Summary
This thesis aimed to examine the relevance of attachment insecurities (avoidance, anxiety) in explaining prosocial behavior, and by so doing to conceptualize individual and group prosocial behaviors in terms of Bowlby and Ainsworth’s attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982).

To date there have been relatively few theoretical analyses which considered the role of attachment insecurities as they relate to caregiving as a prosocial behavior in individual and group settings (see Penner, 2002; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000, for preliminary efforts). In terms of the resource theory (Wilson and Musick, 1999), one can ask to what extent does secure attachment provide a meaningful resource for prosocial behavior, and at what level can this behavior be suppressed or over-ridden by attachment insecurity (Kunce & Shaver, 1994).

Mikulincer and others (e.g., Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath & Nitzberg, 2005; Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005; Feeney & Collins, 2001) have argued that only a relatively secure person can easily perceive others not only as sources of security and support, but also as suffering human beings who have important needs and therefore deserve support.

The research aimed to examine the relevance of attachment insecurities (avoidance, anxiety) in explaining prosocial behavior. Beyond conceptualizing individual and group prosocial behavior, in terms of attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982) we wanted to examine the unique explanatory power of attachment patterns beyond the potential contribution of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness) to
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caring behavior. Another purpose was to examine the role of moral judgment in the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism. Finally, we suggested to apply attachment theory in understanding intra-group caring behavior.

Initial studies took place across three different countries (Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States). The findings reveal that the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to prosocial behavior, as measured by real-world altruistic volunteering. Avoidant individuals engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons than secure individuals to care for others. Anxious individuals are not less likely to volunteer, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives (self-protection, self-enhancement, social and career motives). It appears that those self-centered motives play an important role in mediating the links between attachment anxiety and volunteering behavior, whereas attachment avoidance has a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering. Attachment security, as defined in terms of low scores on the attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions, is generally associated with higher prosocial altruistic behavior and caring for people for other-focused reasons.

The importance of attachment security is enhanced by the findings of its unique contribution to prosocial behavior, beyond the explanatory power of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism). Although these traits were associated with both attachment orientations and volunteerism, they failed to explain the link between attachment and volunteerism.

Considering moral judgment brings into focus the egocentric motives for volunteering of avoidant individuals; The findings show that while
anxiously attached individuals show self centered reasons, regardless of their level of morality, avoidant individuals report more egocentric reasons for volunteering (i.e., self-protection and self-enhancement reasons) when their level of moral judgment is low.

Finally, our research has emphasized the importance of attachment theory for exploring individual differences, also in the context of group behavior. We showed that feelings of commitment as well as engagement in group serving efforts and donation to the group following signals of group respect and disrespect are highly dependent on a person’s attachment insecurities along the attachment anxiety dimension; for highly attachment-anxious participants, high group respect heightened group commitment and effort expenditure on behalf of the group, whereas group disrespect led to lower group commitment but to more money donation to the group and higher effort expenditure. Less attachment-anxious participants were not significantly affected by group respect or disrespect. Attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect. The findings stress the importance of individual self representation from which a person perceives others and reacts to them.

Taking into account all the studies included, this thesis adds some insights into the mechanisms underlying different attachment orientations and their relation to caring and prosocial behavior. Our results support attachment theory and related research (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002) which claims that although both anxious and avoidant people have difficulties in constructing an authentic, cohesive, and stable sense of self-worth, each of these attachment insecurities result in different self-configurations and disorders of the self, and thereby in different ways of dealing with other’s distress and caring behavior.
Avoidant individuals appear to engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons to care for others, than secure individuals. Attachment avoidance has a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering. Avoidant people tend to convince themselves and other people that they are strong and self-sufficient. This fits their defensive tendency to dismiss any signal of others' distress and to suppress painful emotions (e.g., Fraley & Shaver, 1997).

Avoidant individuals with low morality level, shows higher motivation to volunteer mainly for egoistic motives. One can refer to it as "using other by helping them"; In "The Use of An Object and Relating Through Identifications," Winnicott (1969) is concerned with the shift from a narcissistic attitude towards objects as extensions or projections of the self, to what most would regard as a more advanced mode of object-relating in which the object is recognized as separate and distinct from the self. The avoidant person with low morality level appears to use others to fulfill his egoistic needs.

Attachment avoidance was only found to weaken the effects of induced group disrespect on group-related worries. That is to say, attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect. This finding fits the already observed cynical tendency of highly avoidant people to preserve a pretense of confidence, and to dismiss any signal of interpersonal rejection (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review). However, one should note that we have assessed explicit manifestations of group-related worries, which can be easily affected by avoidant defenses. Perhaps the assessment of more implicit manifestations of these worries would reveal the negative emotional and cognitive impact that group disrespect might have even among highly avoidant people. In
addition, it is also possible that the distress caused by our induction of group disrespect was not so strong, thereby allowing avoidant people to easily dismiss the worries it can cause. Probably more personally relevant instances of group disrespect could shatter avoidant people's defensive façade of self-worth and elicit heightened group-related worries.

As for **Anxious individuals**, although preliminary results have shown no significant correlation between anxious attachment and volunteerism (Gillath et al., 2005), further investigation indicated that highly anxious people actually do volunteer when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are involved (i.e., self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, career promotion motivations). That is, they are not less likely to show caring behavior such as volunteering, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives and with their strong needs to feel love and acceptance (e.g., Cassidy & Kobak, 1988).

It appears that egoistic motivations are mediating the relation between anxious attachment and voluntary behavior. That is, highly attachment-anxious people volunteer mainly when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are involved (i.e., highly anxiously attached participants are more likely to engage in volunteer activities than their less anxious counterparts mainly when they endorse self-centered reasons for volunteering).

Attachment-anxious people are hyper-sensitive to signs of social approval and their over-dependence on external sources of self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). They chronically seek others' love and approval and their sense of self-worth is based on others' positive feedback. These working models appear to also affect the ways in which they react to the induction of group disrespect; Attachment-anxious people show stronger worries about acceptance and approval from other group members and lower group commitment. On the other hand, they also react to the induction of
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group disrespect with heightened willingness to contribute to the rejecting group and higher actual pro-group behavior. Their pro-group responses are driven by strong motives of social approval and strong self-relevant doubts, and thus can disappear as time elapses from the high group respect feedback and no further positive feedback is given. Absence of continual positive group feedback might interfere with their long term pro-group caring responses.

**Attachment security** is generally associated with higher volunteerism to care for and to help people for other-focused reasons. Secure attachment includes positive representations of oneself as worthy and competent (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). During interactions with available, sensitive, and supportive attachment figures, people find it easy to perceive themselves as valuable, lovable, and special, thanks to being valued, loved, and regarded as special by caring attachment figures. Moreover, they learn to view themselves as active, strong, and competent and mobilize caring qualities within themselves – qualities modeled on those of their attachment figures – as well as representations of being loved and valued by such figures, and these representations act as authentic and highly stable sources of comfort and self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004), provide a base of buffering the impact of signals of group respect or disrespect, and promote empathy, caring and prosocial behavior.

Overall, this thesis emphasizes the importance of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) in explaining caring, prosocial behavior. Further studies using interview-based measures and assessing actual caring behavior, are necessary to increase our confidence in the validity and generalizability of the observed links between the systems of attachment and caregiving. It appears that feelings of belongingness to the group and
engaging in group serving contributions are highly dependent on individual self representation from which a person perceives the world and reacts to it.

It is recommended that future studies will examine a wider variety of subjects, add more objective measure and extend the causal methods to examine the effects of individual differences in attachment insecurities on caring behavior within different context (e.g., groups, parenting, working relations) and devise ways of increasing people’s compassion, caring and effective altruism.