The Influence of Attachment Style on Memory Retrieval

Hongyu Tao

Chongqing Normal University, NeiHuan North Street, Chongqing YongChuan, China
thy95bx@163.com

Abstract: Attachment style plays an important role between our behavioral pattern and the closeness relationship. Nowadays, there are lots of studies which shown that attachment style also has an influence on the memory retrieval. However, there still lack the summary of the systematic conclusion about these. The results suggest that secure attachment individual has moderate emotion and view on memory retrieval, avoidant attachment individual adopt advance defense strategy to restrain the memory retrieval and anxious attachment individual activate the overactivation strategy to avoid the emotion expression. This essay aims to summarize the recent research and try to find out the specific connection between the attachment style and the memory retrieval. We mainly compare the attachment style, demonstrating that the different attachment style individual retrieval their memory relied on the internet working model which based on the reacting of the attachment figures to the proximity needs, meanwhile, the attachment strategy also influences the memory retrieval.

Keywords: Attachment style, Internet Working Model, Memory retrieval.

1. Introduction

According to Bowlby's theory, the attachment is defined that the relationship connection between the primary caregiver and individual forms early life. At the same time, attachment is the phenomenon throughout our life from cradle to grave, with the development of individual, the closeness relationship not only between parents, but also from friends and lovers. Attachment theory has become one of the important topics in the field of individual's memory and is a highly relevant framework for explaining relational cognitions and behaviors across the entire life span. Different attachment style (secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment) shows distinct influence on emotional responses and information clues. Attachment style has impression on human cognization and society, and it also has impacted on memory. As one of the most significant parts in humankind, memory helps people live better. Up to now, a great number of studies had proved that attachment style had an important effect on the long-term memory. There is no doubt that people always have some special reflections because of some memories which were influenced by the attachment style. Many experiments had proposed that attachment style had effect on the autobiographical retrieval [1] and the extension of marriage satisfaction based on the romantic memory [2].

Ainsworth, Blehar, Water and Wall first took measures to classify the attachment style according to the baby's actions with mother in separate and reunion surroundings. The attachment style mainly has two types, secure and insecure attachment style. The insecure attachment style also has been classified to the anxious and avoidant attachment style. It means that there are secure, anxious,

and avoidant attachment style respectively. Bowlby asserted that innate attachment behavioral system motivates humans to seek proximity. Secure individuals have low avoidance and low anxiety who enjoy intimate relationships, seek social support, and trust others (Donges et al., 2015). Avoidant individuals have high avoidance and low anxiety who prone to restrain the idea of seeking proximity and unwillingly establish close relationships with others. Anxious individuals have high anxiety and low avoidance who exaggerate attachment and support needs. It is no clear and definite, although there are a lot of experiments had improved that the connection between the attachment style and memory.

The essay mainly concentrates on how the different attachment styles influence memory retrieval process. People can have more vibrant and deep understanding about their own memory fragments which can help them see themselves more rationally. On the other hand, it also can make people live better in their future by knowing their attachment style and the characteristic of the attachment, so it is necessary to figure the connection out between the attachment style and memory retrieval process.

2. Internet Working Model of Attachment and the Attachment Strategy

Internet Working Model of attachment is a mental representation which is based on the way of the reacting of the attachment figures to the proximity needs, including the self-belief and about other's-belief. Individuals interact with attachment figures and maintain proximity will help individual form different cognitive processing mode which is attachment interior working processing. In the theory, self-representation mainly contains the code about whether worth to be loved and concerned by self or not, and the other-representation primarily include code about whether coherent and reliable of the caregiver and their behaviors [3]. For the secure attachment style, they have positive-self belief and positive-others belief processing working model [4]. Research also found that person scoring high on attachment avoidance correspond to the avoidant style, which is characterized by negative representations of others, compulsive self-reliance, and preference for emotional distance and persons scoring high on attachment anxiety correspond to the anxious style, which is characterized by doubts in others' responses, negative self-appraisals, compulsive need for closeness, and fear of rejection [5]. The research also found that the if the persons scoring high on anxiety, the self-belief is more passive and if the person scoring high on avoidant, the other belief is more passive. When the individual suffering the pain, the attachment system has been activated to protect themselves, a great number of the research had recognized that attachment style is correspond to the internal working model of attachment.

Bowlby (1982) assert that attachment individual will form great and secure emotional management strategies when they get good proximity and positive expectation for others and valuable points to themselves. However, if they do not get these or these reflections which are useless to reduce pressure and cannot get attachment secure feeling, individuals will form secondary attachment strategy. Shaver and Mikulincer [3] put forward the attachment system activity and dynamic mechanism model to descript the connection between the emotional management strategies and attachment system function. The model mainly includes three patterns, the first pattern is the primary mechanism which contains controlling and evaluating the danger thing when the attachment system is activated. The second part play a role in monitoring and estimating the availability and reactivity of attachment aims, and it can explain the difference of the individual attachment security and development of "safe base strategy". The last part can distinct the avoidant attachment and anxious attachment when attachment figures cannot be activated. In this process, people will counterbalance the choice of seek proximity is feasible or not, if the answer is yes, the avoidant attachment individual will rouse the deactivation strategy, if the answer is no, the anxiety attachment individual will awaken the activation strategy.

3. Memory Retrieval Processing of the Secure Attachment

In childhood, infants who will inform the secure attachment style will showing that they are unwilling to being separating from their mother, but they can regulate emotion quickly, hugging their mother when they reunite once again. For the secure attachment style, seeking the proximity has significant impact on themselves. Individuals have enough self-confidence view about themselves, thinking themselves are cute and worth to be loved and others are sufficient reliable who can provide help. In the stressful surrounding, secure attachment individuals will arouse the early positive memory with attachment object. These positive memories will intensify the behavior of secure attachment individual to seek help. With the circulation, the closeness has been kept, individual feel enough safe and will keep moderate emotion to retrieve their memory. A lot of research had proved that their more stable emotion and more positive attitude to their memory [6], they are not uncomfortable with the proximity relationship and not concerned with being refused or deserted by others. Besides, secure attachment individual is occupied with higher level of affective awareness, and express stable social behavior to establish good interpersonal relationship. According to the positive strategy, they can undergo more stress and counterbalance relationship, living freer in their life. That means secure attachment individual have more stable emotion and more positive view to retrieval the bad memory.

4. Memory Retrieval Processing of the Avoidant Attachment

In childhood, infants who will inform the avoidant attachment style will showing that they do not care whether their mother leave or come back. For the avoidant attachment individual, they have positive-self belief and passive-others belief process working model. Ein-Dor, Mikulincer and Shaver [3] found that avoidant attachment individual prone to use the module of fight to escape to face the theater surroundings so that they can reduce the physiology and emotion activation. Besides, the measurement of personality questionnaire also expresses that avoidant attachment individual will restrain the emotion more frequently. In the stressful surrounding, the attachment style will activate the deactivation strategy which has been classified to advance defense strategy and after the defense strategy [3]. The advance defense strategy which is on the memory code process could neglect the threaten things and is good to avoid the harmful message or memory, can reduce the attention to the message and the unhappy thinking. While the after the defense strategy is on the memory retrieval process, individual control the coded message to retrieval, reducing the stressful emotional thing to be retrieved. Although the two strategies play a role in restrain the memory, the first one is more sufficient. When the advance defense strategy does not work successfully, the defense strategy will be activated. However, the deactivation strategy is not always successful to work, because the cognitive load influences the restrain strategy.

Avoidant attachment individual long for the independence and autonomous of own heart and avoid the intimate relationship with others. In the early research, it is difficult to recall the negative memory for the avoidant individual and it also take more time [4]. Meanwhile, avoidant individual was also hard to retrieval the harmful and anxious message [5] and the emotion intensity was also low. Avoidant attachment individual avoids establishing the intimate relationship and refuse to trust others. Besides, because during the avoidant attachment individual take a lot of cognitive and energy to restrain, they will recall the least memory with the emotional comparing with secure and anxious attachment individuals, and the passive emotional memory will take more time and their emotion intensity is also the lowest.

5.   Memory Retrieval Processing of the Anxious Attachment

In childhood, infants who will inform the anxious attachment style will showing that they are unwilling to be separating with their mother with extremely painful, when their mother come back, they want to be close to their mother, but also refuse them. For the anxious attachment individual, they have passive-self belief and positive-others belief process working model. People who are high in attachment anxiety in close relationships have intense needs to be accepted, supported, and admired by their partner, which is likely to create relationship tensions and conflicts. Anxious attachment individual prone to activate the overactivation strategy, exaggerating the attachment and seeking proximity from others [7]. They occasionally take the system which is direct opposite of the secure attachment and the strong watchfulness about the refusion and supportive sign. What is more, the system will also enhance individual's desire to proximity and hope to blend to with the attachment figure. Research shows that anxious attachment individual is supported by the daily positive thing. What is more, they will recall more memory and put more cognitive resource with excessive bad emotion. For the memory extract, nowadays, there is still a big disputation for anxious attachment individual, some research deems the anxious attachment individual prone retrieval the passive memory, but some research consider they restrain the things which relates to the attachment.

As unsecure attachment style, avoidant attachment style and anxious attachment style have express unlikely with the secure attachment style when facing the threating situation and information. However, they still have the different reflections. For the avoidant attachment individual, the attachment strategy will restrain their emotion expression and bad memory retrieval, but for the anxious attachment individual, they are willing to avoid the emotion expression.

6.   Conclusion

We have attempted to introduce the connection between the attachment style with memory retrieval based on individual's Internet Working Model of attachment, the attachment strategy, and the memory retrieval processing. From the discussion, the conclusion can be reached that different attachment style have influence to individual's memory, cognitions, and behaviors across the whole of humankind. Secure attachment individual has moderate emotion and much easier to retrieval the bad memory according to the great and secure emotional management strategies because their positive attitude to themselves and their closeness lover or families. For the avoidant attachment individual has much slighter emotion and harder to retrieval bad memory by the deactivation strategy because their positive-self attitude and the passive-self attitude about their families [8]. For the anxious attachment style individual has stronger emotion experience and avoid to the emotion expression with the overactivation strategy because their passive-self attitude and positive-others attitude to their kin. According to this essay, the connection between the different attachment style and the memory retrieval processing has a relatively comprehensive summary. Meanwhile, people could understand their own attachment style and correspond to the characters of the attachment styles, such as the attachment internet working model. For example, some people showing excessive emotional experiences when they extract their memory, we can properly discern the anxious attachment style and help us pay more attention to the closeness relationship with their families. After that, human have more rethinking about their memories whether are realistic and objective or not and their closeness relationship with others, and they can be able to treat their memory processing more professional to make human life much better.

Consequently, there is still much to be done to unify theory building and verification in attachment styles. First, the essay does not discuss the attachment styles' electrical mechanism, the specific cerebrum working process is not displayed. Second, there is not agreed viewpoint about the

anxious attachment style memory retrieval about whether only relate to the passive memory or restrain the things which connect to the attachment. At the present state of knowledge, however, there are some depth lessons for practice and research. For example, some researchers have been found that different attachment individual have big different expressions between youth and old. At the same time, comparing other attachment styles, anxious attachment individual strategy is more complex, there could compare the different strategy of high goal in the anxiety with the low goal in the anxiety.

7.   Reference

[1] Jing Zhai. An EPR Study On Avoidant Attachment And the Implicit Recognition (in Chinese). (Doctoral dissertation, Southwest University).

[2] Liu Chen. (2019). An ERP Study on Attachment and Autobiographical Memory Retrieval: The Impact of Strategic Information Processing and Its Effectiveness. (Doctoral dissertation, Southwest University). (in Chinese).

[3] Ya Nan Liu. (2018). The Influence of Adult Attachment To The Marital Satisfaction: The Mediating Role Of Romantic Relationship Memory. (Doctoral dissertation, Nan Jing Normal University).

[4] Sun Li. The Relationship Between Attachment and Autobiographical Memory: Relational-Interdependent Self-Construct as a Moderator. (Doctoral dissertation, Zhe Jiang Normal University).

[5] Jun Ping Liu, Rong Lie Shen, & Li Yuan Li. (2012). The Defensive Mechanism Of The Avoidant Attachment And The Influence To The Recognition. Journal of Education institute of Taiyuan University(S1),4-7. (in Chinese).

[6] Liu, Y., Ding, Y., Lu, L., & Chen, X. (2017). Attention bias of avoidant individuals to attachment emotion pictures. Scientific Reports, 7, 41631.

[7] Zhai Jing. (2015). The cognitive-emotional features of avoidant attachment on memory processing. Advances in Psychology, 05(11), 633-639.

[8] Zhai, J., Chen, X., Ma, J., Yang, Q., &Liu, Y. (2016). The vigilance-avoidance model of avoidant recognition: an erp study under threat priming. Psychiatry Res, 246, 379-386.