subscale but not for the other two scales (Table 7). TUKEY tests revealed a
significant difference between Asian and African-American males on this measure, with Asian males showing greater ambivalence over expressing negative emotions compared to African-Americans and Caucasian males who showed less ambivalence over expressing negative emotions (Table 7).

Table 7. One-Way Analysis of Variance Comparing Ethnic Groups on the Verbal Emotional Expression Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hispanic (n=43)</th>
<th>Asian (n=11)</th>
<th>Caucasian (n=43)</th>
<th>African American (n=7)</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression Scales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale-20 (TAS-20)</td>
<td>14.0 (4.2)</td>
<td>15.3 (2.2)</td>
<td>12.4 (3.8)</td>
<td>13.2 (5.3)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AEQ:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ambivalence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over expressing</td>
<td>37.2 (10.1)</td>
<td>39.7 (6.5)</td>
<td>33.5 (9.6)</td>
<td>33.3 (13.3)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable Emotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambivalence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Expressing</td>
<td>16.2 (4.5)</td>
<td>19.8 (4.3)</td>
<td>16.1 (3.7)</td>
<td>13.0 (4.1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .05
** p ≤ .01
*** p ≤ .001

Note: Due to the small sample size of some of these ethnic groups, these data should be regarded as only exploratory.

Finally, to examine whether socio-economic status (SES) impacted participants’ verbal emotional expression, t-tests were computed comparing participants’ fathers’ educational level (i.e., having a high school diploma or less vs. some college education or higher). There was no
significance difference between the two groups on their verbal emotional expression scores (Table 8).

Table 8. T-Test Comparing Socio-Economic Status and Verbal Emotional Expression Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Socio-Economic Status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father Education</td>
<td>Father Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(High School or lower)</td>
<td>(BA or higher)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=39)</td>
<td>(n=74)</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td>X (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Emotional Expression Scales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20 (TAS-20)</td>
<td>13.3 (2.6)</td>
<td>13.3 (3.8)</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AEQ:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Ambivalence Over Expressing Vulnerable Emotions</td>
<td>35.2 (10.0)</td>
<td>36.2 (10.1)</td>
<td>-.6</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambivalence Over Expressing Negative Emotions</td>
<td>16.2 (4.4)</td>
<td>16.8 (4.2)</td>
<td>-.7</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05  
**p ≤ .01  
***p ≤ .001
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether the quality of attachment security affects males’ abilities to verbally express their emotions to others. While research has investigated the connection between secure attachment and emotional competency (i.e., Laible & Thompson, 1998), few studies have examined the connection between attachment and the verbal expression of emotions. Given the recent literature on boys’ development, which indicates that boys are socialized to “mask” their feelings (e.g., Kindlon & Thomas, 1998), we felt that it was important to examine how attachment can impact the verbal expression of emotions in boys.

The literature on attachment points to the impact of attachment quality on emotional development. In general, this research indicates that individuals who are securely attached are better able to regulate, understand, and communicate their emotions (Bertherton, 1996; Gilliom et al., 2002; Laible & Thompson, 1998). Attachment provides a secure base where children will feel that they can come (or not) to their caregivers when in need (Bowlby, 1998). When parents are responsive to their children’s emotional needs, children are better equipped with internal working
models that allow them to manage their emotions more appropriately (Bertherton 1996; Cassidy, 1994). In the current study, it was expected that if males had secure attachments to their caregivers, they would more easily express their emotions verbally. Findings of a Pearson Correlation showed a low to moderate relationship between secure maternal attachment and greater confidence in the expression of both vulnerable and negative emotions. T-test results comparing high vs. low attachment groups showed, not surprisingly, similar results. These findings are consistent with other studies that indicate that children and adults with secure attachments are better able to communicate more openly and show greater self-disclosure (Bretherton, 1990; Main et al., 1985; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). This would be expected given the effect of attachment on emotional expression. When caregivers are accepting and less controlling of a child's need to express his emotions (both negative and positive), the child is able to feel safe and secure to express his own feelings (Berlin & Cassidy, 2003). In accordance with attachment theory, then, securely attached children are allowed to express and explore their emotions (Cassidy, 1994). Securely attached children can feel secure that their emotions will not be minimized or
controlled, allowing them to explore and express their emotions. By contrast, insecurely attached children have been shown to have more difficulties expressing and understanding their emotions, and, not surprisingly, they have caregivers who are less accepting of their emotions, especially negative emotions (Berlin & Cassidy, 2003).

Thus, for the population studied, it would be expected that males who report greater attachment security would also feel more confident expressing both vulnerable and negative emotions. It is noteworthy that despite social norms, which dictate that boys should suppress vulnerable emotions, those with higher attachment security showed a greater sense of confidence in verbally expressing their negative and vulnerable emotions.

Our results add to the body of literature that indicates that secure attachment is related to emotional expression. More specifically, our study supports the importance of attachment quality in the socialization of verbal expression of emotions in males.

But why was there such a modest relationship between early attachment security and verbal emotional expression in male subjects? There are several factors that may have contributed to these modest results.
First, the measures of emotional expression used in this study may not have been as precise as they could have been, i.e., captured clearly the construct of emotional expression. Due to little existing research in this area, there simply were not many measures to choose from. Because of this, the choices were limited and restricted to a short assessment measuring Alexithymia (i.e., difficulty in expression of feelings) and ambivalence over expressing negative and positive emotions. Alexithymia and ambivalence over expressing emotions may not be the best assessment of a person’s ability to talk to others about their feelings. It would have been better to find a measure that instead measured the ability to express one’s emotions.

A second possible explanation for the modest results may have been the sample size: there were only 115 participants. Perhaps with a greater number of subjects, the results might have been more robust. Limited numbers of participants in research studies can result in too much random fluctuation (Groth-Marnat, 1999).

A third factor contributing to the modest results might have been the limited age of the sample, i.e., 18-25 year-olds. Perhaps during late adolescence and early adulthood, participants may be more highly influence by
societal norms than they would be at later ages. Given that society's message to males is to hide and mask their feelings (Kindlon & Thomas, 1998; Pollack, 1999), the greater influence of societal norms at this age compared to earlier or later ages might be affecting how participants rate themselves on the measures provided.

In addition, while the measures used in the current study do not discriminate between the level of comfort felt by subjects with regard to whom they express their emotions to, it may be that our participants who were more securely attached would feel more comfortable expressing themselves to family members or other individuals they felt close to. However, the statements in the scale do not make this distinction (i.e., "It is hard to find the right words to indicate to others what I really feel").

Finally, the modest findings of this study may be due to the fact that the verbal expression scales were self-report measures, and thus participants' responses may have been biased towards being socially desirable. It has been suggested that self-report measures of research on emotions need to be complemented by other measures such as behavioral observations, interviews, and physiological measures (Von Salisch, 2001).
In addition to the above findings, there were some patterns in our data analysis that were contradictory to what we expected. Interestingly, the PAQ support subscale (which measures perceived maternal availability and the subjects' willingness to seek help from their mothers in situations of stress) was not related to any of the verbal emotional expression scales. It may be that maternal availability as measured by this subscale is not necessarily impacting verbal emotional expression in sons because it lacks a focus on communication and feelings. The statements in the subscale did not focus solely on emotional type of support and availability. Some examples of the statements include: "in general my mother is available to give me advice or guidance when I want it," and "when I have a serious problem or an important decision to make I know my mother will know what to do". A parent may be perceived as being supportive in meeting their child's physical needs (e.g., assistance in solving problems, monetary assistance), and yet not be responsive to such needs, as the communication of feelings.

Surprising, the Toronto Alexythimia Scale-20 (TAS-20) was also not significantly related to any of attachment measurements. Several factors may have contributed to this. First, this may have been due to the limited number
of items in the scale. The scale was composed of five items. A longer, more thorough scale may have resulted in a broader range of scores, yielding possible significant results. Second, Mayer, Dipaolo and Salovey (1990) point out that the Toronto Alexithymia Scale can be better regarded as a measure of general distress due to its correlation with neuroticism and depression as opposed to a lack of introspective ability. The statements in this scale also focus on the ability to describe one’s feelings (i.e, “I am able to describe my feelings easily”). The fact that a person can describe their feelings may be a different construct then the ability to express these feelings to others. One can cognitively describe or “label” a particular emotion for example, but not necessarily express it to someone else.

Exploratory Analyses: Ethnicity and Social Economic Status

Results examining possible ethnic differences in verbal emotional expression indicated that Asian participants were more ambivalent over expressing negative emotions than both African Americans and Caucasians. This is not surprising given that research has indicated that culture influences emotional expression (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). Culture provides the rules by which we
manage emotional expressions in social contexts. Research has documented, for example, that Japanese individuals are more likely to mask negative feelings while Americans are more likely to show these feelings in social situations (Ekman, 1972). More recent studies have looked at the differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures and their display of emotions (Matsumoto et al., 1998). Individualistic cultures foster a sense of autonomy and uniqueness, and emphasize the needs of the individual over those of a group. Collectivistic cultures on the other hand, are more likely to foster harmony and cooperation, emphasizing the group over the individual. Asians are considered to be more collectivistic in nature, and studies have shown that they tend to display more control over disruptive emotions (such as anger) in order to maintain harmony within a group when compared to persons from individualistic cultures such as Americans (Matsumoto et al., 1998). Our results further support this line of research. However, it is important to note that due to the small sample size of the Asian group in our study, this data should be regarded as only exploratory.

Interestingly, socio-economic status (SES) did not impact the results of the emotional expression subscales. Research has looked at the impact of SES on emotions, and
while some studies suggest that SES is associated with factors that impact emotional availability, sensitivity, and how parents regulate their emotions with their children (Martini, Root, & Jenkins 2004; Halper, 1993), other studies indicate that it is not so much SES that impacts emotional availability and sensitivity but rather it is those factors associated with high vs. low SES that are significant (e.g., family stress, single parenting, education level, social context, family support, etc.) (Spieker & Booth, 1988). In the current study, because SES was assessed by level of education alone, other factors such as level of social support, marital status, or stress level were not reported. Thus, due to the lack of a more comprehensive measure of SES, we were not able to evaluate the impact of these secondary SES variables in our study. Also, including broader SES measures in our study such as mother's education and total family resources may have provided significant results.

Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

There are a number of limitations to consider in our study. First, there are limitations due to our sample, which consisted of college students who were mostly from psychology courses. These courses may attract individuals
who are more likely to be interested in social and human development issues, making them more sensitive to the importance of communication and relationships. Thus, a broader more diverse sample may have shown different results.

A second limitation has to do with the measures used in this study. As previously indicated, there were limited measures available for emotional expression. It would have been preferable to get measures that tapped into the ability to verbally express participants’ feelings and emotions to others. Our verbal emotional expression measures were not specific to that construct.

Finally, a third limitation has to do with the fact that our measures did not specify who participants felt most comfortable expressing themselves to. Future studies could examine whether emotional expressiveness varies according to the relationship of the participants to the individual.

There are a number of other areas related to the present study that future research may explore. First, it would be interesting to measure the impact of social messages that boys receive along with attachment to explore the relationship of these messages to emotional expression. It would then be interesting to see if
attachment serves as a mediator. Second, it would also be interesting to study the impact of fathers on the development of verbal emotional expression in males. While we know that mothers play a central role in attachment security due to their caregiver role, fathers' roles are changing and they are involved in less traditional male roles when it comes to childrearing. It would be of interest to see how fathers shape boys' emotional development and expression and explore and how this process may differ from that of mothers. Also, linking the impact of attachment and verbal emotional expression in an individual's success in relationships would also be valuable. Finally, conducting a longitudinal study with periodic in-home observations would yield more in-depth insights into understanding the impact of mother-son attachment quality on the development of verbal expression of emotions of boys from early childhood through young adulthood.

Summary and Conclusion

Although results showed a low to moderate relationship between attachment and verbal emotional expression, this study adds to the body of research that supports the connection between emotional competency and attachment. Attachment plays a significant role in
emotions in every stage of life; not just in verbal emotional expression, but in emotional regulation and understanding as well. In addition, this study adds to the field of male socialization in that it supports the relationship between attachment and the ability for males to verbally express their emotions. Finally, this study contributes to the body of research-based information providing guidance to parents on impact of their response to their children's emotions, especially regarding the importance of providing emotionally supportive environments for their sons.
APPENDIX A

THE INVENTORY OF PARENT AND PEER ATTACHMENT
The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment

Instructions: Please carefully read each item below and choose the best response. Mark its corresponding “letter” on the scantron sheet. Please be sure to answer every item!

Each of the statements below asks about your feelings about your mother or person who acted in place of your mother. Please read each statement and mark on the scantron the ONE letter that tells how true the statement was for you WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My mother respected my feelings.</td>
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<td>2. I felt my mother did a good job as my mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My mother accepted me as I was.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I wish I had a different mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I liked to get my mother's point of view on things I was concerned about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I felt it was no use letting my feelings show around my mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. My mother was able to tell when I was upset about something.</td>
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<td>8. Talking over my problems with my mother made me feel ashamed or foolish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My mother expected too much from me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I got upset easily around my mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I got upset much more than my mother knew about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. When we discussed things, my mother cared about my point of view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. My mother had her own problems, so I didn’t bother her with mine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. My mother helped me understand myself better.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I told my mother about my problems and troubles.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost Never or Never true</td>
<td>Not Very Often True</td>
<td>Sometimes True</td>
<td>Often True</td>
<td>Almost Always or Always True</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

17. I felt angry with my mother.
18. I didn't get much attention from my mother.
19. My mother helped me talk about my difficulties.
20. My mother understood me.
21. When I got angry about something, my mother tried to be understanding.
22. I trusted my mother.
23. My mother didn't understand what I was going through.
24. I could count on my mother when I needed to get something off my chest.
25. If my mother knew something was bothering me, she asked me about it.
APPENDIX B

PARENTAL ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Parental Attachment Questionnaire

Instructions: Please respond to each item by filling in the number on a scale of 1 to 5 that best describes your relationship with your mother or person who acted in place of your mother, and your experiences and feelings. Please provide a single rating to describe your mother and your relationship with her.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>A Moderate Amount</td>
<td>Quite a Bit</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0-10%)</td>
<td>(11-35%)</td>
<td>(36-65%)</td>
<td>(66-90%)</td>
<td>(91-100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, my mother...

_ 1. is a person who I can count on to provide emotional support when I feel troubled.

_ 2. supports my goals and interests.

_ 3. lives in a different world.

_ 4. understands my problems and concerns.

_ 5. respects my privacy.

_ 6. restricts my freedom or independence.

_ 7. is available to give me advice or guidance when I want it.

_ 8. takes my opinions seriously.

_ 9. encourages me to take my own decisions.

_ 10. is critical of what I can do.

_ 11. imposes her ideas and values on me.

_ 12. has given me as much attention as I have wanted.

_ 13. is a persons to whom I can express differences of opinions on important matters.

_ 14. has no idea what I am feeling or thinking.

_ 15. has provided me with the freedom to experiment and learn things on my own.
1. Not at All (0-10%)
2. Somewhat (11-35%)
3. A Moderate Amount (36-65%)
4. Quite a Bit (66-90%)
5. Very Much (91-100%)

   _ 16. is too busy or otherwise involved to help me.
   _ 17. has trust and confidence in me.
   _ 18. tries to control my life.
   _ 19. ignores what I have to say.
   _ 21. is sensitive to my feelings and needs.
   _ 22. is disappointed in me.
   _ 23. gives me advice whether or not I want it.
   _ 24. respects my judgment and decisions, even if different from what she would want.
   _ 25. does things for me, which I could do for myself.
   _ 26. is a person whose expectations I feel obligated to meet.
   _ 27. treats me like a younger child.

_During recent visits or time spent together, my mother was a person...

   _ 28. I looked forward to seeing.
   _ 29. with whom I argued.
   _ 30. with whom I felt relaxed and comfortable.
   _ 31. who made me angry.
   _ 32. I wanted to be with all the time.
   _ 33. towards whom I felt cool and distant.
   _ 34. who got on my nerves.
   _ 35. who aroused feelings of guilt and anxiety.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at All (0-10%)</td>
<td>Somewhat (11-35%)</td>
<td>A Moderate Amount (36-65%)</td>
<td>Quite a Bit (66-90%)</td>
<td>Very Much (91-100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36. to whom I enjoyed telling about the things I have done and learned.

37. for whom I felt a feeling of love.

38. I tried to ignore.

39. to whom I confided my most personal thoughts and feelings.

40. whose company I enjoyed.

41. I avoided telling about my experiences.

Following time spent together, I leave my mother...

42. with warm and positive feelings.

43. feeling let down and disappointed by.

When I have a serious problem or an important decision to make...

44. I look to my family for support, encouragement, and/or guidance.

45. I seek help from a professional, such as a therapist, college counselor, or clergy.

46. I think about how my family might respond and what they might say.

47. I work it out on my own, without help or discussion with others.

48. I discuss the matter with a friend.

49. I know that my family will know what to do.

50. I contact my family if I am not able to resolve the situation after talking it over with my friends.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Not at All (0-10%)</th>
<th>2 Somewhat (11-35%)</th>
<th>3 A Moderate Amount (36-65%)</th>
<th>4 Quite a Bit (66-90%)</th>
<th>5 Very Much (91-100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**When I go to my mother for help...**

___ 51. I feel more confident in my ability to handle the problems on my own.

___ 52. I continue to feel unsure of myself.

___ 53. I feel that I would have to obtain more understanding and comfort from a friend.

___ 54. I feel confident that things will work out as long as I follow my mother’s advice.

___ 55. I am disappointed with her response.
APPENDIX C

TORONTO ALEXITHYMIA SCALE-20: DIFFICULTY DESCRIBING FEELINGS SUBSCALE
Toronto Alexithymia Scale-20: Difficulty Describing Feelings Subscale

Instructions: Please carefully read each item below and choose the best response. Mark its corresponding "letter" on the scantron sheet. Please be sure to answer every item!

Almost Never or Never true Not Very Often True Sometimes True Often True Almost Always or Always True
A B C D E

1. It is difficult for me to find the right words for my feelings.
2. I am able to describe my feelings easily.
3. I find it hard to describe how I feel about people.
4. People tell me to describe my feelings more.
5. It is difficult for me to reveal my innermost feelings, even to close friends.
APPENDIX D

AMBIVALENCE OVER EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE
Ambivalence Over Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire

Instructions: Please carefully read each item below and choose the best response. Mark its corresponding "letter" on the scantron sheet. Please be sure to answer every item!

Almost Never or Never Feel This Way | Not Very Often Feel This Way | Sometimes Feel This Way | Often Feel This Way | Frequently Feel This Way
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
A | B | C | D | E

1. It is hard to find the right words to indicate to others what I really feel.
2. I try to control my jealousy concerning my boyfriend/girlfriend even though I want too let hem know I'm hurting.
3. I make an effort to control my temper at all times even though I'd like to act on these feelings at times.
4. I often cannot bring myself to express what I am really feeling.
5. I'd like to talk about my problems with others, but at times I just can't.
6. I want to tell someone when I love them, but it is difficult to find the right words.
7. I try not to worry others even though sometimes they should know the truth.
8. Often I'd like to show others how I feel, but something seems to holding me back.
9. When someone bothers me, I try to appear indifferent even though I'd like to tell them how I feel.
10. Often I find that I am not able to tell others how much they really mean to me.
11. I try to keep my deepest fears and feelings hidden, but at times I'd like to open up to others.
12. I want to express my emotions honestly but I'm afraid that it may cause me embarrassment or hurt.
13. I try to refrain from getting angry at my parents even though I want to at times.
14. I try to show people I love them, although at times I am afraid that it may make me appear weak or too sensitive.
Almost Never or Never Feel This Way
Not Very Often Feel This Way
Sometimes Feel This Way
Often Feel This Way
Frequently Feel This Way
A B C D E

15. I try to apologize when I have done something wrong but I worry that I will be perceived as incompetent.

16. I think about acting when I am angry, but I try not to.

17. I would like to express my affection more physically but I am afraid others will get the wrong impression.

18. When I am really proud of something I accomplish I want to tell someone, but I fear I will be thought of as conceited.

19. I try to hide my negative feelings around others, even though I am not being fair to those close to me.

20. I can recall a time when I wish that I had told someone how much I really cared about them.

21. I try to avoid sulking even when I feel like it.

22. I would like to be more spontaneous in my emotional reactions, but I just can’t seem to do it.

23. I try to suppress my anger, but I would like other people to know how I feel.

24. I strive to keep a smile on my face to in order to convince others I am happier than I really am.

25. I worry that if I express negative emotions such as fear and anger, other people will not approve of me.

26. I feel guilty after I have expressed anger to someone.

27. I would like to express my disappointment when things don’t go as well as planned, but I don’t want to appear vulnerable.

28. After I express my anger to someone, it bothers me for a long time.
APPENDIX E

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Background information: please complete the following:

a) Your age: _____ years

b) Your sex: _____ male _____ female

c) Do you have a child of your own? _____ yes _____ no

d) Your ethnicity: _____ Hispanic _____ African American
_____ Asian _____ other: __________________________
_____ Caucasian

e) The highest level of education your mother completed:
   _____ did not complete high school
   _____ high school graduate
   _____ some college or trade school
   _____ graduated with a Bachelor’s degree
   _____ some graduate school
   _____ graduate or professional degree

f) The highest level of education your father completed:
   _____ did not complete high school
   _____ high school graduate
   _____ some college or trade school
   _____ graduated with a Bachelor’s degree
   _____ some graduate school
   _____ graduate or professional degree

g) Who was your primary caregiver when growing up:
   _____ mother _____ both
   _____ father _____ other ______________________

h) Was your mother raised in his country? _____ yes _____ no

i) Have you ever been in psychological therapy? _____ yes _____ no

j) While you were growing up, what was your:
   1) mother’s primary occupation ___________________
   2) father’s primary occupation ___________________

k) While you were growing up, which adult(s) resided in your home?
   _____ mother only
   _____ father only
   _____ mother and father
   _____ other: please explain ______________________
REFERENCES


