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## **Attachment and partnership in a close relationship**

### **Introduction**

Contemporary modifications of social and family life together with economic transformations have made a significant impact on the quality of close interpersonal relations. Changes in the perception of marriage, growing popularity of alternative forms of life as well as the increasing number of divorces and the phenomenon of close relationship decline have laid foundation for the twilight of the institution of marriage. Extended education period, difficulties in making decisions together with the inclination for “trial marriage”, financial dependence of young adults on their parents and delaying the beginning of professional work have repeatedly contributed to the attractiveness of the alternative forms of a relationship (Janicka 2006, Slany 2008).

The departure from the traditional type of a relationship – marriage and the acceptance of cohabitation turned to cause the crisis of the institution of marriage and family which had a frequent effect on the sphere of functioning between the partners within indicated types of relations. The grounds for the conversion of marriage and family model may as well be traced in factors such as a change of the position of women in contemporary world, sexual openness and the progress in the field of contraception which made way for procreative freedom and thereby departure from procreation (Slany 2008).

The prevalence of extramarital forms of functioning has drawn the interest of researchers who have made their attempts to explain the influence of cohabitation on the quality and duration of partner relationships. Numerous

studies provide evidence for dissimilar levels of satisfaction and contentment of the partners, poorer communication among non-marital relationships and at the same time tendencies towards stronger psychic bond throughout married partners. Research conducted by L. Jamieson, M. Anderson et al. (2002) also suggest that the level of engagement in a relationship and mutual dedication is higher with spouses than unmarried partners (Janicka 2006). Other studies have proved that durable and steady relationships, such like marriage, provide individuals with the sense of security which is further connected with the quality of the relations between partners. Marriages are more permanent, less prone to breakups, separations and crises than non-marriages. Similarly, the level of integration and satisfaction with relations is higher among the former (DeMaris, Leslie 1984, Nock 1995, Aronson, Huston 2004, Binstock 2003, ex lib. Janicka 2006). The abovementioned research results perfectly reflect transformations regarding family life.

Metamorphoses of social and cultural macrostructure, the development of technology and modernization have also brought changes into the sphere of values between partners. Currently a growth of such needs as individualism or autonomy is being observed whereas support, authority or dependence are being devalued (Janicka 2006, Slany 2008). Nowadays, material bond very often makes way for psychic bond which is regarded as one of the factors that influence the durability, stability and quality of a relationship. These far-reaching changes have also contributed to the alterations of interactions between partners and their mutual commitments (Szopiński 1986, Janicka 2006). The realization of partnership implied as negotiation of common issues connected with respecting mutual peculiarity in the emotional, intellectual and operational sphere, which is synonymous to psychical bond (Szopiński 1986, p. 35), is impeded in modern times. In the light of these transformations and upholding tendencies a great number of researchers undertake trials of exploration into the notion of partnership and bond in close relationships.

Contemporary, a growing number of new research are being performed regarding the functioning of partner in different types of relationships. Their aim at a detection of factors that influence the quality and durability of a relationship. The authors of this article have decided to conduct research embracing psychical functioning of partners engaged in different forms of relationships with regards to their characteristic style of attachment.

A type of attachment that is characteristic of individuals forms up as soon as early childhood being a response to the interactions between a child and its predominant carer, most often the mother. The founder of the attachment theory emphasized that there is a tendency towards the existence of similar patterns of attachment between a child and a parent in the childhood as between adult

partners during adulthood. The experience of attachment seems to be lying at the bottom of developing a number of close relations in the adulthood (Rutter and Ruter 1993, at: Birch 2009). Having a particular style of attachment is not insignificant when it comes to the formation of certain traits of character (e.g. the sense of fear or loneliness) as well as the understanding of love (Rostowski 2003).

Studies on attachment stem from evolutionary tradition assuming that the attachment system developed in order to facilitate establishing relations between partners which could eventually aid the survival of the offspring. Therefore attachment is adaptive in its nature (Kuczyńska 1998). The shape of the attachment theory was undoubtedly influenced by etiological, pioneering research by Konrad Lorenz on birds who proved that attachment may come into being without feeding as well as the experiments of Harlow with young rhesuses which gave evidence to the fact that an individual may be fed still not create attachment (Holmes 2007). Therefore child's love is not only fed with mother's milk. The search for contact and maternal intimacy is stronger than hunger for as far back as infants (Zazzo 1978, p. 32). These observations inspired John Bowlby to develop a thesis that there is a biologically conditioned system of attachment within every human being. The system contains a permanent primary tendency towards searching for a relationship, establishing strong emotional bonds with other people (Zazzo 1978). Moreover, what Bowlby underlined was that the style of attachment, which characterises every human throughout the lifetime, determines the functioning of partners in a close relationship and, up to a certain degree, is a repetition of a childhood model. Such style influences the initiation of interpersonal contacts and, above all, the aptitude for building satisfactory relations (Plopa 2005, Rostowski 2003).

On the basis of long-term studies one of the attachment analysts – Mary Ainsworth conducted that children's experiences display a tendency to sustain and self-reinforce which makes them have a substantial impact on the manner of further functioning of a human despite being formed in the early childhood period. They become a kind of a script in relations with other people and building interpersonal relationships during adulthood (Czub 2005, ex lib. Brzezińska 2005).

When Mary Ainsworth dealt with early-childhood attachment, other scientists – Cindy Hazan and Philip Shaver employed the rudiments of the attachment theory to explain the nature and aetiology of love in the adulthood period. According to their findings romantic love is an integration of attachment, care, parenthood and sexuality. The researchers noticed some similarities regarding the bond between partners and the attachment between an infant and its predominant carer. In their view these processes are controlled by the same biological system which allows for obtaining care and support in harsh

times (Plopa 2003, Wojciszke 2005). The quoted experimenters also claim that the interactions of a child with the object of its attachment contribute to the development of internal operational models that endorse the formation of self-perception and the perception of the surrounding world. What is more, these models influence the method applied by a unit in order to attempt establishing intimacy with others (Czub, ex lib. Brzezińska 2005). Shaver and Hazan also underline that the styles of attachment are very similar to the "styles of love" observed among adults (Fraley, Shaver 2000, ex lib. Plopa 2005). They have discovered three types of attachment: secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant. Individuals characterised by the secure attachment style described their relationships as happy, full of friendship and trust for the partner. They take delight in close and intimate intercourse with partner. The dependence on the partner and searching for his support does not pose a problem because they treat the partner as a warm and responsible person. They feel loved and appreciated in the relationship and reveal adequate social abilities. Their relationship is stable, full of warmth and intimacy (Rostowski 2003, Wojciszke 2004, Wojciechowska 2005, Plopa, Kaźmierczak 2006). People attached in an anxious-ambivalent manner are afraid of being rejected by the loved person, they show a high level of worrying about their relationship. They perceive the partner as being unreliable and searching for alternative relations. Their relationship is characterised by a high level of jealousy. Such individuals are accompanied by a strong need for appreciation from others and intensified desire for being in closeness. Dissimilarly, people presenting the avoidant attachment experience discomfort in a close and intimate situation with a partner. They self-distance from the partners, very often do not accept them. They wish to be independent and negate their own need for attachment. Being close to another person proves difficult for them. They display reluctance to becoming engaged (Plopa, 2003 Kobak, Hazan 1992, Palmer 1996, Mikulincer 1998, Carver, Scheier 2000, Feeney et al. 2000, Zeifman, Hazan 2000 ex lib. Rostowski 2003, Brzezińska 2005).

The experiences of attachment, which crystallize on the course of growing older, play a significant role in social functioning of a person. The quality of established interactions and creating bond with others is determined by the style which seems to influence the interpersonal behaviour throughout lifetime (Baron, Byrne 2000, ex lib. Rostowski 2003). The type of attachment, formed in early childhood, is strongly connected with the quality of a close relationship and is a predicate of romantic relations in adulthood (Feeney, Noller 1990, Collins, Read 1990 ex lib. Kuczyńska 1998). Depending on the style of attachment acquired by a person, more or less satisfactory relations with others are being built. Moreover, description of functioning of partners being in close relationships becomes possible.

A great number of researchers have undertaken trials to discover the importance of attachment styles for particular aspect of human adult life (Feeney, Noller 1990, Collins, Read 1990, Mikulincer, Nachshon 1991, Kobak, Hazan 1991, ex lib. Kuczyńska 1998). Likewise, the authors of the hitherto article have decided to explore the notion of attachment and its meaning for the harmony of a relationship in adulthood.

## **Problem and aim of the research**

“Modern times” bring a number of threats to the realization of partnership in contemporary marriage. With regards to the transformations of social-family life, growing number of divorces, increasing admittance for alternative forms of relationships, changes in the sphere of ideas and values the authors have decided to focus on the quality of partnership in various types of relations from the perspective of the attachment theory. Therefore the main aim of the pursued research was a detection of the significance of the attachment style acquired by the partners for the quality of their partnership and psychic functioning within cooperation, co-understanding and co-experience dimension. Its realization required an establishment whether factors like the form of a relationship, number of previous relationships, duration of a relationship or having children are related to the quality of partnership as well as an identification of a connection between the style of attachment of partners and the above-mentioned factors.

## **Variables**

- Self-reliant variable:
  - The style of attachment: secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant,
- Reliant variable:
  - Partnership: co-experience, cooperation, co-understanding,
- Intermediary variables:
  - form of the relationship, duration of the relationship, the number of previous relationships, having children.

## **Research problems**

1. Is the style of attachment significant for the quality of partnership? (If yes, what kind of)

2. Does the form of a relationship differentiate the quality of the partnership? (If yes, what kind of)
3. Is there a relationship between the number of previous relationships and the quality of the partnership? (If yes, what kind of)
4. Is there a relationship between the duration and the quality of the partnership. (If yes, what kind of)
5. Does having children differentiate the quality of partnership? (If yes, what kind of)

### **Research instruments**

For the purposes of this research the following research instruments have been applied: Attachment Styles Questionnaire (KSP) by Mieczysław Plopa and Marriage Bond<sup>1</sup> Scale (SWM) by Józef Szopiński. The SWM was also used to examine extramarital relationships which was connected with a modification of the tool. The assertions remained similar to the primary version however the repeating word “marriage” was substituted with the word “relationship” and the word “spouse” changed into “partner”. This is how a Partnership Bond Scale (SWP) came into being.

The Marriage/Partnership Bond Scale is used for measuring the psychic link between the partners perceived as a conjunction of interactions in the sphere of co-experience, co-understanding and cooperation (Szopiński, 1980). Co-experience is an emotional dimension of psychic bond. It is related to emotional participation in the feelings of another person. It is conducive to the formation of mutual, deep emotional relations between partners as well as their personal development. Co-experience is a bilateral pervasion of experiences and a trial to put oneself in another person's situation. Co-understanding, however, is a cognitive element of the psychic bond and it expresses itself in a desire to exchange observations, reflections and experiences. It results from proper communication and two-sided transfer of needs and aims. The last component of the psychic bond is cooperation. The basis for cooperation is given by co-experience and co-understanding. Cooperation demonstrates in mutual activity, common scope of actions, desire to spend time together, care about the partner, fulfilling their needs. The fuller the bond between partners is, the bigger the range of their cooperation (Szopiński 1977, Janicka 2006).

The SWM/SWP method consists of 60 statements, 20 per each of the subscales (co-experience, co-understanding, cooperation). The examined people decide with a 5-degree scale about the frequency of mutually performed activities. The

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<sup>1</sup> According to the author of the Marriage Bond Scale the synonym of the word „bond” is “partnership” and “harmonizing” (Szopiński, 1986).

general maximum is 300 points whereas the minimum is 60 points. The results may be separately calculated for every single subscale. The maximum for a particular subscale is 100 and the minimum is 20 points. Also the absolute stability of the instrument was calculated which turned out to be high and reached up to 0.85. The three scales measuring co-experience, co-understanding and cooperation are characterised by high internal reliability (0.94). Moreover mutual and high correlations among the subscale have been noticed (Szopiński 1980).

For the identification of the attachment style of young adults the Attachment Styles Questionnaire by Mieczysław Plopa has been employed. The construction of the questionnaire was based on the aforesaid concept of Hazan and Shaver. KSP questionnaire consists of 24 statements. The examinee has to take an attitude towards them by circling the adequate number on a seven-degree scale through which the extent is specified of their agreement or disagreement with the given statement. The questionnaire contains three subscales that match with the attachment styles: secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant. The raw results for each scale fall between 8 and 56 points which are then transformed into stens. Stens 1-2 depict very low results; stens 3-4 present low results; stens 5-6 describe average results; stens 7-8 demonstrate high results and stens 9-10 illustrate very high results. The reliability of the dimensions of the questionnaire equals: 0.91 for the secure attachment style; 0.78 – for the anxious-ambivalent style; 0.80 for the avoidant style. The accuracy of the questionnaire was assessed on the basis of examining the internal structure of the test, the method of comparing cross-group differences as well as the criterion accuracy method (Brzeziński 1997, Plopa 2005). The questionnaire proved to be an instrument that satisfies the theoretical accuracy criteria.

### **The research group**

The research group was made up of people staying in close, romantic relationships. The research comprised 120 people – 60 women and 60 men being in different types (forms) of relationships. Those were marriages (20 couples), engaged couples (20) and cohabitant relationships (20 couples) aged 20 to 50. All marriages, engaged couples and cohabitants were diversified according to the duration of the relationship: from 0,5 year up to 25 years. The most numerous subgroup was made up of people having higher education. Nineteen couples had children together.

### The course of the research

The sample of the examined was purposefully chosen out of the population. The criterion for the choice was the persistence in a close partner relationship. Three forms of relationships have been distinguished: marriage, engaged couple and cohabitation. Within the group of marriages there were married individuals having their relationship legally approved. For the group of engaged couples only fiancées were qualified. Consequently, the condition for identification of the examinees as cohabitating individuals, according to the definition by Trost and Chechliński, Wiersm and Elliot, was the fact of mutual indwelling without a legal approval of the relationship (Kwak 2005, Trost 1977, Chechliński 1981, ex lib. Janicka 2006).

The actual research was preceded by an individual conversation with the testees, assurance of anonymity and their strictly scientific character. After declaring approval for participation in the research the examined were given a set of questionnaires to fill in. Incompletely filled questionnaires were excluded from the research.

### The results of the research

In the light of the statistic analysis with the Pearson's correlation coefficient  $-r$  it turned out that the style of attachment is significant for the quality of partnership. The results are presented in the following table 1<sup>2</sup>.

The secure style moderately positively correlates with co-understanding ( $r=0.46$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), cooperation ( $r=0.44$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and the general bond index

Table 1. The relation between the attachment style and partnership

Pearson's Correlation coefficient $r$ (N=120)			
Variable	Secure	Anxious-ambivalent	Avoidant
Co-experience	0.32 <b><math>p&lt;0.001</math></b>	-0.31 <b><math>p=0.001</math></b>	-0.18 <b><math>p=0.044</math></b>
Co-understanding	0.46 <b><math>p&lt;.001</math></b>	-0.25 <b><math>p=0.007</math></b>	-0.23 <b><math>p=.011</math></b>
Cooperation	0.44 <b><math>p&lt;0.001</math></b>	-0.27 <b><math>p=0.003</math></b>	-0.15 $p=0.10$
Bond (in general)	0.46 <b><math>p&lt;0.001</math></b>	-0.31 <b><math>p=0.001</math></b>	-0.21 <b><math>p=0.021</math></b>

<sup>2</sup> Statistically relevant data is marked with bold font.



( $r=0.46$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Insignificant positive relation concerns co-experience ( $r=0.32$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). This means that the more secure the attachment between the partners, the more they participate in emotional life, understand each other and take part in mutual range of activities which favours generally higher psychic bond.

The second of the specified styles – the anxious-ambivalent style, faintly negatively correlates with co-experience ( $r=-0.31$ ;  $p=0.001$ ), co-understanding ( $r=-0.25$ ;  $p=0.007$ ), cooperation ( $r=-0.27$ ;  $p=0.003$ ) and the general bond index ( $r=-0.31$ ;  $p=0.001$ ). This means that the more anxious-ambivalent the attachment between the partners, the fewer deep emotional relations and understanding as well as a smaller range of mutual activities which favours generally lower psychic bond.

The results of the statistic analysis indicate that there is weak negative correlation between the avoidant style and co-experience ( $r=-0.18$ ;  $p=0.044$ ), co-understanding ( $r=-0.23$ ;  $p=0.11$ ) and the general bond index ( $r=-0.21$ ;  $p=0.021$ ). This means that the more avoidant the attachment between the partners, the more seldom they share their feelings, observations and reflections. This, in turn, is significant for the general psychic bond index which becomes lower when the partners are characterised by the avoidant style of attachment. In the face of the statistic analysis results the avoidant style is not significantly connected with cooperation ( $r=-0.15$ ;  $p=0.10$ ). The abovementioned results demonstrate that there is a strong relationship between the style of attachment and the partnership. Higher level of cooperation, co-understanding and co-experience is characteristic of partners who acquired secure attachment style. Notwithstanding, the lower level of the aspects of partnership is characteristic of the individuals presenting secured attachment styles.

Statistic analyses proved that the form of a relationship differentiates the quality of their partnership. The following table 2 displays the results of the Fisher test for co-experience, co-understanding and cooperation, the level of significance for each of them as well as the average results for the aspects of partnership in different forms of a relationship.

Fisher test proved that the form of a relationship differentiates the quality of the partnership. In order to identify the constellations of the specified aspects of partnership i.e. co-experience ( $F=11.54$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), co-understanding ( $F=7.97$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and cooperation ( $F=19.33$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) as well as the general bond index ( $F=16.04$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) in various types of relationships a post-hoc analysis has been conducted with the use of the Duncan test. In the light of the results of the statistic analysis it turned out that marriages are characterised by a higher level of partnership and its aspects than engaged couples or cohabitating partners. Characteristic for marriages is a higher level of co-experience, co-understanding, cooperation and general bond index in comparison to the remaining kinds of relationships.

Table 2. Average results for the form of a relationship and the partnership together with the results of a Fisher test concerning the form and the aspects of a relationship

Variable	Average results for the form of a relationship and the partnership			One-way analysis of variance - Fisher test N=120	
	Engaged couple (1) N=40	Marriage (2) N=40	Cohabitation (3) N=40	F	Level of significance p
Co-experience	87.05	91.38	85.35	11.54	p<0.001
Co-understanding	86.35	89.13	83.73	7.97	p<0.001
Cooperation	85.63	89.65	80.95	19.33	p<0.001
Bond (in general)	259.03	269.85	250.03	16.04	p<0.001

Table 3. Duration of a relationship against the aspects of partnership

Pearson's correlation coefficient - r (N=120)				
Variable	Co-experience	Co-understanding	Cooperation	Bond (in general)
Duration	0.26	0.19	0.29	0.28
	p=0.005	p=0.039	p=0.001	p=0.002

In the light of the statistic analysis results with the Pearson's correlation coefficient - r it proved that there is a connection between the duration of the relationship and the quality of partnership.

The correlation between the duration of a relationship and the aspects of partnership is weak yet significant. It means that the longer time of a relationship is linked to a higher level of mutual sensibility ( $r=0.26$ ;  $p=0.005$ ), co-understanding ( $r=0.19$ ;  $p=0.039$ ) and common scope of actions ( $r=0.29$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) which is important for the general psychic bind index ( $r=0.28$ ;  $p=0.002$ ) which increases with the continuation of the relationship.

The statistic analysis including the form of the relationship (marriage, engaged couple, cohabitants) affirmed that the duration of a relationship is eminent for the aspects of partnership only for engaged couples (Table 4).

A moderately negative correlation was noticed between the duration of a relationship of engaged couples and co-understanding ( $r= -0.44$ ;  $p=0.005$ ), weak negative dependency between the duration of a relationship and co-experience ( $r= -0.38$ ;  $p=0.016$ ) and general bond index ( $r= -0.36$ ;  $p=0.023$ ).

Table 4. Duration and form of the relationship against partnership

Pearson's correlation coefficient - r (N=120)				
Variable	Co-experience	Co-understanding	Cooperation	Bond (in general)
Duration of the relationship (engaged couples)	-0.38	-0.44	-0.08	-0.36
	<b>p=0.016</b>	<b>p=0.005</b>	<b>p=0.616</b>	<b>p=0.023</b>
Duration of the relationship (marriages)	0.24	0.14	0.18	0.21
	p=0.141	p=0.400	p=0.262	p=0.189
Duration of the relationship (cohabitants)	-0.09	0.06	-0.10	-0.05
	p=0.575	p=.707	p=.558	p=.755

This implies that the longer partners are together the less co-experience and co-understanding there is in the relationship as well as weaker psychic bond between them. Such connections have not been observed among the remaining forms of relationships. Therefore, the duration of the engagement period is particularly associated with the aspects of partnership which become weaker with time.

The results of the correlation analysis with Pearson's  $-r$  (Table 5) regarding all couples despite the form of their relationship clarified the existence of a link between the number of previous relationships and the quality of their partnership. It plays a significant role for their common experience of participation in emotions ( $r = -0.23$ ;  $p=0.011$ ) bilateral activity ( $r = -0.20$ ;  $p=0.026$ ) and the general bond index ( $r = -0.23$ ;  $p=0.010$ ). The correlation between the number of

Table 5. Correlation between the number of previous relationships and partnership

Pearson's correlation coefficient - r (N=120)				
	Co-experience	Co-understanding	Cooperation	Bond (in general)
Liczba poprzednich związków	-0.23	-0.17	-0.20	-0.23
	<b>p=0.011</b>	p=0.068	<b>p=0.026</b>	<b>p=0.010</b>

previous relationships and the aspects of partnership is weak and negative. The more previous relationship were established the weaker were their co-experience, cooperation and the general psychic bond index.

The statistic analysis that comprised the forms of those relationships did not reveal the abovementioned relations.

In the face of the results of an examination with t-Student test it turned out that having children differentiates the scope of mutual actions of the partners (table 6).

Table 6. No/having children in a relationship against partnership

Variable	No children (0)	Having children (1)	t	p	N (0)	N (1)
Co-experience	87.33	89.24	-1.569	p=0.119	82	38
Co-understanding	86.11	87.08	-0.791	p=0.431	82	38
Cooperation	<b>84.45</b>	<b>87.47</b>	<b>-2.184</b>	<b>p=0.031</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>38</b>
Bond (in general)	257.85	263.47	-1.644	p=0.103	82	38

The statistic analysis showed that having children in a relationship regardless of its form differentiates partner within the cooperation dimension. It turned out that partners who have children are marked with a higher level of cooperation, common activity and spending time together than childless partners. The statistic analysis including the form of the relationship did not display such dependencies.

## Discussion

The conducted research proved that the style of attachment is significant for the quality of partnership. The more secure is the attachment between partners, the fuller is their bond. Their partnership is characterised by an emotional participation in another person's experiences, mutual understanding as well as common range of activity. Notwithstanding, the more extra-secure type of attachment there is between the partners, the weaker is the psychic bond occurring in their relations. The more anxious-ambivalent attachment effects in a decreased ability to co-experience, understand the partner or unite in various activities and cooperation. Among partners attached in an avoidant manner with increasing strength of averting close contact decreases the interest in the partner's feelings and attempt to deeper understand their reflections,

experiences and observations. With regard to partners presenting the avoidant type of attachment there is no meaningful connection between the form of the relationship and cooperation.

The abovementioned dependencies are a confirmation of earlier research over the competencies characteristic of people displaying various styles of attachment. Through one of such research it was indicated that people presenting a secure attachment developed proper behaviours in relations with their partners e.g. increased compliance, sensitivity, requiring emotions, cooperativity, openness, constructive communication. Comparatively more quarrels, not developing or rapid decline of romantic relation was connected with extra-secure styles of attachment (Kobak, Hazan 1991, ex lib. Plopa 2003). The opinions above have been confirmed in my research presented in hitherto article.

Another research, in turn, proved that the style of attachment is linked to the functioning of individuals in close relationships. It has been stated that the relationship of people attached in a secure way is stable, full of warmth and love, described as friendly and characterised by a high mutual trust. The relations between people presenting anxious-ambivalent attachment are marked with jealousy, confrontational attitude, a multiplicity of doubts and emotional instability as well as a lack of sensitivity. On the other hand the relationship of people attached in avoidant manner is characterised by a lack of trust for the partner, distance and refraining from emotional contact. They display resistance towards a consolidation of the relationship of attachment (Feeney, Noller 1990, Collins, Read 1990, Kobak, Hazan 1991, Mikulincer, Nachshon 1991, ex lib. Rostowski 2003). The reports of the cited research have also been acknowledged by the results of the studies conducted by the authors.

The pursued research revealed that the form of the relationship between partners differentiates the quality of their partnership. Spouses are characterised by stronger ability to understand the partner, participation in their experiences as well as union of activities in comparison to the remaining forms of close relationships (engaged couples, cohabitation). The observed dependencies do not correspond with the findings of other researchers who noticed that the form of the relationship does not influence the psychic bond between spouses (Janicka 2006). Perhaps the results obtained by the authors of the present article are the effect of the transformations in partner life which indicate significant differences in the functioning of the partners in various types of relations. Moreover the process of development of the relationships, disappearance of traditions and some values is more dynamic than a couple of years ago. It is not insignificant for the partners, who more often tend to live together before the wedding, and their future psychic bond or partnership as a prolonged cohabitation may lead to an earlier entry into the state of a marital crisis or an impairment of the durability of

the relationship (Janicka, Niebrzydowski 1994, Cohan, Kleinbaum 2002, Stanley, Whitton, Markman 2004, ex lib. Janicka 2006).

The presented connections acknowledge the observations of other researchers concerning the impact of the form of a relationship on the quality of the relation (Celmer 1985, Braun-Gałkowska 1992, Plopa 2005). Marriages in contrast to extra-marital relationships develop more advantageous relations transparent in better communication, higher commitment and a lower level of conflict behaviours (Brown, Booth 1996, ex lib. Janicka 2006). This suggest the supremacy of the strength of the positive psychic bond connecting the spouses over the strength of the bond existing between engaged couples or cohabitants. This becomes a support for the thesis coined by some of the researchers who claim that the institution of marriage provides partners with stronger sense of security and stability, greater opportunity for realization of mutual expectances and needs in comparison to other forms of relationships (Braun-Gałkowska 1992, Matuszewska 2003, Kwak 2005). The wedding ritual not only grants new social roles to the individuals and endows spouses with the sense of responsibility and common belonging but it also assumes indissolubility of the relationship. The public declaration of partners about bilateral persistence “for better or worse” considerably influences the quality and durability of the relationship (Kwak 2005, Janicka 2006, Slany 2008). The fact of getting married underpins the couple’s belief that they are going to remain together in spite of obstacles, temporary disagreements, etc. Marriage bears strong socio-cultural and legal support (Goldstein, Kenney 2001). This facilitates the life of married people and may protect against at least some of the problems which are more often struggled with by unmarried individuals (e.g. having illegitimate child, social isolation in the neighbour environment, credit difficulties, etc.). In contrast with the extra-marital partners, spouses are more oriented towards cooperation, interdependence and an exchange of services (Tyszka 2002). The higher level of mutual confidence, intimacy and stability of a married couple facilitates more effective dealing with everyday problems in comparison to couples remaining in other types of relationships. With this respect a positive bond that links spouses becomes at the same time the aim of marriage and the basis for its stabilization (Ryś, 1999). The situation is inverse among cohabitating partners. The lack of specified rules and cultural norms describing common life is unfavourable for the relationship. Therefore, related restrictions, difficulties and problems may occur influencing the quality of their relations and a weaker bond (e.g. the lack of credit capacity resulting from the lack of legal regulation of the relationship, the situation of an illegitimate child at school, the lack of social acceptance of non-common-law marriage, etc.). Occasionally, the needs of a dyad may be reduced at the expense of individual needs providing that

cohabitating partners are oriented towards independence and fulfilment of the need for freedom more than spouses. The differences concerning mutual functioning, plans and expectations related to satisfying the primary needs of a person lead to contradictory actions disturbing the relations between partners (Janicka 2006).

The research results have also proved the existence of a link between the duration of a relationship (regarding all couples) and the quality of their partnership. The longer duration is bound to a higher psychic bond, the dimensions of partnership: understanding another person and empathizing with their psychic states as well as organizing common activities. It corresponds with the studies conducted by J. Szopiński (1979) which suggest that the bond between the partners changes with the duration of the relationship. The initial stage of acquaintance is the time to mutual adjusting of the partners. During the next stage (4-5 years) harmony and balance is being achieved which facilitates the development of psychic bond. Among marriages after about 20 years the psychic bond rebuilds which is subsequent to the earlier changes in the structure of a relationship and ensuing accustoming. Conversely the statistic analysis including the form of a relationship proved that the duration of a relationship is only significant for the engaged couples. It turned out that the longer the engaged people are together, the less co-experience, co-understanding and weaker psychic bond between them. This is complementary with earlier deliberations of other scientists which suggest that the engagement period is connected with the quality of a relationship. The optimal span of premarital acquaintance should not be shorter than one year but not longer than two years. Prolonged engagement contributes to the weakening of interest in the partner, discouragement, crisis and may eventually lead to a breakdown of the relationship (Laskowski 1987, Janicka, Niebrzydowski 1994). Nevertheless, the quoted research results ought to be interpreted with a dose of caution. With this respect it seems vital to mention the replica of the research conducted on a precisely chosen sample group. Within such a group it should be possible to encompass numerous variables (number, duration, experience from a generational family, system of values) and, above all, the range of similarity or matching between the partners within this area.

The results of the studies have also shown that there is a link between the number of previous relationships and the quality of partnership. The more relationships were built by the partners the less co-experience, cooperation and weaker bond between them. Perhaps it results from the fact that after a few relationships partners become more insecure and are afraid of being disappointed with another unsuccessful relationship or scared of making a mistake. It cannot be completely ruled out that partners have developed a conviction that it is

worthless to engage, commit or fully open in front of another person if it were so many times when something went wrong. Moreover partners can transfer their worries and negative experiences from the past onto the current relationship and, therefore, cause qualitatively worse relations. Particular data supporting the abovementioned results is provided by the theory of attachment and studies over maternal deprivation. The studies inclined that frequently changing people in the life of a child hamper establishing bond and occasionally make it impossible to get attached to anyone. Those early-childhood experiences translate on the adult functioning and may have an influence on the creation of romantic relations with the partner (Bowlby 2007).

The research have also proved that partners who have children are characterised by a higher level of cooperation – organizing common activities and spending time together. This corresponds with the results of research that convince about a positive impact having children has on the relations of partners displayed through greater satisfaction, increased responsibility and expanded opportunities for them. Moreover underlined is the fact of development and maturation of spouses under the influence of having children as well as a completion of their relations. Having children may facilitate partner's better dealing with numerous needs, requirements or tasks that they can come across. Additionally, the fact of having children is an effective and important impulse for common actions of the partners. It creates an opportunity to elaborate new and more positive methods of showing marks of love and care to each other (Rostowski, 1987). However, bearing in mind the divergence of the results and their ambiguity a further exploration of this notion is advisable. Such exploration should include a greater number of the examined people as well as the range of similarity or matching of the partners which could, in turn, contribute to drawing validated conclusions.

Research that deal with the functioning of partners from the attachment theory perspective are currently becoming more and more important. Their undertaking is induced by the contemporary transformations of the context of life, a far-reaching liberation of social life as well as economic changes which put a strain on the quality of interpersonal relations (Bauman, 2000 Giddens, 2006). More commonly occurring changes such like: the perception of marriage by young adults, growing popularity and acceptance of alternative forms of life and increasing number of divorces indicate the intensification of tendencies towards a decline of close interpersonal bonds. Therefore an in-depth exploration of the notion of relationships is significant for determining the functioning of individuals in the human life cycle. Convincing for the conduction of research regarding interpersonal relations and attachment may also be the hitherto prevailing empirical output within this area. Although being enormous, the



output still cannot fully explain the concept of close romantic relationships. An important issue is constituted by the fact that the exploration in this field of interest may allow for a detection of new directions in psychological counselling which should increase the effectiveness of therapies or direct towards a construction of a new method of diagnosing relation disorders between partners. The results of the research may also contribute to the increase in social awareness with regard to the perception of marriage and cohabitation and therefore dispersion of myths concerning these concepts.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the results of research over the styles of attachment and partnership in intimate relationships allowed for the formulation of the following conclusions:

1. The more the partners are attached in a secure way, the higher level of their mutual participation in emotions, co-understanding and spending time together.
2. The form of the relationship significantly differentiates the quality of partnership. Married couples are characterised by a higher level of participation in the other person's experiences, co-understanding and the common scope of actions in comparison to unmarried partners (engagement, cohabitation).
3. There is a considerable link between the duration of a relationship and the partnership. The longer duration is connected with a higher level of co-experience, co-understanding and cooperation still when it comes to engaged couples with increasing duration of the relationship the dimensions of their partnership decrease.
4. The number of the previous relationships of partners is essentially connected with partnership. The more relationships were built by the partners, the smaller was the cooperation, co-understanding and co-experience as well as the psychic bond.
5. Partners who have children are characterised by a higher level of cooperation, common activity and spending time together in contrast to childless individuals.

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