

Hazen and Shaver

Adult relationships

Although Bowlby was primarily focused on understanding the nature of the infant-caregiver relationship, he believed that attachment characterized human experience from "the cradle to the grave." It was not until the mid-1980's, however, that researchers began to take seriously the possibility that attachment processes may play out in adulthood. Hazan and Shaver (1987) were two of the first researchers to explore Bowlby's ideas in the context of romantic relationships. According to Hazan and Shaver, the emotional bond that develops between adult romantic partners is partly a function of the same motivational system--the attachment behavioral system--that gives rise to the emotional bond between infants and their caregivers. Hazan and Shaver noted that the relationship between infants and caregivers and the relationship between adult romantic partners share the following features:

- both feel safe when the other is nearby and responsive
- both engage in close, intimate, bodily contact
- both feel insecure when the other is inaccessible
- both share discoveries with one another
- both play with one another's facial features and exhibit a mutual fascination and preoccupation with one another
- both engage in "baby talk"

On the basis of these parallels, Hazan and Shaver argued that adult romantic relationships, like infant-caregiver relationships, are attachments, and that romantic love is a property of the attachment behavioral system, as well as the motivational systems that give rise to caregiving and sexuality.