

Relations between Peer Attachment, Self-Esteem, and Perceived Parental Bonding in Greek Cypriot and British Young Adults

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Abstract

Greek Cypriot (N=272) and British (N=170) students completed assessments of (a) perceptions of childhood relationships with parents, (b) peer attachment, and (c) self-esteem. In comparison with British students, Greek Cypriot students were more likely to classify their relationships with peers as insecure, and perceived both of their parents to be more overprotective. In both the Greek Cypriot and British samples, individuals who classified relationships with peers as secure perceived their mothers to have been more caring and less overprotective, and had higher self-esteem compared to individuals who classified relationships with peers as preoccupied or fearful. Regardless of nationality, higher self-esteem was related to higher perceived parental care and lower perceived parental overprotection. The results are discussed with reference to differences in family structure in Cyprus and the UK.

Keywords: parental bonding, peer attachment, culture, self-esteem

Introduction

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980) proposes that individuals use early experiences with caregivers to form internal working models (IWMs) of self and relationships with others. If caregivers have been sensitive and loving, the child will form an IWM of self as being worthy of love and attention and an IWM of relationships with others as being satisfying and worthwhile. Conversely, if caregivers have been insensitive or inconsistent, the child will form an IWM of self as unworthy of love and attention and expect relationships with others to be unfulfilling. Early attachment experiences are thus proposed to form a template for future close relationships (Bowlby, 1973, 1980).

The development of self-report measures for assessing adults' attachments to peers and romantic partners (e.g. Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991) has made testing this claim possible. In these self-report measures of attachment style, individuals endorse the description of interpersonal interaction that best fits their approach to close relationships. Hazan and Shaver's measure involves three descriptions based on Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall's (1978) tripartite scheme for assessing attachment security in infants: secure, dismissing, and preoccupied. Secure individuals have positive IWMs of both self and of close relationships. Dismissing individuals have a positive IWM of self, but a negative IWM of close relationships,

whereas preoccupied individuals show the opposite pattern. Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) described a further style, since they argued that there should logically be four attachment styles on the basis of the valence of IWMs of self and relationships with others. The new category was termed fearful, and describes individuals who have a negative IWM both of self and close relationships. Bartholomew and Horowitz's model thus has the advantage of distinguishing between individuals whose reasons for avoiding close ties are different. In contrast to those in the dismissing category, fearful individuals' failure to forge successful relationships stems not from a view that such relationships are unnecessary in order to feel fulfilled, but because their negative IWM of self and their poor expectations of social relations makes them reticent about seeking close relationships.

Attachment System and Adolescence

In adolescence, peer relationships increasingly become the major source of love and support. Parental attachment relationships can enhance or impede adolescents' ability to form meaningful relationships with peers. For example, Allen and colleagues have argued that secure relationships with parents facilitate increased autonomy in adolescence (Allen, Hauser, Bell, and O'Connor, 1994) and provide young adults with a secure base from which to explore their changing identity (Allen and Land, 1999). In early childhood, the primary goal of the caregiving system is protection, both in terms of meeting the child's physical needs and providing psychological and social support. However, in order for the caregiving system to support autonomy and self-development in adolescence, the parent must be willing and able to provide protection and support in more subtle ways. As Ekstein (1991) noted, "the most complex act of true parental love is the one that permits the child to move away towards his own life" (p. 531). Failure to manage this transition sensitively can result in parents being perceived as overprotective and stifling the adolescent's attempts to forge an adult identity.

Surprisingly little empirical research has investigated this important aspect of how attachment systems evolve during adolescence and early adulthood. For obvious reasons, longitudinal investigation of the transfer of primary attachments from parents to peers is difficult. Given Bowlby's (1969/1982) argument that early relationships with caregivers become the template for later relationships with peers and romantic partners, cultural differences in caregiving practices may provide an elegant way of investigating whether parental encouragement of autonomy in adolescence facilitates the development of secure attachment relationships with peers. In any given culture, parent-child relationships are bound by accepted caregiving practices and socio-cultural influences. If perceptions of parental attachment relationships and the extent to which parents are viewed as caring versus overprotective are indeed important in determining the quality of peer attachments, one would predict that cultural practices that serve to engender high levels of parental supervision into early adulthood may impede the formation of secure attachment relationships with peers. Investigating this question was the first aim of the study reported here.

Culture and Perception of Self

We chose to investigate the impact of different cultural caregiving practices on young adults' perceptions of relationships with peers and parents by recruiting participants from two contrasting countries: Cyprus and the United Kingdom (UK). People's perception of self is greatly influenced by culture. Markus and Kitayama's (1991) seminal work on culture and the self describe the differences in the perception of self between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. According to these researchers the construct of self develops through early patterns of direct interactions with parents and peers in a given culture. Individualistic cultures emphasise the inherent separateness of persons who are independent from others. Achieving the cultural aim of independence requires the construction of a self that is organised around one's feelings, thoughts and actions, rather than by reference to others' feelings and actions. Thus, a person is considered an independent and an autonomous entity. In contrast, collectivistic cultures stress the importance of connectedness of human beings to each other and the interdependence among individuals. An individual's sense of self is determined to a large extent by the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others, as one needs to see oneself as part of a larger social unit. The fact that family ties still predominate in early adulthood in Cyprus, whereas the main focus of attachment tends to transfer from parents to peers during the teenage years in the UK, makes the cross-cultural study reported in this chapter well suited to investigating the comparative contributions of perceptions about parental versus peer relationships to young adults' self-esteem. Research has shown that self-esteem is stable across the life-span or increases with age (Gove *et al.*, 1989; Trzesniewski *et al.*, 2003; Coleman *et al.*, 1993). A general increase in self-esteem with age has even been observed in psychiatric patients, independent of the type of disorder patients were suffering from (Salsali and Silverstone, 2003). Consequently, age was included as a control variable in the regression analyses.

Cyprus' Historical Development

Greek Cypriots were chosen as a comparison group for the British sample for a number of reasons. First, despite Western influences and urbanisation, Cypriot society remains traditional, with strong emphasis on the nuclear family and extended kin well into adulthood (Attalides, 1981; Mavratsas, 1992; Peristianis, 2004). For example, in a recent study of Greek Cypriot adults up to age 64, almost half reported seeing both parents on a daily basis, with over one-third seeing in-laws and one-fifth seeing grandparents every day (Intercollege, 2004). Various researchers have proposed that Greek Cypriots in general emphasise the family as the most important unit of life and that ties with the extended family are very important. Greek Cypriot parents have often been characterised as caring but overprotective (Charalambous, 2006; Attalides, 1981; Mavratsas, 1992). As most researchers of Greek and Greek Cypriot society have pointed out, Greek Cypriot parents' attitudes seem to differ from those of their counterparts in the Western world. Although the Greek Cypriot family is at a transitional stage from collectivism to individualism, the family remains the

strongest institution in Greek Cypriot society. Furthermore, in Schwartz's (1994) cross-cultural research on value priorities, Greek Cypriot teachers appeared to be most conservative among 36 cultures emphasising traditional order, respect for tradition, obedience, and family security. Given the prevailing attitudes and as Cyprus is still at a stage between traditionalism and modernisation, child-rearing practices still involve a high level of control as the family is valued over and above individualistic concerns (Herz and Gallone, 1999).

While Greek Cypriot family roles are changing due to women's higher education opportunities, and economic independence, according to Charalambous (2006), the "ingroup" is the immediate and extended family and the "outgroup" is other families or nearby communities in the Greek Cypriot community. The "ingroup" is to be honoured, respected, and valued. In contrast, relationships with the "outgroup" are more likely to be characterised by distrust and contention. In contrast, the UK is an individualistic society where regular contact with extended family is increasingly rare, adolescents are allowed much greater autonomy, and the individual rather than the family is emphasised as the basic unit of society.

Second, young adults in Greek Cypriot society are socialised to maintain family honour through abiding by moral codes, with traditionally more emphasis placed on ensuring young women's moral virtue than young men's (Markides, Nikita and Rangou, 1978; Peristianis, 2004; Peristiany, 1965). This differs markedly from British norms, and consequently many of the practices commonly adopted by Greek Cypriot parents would be seen by British standards to be overprotective.

Finally, Cyprus' unique recent history is likely to have reinforced the importance of family, protection, and a sense of belonging in Greek Cypriots' lives. In the 1950s Greek Cypriots engaged in a struggle for *enosis* and the outcome of this struggle led to Cyprus becoming an independent nation, in 1960. In 1974, Cyprus experienced a military coup against its first president, followed by the Turkish invasion that separated the island into two parts. Almost 40% of the land came under Turkish control, and 200,000 Greek Cypriots were expelled from their homes. It has been argued that this foreign rule makes Greek Cypriots fearful and distrustful of outsiders (e.g. Markides *et al.*, 1978) and to focus even more strongly on family ties.

If the argument that secure peer relationships are facilitated by parents' willingness to encourage autonomy in their adolescent children is correct, one would expect Greek Cypriot parents' continuing emphasis on family ties rather than relationships with peers in early adulthood to result in a higher proportion of insecure peer attachment in the Greek Cypriot sample than in British young adults. We also explored differences between these two groups of young adults in how they perceived their relationships with parents. Despite cultural differences in the caregiving one experiences, all young adults should seek to forge their own autonomous self-identity and focus more prominently on relationships with peers. If caregiving practices serve to maintain a focus on parental and family relationships, young adults are likely to perceive parents as being overprotective. We therefore hypothesised that Greek Cypriot young adults would be more likely than their British counterparts to perceive their parents as overprotective.

However, one of the limitations of this study is that cultural differences were assumed, and not assessed. For example, it is impossible on the basis of the data to draw any conclusion regarding whether parental overprotection is perceived negatively among Greek Cypriot young adults, rather than merely regarded to be the norm of the culture. Future research should use additional observational and interview-based assessments of Greek Cypriot young adults' opinions about their parents to investigate whether they like or dislike such attitudes associated in Western cultures with overprotection and stifling of independence and autonomy.

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI: Parker, Tupling and Brown, 1979)

One measure that focuses explicitly on individuals' perceptions of parental overprotection is the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI: Parker, Tupling and Brown, 1979). The PBI is a short questionnaire with items assessing the extent to which the individual views the parent's behaviour during their first 16 years as being caring or overprotective. Surprisingly, the contribution of parental care versus overprotection in maintaining the attachment system via peers has not been studied extensively. Matsuoka *et al.*, (2006) investigated relations between PBI scores and self-reported peer attachment using the RQ in a large sample of Japanese college students. Rather than using the RQ categories in their analyses, Matsuoka *et al.*, derived a total attachment style score by having individuals rate each of the four attachment descriptions using a 7-point Likert scale and then subtracting the scores obtained on the ratings of the three insecure styles (dismissing, preoccupied, fearful) from the rating for the secure style. They reported positive correlations between this measure and PBI care scores for both parents, and negative correlations between scores for total attachment style and overprotection for both mothers and fathers.

Themes of the Study

We investigated links between perceived care and overprotection in parental relationships and attachment style with peers, hypothesising that secure peer attachment in both the Greek Cypriot and British young adults would relate to higher perceived parental care and lower perceived parental overprotection.

The final aim of the study reported here was to investigate how perceived parental and peer attachment related to young adults' evolving self-identity, and in particular their self-esteem. Bowlby's (1973, 1980) theory predicts that attachment relationships are important for an individual's psychological health, and links between infant-parent attachment security and children's later self-esteem have been identified (see Sroufe, 2005). Although research has addressed links between perceived parenting and self-esteem in various atypical populations, such as psychiatric outpatients (Fosse and Holen, 2007), young adults whose parents had suffered early child loss (Pantke and Slade, 2006), adoptees (Passmore, Fogarty, Bourke and Baker-Evans, 2005), and young offenders (Chambers, Power, Loucks and Swanson, 2001), few studies have investigated

links between these factors in normative populations. In a sample of Australian and Vietnamese Australian adolescents, Herz and Gullone (1999) reported that higher self-esteem was associated with lower scores for parental overprotection and higher scores for parental care regardless of the adolescents' cultural group. With respect to relations between self-esteem and peer attachment relationships (assessed using the RQ), Park, Crocker and Mickelson (2004) found that secure and dismissing attachment styles were related to higher self-esteem, whereas preoccupied and fearful styles were associated with lower self-esteem.

However, what is less clear is how both parental and peer attachment relationships contribute to young adults' self-esteem. To our knowledge, only one study has investigated how representations of both peer and parental attachment relationships contribute to young adults' self-esteem. Laible, Carlo, and Roesch (2004) reported that perceived parental, but not peer, attachment had a direct effect on self-esteem. Laible *et al.*, (2004) found that peer attachment was unrelated to self-esteem in young men, but in young women, there was an indirect relation, with pro-social behaviour mediating the link between peer attachment and self-esteem. Regardless of gender, perceptions of parent and peer relationships were highly positively correlated. However, the assessment of parental attachment in this study did not assess perceived overprotection, so it is not possible to establish from these findings whether perceiving one's parents to be stifling one's autonomy plays a crucial role in determining both peer relationships and self-esteem. We thus sought to investigate how perceptions of parental care versus overprotection and the security of peer relationships relate to young adults' self-esteem. We predicted that higher perceived care and lower perceived overprotection in relationships with parents would relate to higher self-esteem. With respect to peer relationships, given that both secure and dismissing individuals are proposed to have a positive IWM of self, we hypothesised that individuals in these two groups would have higher self-esteem than their counterparts with either preoccupied or fearful attachment styles.

In summary, the study reported here investigated how perceptions of relationships with parents and peers related to young adults' self-esteem in a country where family ties still predominate in early adulthood (Cyprus), and one in which the main focus of attachment tends to transfer from parents to peers during the teenage years (the UK). We hypothesised that (a) Greek Cypriot students (particularly women) would be more likely than their British counterparts to perceive parents as overprotective; (b) Greek Cypriot students would be less likely than British students to have secure peer attachment relationships; (c) in both countries, secure peer attachment would relate to higher perceived parental care and lower perceived parental overprotection; and (d) in both countries, self-esteem would relate positively to secure or dismissing peer attachment and perceived parental care, and negatively to perceived parental overprotection, whereas the opposite pattern would be found in preoccupied and fearful individuals. Finally, we investigated whether perceptions of peer and parental relationships made independent contributions to self-esteem, although no directional hypothesis was made.

Method

Participants

Participants were students drawn from two countries: Cyprus and the United Kingdom (UK). The Greek Cypriot sample comprised of 272 (189 women) college students, ranging in age from 17 to 37 years (mean 20.7 years, standard deviation 2.70 years). All participants spoke Greek as their native language and lived in Cyprus. The British sample consisted of 170 (92 women) native British university undergraduates aged between 17 and 34 ($M=20.6$ years, $SD=2.63$ years), all of whom lived in the UK and spoke English as their native language. No incentive was offered for participation.

Procedure

All measures were translated into Greek by a bilingual researcher. The translated questionnaires were then piloted on a sample of 16 Greek Cypriot students to check for comprehensibility. No problems were identified from this pilot, and these translations were thus used for the Greek Cypriot sample in the main study. All students completed the questionnaires in the order described below.

Perceived Parental Bonding was assessed using the PBI (Parker *et al.*, 1979). Two copies of the PBI, one for each parent, were administered to the students. The PBI is a 25-item self-report measure of parental attitudes and behaviours, with each item being scored on a 4-point Likert scale. Items assess perceived care (12 items) or perceived overprotection (13 items), yielding scores of between 0 and 36 for care, and between 0 and 39 for overprotection. High care scores indicate empathy and warmth, while low care scores indicate indifference and rejection. High overprotection scores reflect a parent who infantilises controls, intrudes, and encourages dependency, while low overprotection scores point to a parent who encourages independence and autonomy in the child. The PBI has been shown to have good reliability and validity (Parker *et al.*, 1979; Wilhelm and Parker, 1990), and has been used to assess reported parental characteristics of the subcultures of Jewish and Greek parents in Australia (Dihn, Sarason and Sarason, 1994; Parker and Lipscombe, 1979).

Peer Attachment Style was assessed using the RQ (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991), in which participants indicate which of four paragraphs (secure, dismissing, preoccupied, or fearful styles) best describes their relationships with peers and romantic partners. The RQ has been shown to have acceptable reliability and validity (Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994).

Self-Esteem was assessed using Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI). The SEI is a 10 item-scale that measures global self-esteem, with each item scored on a 4-point Likert scale (possible scores range from 10 to 40). In the original coding scheme, higher scores indicate lower self-esteem, but items were reverse scored in the study reported here so that higher scores represent higher self-esteem. The SEI has been used across the globe to assess self-esteem (Schmitt and Allik, 2005).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Tables 1 and 2 (p. 70) show the descriptive statistics with respect to nationality, gender, and peer attachment. Six participants (5 British) did not complete the PBI for fathers due to parental separation early in their lives. Kolmogorov-Smirnoff tests showed that all of the PBI variables were non-normally distributed, and transformation did not improve normality. However, the F-test is robust against violations of the assumption of normality as long as there are at least 20 degrees of freedom for error (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Non-transformed scores were thus used in all analyses.

Relations between Nationality and Perceived Parental Bonding

Differences in PBI scores between the British and Greek Cypriot samples were investigated in a series of nationality (British, Greek Cypriot) \times gender (men, women) ANCOVAs with age as a covariate. ANCOVA is an extension of analysis of variance that allows one to explore differences between groups while statistically controlling for an additional variable, called a covariate. For maternal care, there was no main effect of nationality, $F(1, 403) = 2.48$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .006$, or gender, $F(1, 403) = 0.40$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .001$, and no nationality \times gender interaction, $F(1, 403) = 0.72$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .001$. For paternal care, there was a main effect of nationality, $F(1, 397) = 4.46$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .011$, but no effect of gender, $F(1, 397) = 0.15$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .000$, and no interaction, $F(1, 397) = 0.47$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .001$. A post-hoc t test showed that British participants ($M = 25.85$, $SD = 7.79$) reported higher paternal care than their Greek Cypriot counterparts ($M = 24.21$, $SD = 8.18$), $t(434) = 2.08$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.21$.

For maternal overprotection, there was a main effect of nationality, $F(1, 403) = 4.67$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .011$, no main effect of gender, $F(1, 403) = 2.37$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .001$, and a significant nationality \times gender interaction, $F(1, 403) = 4.32$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .010$. As figure 1 shows, the interaction for maternal protection scores arose due to the fact that Greek Cypriot women ($M = 14.46$, $SD = 7.34$) perceived their mothers to have been more overprotective than did British women ($M = 12.08$, $SD = 6.41$), $t(279) = 2.66$, $p < .01$. Greek Cypriot men ($M = 12.81$, $SD = 6.70$) and British men ($M = 12.57$, $SD = 6.97$) did not differ in perceived maternal overprotection, $t(154) = 0.23$, n.s.

For paternal overprotection, there was a main effect of nationality, $F(1, 397) = 14.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .036$, and of gender, $F(1, 397) = 5.29$, $p < .025$, $\eta^2 = .013$, but no interaction, $F(1, 397) = 0.43$, n.s., $\eta^2 = .001$. Post-hoc t tests showed that Greek Cypriot participants ($M = 13.18$, $SD = 7.92$) perceived their fathers to have been more overprotective than did British participants ($M = 9.75$, $SD = 5.80$), $t(434) = 4.83$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.50$, and women ($M = 12.85$, $SD = 7.71$) reported higher paternal overprotection than did men ($M = 10.26$, $SD = 6.40$), $t(429) = 3.54$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.37$.

Relations between Nationality and Peer Attachment

Secure peer attachment style was reported by 105 (38%) Greek Cypriot and 91 (54%) British participants, dismissing style by 57 (21%) Greek Cypriot and 22 (13%) British participants, preoccupied style by 43 (16%) Greek Cypriot and 23 (14%) British, and fearful style by 68 (25%) Greek Cypriot and 34 (20%) British participants. Peer attachment style was related to nationality, $\chi^2(3) = 10.52, p < .025, w = 0.15$. British participants were more likely to report secure peer attachment style than were their Greek Cypriot counterparts.

Figure 1:

Mean Maternal Overprotection Scores for Greek Cypriot and British Men and Women

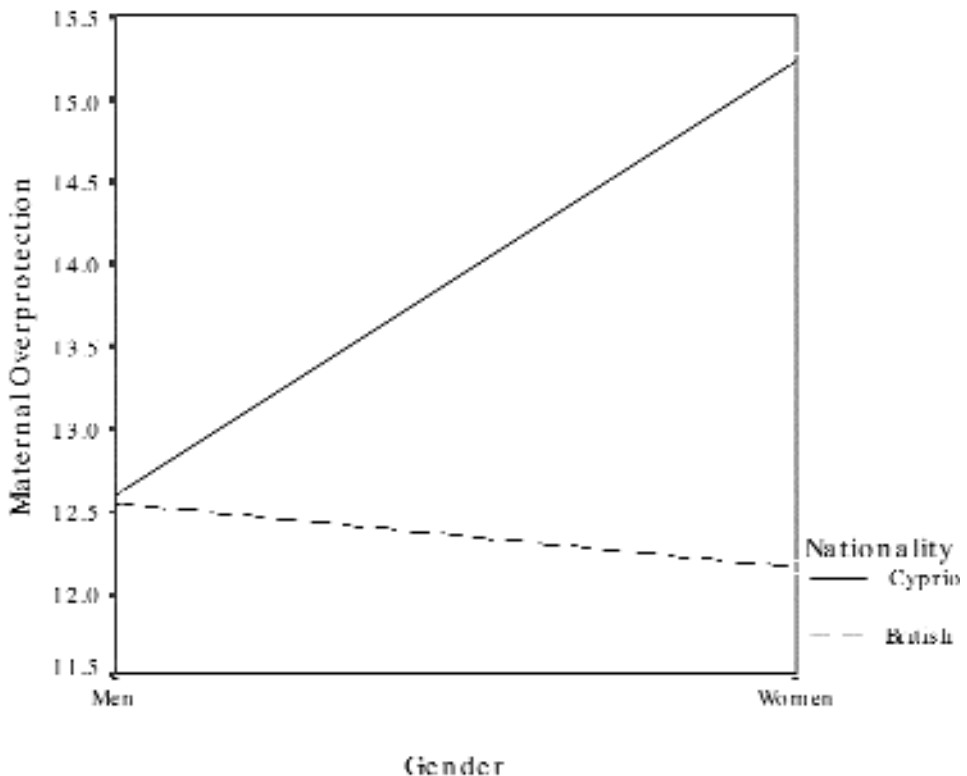


Table 1
Mean scores for MC, MO, PC, PO and SE in Greek Cypriot Secure, Dismissing, Preoccupied and Fearful Participants

	Secure		Dismissing		Preoccupied		Fearful									
	Men n=38	Women n=66	Men n=20	Women n=35	Men n=10	Women n=32	Men n=12	Women n=56								
MC	29.11	4.87	29.12	6.80	27.20	7.18	27.46	5.34	22.40	11.85	26.44	6.01	26.08	5.28	28.06	6.66
MO	11.84	6.34	12.77	7.17	12.65	6.60	15.94	7.06	15.80	7.93	15.75	7.61	13.67	6.96	14.79	7.35
PC	24.38	6.74	25.61	8.96	24.37	6.75	23.43	7.13	24.00	11.85	21.91	6.44	20.85	4.98	24.70	9.75
PO	10.76	6.49	12.70	8.21	11.79	6.79	14.94	8.23	11.10	10.67	16.53	6.81	12.17	6.81	13.63	8.52
SE	32.26	3.84	31.68	4.53	32.10	4.44	30.00	5.09	28.20	6.03	26.47	4.77	29.67	4.46	28.07	5.61

Note. MC - Maternal Care, MO - Maternal Overprotection, PC - Paternal Care, PO - Paternal Overprotection, SE - Self-esteem

Table 2
Mean Scores for MC, MO, PC, PO, and SE in British Secure, Dismissing, Preoccupied and Fearful Participants

	Secure		Dismissing		Preoccupied		Fearful									
	Men n=42	Women n=48	Men n=13	Women n=8	Men n=8	Women n=15	Men n=13	Women n=21								
MC	30.62	3.80	30.60	5.76	29.62	4.43	28.25	9.08	27.88	6.94	28.47	7.90	25.25	5.30	23.05	8.94
MO	11.71	6.78	9.44	4.51	13.00	8.30	14.00	8.35	13.25	7.01	15.07	7.54	14.46	6.54	15.24	7.54
PC	25.95	6.42	27.51	8.64	26.92	7.12	29.25	9.05	22.13	6.92	26.67	5.69	23.64	5.41	22.48	9.34
PO	9.34	5.81	12.70	8.21	9.83	3.79	11.75	6.82	7.00	3.16	12.13	6.36	9.45	4.44	11.05	6.00
SE	33.19	3.74	31.19	4.18	33.00	2.61	29.00	3.63	28.88	4.32	27.00	3.34	28.46	5.59	24.86	5.46

Note. MC - Maternal Care, MO - Maternal Overprotection, PC - Paternal Care, PO - Paternal Overprotection, SE - Self-esteem.

Peer Attachment and Parental Bonding

PBI scores are shown as a function of peer attachment style in Tables 1 and 2. Relations between parental bonding and peer attachment were investigated in a series of one-way ANCOVAs with age and gender as a covariate. For maternal care, there was a main effect of attachment style, $F(3, 403) = 8.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons showed that individuals with secure peer attachment ($M = 29.78, SD = 5.63$) rated their mothers as more caring than those in each of the dismissing ($M = 27.76, SD = 6.19$), preoccupied ($M = 26.53, SD = 7.70$), and fearful ($M = 26.48, SD = 7.54$) groups. No other pairwise contrasts were significant.

Paternal care was related to peer attachment style, $F(3, 403) = 82.90, p < .05, \eta^2 = .022$, but post-hoc tests indicated that there were no significant pairwise contrasts.

For maternal overprotection, there was an effect of attachment style, $F(3, 403) = 8.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .057$, with post-hoc tests showing that secure individuals ($M = 11.55, SD = 6.40$) rated mothers as being less overprotective than those in the dismissing ($M = 14.12, SD = 7.39$), preoccupied ($M = 15.18, SD = 7.07$), and fearful ($M = 14.71, SD = 7.16$) groups. No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

There was a marginally significant relation between paternal overprotection and peer attachment style, $F(3, 403) = 2.44, p = .064, \eta^2 = .018$. Post-hoc comparisons showed that preoccupied individuals ($M = 13.53, SD = 7.66$) rated their fathers as more overprotective than did secure individuals ($M = 10.69, SD = 7.06$), with no other significant pair-wise contrasts.

Predictors of Self-Esteem

Independent predictors of SEI scores were investigated using hierarchical linear regression analyses. In the first regressions, gender, age, and nationality were entered at the first step, and the four PBI variables and RQ attachment style were entered at the second step. RQ attachment style was entered into the regression as a dummy variable (1=secure, 2=dismissing, 3=preoccupied, 4=fearful). With respect to relations between the attachment variables and self esteem, as table 3 shows, self-esteem scores were independently predicted by (a) maternal care, (b) paternal care, and (c) peer attachment style. A post-hoc one-way ANOVA showed a main effect of attachment style on self-esteem scores, $F(3, 442) = 28.40, p < .001, \eta^2 = .163$, with pairwise comparisons indicating that individuals with secure peer attachment style ($M = 31.92, SD = 4.27$) had higher self-esteem than those in the preoccupied ($M = 27.11, SD = 4.61$) and fearful ($M = 27.65, SD = 5.59$) groups, and individuals in the dismissing group ($M = 30.82, SD = 4.62$) reporting higher self-esteem than those in the preoccupied and fearful groups. No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

Gender, age, and nationality also independently predicted self-esteem at the final step. Post-hoc tests showed that men ($M = 31.60, SD = 4.49$) had higher self-esteem scores than women ($M = 29.24, SD = 5.25$), $t(440) = 4.74, p < .001, d = 0.48$, but there was no difference between the self-esteem scores of the Greek Cypriot ($M = 29.95, SD = 5.18$) and British participants ($M = 30.13, SD = 5.07$), $t(440) = 0.35, n.s., d = 0.04$, and age and self-esteem scores were not correlated, $t(440) = 0.08, n.s.$

Table 3:
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Self-Esteem Scores

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Age	0.07	0.09	.04
Gender	2.29	0.54	.22 [†]
Nationality	0.15	0.52	.01
Step 2			
Age	0.22	0.08	.12**
Gender	1.54	0.46	.15 [†]
Nationality	0.92	0.44	.09*
Peer Attachment Style	1.12	0.18	.27 [†]
Mother Care	0.25	0.04	.31 [†]
Father Care	0.06	0.03	.09*
Mother Overprotection	0.07	0.04	.09
Father Overprotection	0.03	0.04	.05

Note. $R^2 = .05$, $p < .001$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .31$, $p < .001$ for Step 2.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, [†] $p < .001$.

Discussion

The present study aimed to assess how assumed cultural differences in caregiving practices related to young adults' perceived parental bonding and attachment relationships with peers, and to investigate cross-cultural influences of perceived parental and peer attachment on self-esteem. Broad support was obtained for the hypothesised relations.

Greek Cypriot and British participants did not differ in their ratings of maternal care during childhood, but in support of our first hypothesis Greek Cypriots perceived both parents to have been more overprotective than did their British counterparts. As well as this main effect, there was an interaction between gender and nationality for maternal overprotection scores. Compared with British women, Greek Cypriot women perceived their mothers to have been more overprotective, while there was no such difference in Greek Cypriot versus British men. There was also a main effect of gender for paternal overprotection, with women from both countries perceiving their fathers to have been more overprotective than did men. However, contrary to expectations, British participants perceived their fathers to have been more caring than did their Greek Cypriot counterparts, although the effect size for this relation was small (Cohen, 1988).

As hypothesised, the Greek Cypriot students were less likely than their British counterparts to report secure attachment style with peers. While 54% of British participants reported having a secure attachment style, only 38% of Greek Cypriots perceived their peer relationships as being secure. But regardless of nationality, secure peer attachment style was related to higher perceived maternal and paternal care and lower perceived overprotection from both parents.

With respect to relations with self-esteem, regression analyses showed that perceived parental bonding and peer attachment style predicted self-esteem scores independently of one another. Specifically, perceived maternal care was the best predictor of self-esteem, followed by peer attachment style, with paternal care also independently predicting self-esteem, and a non-significant trend for maternal overprotection as a predictor. Higher self-esteem was associated with higher perceived parental care and with both secure and dismissing peer attachment style. Our findings thus replicate those of previous studies indicating a link between attachment and self-esteem in children (Sroufe, 2005) and adolescents (Herz and Gullone, 1999). However, our study is unique in identifying independent contributions of perceptions of both peer and parental attachment relationships to self-esteem.

The finding that both peer and parental attachment relationships contribute independently to self-esteem is not consistent with Laible *et al.*, (2004) who reported no direct relation between peer attachment and self-esteem. This discrepancy may have arisen due to the different assessments of peer and parental attachment employed in the two studies. Laible *et al.*, assessed parent and peer attachment using an adapted version of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987) which assesses relationships with respect to three variables: trust, communication, and alienation. It may be that measuring attachment relationships with both parents and peers using the same assessment results in individuals being more likely to generalise across different types of attachment relationship, thus reducing the discriminant validity of the peer versus parental attachment measures. In contrast, we assessed individuals' perceived relationships with parents and peers using very different measures, with a specific focus on care versus overprotection in parental attachment relationships. This distinction in how different types of attachment relationships were characterized and assessed might explain why we found peer and parental attachment to make unique contributions to self-esteem. Future research should attempt to explore in greater detail how the mode of assessment of different types of attachment relationships might impact on outcome variables.

It is important to note the limitations of the present study. We have relied solely on self-report assessments of attachment relationships, and it would be interesting to establish whether a similar pattern of results is obtained if attachment relationships were assessed using more in-depth measures such as the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, and Main, 1985). Given that all assessments were made concurrently, it is also impossible to draw strong conclusions relating to the causal role that attachment relationships may play in young adults' developing self-identity and self-esteem. Our findings are, however, consistent with those of longitudinal studies that have shown a link between early attachment security and later self-esteem (Sroufe, 2005).

Despite the limitations of our study, the findings reported here make an important contribution to the literature on cross-cultural differences in patterns of attachment. While research on cultural differences in infant attachment security has a long history (van IJzendoorn and Kroonenberg, 1988), the present study is noteworthy in investigating how cultural differences in caregiving practices impact on young adults' perceptions about attachment relationships. Our results also support a number of central proposals in attachment theory.

First, the fact that, regardless of cultural background, robust relations were found between perceptions of parental and peer relationships supports Bowlby's (1969/1982) argument that early experiences with caregivers provide a template for later relationships with peers and romantic partners. Second, our finding that Greek Cypriot young adults are more likely than their British counterparts to perceive (a) their parents as being more overprotective, and (b) their relationships with peers as being insecure, is consistent with the proposal that parents' willingness to encourage their children to become autonomous in early adulthood promotes successful peer relationships (e.g. Allen *et al.*, 1994). Our results thus support the view that a vital part of the caregiving system as the child matures is facilitating the transference of primary attachment relationships from parents to peers.

In line with the argument that both secure and dismissing individuals have a positive IWM of self, we found no self-esteem differences between individuals in these groups, whereas both secure and dismissing individuals' self-esteem was higher than that of individuals in the two groups proposed to have negative IWMs of self (preoccupied and fearful). Finally, the fact that the same relations between perceptions of attachment relationships and self-esteem were found in both cultures supports the view that IWMs play an important role in determining psychological wellbeing (e.g. Bowlby, 1969/1982).

This study was thus the first of its kind to provide evidence that Greek Cypriot young adults perceive their parents as overprotective.

In addition, the study included only young adults, for whom ties with parents are still likely to be part of their lives. It would be interesting to test older adults or other age groups to find out whether the same patterns exist across the lifespan to establish whether the same patterns are obtained regardless of age. For example, it may be that perceptions of one's relationships with parents become less important in determining one's self-esteem than do those with peers and romantic partners as people grow older. Moreover, as people become parents, the quality of relationships with one's offspring may make increasingly important contributions to one's self-esteem. There is thus a great deal of future research to be done in mapping out relations between representations of different types of close relationships and self-esteem across the lifespan.

The study reported here highlights the importance of viewing the caregiving system and its influence on developmental outcome within its cultural context. In order to understand how caregiving changes as the child becomes an adolescent, one needs to take into account not merely the individual characteristics of the caregivers involved, but how caregivers' behaviour is influenced

by cultural expectations. Future research should thus investigate changes in caregiving practices during adolescence and early adulthood in other traditional societies to establish the true impact of parental attachment on individuals' evolving relationships with peers and romantic partners, as well as their developing sense of self.

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