

Insecure attachment, gender roles, and interpersonal dependency in the Basque Country

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Abstract

Gender, gender role, and attachment style were used to predict emotional and instrumental dependency in a Basque student sample ($N = 602$). Psychometrically sound Spanish adaptations of English-language measures of dependency and attachment were created. As predicted, women were more emotionally and instrumentally dependent than men, but the sex differences were mediated by psychological masculinity and femininity. The anxious attachment dimension was correlated with emotional and instrumental dependency, the preoccupied rating with emotional dependency, and the avoidant attachment dimension and fearful rating with instrumental dependency. When the two attachment dimensions and the two gender-role variables were combined to predict dependency, emotional dependency was a function of anxious attachment and femininity; instrumental dependency was a function of anxious and avoidant attachment and low masculinity. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

In the last 20 years there has been increasing interest in the construct of interpersonal dependency, because of its importance for close relationship dynamics and individual well-being. Although some degree of dependency, especially during childhood, is normal and is a natural characteristic of highly social animals, there are also maladaptive forms of dependency that deserve study because of their relevance for clinical assessment and treatment. Excessive dependency is recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as a personality disorder (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994), and it has been linked with other personality and clinical disorders (for a review, see Bornstein, 1995a). Even studies

of nonclinical samples reveal a high prevalence of maladaptive dependency (Bartel, 1995; Bornstein & Johnson, 1990), making this an especially important topic for further research.

Birtchnell (1988) characterized the abnormally dependent person as one who consistently displays excessive dependency toward others in ways that damage close relationships and threaten individual well-being. Subsequently, the dependent personality disorder (DPD), as defined by the DSM-IV, became the standard for therapists and researchers. DPD as defined by DSM-IV currently provides the most influential framework for the study of pathological dependency.

Although the goal of the DSM definition and criteria was to denote a *category* of individuals needing treatment, many researchers view personality disorders, including DPD, as ends of continua ranging from normal through mildly troubled to severely troubled (Livesley, 1987; Widiger & Sanderson, 1995). From this perspective, a positive diagnosis of dependent personality disorder indicates a high degree of interpersonal dependency,

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which could be assessed with continuous, dimensional measures.

As early as the 1950s, Heathers (1955) described different ways of being dependent, stating that a person might be *emotionally dependent*, *instrumentally dependent*, or both. More recently, Hirschfeld et al. (1977) factor analyzed a large pool of dependency-related questionnaire items and concluded that there were three underlying dimensions: emotional reliance on others, lack of social self-confidence, and a not widely studied third dimension, assertion of autonomy. The distinction between emotional and instrumental dependency is sufficiently pervasive in the literature to make Hirschfeld et al.'s factor-based measures of these two constructs the measures of choice for research on dependency (Bornstein, 2000).

Determinants of dependency

Relatively little is known about the causes of dependency. Bornstein (1993) summarized studies of possible childhood determinants. The parent-child relationship is viewed by Bornstein as the crucible of dependency. He believes that dependency is a function of a person's mental models of self and others, an idea also central to Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1969/1982). For this reason, measures of attachment style, or working models of attachment, are important for dependency research.

Another possible contributor to dependency is gender. There has been considerable debate about the possibility that females are more dependent than males, and the debate has often been clouded by subjective opinions and ideological commitments. Considering empirical studies on the issue, we note that some researchers (e.g., Bornstein, Bowers, & Bonner, 1996; Kass, Spitzer, & Williams, 1983) have found gender differences in dependency, whereas others have not (e.g., Hirschfeld et al., 1977; Reich, Nduaguba, & Yates, 1988).

Attachment

Bowlby (1969/1982) and Ainsworth (1972) first proposed attachment theory as an

explanation of individual differences in personality development and psychopathology rooted in a person's important close relationships. According to attachment theory, every person possesses an innate attachment behavioral system that becomes highly activated in times of stress, fatigue, or injury. Every human being enters the world dependent on one or a few individuals, and these people are likely to become "attachment figures" (recognized care providers). The quality of a person's attachments depends on previous experiences with attachment figures. The residue of prior attachment relationships takes the form of internal working models of self, relationship partners, and attachment relationships.

Bowlby (e.g., 1969/1982) initially drew clinical and theoretical distinctions between secure, anxious, and avoidant forms of attachment in infancy and adulthood. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) created a laboratory procedure that could be used to identify infants as securely, anxiously, or avoidantly attached to primary caregivers. In their influential monograph, these authors showed that the three major attachment patterns can be conceptualized as regions in a two-dimensional, anxiety-by-avoidance space, but this possibility was given little attention until two further developments occurred in the field. First, Main and Solomon (1986) identified a fourth pattern of attachment, called disorganized/disoriented. Second, Hazan and Shaver (1987) and Bartholomew (1990) showed that similar attachment patterns can be identified in the context of adult romantic relationships. Bartholomew (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) conceptualized the four adult attachment patterns, which she called secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing, as regions in a two-dimensional space similar to the one discovered by Ainsworth et al. (1978).

In 1998, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver published the results of a large-sample factor-analytic study of self-report measures of adult romantic attachment. They found two orthogonal factors, *anxiety* and *avoidance*, to underlie all of the measures so far proposed to assess attachment styles. They also showed that these two dimensions are similar to the ones

proposed by Bartholomew (1990). The anxiety factor is similar to the dimension Bartholomew called Model of Self, such that people who score high in attachment-related anxiety (about rejection, lovability, and abandonment)—the preoccupied and fearful individuals—have more negative models of self. The avoidance factor is similar to Bartholomew's Model of Others dimension, such that people who score high in avoidance—the dismissing and fearful individuals—have more negative (e.g., less trusting) models of others.

A few empirical studies have suggested that the two dimensions can help to explain pathological dependency. Brennan and Shaver (1998) examined the relation between Bartholomew's (1990) four attachment styles and personality disorders in a large college-student sample. When mean DPD scores were computed for each of the four attachment categories, the preoccupied group had the highest mean, followed by the fearful group. Thus, DPD was associated with what Brennan et al. (1998) called the *anxiety dimension* underlying attachment styles, but especially with the preoccupied style, which is both high in anxiety and relatively low in avoidance.

Interpersonal dependency, as measured by Hirschfeld et al.'s (1977) emotional and instrumental subscales, was related to the four attachment styles in an unpublished study by Bartholomew and Larsen (1992). The results indicated that emotional dependency was most highly correlated with the preoccupied attachment style and that instrumental dependency was most highly correlated with the fearful attachment style. Thus, once again, dependency in general was related conceptually to the anxiety (or self-model) dimension underlying attachment styles, but the two kinds of dependency were associated differentially with the two kinds of anxious attachment: preoccupied and fearful.

Gender and gender roles

Before the present generation of dependency measures and DSM criteria were devised, clinicians commonly assigned the diagnosis of DPD to women at 2.5 to 4 times the rate at which it was assigned to men (Kass et al.,

1983). When early self-report measures of dependency were used in nonclinical samples, however, gender differences were not always found (e.g., Reich et al., 1988). To get a comprehensive picture of all such results obtained before the 1994 edition of the DSM, Bornstein (1995b) reviewed studies published between 1969 and 1994. He found that women received a DPD diagnosis more often than men. When he looked at subsequent studies of diagnostic practices using the DSM-IV (Bornstein, 1997), he found that women continued to be more likely than men to receive a DPD diagnosis. Brennan and Shaver (1998) reported gender differences in DPD (with women receiving higher scores than men) assessed by self-report in a large nonclinical sample, according to criteria of the DSM-III-R (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).

Many authors have attributed the gender difference in dependency to socialization (e.g., Birtchnell, 1991; Bornstein, 1992). This would help to explain why some studies yield gender differences and some do not. For instance, in one study of a sample of psychology students (Bornstein et al., 1996), the Interpersonal Dependency Inventory (IDI) was used as a measure of dependency. The emotional dependency subscale was negatively correlated with masculinity and positively correlated with femininity, and the instrumental dependency subscale was even more strongly negatively correlated with masculinity and less strongly correlated with femininity. But no attempt was made to determine whether these differences in gender-role constructs mediated the gender differences in the two dependency subscales. That was one of the aims of the study reported here.

Hofstede (1980, 1998) has addressed the relativity of psychological masculinity and femininity. He set up a ranking system in which each country was rated according to its level of masculinity. He defined masculinity as a cultural construct characteristic of societies in which men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Societies with low masculinity scores are ones in which both men and women are supposed to be tender, modest, and concerned

with the quality of life. Hofstede (1998) complained about the fact that, in general, psychologists assume that roles, values, and behaviors are similar in all societies. His analysis of gender roles suggested that they should be examined in the context of individual cultures or societies.

Indeed, a society's position on the masculinity dimension might affect the way health professionals view healthy and pathological attitudes and behaviors in different countries or regions of countries. This has particular relevance in the case of interpersonal dependency because there is preliminary evidence that it is influenced by gender roles in the United States (Bornstein et al., 1996). These results, however, should be replicated in different countries to assess the influence of gender roles on dependency. This was another aim of our study.

The present study

The purpose of the present study was to test four hypotheses about attachment and gender-related correlates of dependency in a sizable sample of adults from the Basque Country, a partially autonomous region of Spain with its own non-Romance, pre-Indo-European language, Basque.

According to Hofstede's ranking of countries on the masculinity/femininity dimension, Spain is a less masculine country than the United States, so the rigidity of gender roles should be somewhat lower. Of special interest here is that, based on indirect indexes, the Basque region of Spain is less masculine, in Hofstede's sense, than is the remainder of Spain. For instance, Hofstede (1980) found masculinity to be negatively correlated with the average percentage of its Gross National Product a country spent on development aid to poor countries. The last report about aid to undeveloped countries showed that the Basque Country had the highest percentage when compared to the other 15 regions of Spain; almost 40% of all aid from Spain comes from the the Basque Country (Alonso, 1998). Furthermore, the blood donation index for 2000 was higher in the Basque Country than in any other region of Spain. These data led us to wonder whether gender-role variables

would perform in the Basque Country similarly to the way they do in the United States.

This study was designed to test the influence of gender, gender role (psychological masculinity and femininity), attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance), and attachment ratings (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, fearful) on emotional and instrumental dependency. Another aim of the study was to examine the properties of new Spanish translations of the dependency and attachment measures in a Basque sample. The hypotheses were as follows:

- H1: *There will be a significant relationship between gender and both types of dependency, emotional and instrumental. Women are hypothesized to be slightly more dependent than men.*
- H2: *There will be associations between psychological masculinity and femininity on the one hand, and gender, emotional dependency, and instrumental dependency on the other. Moreover, the gender-role variables will mediate any relationship found between gender and dependency. In particular, masculinity will be negatively correlated with emotional dependency, and femininity will be positively correlated with emotional dependency. There will be a negative correlation between masculinity and instrumental dependency and a positive correlation between femininity and instrumental dependency. When gender-role differences are controlled, gender will not be significantly related to emotional or instrumental dependency.*
- H3: *Attachment variables will be associated with both kinds of dependency. In particular, there will be a positive correlation between attachment-related anxiety and emotional dependency but no association between attachment-related avoidance and emotional dependency. In line with Bartholomew and Larsen's*

(1992) findings, and with their notion that fearful avoidants, although anxious like preoccupied individuals, will not express dependency in an emotionally vulnerable way but in a less emotional, more distanced and instrumental way, instrumental dependency will be positively correlated with both attachment dimensions, anxiety and avoidance. When ratings of Bartholomew's (1990) four separate attachment styles are considered, there will be a positive correlation between the preoccupied style and emotional dependency and a positive correlation between the fearful style and instrumental dependency.

- H4: When both attachment and the two gender-role variables are considered together as predictors of emotional and instrumental dependency, emotional dependency will be predicted by anxiety, femininity, and (low) masculinity; instrumental dependency will be predicted by anxiety, avoidance, femininity, and (low) masculinity.

Method

Participants

Participants were 602 undergraduates enrolled at the University of the Basque Country (291 women, 311 men). All of them were Basque, heterosexual, and Caucasian. The participants were recruited from different colleges on campus. Except for the 1% who were married or cohabiting, the participants were single. They ranged in age from 18 to 36, with a median age of 20 years and a mean of 20.6 years. Participants were given a chance to win prizes in a raffle (music CDs, tickets for local soccer games, etc.). Seven prizes were awarded.

Measures

Emotional dependency. Emotional dependency was measured with a Spanish version of

the Emotional Reliance on Another Person subscale (the ER subscale of the IDI; Hirschfeld et al., 1977), which was constructed especially for this study. Back-translation was employed to maximize the similarity of the English and Spanish versions of this and all subsequently mentioned questionnaires. Although the original scale contained 17 items rated on a 4-point scale, the Spanish adaptation contained only 16 items, because item 14 would have reduced the scale's internal consistency. The reliability coefficient for the scale was $\alpha = .84$.

Instrumental dependency. Instrumental dependency was measured with a Spanish version of the Lack of Social Self-Confidence subscale (the LS subscale of the IDI) constructed for this study. Although the original scale contained 15 items rated on a 4-point scale, the Spanish adaptation contained only 13 items, because items 4 and 7 would have reduced the scale's internal consistency. The reliability coefficient for the scale was $\alpha = .73$.

Gender-role variables. Psychological femininity and masculinity were measured with a Spanish version of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974; Vergara, 1993). The BSRI measures an individual's self-characterization in terms of gender-role attributes (collectively labeled masculinity and femininity), with these constructs being viewed as orthogonal rather than as opposite ends of a continuum. Bem reported coefficient alphas ranging from .70 to .86, and test-retest reliabilities ranging from .89 to .93 over a one-month period. The reliability coefficients of the Spanish masculinity and femininity scales in a Basque sample were .81 and .75 (Vergara, 1993). The BSRI consists of 60 adjectives thought to be socially desirable for men, women, or both (e.g., self-confident, caring). Respondents indicate on a 7-point scale how well each adjective describes them. In the present study, the alphas for the Spanish-language masculinity and femininity scales were .84 and .77.

Attachment. Two measures of attachment style were included: a Spanish version of the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR)

scale (Brennan et al., 1998), which was created for this study, and a Spanish translation of Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) Relationship Questionnaire (RQ). The ECR assesses two dimensions of adult attachment in the context of close (couple) relationships: (a) avoidance of intimacy and (b) anxiety about rejection and abandonment. Each scale contains 18 items, which are evaluated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The reliability coefficients for ECR avoidance and anxiety were .87 and .85, respectively.

The RQ asks respondents to rate how self-characteristic each of four attachment-style prototypes is. It elicits self-ratings of four attachment patterns: secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing. Respondents are asked to evaluate each item on a 7-point scale. Besides the ratings used in the analyses reported below, participants' self-classifications into one of the four attachment-style categories were assessed, with the following results: secure, 44.2%; dismissing, 16.5%; preoccupied, 22.3%; and fearful, 17%. These results are similar to results obtained in studies using the English version of the measure in nonclinical samples.

Procedure

Chairpersons or other professors from most departments in the University of the Basque Country, as well as student organizations, were contacted about the study. Most colleges agreed to help with participant recruitment. Some students completed the questionnaires in the classroom; others completed them on their own time.

Results

Preliminary analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted to test for the existence of two slightly correlated factors of dependency and two independent attachment factors. In addition, gender differences in masculinity and femininity and in the attachment measures, were examined, as were correlations between the gender-role and attachment scales.

Dependency. A principal components analysis of the dependency items, followed by oblique rotation, revealed two major factors (both with eigenvalues greater than 1) accounting for 29.4% of the variance. Factor 1 (eigenvalue = 5.4) accounted for 21.3% of the variance and corresponded with Hirschfeld et al.'s (1977) emotional dependency scale; Factor 2 (eigenvalue = 4.0) accounted for 8.1% of the variance and corresponded with the instrumental dependency scale. As expected, the two factors were significantly correlated ($r = .34, p < .001$). Because the factors were so similar to Hirschfeld et al.'s scales (each correlated above .95 with the corresponding scale score), which have been used in several previous studies, the constructs of emotional and instrumental dependency were operationalized by the traditional scales (minus the three weak items mentioned earlier). The correlation between the scales was .46 ($p < .001$).

Attachment. A principal components analysis, followed by oblique rotation, of the items in Brennan et al.'s (1998) adult attachment measure once again yielded two major factors (both with eigenvalues greater than 1) accounting for 34.6% of the variance. Factor 1 (eigenvalue = 6.8) accounted for 18.9% of the variance and corresponded to the avoidance dimension, and Factor 2 (eigenvalue = 5.7) accounted for 15.7% of the variance and corresponded with the anxiety dimension. As expected, the two factors were orthogonal ($r = -.02, ns$). Because the two factors correlated very highly with the corresponding unit-weighted scales used in previous research (both coefficients were larger than .95), avoidance and anxiety were operationalized by the traditional unit-weighted scale scores. The correlation between the two scales was $-.01$.

Gender and gender role. Previous research (summarized by Lenney, 1991) has documented reliable gender differences in psychological masculinity and femininity. In the present study, the same differences were found: women ($M = 5.06, SD = 0.57$) scored higher in femininity than men ($M = 4.68, SD = 0.58$) ($t(600) = 7.98, p < .001$); men

($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.71$) scored higher in masculinity than women ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.66$) ($t(600) = 11.18$, $p < .001$).

Masculinity and femininity, which have been conceptualized as orthogonal dimensions (Bem, 1974), were slightly negatively correlated in the present study ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$), although not so highly correlated as to challenge the claim that they are conceptually independent.

Hypotheses tests

Gender and dependency. Gender *t*-tests were computed on the two dependency variables, and the results were significant for both. For instrumental dependency, women had a higher mean ($M = 28.23$, $SD = 5.52$) than men ($M = 26.22$, $SD = 5.08$) ($t(596) = 4.63$, $p < .001$); for emotional dependency, women also had a higher mean ($M = 41.80$, $SD = 8.45$) than men ($M = 38.76$, $SD = 7.18$) ($t(596) = 4.74$, $p < .001$).

Gender, gender role, and dependency. To determine whether the gender differences in dependency were attributable to differences in psychological masculinity and femininity, multiple regression analyses were conducted. First, correlations among all of the variables were calculated (see Table 1). Emotional dependency was slightly negatively correlated with masculinity. As expected, emotional dependency was moderately correlated with femininity. Instrumental dependency was strongly negatively correlated with masculin-

ity and modestly positively correlated with femininity. We expected that psychological masculinity and femininity would mediate the links between gender and dependency. Indeed, the previous significant relation between gender and dependency was reduced to a nonsignificant level ($\beta = .07$) when the mediating variables were controlled. The effect of the masculinity variable was highly significant ($\beta = .57$) but the effect of the femininity variable was not significant ($\beta = .07$). Thus, the effect of gender on instrumental dependency was mediated largely by psychological masculinity.

We repeated the same analyses with emotional dependency as the dependent variable. As predicted, the link between gender and emotional dependency became statistically insignificant when the sex-role variables were controlled ($\beta = .06$). The effect of the masculinity remained significant ($\beta = .09$), however, as did the effect of femininity ($\beta = .29$). These results indicate that the link between gender and emotional dependency is mediated by psychological masculinity and femininity.

Attachment and dependency. To test the hypothesized relations between attachment and dependency variables, correlations were computed. As predicted, there was a significant correlation between emotional dependency and anxiety, and there was a significant correlation between anxiety and instrumental dependency. There was also a significant positive correlation between

Table 1. Correlations among dependency, gender-role, and attachment variables

Target variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Emotional dependency	—						
2. Instrumental dependency	.46***	—					
3. Femininity	.33***	.14***	—				
4. Masculinity	-.16***	-.55***	-.16***	—			
5. Anxious attachment	.64***	.40***	.26***	-.15***	—		
6. Avoidant attachment	-.02	.25***	-.16***	-.07	-.01	—	
7. Gender ^a	.19***	.19***	.31***	-.41***	.07	-.08	—

*** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

^a0 = men, 1 = women.

avoidance and instrumental dependency ($r = .25, p < .001$). Thus, our predictions were confirmed.

It was also possible to determine the extent to which emotional and instrumental dependency were related to self-ratings on each of Bartholomew's four attachment styles (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), as shown in Table 2. Emotional dependency was most strongly related to the preoccupied attachment style, but also to the fearful style and to low scores on the dismissing and secure styles. Because the highest positive correlation was with the preoccupied style and the highest negative correlation was with the dismissing style, the results indicate that emotional dependency is strongly related to the dismissing-to-preoccupied diagonal of Bartholomew's attachment typology. Instrumental dependency was most strongly related to the fearful attachment style and was also correlated positively with the preoccupied style. It was negatively correlated with the secure style. Thus, instrumental dependency is associated most strongly with the fearful-avoidant attachment style, as predicted, and is related to the secure-to-fearful diagonal of Bartholomew's attachment typology.

Gender role, attachment, and dependency. A final step in the analyses was to determine how well a linear combination of sex-role and attachment variables could account for variance in emotional and instrumental dependency. The R^2 for the analysis with emotional dependency as the dependent

variable was $.44 (F(4,593) = 114.61, p < .001)$. The beta coefficients for anxiety ($.59, p < .001$) and femininity ($.17, p < .001$) were significant, but the coefficients for avoidance ($.02$) and masculinity ($-.04$) were not. The R^2 for the analysis with instrumental dependency as the dependent variable was $.45 (F(4,593) = 119.41, p < .001)$. The beta coefficients for masculinity ($-.48, p < .001$), anxiety ($.32, p < .001$), and avoidance ($.22, p < .001$) were significant, but the coefficient for femininity ($.03$) was not. In general, the results confirmed Hypothesis 4, except that masculinity did not contribute to the prediction of emotional dependency, and femininity did not contribute to the prediction of instrumental dependency.

In summary, as predicted, emotional dependency and instrumental dependency were explained in part by gender-role variables, which mediated the effects of gender, and by attachment variables. The two kinds of dependency differed in the ways predictor variables were associated with them.

Discussion

This study was conducted to examine associations between gender, gender-role dimensions, attachment, and dependency in the Basque Country. The principal components analyses of the Spanish versions of the questionnaires conformed to theoretical expectations. The measures performed well and seemed highly similar in structure and reliability to their English counterparts. Two

Table 2. Correlations between dependency variables and attachment-style ratings

Target variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Emotional dependency	—						
2. Instrumental dependency	.46***	—					
3. Secure	-.14***	-.29***	—				
4. Dismissing	-.22***	-.07	.11**	—			
5. Preoccupied	.40***	.27***	-.16***	-.12**	—		
6. Fearful	.22***	.34***	-.25***	.22***	.26***	—	
7. Gender ^a	.19***	.19***	-.01	-.04	-.06	.06	—

** $p < .01$, two-tailed. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

^a0 = men, 1 = women.

major kinds of dependency, emotional and instrumental, were tapped, and they were moderately correlated. There were two major dimensions of attachment, anxiety and avoidance, and they were orthogonal in our Basque sample as they were in the American study from which the measure was derived.

Hypothesis 1 regarding gender differences in dependency was confirmed. Women were slightly more emotionally and instrumentally dependent than men. This effect must be viewed in the context of Hypothesis 2, however. This hypothesis predicted that any gender differences in dependency would be accounted for by the two gender-role variables, psychological masculinity and femininity. The effects of these variables on the two forms of dependency were much stronger than the effects of gender per se, and the effects of gender were reduced to nonsignificance once masculinity and femininity were statistically controlled. These results suggest we should look to sex-role socialization for some of the causes of dependency in women.

For centuries, women have generally occupied roles in which they were subordinate to and dependent upon men. Eagly's research (e.g., Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000) shows that when these role relationships change, people's conceptions of the psychology of men and women change as well. These changes can be expected (eventually) to cause corresponding changes in dependency—a possibility that can be tested in future studies.

Nevertheless, these results were obtained with a somewhat unusual sample, in which less rigidity in gender roles was expected. Compared to Bornstein et al.'s (1996) study, similarities were noted, but also some differences. Particularly interesting is the relation between emotional dependency and masculinity. There is a considerable association in the American sample ($-.37$ and $-.31$), but in the Basque sample a lower correlation ($-.16$) was obtained, and this association turned out to be nonsignificant when femininity was entered into the regression equation.

Thus, to the extent that dependency is thought to be more characteristic of women than of men, this perception is probably due, at least in part, to gender-role stereotypes rather

than to unbiased perception of actual gender differences. Taking into account the between-countries differences in gender roles, DSM-IV's recommendation to avoid gender-biased diagnosis of DPD should be taken more seriously in countries that display a lower masculinity index than the United States.

Hypothesis 3 stated that emotional dependency would be predictable, in the dimensional analyses, from anxious attachment and from the preoccupied and fearful attachment-style ratings. This part of the hypothesis was confirmed. Hypothesis 3 also stated that instrumental dependency would be predictable from a combination of anxious and avoidant attachment, which is conceptually equivalent to the fearful attachment style. The results confirmed this part of the hypothesis. The correlation between instrumental dependency and the anxiety scale was higher than the correlation between instrumental dependency and the avoidance scale, and the preoccupied rating was correlated with instrumental dependency almost as highly as the fearful rating. Both of these results call attention to the central importance of anxious attachment as a predictor of both kinds of dependency, emotional and instrumental. Thus, emotional dependency is most compatible with an attachment style that involves a combination of high anxiety about abandonment and a high desire for closeness and intimacy with others. In contrast, instrumental dependency is most compatible with an attachment style that involves high anxiety about rejection and abandonment combined with avoidance of closeness and intimacy. Instrumental dependency may be a way of expressing insecurity (e.g., asking for advice or guidance) without opening oneself to rejection of one's core self.

When both the gender-role and attachment variables were included as predictors of the two kinds of dependency, there was a unique constellation of predictors for each kind. Hypothesis 4 predicted that emotional dependency would be a joint function of anxious attachment, femininity, and masculinity. The results supported the prediction with respect to anxious attachment and femininity but not masculinity. Viewed in this light, emotional dependency is an understandable reaction on

the part of a person who cannot take acceptance, love, and sympathy for granted but instead has to beg for and be vigilant about these social provisions. Femininity is a culturally coherent set of traits suitable for a class of people who have traditionally been assigned dependent roles in society. This kind of contribution to emotional dependency is, understandably, partially independent of the contribution of anxious attachment.

Hypothesis 4 also predicted that instrumental dependency would be a joint function of all four attachment and gender-role variables. The results indicated that three of the four variables—*anxiety, avoidance, and masculinity*—made independent contributions to instrumental dependency, but *femininity* did not. In the same way that the feminine role has been defined partly in terms of dependency, the masculine role has been defined partly in terms of dominance and independence. For men to ask for help is notoriously difficult and status-threatening.

Attachment anxiety contributes to instrumental dependency just as it does to emotional dependency, because being unsure of one's value and acceptability makes it likely that other people's help and advice will be sought and valued. Attachment avoidance contributes to instrumental dependency presumably because the avoidant individual lacks security and self-confidence but does not feel safe seeking direct emotional support. Seeking instrumental help may be a safe step away from seeking personal acceptance.

Overall, the results suggest that dependency is a joint function of gender-role socialization and attachment history. This suggests strategies for treatment and change besides working directly on dependency. Treatment for dependency might require an exploration of alternatives to traditional gender-role conceptions of self and a process that attachment researchers call "revision and updating of internal working models" of self and relationships (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999).

Limitations

There are at least three limitations of the study reported here. First, we cannot tell, with a

cross-sectional design, whether adult dependency is actually caused by insecure attachment and sex-role socialization. With respect to the variables studied here, it does seem likely that an adult's attachment style begins to develop during infancy and childhood (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982; Thompson, 1999), as does their gender-role socialization (Kohlberg, 1966; Mischel, 1966). Still, the adult measures of these variables might be interrelated for reasons other than the causal history we have in mind.

That brings us to a second limitation of our study: All of the constructs were measured with self-report scales, some of which contained similar item content. Anxious attachment and emotional dependency were related at least in part because both constructs are measured with items asking about fear of rejection and anger and frustration about lack of acceptance. Similarly, masculinity was defined partly in terms of attributes such as "independent" and "makes decisions easily," which are direct opposites of phrases used in the measures of dependency. This is a problem in most self-report studies of personality constructs and can be solved only by including observational and other non-self-report measures, preferably in a longitudinal design.

Finally, our measurement of psychological masculinity and femininity was based on a Spanish translation of the BSRI (Bem, 1974; Vergara, 1993). The English-language BSRI has been criticized for a number of reasons. The conception of femininity embodied in the inventory includes unfavorable terms, even though Bem intended to include only characteristics that were socially desirable. (See Lenney, 1991, for a discussion of this matter.) Moreover, the inclusion of such characteristics as gullible, shy, and yielding increases the likelihood that "femininity" will correlate with dependency. Further study is needed to determine how femininity should be defined for various research purposes. In the present context, the BSRI portrayal of femininity causes femininity to seem unhealthy, both in its own right and in its association with dependency.

Future directions

According to our reasoning, emotional and instrumental dependency are traits that emerge during childhood and adolescence as a function of attachment history and gender-role socialization. But this interpretation ignores the possibility that a third variable, such as temperament, plays a role in determining dependency, attachment style, and gender-related personal qualities. Only longitudinal studies can map the causal relations between these variables over time, and only twin studies can determine the role of inherited temperament, if any.

Studies in clinical settings should be conducted to see whether our results apply to clinical in-patients and out-patients. Our findings suggest that people seeking, or needing, clinical treatment for dependency would not only be high scorers on measures of emotional and instrumental dependency, but would also have insecure attachment styles and, at least in the case of women, extreme scores on femininity as defined by the BSRI. Further research is needed to determine whether these

clinical extrapolations from our studies are valid.

Given that only about 45% of the variance in dependency was accounted for in our research, there must be other important determinants of dependency yet to be discovered. Two places to look for such determinants are in the realms of predisposing experiences, such as childhood abuse and parental drug or alcohol abuse, and precipitating factors such as spousal violence. The relations between such experiences and the variables studied here—attachment, gender role, and dependency—are still unclear.

Our research was conducted in the Basque Country, a singular part of Europe where indirect signs point to a lower rigidity of gender roles, compared to other Western countries. Although all of the measures used in our studies seemed to perform similarly to the way they perform in similar studies conducted in the United States, in English, we cannot be sure that the patterns of relations among the variables, and the slight gender differences in dependency, will replicate elsewhere. This is another question for future research.

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