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Adult attachment styles and negativistic beliefs about the social world: The role of self-image and other-image

Abstract: This article is concerned with the relationship between adult attachment styles and generalized negativistic social beliefs (i.e. pessimistic expectations concerning human nature and interpersonal relations). Two general dimensions of attachment styles, avoidance and anxiety, are considered to be manifestations of an individual's image of other people and of the self, respectively. We suggest that both dimensions may be a substantial basis for formulating negative beliefs about the social world. Firstly, we believe that a high level of negativistic social beliefs can be positively predicted by the growth of avoidance (negative image of others) and anxiety (negative image of self). Secondly, we formulate an expected interaction effect. Although the nature of such an interaction is ambiguous, it may be argued as having a synergistic as well as antagonistic pattern. These hypotheses were tested and supported (in favor of an antagonistic pattern of interaction in the case of the second hypothesis) on a representative sample of adult Poles (N = 853).
Key words: attachment styles, self-image/other-image, avoidance, anxiety, negativistic social beliefs

For some time now an increasing accumulation of evidence has shown that real-life interpersonal relations are largely determined by individual perceptions of the social world (e.g. Duckitt, Birum, Wagner, & du Plessis, 2002; Feldman, 2003; Forgas, Williams, & Wheeler, 2005). This umbrella term covers various more or less related beliefs comprising the model of human nature and the basic rules governing social life. These general beliefs are referred to as "basic beliefs" (Catlin & Epstein, 1992), "personal (or implicit) theories of reality" (Lerner, 1980), "lay (naive) ideologies", or as an "individual's worldview" (Crandall, 2008; Duckitt et al., 2002). Of particular interest for social scientists are those social beliefs which construct a pessimistic and negative view of the social world. In this article we formulate and empirically test the hypothesis that individual differences in attachment styles are important determinants of the tendency to construct the social world in negative terms.

Negativistic beliefs about the social world

Based on past personal and group experiences involving a given class of social objects, each of us tends to generalize its characteristics and properties in time and space. Such generalization in turn affects the subsequent information selection, integration, and organizational processes concerning these spheres of reality. These cognitive processes form an individual's schema of the social world (Fiske & Taylor, 2008), though there are elements of more complex sets of individual basic beliefs concerning the social world: expectations of positive or negative behavior of other people, rules of interpersonal relations, and methods of life-success achievement (Catlin & Epstein, 1992; Chritie & Gais, 1970; Crandall, 2008; Lerner, 1980). These basic beliefs can be divided into those which assume that the nature of interpersonal relations is antagonistic and that the interests of various individuals and social groups ("egoistic by nature") are incompatible, and those beliefs which assume benignity of the social world, or a cooperative and synergistic nature of social relations (e.g. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Christie & Geis, 1970; Pinker, 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In our search for connections between dispositions determined by individual differences and social beliefs, we utilize the positive-negative asymmetry principle (Peeters

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& Czapiński, 1990) and concentrate on those social beliefs which are strictly negative.

In the negative approach, the schema of social relations consists of at least three beliefs which are more or less positively linked by a pessimistic view of human nature and interpersonal relations. The first set of beliefs concerns the nature of all significant resources which we crave in our life and for which we compete with others. According to the antagonistic approach, these resources are limited and cannot be multiplied. The individual views everybody who aspires to these resources as a rival – if they win I lose and if I succeed they fail. In this perspective there is no concept of shared benefits, as no good can result from cooperation. Social life is a zero-sum game and the proper thing to do is to compete ruthlessly (Wojciszke & Różycka, 2009).

The second component of the negative worldview is generalized interpersonal distrust. It consists of attributing negative deprecating traits to "most people". According to this social belief, people cannot be trusted a priori as they are egoistic "by nature" and do not obey moral principles unless they have a vested interest in doing so (cf. Coleman, 1988; Rahn & Transue, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Skarżyńska, 2012).

Finally, the third form of negativistic social worldview involves the rules of conduct in social life – they are preferred, believed to be effective, and lead to personal success. This belief set is expressed in the conviction that one must take just one's own good into account when dealing with people; one must be ruthless and vindictive, and treat people as objects to be used for as long as they are useful. Power and money are more important than honesty and respect for social rules of reciprocity, and cold cynical manipulation is accepted as an effective way to realize one's goals. This model of interpersonal relations is called Social Darwinism (e.g. Duckitt et al., 2002). The name reflects its core belief that only the fittest will survive, i.e. those most adapted to life in the "social jungle", the ones who lack compassion and know how to take advantage of others.

Do negativistic social beliefs depend on attachment styles?

John Bowlby (1979, 1988) laid the theoretical foundations for the concept of attachment styles. His theory contained a number of key theses which were to become the point of departure for later research on the manifestations and consequences of different attachment styles in adults, and so led to the construction of new theoretical models of the development of intimate relations in adulthood (e.g. Ainsworth, Blehar, Walters, & Wall, 1978; Hazan and Shaver, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). There is no lack of evidence that attachment styles are important determinants of an individual's relations with the people belonging to the circle of significant others in the broad sense. It is not clear yet, however, whether attachment styles play an equally deterministic role in wider macro-social contexts. Historically speaking, we can point out a number of psychological theories that trace the origins of the individuals' psychosocial mentality in the broad sense,

including ideological orientation, public involvement, political ideas and choices etc., to socialization and early family relations (cf. Adorno et al., 1950; Bowlby, 1988; Rokeach, 1960; Tomkins, 1963).

We presume that if attachment styles are stable psychological features which play a central role in the shaping of various forms of interpersonal relations, then they should significantly affect individuals' beliefs concerning human nature and the nature of the social world which they inhabit. In other words, the contents of these social beliefs should not only reflect the social reality in which an individual lives, but should also depend to a certain extent on characteristics developed in the process of socialization. A particularly interesting question from our point of view is whether we can empirically demonstrate how individual differences in stable patterns of interaction with other people can affect negative beliefs about the social world and, if so, to what extent.

Our frame of reference is the conceptualization of attachment styles presented by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). They proposed a four-category model based on four "prototypical" descriptions of attachment styles. Bartholomew and Horowitz's model predicts that adult attachment is based on two dimensions: an image of others (partners) who are trustworthy, reliable and available, or untrustworthy, rejecting and unavailable, and the image of the self as someone who deserves (or does not deserve) to be the object of others' interest, understanding, affection, and support. These dimensions are characterized as low vs high *avoidance* in respect to the image of others, and low vs high *anxiety* in respect to the image of self.

By combining these two dimensions, we have obtained four theoretical prototypes which can be approximated to various extents in real-life ways of maintaining intimacy. In adults, the *secure* type involves a high level of self-acceptance, the feeling that one deserves to be loved and to be the object of interest and support, and the expectation to be accepted by others and have one's needs realized. Individuals with a *dismissive* attachment style also have a high level of self-acceptance and feel that they deserve to be loved, but they see others in a negative light and their expectations of others are negative. They avoid close contact in self-defense, try to be independent, and focus on activities which do not require intimate relationships (e.g. work). This characteristic is exactly opposite to individuals with a *preoccupied* attachment style, i.e. having low self-acceptance but holding other people in high regard. Their self-esteem seems to depend largely on whether or not they are managing to obtain the interest of others and positive appraisal. Individuals with such an attachment style spend a lot of time and effort on maintaining close relations and are highly emotionally expressive. Finally, individuals who have low self-acceptance and view others negatively possess a *fearful* style. They believe that other people are not trustworthy and expect them to be disinterested or rejecting. People with this style avoid intimate relationships for fear of being rejected or hurt.

The hypothesis which seems to flow naturally and directly from these theoretical assumptions is that the beliefs of the individual concerning the social world should be determined by his/her "prototypical" representation of self and others, the two basic components of individual attachment style. However, the crucial question is whether these two factors have a significant effect on the relations between attachment style and social negativism and, if they do, which of them is the decisive factor? Since this is a question that still needs to be answered, we can formulate several hypotheses.

Firstly, the image of others should be the most important of the factors contributing to a negativistic social worldview. Perception of the social world should be most negative in individuals who avoid dependence, since - perceiving others as unreliable, untrustworthy, and insincere – they are afraid to confide in people. Secondly, self-image may also play a substantial role. In contrast with self-confident people, those individuals who have low self-esteem and do not accept themselves have understandable reasons to view the social world in negative terms *a priori*. Being convinced that they do not deserve the interest, understanding, affection, or support of others, they may be afraid of disrespect and rejection. Taking these expectations into consideration we can therefore hypothesize that:

H_1: *A high level of negativistic social beliefs will be positively predicted by growing avoidance (negative image of others) and anxiety (negative image of self)*

As long as directions of independent effects appear to be relatively straightforward, we believe that the potential joint effect of avoidance and anxiety seems to be more questionable. On one hand we may hypothesize based on the theory of self-esteem as a "sociometer", i.e. an indicator of the individual's perception of acceptance by his social environment (Leary & Downs, 1995). Such a perspective would predict that low self-esteem (negative self-image) is for an individual a measure of the level of social disapproval, rejection, or exclusion from the group. That is why - together with a low assessment of other people – it should increase social negativism. Individuals who have a negative image of others and tend to avoid them should internalize and express negativistic social worldview even more so when their self-acceptance is low. This means that a negative self-image (producing high anxiety) would significantly sharpen the growth of social negativism evoked by a negative image of others. In such a case we should expect a synergistic interaction, including both positive anxiety and avoidance effects as well as their positive joint effects. A hypothesis concerning interaction would be as follows:

H_{2A}: *The positive relationship between avoidance and negativistic social beliefs is strongest at a high level of anxiety*

However, we suppose that the above-mentioned mechanism is not the only possible one. We believe that the mechanisms evoking a potential interaction effect may arise out of a strong positive relationship between self-esteem on one hand and beliefs about one's own competence and effectiveness on the other (Swann, 2005; Tafarodi & Milne, 2002; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008). It is possible that the individual regards other people as rivals and sees himself as a rival to them in competition for different goods only when he perceives his agency as sufficient enough. Assuming that people who assess their own competence and effectiveness as rather low do not compete with others and are aware of someone's negative characteristics, they are not motivated to generalize this to the form of negative schemata (or naive ideologies) of the social world. Thus, an alternative hypothesis predicts that the expression of a negativistic social worldview by highly avoidant individuals would be strongest when their self-acceptance is high. In other words, positive self-image (low anxiety) would significantly sharpen the growth of social negativism evoked by a negative image of others. While the synergistic shape of interaction suggests that negative self-image would be a kind of additional catalyst allowing avoidance to be expressed much more easily in the form of negativistic social beliefs, in the second case the catalytic role is served by positive self-image, which may protect the individual from the fear of free expression of his/her social negativism. In an alternative version of hypothesis 2 we should expect an antagonistic interaction, including both positive anxiety and avoidance effects, followed by a negative interaction effect. A hypothesis concerning this interaction would be as follows:

H_{2B}: *The positive relationships between avoidance and negativistic social beliefs will be strongest at a low level of anxiety*

Methods

Procedure and participants

The study was based on face-to-face interviews using a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) which ensured individual randomization of the order of items within each multi-item scale. There were 853 participants. All were adults (aged 18+) and Polish residents. The sample was a random-quota and was fully representative for the Polish population in terms of the region of residence, place of residence, sex, age, level of education, and income. Sample selection, respondent sampling, and field testing were all conducted by CBOS (The Public Opinion Research Center), a leading social studies company and a member of the ESOMAR (The European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research).

Measures

Attachment styles

For several reasons we decided to elaborate on our own measure of attachment styles. The basis for this development was the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ-

CV), a set of four vignettes constructed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). The original measure has two major drawbacks from our point of view. Firstly, it measures prototypical interaction patterns for so-called romantic relationships. In other words, the "others" category is restricted to intimate emotional relations with partners and does not include other categories of people with whom respondents also have close relations, such as family, friends, work colleagues, etc. Secondly, in Bartholomew and Horowitz's method, participants select one of four descriptions, or rate the degree to which each description accurately portrays their general relationship style. This kind of measurement has been strongly criticized by other researchers for a lack of clarity and questionable reliability. As a result, new methods were constructed in which descriptive vignettes were replaced by several dozen items diagnosing the different styles and enabling the computation of a total attachment score (e.g. Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998: Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000). However, like the RQ-CV questionnaire, these new instruments still have the first above-mentioned drawback, i.e. they measure prototypical interactions in so-called romantic relationships, and limit the "others" category to very intimate relationships.

Since the contents of these instruments do not give any possibility to expand the "others" category by modifying the instructions, we decided to construct our own method measuring attachment styles in four multi-item subscales. The wording of the items was based directly on the contents of Bartholomew and Horowitz's descriptions. The items were formulated in such a way that the descriptions of typical social interactions and accompanying thoughts referred to the respondent's typical relations with people in general. As in the original questionnaire, respondents rated their acceptance of each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The pilot study was conducted on-line using the Qlabo.eu internet platform (which complies with the international standards of the commission for psychological tests). A total of 120 students studying various humanistic courses were tested. Following subsequent reliability tests and inter-item correlations, 20 items were included in the final version of the instrument (see Appendix).

The pilot study yielded the following Cronbach α coefficients: .72 for secure, .70 for dismissive, .78 for preoccupied, and .79 for fearful. In the main study, conducted on a representative and much more socially heterogeneous sample (n=853), all α values were lower: .65 for secure, .65 for dismissive, .70 for preoccupied, and .74 for fearful.

The new instrument's most important criteria validity test should always be in relation to the method out of which it evolved, i.e. in this case Bartholomew and Horowitz's vignettes. We tested these relations in the main study ($n = 853$) and the results are shown in the correlation matrix in Table 1.

Negative beliefs about social life

In our approach three sets of beliefs are linked to a pessimistic view of human nature and of interpersonal relations. Respondents rated their acceptance of each item in all measures of negativistic social beliefs on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). For each scale, higher scores indicate stronger negativism.

Interpersonal Distrust was measured with a 7-item scale measuring generalized trust/distrust in people. The scale was based on an instrument developed by Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994). Examples: "When dealing with strangers one should be cautious", "One should not trust a person one does not know". Cronbach's alpha amounted to .85.

Social Darwinism was measured with a 15-item competitive worldview scale developed by Duckitt and collaborators (2002). Examples: "If you need to be vindictive and ruthless to achieve your goals, that is what you should do", "We live in a world which knows no mercy and you sometimes have to behave mercilessly". Cronbach's alpha amounted to .74.

The *Belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game* was measured with a 10-item scale constructed by Wojciszke et al. (2009). The scale concerns antagonistic visions of social relations: conflicts of interests, egoism, and rivalry as inherent aspects of human nature. Examples: "It is a fact of life that when one person wins another must lose", "Prosperity of the minority is built on the suffering of the majority". Cronbach's alpha amounted to .78.

Socio-demographic variables

The following socio-demographic variables were controlled: age, sex, level of education, and declared income. Because almost 50% of the respondents refused to declare their income, this variable was not included in the analyses. When income was analyzed despite the missing data, it was only found to be a significant predictor of negative beliefs in the regression model which included socio-demographic variables. When both dimensions of attachment styles were entered into the model, the effect of income was no longer significant.

Table 1. Correlations between the multi-item method and Bartholomew and Horowitz's RQ-CV (n=853)

	RQ-CV			
	1	2	3	4
1. Secure	.28**	-.11**	-.11**	-.29**
2. Dismissive	-.05	.25**	.16**	.22**
3. Preoccupied	-.08*	.19**	.32**	.41**
4. Fearful	-.16**	.18**	.24**	.46**

Notes. **$p < .01$　*$p < .05$

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Attachment styles

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations for multi-item attachment style measures. Initial descriptive analyses on the entire respondent sample show that the secure attachment style was the interaction pattern which, "generally speaking", respondents felt best described their typical behavior in relations with other people ($M = 5.13$). The dismissive style ($M = 4.03$) was felt to be the second best pattern describing one's typical relations with other people, with the remaining measures of the preoccupied and fearful styles least prevalent in the population ($M = 3.01$ and 3.40, respectively). All of the six possible comparisons between means in Table 2 were significant at $p<.001$.

In order to calculate an overall rate of model of others (low vs. high avoidance) and model of self (low vs. high anxiety) for each individual, we used the following formula proposed by Schmitt, Alcalay, Allensworth, Allik, Ault, Austers, et al. (2004):

Model of Others = (Secure AS + Preoccupied AS) - (Dismissive AS + Fearful AS)
Model of Self = (Secure AS + Dismissive AS) - (Preoccupied AS + Fearful AS)

In these two formulas higher results mean lower avoidance and lower anxiety, respectively. After computing, both indexes were recoded so that high values corresponded to high avoidance and high anxiety. As shown in Table 2, the examined Polish population was characterized by a higher level of avoidance than anxiety ($M = -.70$ and -2.75; $t= 26.2$ $_{df = 852}$ $p<.001$).

It turned out that both general dimensions – avoidance and anxiety – were clearly positively related ($.31$). As expected, avoidance correlated positively with Dismissive-AS and Fearful-AS ($.66$ and $.69$, respectively) and negatively with Secure-AS ($-.51$). In the case of anxiety, we observed the expected positive correlations with Preoccupied-AS and Fearful-AS ($.71$ and $.68$, respectively), while the relationships with Secure-AS and Dismissive-AS were negative ($-.64$ and $-.12$, respectively). The only drawback in that well-founded and clear correlational pattern was an insignificant – instead of negative – relationship between avoidance and Dismissive-AS.

Negativistic social beliefs

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics and correlations for the three dimensions of negativistic social beliefs. Thanks to the adoption of the same response scales for all measures (1 – strongly disagree; 6 – strongly agree), it was possible to directly identify the social beliefs that are most and least prevalent in the population.

What strikes us most is the extremely high level of beliefs expressing generalized distrust in people ($M = 4.25$). As predicted all the correlations are clearly positive, with the strongest being between Interpersonal Distrust and belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game ($.45$).

Table 3. Negative beliefs: descriptive statistics and correlations (*n*=853)

	1	2	3
1. Interpersonal Distrust			
2. Social Darwinism	.24**		
3. Life as a Zero-sum Game	.45**	.26**	
M	4.25	2.53	3.05
SD	.84	.56	.53

Notes.   ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Table 2. Attachment styles: descriptive statistics and correlations (*n*=853)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Secure						
2. Dismissive	-.07*					
3. Preoccupied	-.34**	.39**				
4. Fearful	-.29**	.45**	.61**			
5. Avoidance	-.51**	.66**	.03	.69**		
6. Anxiety	-.64**	-.12**	.71**	.68**	.31**	
M	5.13	4.03	3.01	3.40	-.7	-2.75
SD	1.09	1.14	1.12	1.34	1.92	2.35

Notes.   **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Attachment styles as determinants of social negativism

Table 4 presents three regression analyses where the dependent variables are Interpersonal Distrust, Social Darwinism, and perception of social life as a zero-sum game. The set of predictors consists of anxiety, avoidance, and their interaction effect. In each regression we controlled three socio-demographic variables: sex, age, and level of education. All analyses were performed hierarchically, i.e. socio-demographic variables were introduced in block one, dimensions of attachment style (anxiety and avoidance) in block two, and their interaction in block three. Only the final regression equation is depicted (after inclusion of interaction effect) in Table 4.

The initial models, which included only control variables, accounted for 8% to 17% of the variance. The most striking effect in the three analyses was the considerable negative impact of education, which remained significant and stable even when attachment style dimensions and their interactions were included. In other words, whatever the content of the different negativistic social beliefs, they were largely the domain of less educated people. The picture becomes slightly more complicated when we analyze the role of age. The effect of age was always significant, although while it inhibits Social Darwinism and belief in Life as Zero-sum Game, Interpersonal Distrust grew with age. A significant albeit marginal effect of sex showed up only in the case of Social Darwinism - such beliefs were more prominent in men than women (coding 1 – male; 2 – female).

Table 4.   Hierarchical Regression analyses for negativistic social beliefs

Dependent Variables	Predictors	b	S.E.	β	η^2
Interpersonal Distrust	Intercept	4.24***	.12		
	Sex	.04	.05	.02	.001
	Age	.01***	.001	.18	.038
	Education	-.07***	.01	-.26	.066
	Avoidance	.11***	.015	.26	.051
	Anxiety	.04**	.01	.14	.013
	Interaction	-.005	.006	-.03	.001
Main effects R^2_{change} .09***	Interaction R^2_{change} .00				
Final model $F_{(df)}$ 47.7*** (6;839)	Final model R^2 .26				
Social Darwinism	Intercept	3.16***	.08		
	Sex	-.13***	.03	-.11	.016
	Age	-.004***	.001	-.14	.021
	Education	-.04***	.01	-.20	.046
	Avoidance	.03***	.01	.15	.015
	Anxiety	.06***	.01	.27	.064
	Interaction	-.03**	.004	-.09	.008
Main effects R^2_{change} .10***	Interaction R^2_{change} .01**				
Final model $F_{(df)}$ 33.3*** (6;834)	Final model R^2 .19				
Life as Zero-sum Game	Intercept	3.17***	.08		
	Sex	.05	.03	.05	.002
	Age	.002*	.001	-.07	.003
	Education	-.04***	.01	-.26	.065
	Avoidance	.05***	.01	.15	.013
	Anxiety	.03**	.01	.13	.010
	Interaction	-.03**	.006	-.10	.009
Main effects R^2_{change} .05***	Interaction R^2_{change} .01**				
Final model $F_{(df)}$ 22.5*** (6;846)	Final model R^2 .15				

Notes. ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$;
b = unstandardized regression coefficient; S.E. = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient; η^2 = estimation of the effect size

The addition of attachment style dimensions produced a significant increase in the predictive power of all three models. As we predicted in hypothesis 1, both avoidance and anxiety were positive predictors of negativistic social beliefs. Their effects clearly contribute to the variance of Social Darwinism (10%) and Interpersonal Distrust (9%). A considerably lower but statistically significant increase of R2 (5%) over and above socio-demographic factors also appeared for the Belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game.

The positive effects of avoidance and anxiety remained statistically significant after their interaction term was introduced (block 3). The interaction effect appeared negative for all dependent variables, attaining statistical significance in the cases of Social Darwinism and Belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game. As we can observe in Figure 1, out of the two alternative forms of hypothesis 2, the second definitely turned out to be closer to the truth. Although avoidance and anxiety increased social negativism, the interaction between them had a so called "antagonistic" pattern. In Figure 1, if we recognize anxiety as the moderator of the relationship between avoidance and negative beliefs, the positive impact of avoidance was strongest when the level of anxiety was lowest (self-acceptance is high). Moreover, Figure 1 also shows that for both statistically significant interactions avoidance ceased to strengthen social negativism when anxiety was highest (low self-acceptance), i.e. regression slopes (simple effects)

of Social Darwinism as well as the Belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game became insignificant.

Discussion

Cognitive social psychology explains interpersonal attitudes and behavior in terms of various formal and substantive characteristics of cognitive representations of the self and others (Forgas, Williams & Wheeler, 2003). Several personal attributes that are important for individual well-being, such as the ability to initiate and maintain interpersonal relations or group affiliations and acting for the good of a group (cf. Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister & Twinge, 2003), are apparently derived from the combination of self-image and other-image, referred to as the cognitive representation of self and others. Individual differences in the relations between self- and other-representations are called attachment styles (Bowlby, 1979, 1988; Ainsworth, 1989; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

In this study we were interested in the potential effects of adult attachment styles on the level of negativism manifested in individuals' beliefs about the social world. To date, attachment styles, understood as stable patterns of interpersonal interactions learned during early socialization, were recognized as contributing significantly in adulthood to intimate relations, i.e. relations with family members and romantic partners. We wanted to find out whether they

Figure 1. Regression of Social Darwinism and Belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game on Avoidance, with Anxiety fixed as moderator
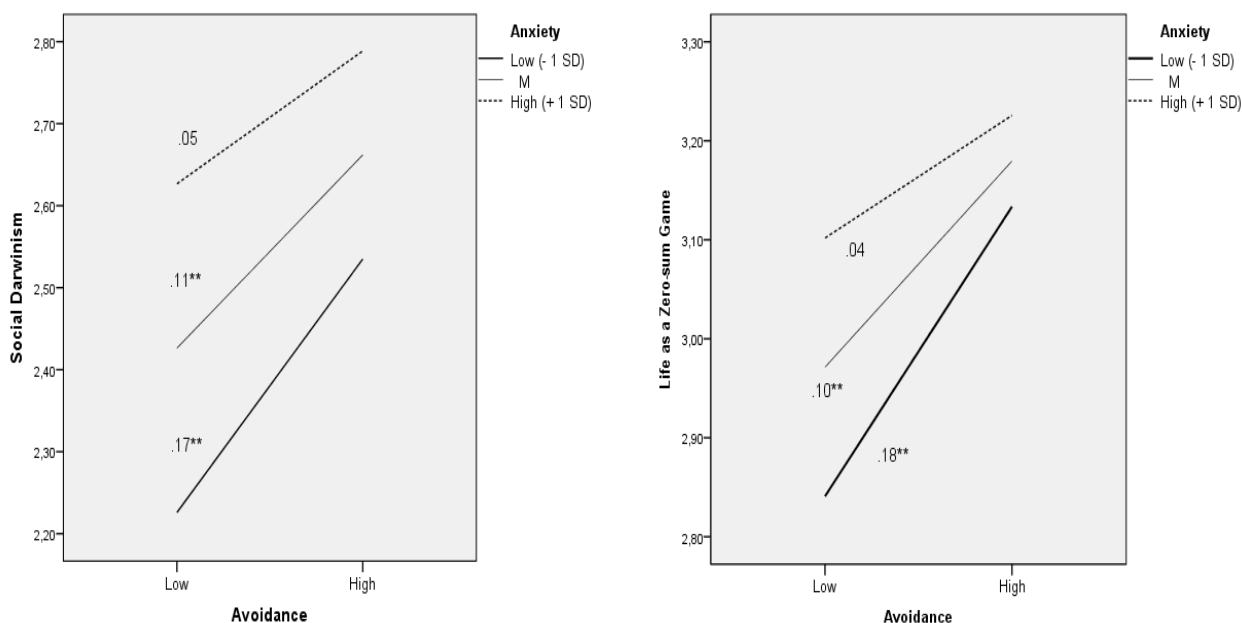
Notes. **p* < 0.01; standardized regression coefficients (*β*) for simple slopes

could also affect such complex psychosocial phenomena as generalized beliefs, accepted *a priori*, concerning human nature and interpersonal relations.

Our empirical hypotheses were based on Bartholomew and Horowitz's theoretical model, which assumes that the individual's preferred attachment style derives from individual differences in self-image (low vs. high anxiety) and other-image (low vs. high avoidance). According to our hypotheses, avoidance and anxiety – as two dispositional characteristics resulting from a negative image of other people and of the self - should increase such negativistic social beliefs as Interpersonal Distrust, Social Darwinism, and Belief in Life as a Zero-sum Game.

The results we obtained, in a large survey which ensured a representative cross-section of Polish society, showed that both dimensions of attachment styles may contribute significantly to the explanation of social negativism. People avoiding closer social ties and interpersonal dependency are indeed prone to perceive the social world as immoral, exploitative, and basically competitive. Such a general negative vision is clearly enhanced by anxiety about rejection and disregard, which result from low self-acceptance and unstable self-esteem. Thus, in terms of the four-category-model of attachment, based on empirical arguments, we may derive that a negativistic social worldview should be relatively lowest in individuals with a *secure* style and most developed in individuals with a *fearful* style.

It might have appeared that the inclination towards negative beliefs about the social world would be strongest in people with both a high level of avoidance and anxiety. Such a synergistic effect seems to be natural when an individual shows a *fearful* attachment style. The interaction between avoidance and anxiety indeed turned out to exist, but it revealed a very interesting antagonistic pattern. As we pointed out, highly avoidant people actually tend to generate a negativistic social worldview, especially when their image of the self is positive. Although they accept themselves, they want to be independent of others and tend to express their self in activities that do not require close relationships. In terms of the four-category-model, we may say that the antagonistic mechanism is specific for individuals with a *dismissive* style.

Why is it so that positive self-image not only significantly reduces social negativity, but is also a moderator of the relationship between other-image and social negativism? In the presence of a positive picture of the self, the relationship between negative other-image (high level of avoidance) and negative beliefs about the social world is statistically significant, while in the case of a negative picture of the self it is not. Thus, as it was argued in hypothesis 2$_B$, it seems that when people tend to compete with others based on the conviction of their own high competence and effectiveness, they are motivated to generalize their negative picture of other people into a form with negative ideologies about the social world.

In the alternative version of hypothesis 2 (H2$_A$) we expected that low self-esteem (negative self-image) as a subjective recognition of social disapproval, together with a low assessment of other people, should increase social negativism. This did not happen. It appears that the participants in our study – today's adult Poles - constructed their self-esteem rather on the basis of their own agency than on the basis of perceived social acceptance. What's more, our previous studies suggest that the role of perception of own agency (or competence) seems to be a mostly self-profitable characteristic, used rather for one's own sake and rather against other people than for the common good (Radkiewicz, Skarżyńska, 2006; Radkiewicz, Skarżyńska, & Hamer, 2013).

Is this a universal phenomenon? We suppose that it may be a culture-dependent regularity, requiring some cross-cultural validation of the research. It may be argued that the pattern found in our study would be replicated in societies more focused on individual success and competition than on cooperation and community value s.

The present study differs considerably from the mainstream in this field of research. It shows the considerable link between attachment styles and very general beliefs about the social world, which means a step beyond just attachment patterns and behavior in close personal relationships. It turned out that even when accounting for socio-demographic variables, attachment styles explained a noticeable amount of the variability of negativistic social beliefs. We can therefore conclude that adult attachment styles will also most likely have implications in wider social beliefs and social relationships. The amount of variance in negativistic beliefs that was accounted for ranged from 15% to 26%. Other empirical studies of the influence of attachment styles on other cognitive structures of adults show similar results (for example, Brennan, Clark, & Shaver (1998) and Catlin & Epstein (1992) found from 5 to 29% accounted variance in basic beliefs). Sources of the rest of variance (unaccounted variance) of negativistic basic beliefs are specific major events, such as love affairs, traumatic accidents, and traumatic stress (Janoff-Bulman, 1990; Lifton, 1993; Vollhardt, 2009) or some collective experiences leading to distrust and cynicism (Rahn & Tranuse, 1998; Leung & Bond, 2004). Our respondents – adult Poles – live in an individualistic and distrustful society, experiencing the stress of social system transformation. Their high level of distrust (M = 4.25 on a scale of 1 to 6) can be explain by such social and political circumstances, but the two others negativistic sets of beliefs are not strongly accepted (means for Social Darwinism and Belief in Life as a Zero-Sum Game are 2.53 and 3.05, respectively). It is quite possible that a positive model of others (with low level of avoidance) rather than a fully secure style of attachment (with low level of anxiety) is the best umbrella for Poles in the rapidly changing and rather unfriendly ordered system.

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APPENDIX

I am going to read you several statements describing interpersonal relations. To what extent do you agree that these statements describe your own thoughts and behaviors.
Secure style
I find it rather easy to be close to people.
I feel good when I can rely on other people and when other people can rely on me.
I am not thinking all the time that someone close to me will want to reject me.
I like to be with people and people like to be with me.
I don't usually mind when someone I've just got to know

wants to get closer to me.

Dismissive style

I like people who do not try to get too close in their relations with me.

In order to feel comfortable in other people's company I prefer not to be too close to them.

I don't get accustomed to people because I'll get nothing out of it.

It's important for me to manage in life without other people.

I prefer to take on tasks which I can do myself rather than cooperate with other people and hence depend on their assistance.

Preoccupied style

In my relations with other people I often think that it's no use getting involved because I'll be rejected anyway.

I want to be close to other people but it's hard for me to stop being afraid of what they think about me.

I think that people usually keep at a much greater distance from me than I myself would like.

The closer I get to someone, the more often I doubt whether that someone accepts me.

Although I very much want them to, I don't think people are as open with me as I am with them.

Fearful style

I'm afraid that other people will hurt me if I let them get close to me.

I find it difficult to open up to others, tell them about myself and confide my secrets.

It's not easy for me to make new acquaintances because you have to be very wary of people.

I avoid too close relations because I never know what others are thinking about me or whether I can trust them.

I get nervous when people want to get very close to me because I'm afraid that they may hurt me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I definitely disagree				I definitely agree	