The Impact of Attachment Styles and Self-Esteem on Romantic Relationships Along with the Development of 'Earned' Secure Attachment Style

By

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Abstract

This paper examines literature around attachment, self-esteem, and how they can impact romantic relationships in young adulthood. This paper will also explore the different attachment styles and how attachment styles can influence a person's development of self-esteem. Further research on the topic of attachment will also explore the 'earned' secure attachment style and how developing an 'earned' secure attachment can positively impact a person's romantic relationship. Finally, the author will layout a workshop that could be used to help therapists who work with teens and young adults have tools to build a more secure attachment style.

Keywords: attachment styles, self-esteem, romantic relationships, preoccupied (anxious), dismissing, internal working model

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my husband, Joshua, for carrying me through.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Romantic relationships for young adults mirror the relationship and connection that a child has with their caregivers (Parkes et al., 1993). When parents are unable to meet the needs of their children in the first four years of life, a child can develop an *insecure attachment* to their caregiver which impacts a child's understanding of self-worth. In the following paper, the idea of attachment and how it impacts an individual's self-esteem will be explored. *Self-esteem* can feel like an abstract idea, but it is pivotal for young people entering a new period where they are separating themselves further from caregivers and forming more intimate and romantic connections with partners. Self-esteem develops throughout a person's lifetime, but it is usually at its lowest throughout the adolescent and young adult years (Yasemin Erol & Orth, 2016). In the following literature review, I am interested in how some young adults have healthy levels of self-esteem, making them more likely to thrive in relationships, while other young adults struggle with their idea of self and have difficulty forming healthy romantic relationships.

Overview

In the following chapter, I give an overview of self-esteem and attachment along with a brief description of the history of these topics. This paper will also explore *attachment styles* in romantic relationships and how self-esteem impacts romantic connections. This first chapter outlines the purpose statements that will be used to structure chapter two and three. As attachment and self-esteem are expansive topics, this chapter will detail the limitations of the research completed and what specific areas will be focused on. Important terms used throughout the paper will be defined and a brief overview of chapter two and three will be summarized.

History of Attachment

Attachment is a key part of the development of self-esteem. In Bowlby's (1944) early work, he observed children in the school system, but because of World War II his work was paused. When he returned to working with children, he and Mary Ainsworth began to work together. Bowlby first started studying attachment styles while observing children staying in hospitals who were separated from their parents for long periods of time. One of the staff that was hired by Bowlby created a movie to depict what young children faced while in the hospital (Bretherton, 1992). This movie was highly controversial within the medical community at the time of release but ended up being very pivotal to ensuring better care and treatment for children in western hospitals (Bretherton, 1992).

At the time of Bowlby and Ainsworth's theories about attachment, language around children's development was still heavily influenced by Freud's ideas of the super-ego and ego, and while Bowlby used this language to explain his perspectives, his theories about the criticalness of the child's primary caregiver supporting and nurturing the child's development were instrumental and ground-breaking for the time (Bretherton, 1992). Another crucial figure in the development of the attachment theory was Blatz, a researcher at the University of Toronto, who researched the idea of a *secure attachment* between child and caregiver (Van Rosmalen et al., 2016). Ainsworth worked under the supervision of Blatz, and it is there that she began to research attachment. Blatz also researched security across a person's lifetime, and even though the two men never met, Blatz and Bowlby were interested in the same phenomena: the attachment between child and caregiver and how that impacts a person over their lifetime. Ainsworth continued to explore this theory of secure attachment as well as insecure attachment as later in Ainsworth's career, she helped to define the different types of insecure attachment

styles (Bowlby et al., 1956). She was pivotal in putting together the strange situation experiment where children were observed in an unfamiliar situation, first with their caregiver and then with their caregiver and a stranger. The caregiver was then asked to leave the room when the stranger was not present and then when the stranger was present. The study was critical to helping Ainsworth and Bowlby begin to understand this idea of insecure attachment and what features a child with insecure attachment displays (Van Rosmalen et al., 2016). From this research, Ainsworth also began to put specific names to different types of insecure attachments styles including anxious-avoidant and anxious-ambivalent (Shen et al., 2021). Ainsworth took both Bowlby and Blatz's research and expanded upon it through research studies that remain pivotal to our understanding of how humans relate to each other.

History of Self-Esteem

The first writing about self-esteem dates to David Hume who was a philosopher in the eighteenth century (Watkins, 2021). The research around self-esteem and measuring self-esteem in young people became more mainstream with Rosenberg's book: *Society and the adolescent image*, which detailed his research and work around youth and self-esteem (Stoodley & Rosenberg, 1966). Rosenberg gathered data from 4,600 youth and with that data and careful adaptations to his questions and research, he discovered a formulaic approach to building a questionnaire that details a person's view of themselves and ultimately measures self-esteem. With this tool, researchers can collect data and observe participants level of self-esteem using an accurate and tested questionnaire. In the following literature review, many of the studies use Rosenberg's questionnaire to gather data on their participant's view of self, as it is understood to be one of the most reliable tests, and it remains one of the most used scales for assessing self-esteem (Monteiro et al., 2022; Stoodley & Rosenberg, 1966;). In Rosenberg's 1965 study, he

considered social factors that contribute to a person's understanding of self-esteem, but his results showed so many different areas that ultimately contributed to self-esteem that Rosenberg (1965) could not find a conclusive answer. Yet, because of the inconclusiveness of this study, many studies since have been conducted, as researchers try to identify the foundational elements that explain the roots of self-esteem (Monteiro et al., 2022).

Purpose Statements

To begin to understand how attachment impacts a young adult's self-esteem and ultimately a person's romantic relationships, the following questions will be explored. The first purpose of this paper will be to consider how the attachment styles of secure-autonomous, dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) play a role in the development of self-esteem in young adults. Next, I will examine how these attachment styles and self-esteem impact romantic relationships in young adulthood. Finally, the idea of *'earned' secure attachment* will be highlighted. In the final chapter of this capstone, I will address best practices for counsellors working with young adult clients struggling in unhealthy romantic relationships and discuss recommendations for future research in this area.

Personal Connection

For this paper, I want to explore the relationship between attachment and self-esteem and how these ultimately impact a young adult's romantic relationships. I will explore how insecure attachment styles may impact the development of self-esteem and considers how that could potentially impact a romantic relationship. As the writer, I am curious about the idea of 'earned' secure attachment, as people are resilient and despite experiencing difficult childhood experiences, they can evolve. I will also consider if a person's attachment style could change over time and how this change could become evident in young adulthood. My hope was that this

research would help guide a counsellor's understanding of the impact of attachment on an individual's self-esteem, as well as further the connection between attachment, self-esteem, and romantic relationships in the young adult years.

In previous literature, researchers have expanded on the connection between attachment and romantic relationships, but in the following literature review, I hope to show the mediating role that self-esteem plays in connecting attachment and romantic relationships. The connection between self-esteem and romantic relationships was first considered when counselling adolescents and young adults in public health. Low self-esteem is common in the adolescents that I work with, but it was particularly obvious when older adolescents began to have serious romantic relationships. I noticed how unhealthy behaviours started to form when adolescents, unsure of themselves, began to form relationships with others. Themes like self-blame and self-doubt were evident in clients who experienced low self-esteem while in romantic relationships. Often in these relationships people would not feel heard, be disrespected by partners, and find themselves in verbally/emotionally abusive relationships. As a result, I attempted to validate my client's experiences, while reframing language around negative self-talk that was often the outcome of low self-esteem. I also noticed with my clients a connection between a negative view of self and an insecure attachment style with primary caregivers. Because of these clients and the connections I saw in the therapy room, I wanted to research this topic more, to better resource myself, support other clinicians working with this population, and become a better therapist for my clients.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

For the following literature review, the theory of attachment is used to understand the framework around children and parental relationships as well as relationships in young

adulthood. Attachment theory first constructed by Bowlby and Ainsworth describes the connection that children have with their primary caregivers, and how this relationship is critical for how children relate to themselves and other people (Kochanska & An, 2023). Bowlby first understood attachment as a person's internal working model, which is the framework for how people view their caregivers. Yet as people grow and separate themselves from their caregiver, it becomes the view that people carry of themselves and others (Homan et al., 2018). This view of self builds into a person's identity and their self-esteem. This idea of self-esteem is also explored in light of the attachment styles that adults form later in life. The literature explores romantic relationships in young adulthood, and the author is curious about how self-esteem formulated from a person's internal working model shows up in romantic relationships.

Attachment theory is also applied in the author's understanding of different types of relationships between children and their caregivers, including secure attachment and insecure attachment. According to Kochanska and An (2023), there is a strong correlation between maladaptive experiences in childhood leading to insecure relationships with caregivers, as caregivers who consistently respond to their children's distress without empathy and kindness are more likely to create insecure attachment patterns in their children (Dagan et al., 2021). Like the patterns that Bowlby and Ainsworth observed, Dagan et al., (2021) notes that insecure attachment is often first seen in children with anxiety and depression, as the internalizing of attachments tends to be demonstrated in these internalizing mental health challenges. Although, attachment theory began with a heavy focus on children, it has since been expanded upon to look at how adults experience attachment. As the literature focuses upon the young adult experience, adult attachment styles will also be explored, as according to Dagan et al. (2021), the internalizing attachment experience in childhood becomes often externalized in adulthood. This

externalization becomes relevant then in romantic partner relationships where the child/parent relationship is mirrored (Carr et al., 2019)

Contribution to the Field

The theory of attachment has been heavily researched and written about since Ainsworth and Bowlby created the theory of attachment. To add to this literature something new felt very overwhelming and impossible at times, so instead I hope to expand on an idea that I believe the literature around attachment already touches on. My hope is to bring together literature that focuses on self-esteem, romantic relationships, and to explore how self-esteem is impacted by attachment styles. Finally, I hope to look at the impact of attachment and self-esteem on romantic relationships.

Before beginning this research, my hypothesis was that self-esteem would be positively relate to securely attached individuals who then have happier and healthier relationships. As a result, this research expands more on how childhood attachment relates to adult attachment styles even though much of the research says that they are not related to each other (Roisman et al., 2002). Yet by comparing childhood attachment styles with self-esteem, I hope to bring the gap between adult attachment styles and child attachment styles closer through the mitigating force of self-esteem.

Previous Research in the Field

The research is rich around this idea of attachment and how it impacts self-esteem, as many different researchers focus on how adult attachment impacts levels of self-esteem. In Sechi et al.'s (2020) research, the authors find that high self-esteem in women with fibromyalgia can increase quality of life. In this way, self-esteem is proven to be a powerful tool for helping

individuals see themselves more positively even when going through difficult life circumstances.

Maurifah (2022) looked at how early attachment impacts the development of self-esteem in young adulthood. This researcher observed the comparison between securely attached children and self-esteem and insecurely attached children who have low self-esteem. Although low self-esteem in young people could also stem from other aspects of a person's development, attachment appears to play a very important role in a child's understanding of themselves and how they view their value and worth. Finally, the research continues by showing that self-esteem positively impacts romantic relationships over an extended period. In Yasemin Erol and Orth's (2016) research, the authors found that self-esteem is a predictor for healthy romantic relationship in young adulthood. Homaei et al. (2016) found that self-esteem positively impacts romantic relationships because of the safe internal working model a person builds in early childhood. When caregivers are receptive and responsive, a person begins to understand relationships as safe and secure. Within a secure framework, people build secure relationships. If this secure framework has never been developed, as an adult, a person can struggle to form close relationships.

Another area that surfaced from the research around attachment and self-esteem was 'earned' secure attachment and how romantic relationships impact attachment in young adulthood. Although 'earned' attachment style is a more recent topic, Hartel (2022) found that in safe and healthy relationships, individuals can begin to relearn their attachment styles. In the following paper, I hope to continue this exploration around 'earned' secure attachment as well as how relationships can help to rewire the internal working model.

Limitations

The literature review in chapter two will only look at attachment in adolescents and young adults and will not be considering attachment throughout the lifespan. Self-esteem as well will be framed within the context of attachment and not be researched in depth as its own separate concept. The research around romantic relationships will be looking solely at heterosexual couples, and although the author was curious about other types of romantic attachments, the research reviewed considered only heterosexual couples. The attachment framework that the author presented on is focusing on the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth, so other researchers who have written extensively about attachment will not be delved into. For this paper, the attachment styles that will be explored include secure-autonomous, dismissing, and preoccupied (anxious). The research paper will not explore the disorganized or unresolved attachment style because the research around it is quite extensive and should in many ways be researched as its own separate topic.

Clinical Implications

As a student counsellor working with children, I found researching self-esteem and attachment instrumental to my work with children. The following literature helps to connect the relationship between attachment and self-esteem, and how these two frameworks impact a child's view of themselves and the world around them. Helping clinicians to make sense of these connections can advise them in their work with children with low self-esteem and bring more understanding and greater clarity to the impact that attachment styles can have in a child's life. My work with young adults in romantic relationships has shown me the impact of early attachment styles and self-esteem on their current relationships. This experience inspired my work around romantic relationships and the lasting impact of early attachment styles on relationships.

Reflectivity and Positionality

As a young woman, I feel like the topic around self-esteem, attachment, and romantic relationships aligns with my interests and values. Working in public health and with children, I have seen the impact of attachment styles on young children and older teens.

Social Location

I understand as I write this capstone around attachment and romantic relationships that as a heterosexual, white, middle-class woman, I have experienced the privilege of being raised by two parents who were able to provide a positive and nurturing environment for me to grow up in. Even with these positive childhood experiences, I still mirrored the relationships I had with my parents in my marriage, which shows how impacted I had been by those early years.

When it comes to my relationship with the topic of attachment, I developed a strong bond to both of my caregivers, despite adverse childhood experiences. Self-esteem's role as a mediating agent between attachment and relationships took form in my purpose statements, as I considered how self-esteem impacted my life and how negative childhood experiences can create a complicated and negative relationship between an individual and the self. When I was eighteen years old, I moved across the country from my family, and for the first time, I experienced self-doubt and low self-confidence. The self-esteem that I felt when I was surrounded by my family disappeared and instead, I struggled to value myself and begin to create a new identity apart from my family. This experience made me wonder about the power of self-esteem and how relationships with caregivers influence a person's understanding of self and their self-confidence.

Beliefs and Experiences

As a I began to work with children as a counsellor, I had to stop and consider my beliefs around attachment and self-esteem, and how the beliefs that I carry into my writing are demonstrations of biases that I carry.

In considering my beliefs around attachment and self-esteem, I realize that I have biased perspective on the topics of relationships and parenting responsibilities because of the religious background that I was raised in. Since moving out of my parent's home at eighteen, I have worked to be very aware of these biases and do my best to check myself when discussing topics around parenting duties and attachment styles. Thankfully because of the support I have received from my capstone advisor, I hope that I approach the following topics of attachment with care and consideration.

Social Influence

As a counsellor student working with children, I have witnessed the difficult life experiences that many children have experienced. As one of my professor's notes, children are not resilient, they are just silent (Percher, 2024). Many parents will admit that they are trying to undo the trauma that their parent's did to them, for the relationship bonds that are learned in childhood are so difficult to unlearn, that it can take generations to undo trauma. Although insecure attachment styles are learned behaviours, the rewriting of these behaviours can take time, and this topic will be developed later, when the author expands on the idea of 'earned' secure attachment. Earned secure attachment is the idea that children develop relationships later in adulthood that help individuals to relearn relationship patterns. Socially, a child with a secure attachment style will have an easier time connecting with others and creating lasting relationships (Shen et al., 2021). Similarly, in romantic relationships, young adults with an

earned secure or secure-autonomous attachment style should have an easier time communicating and connecting with their partner (Carr et al., 2019; Dansy Olufowote et al., 2020).

In this way, these early relationships with caregivers helps to build a secure attachment which lets children socialize healthily in peer relationships. Finally, self-esteem has a large impact on young people's social functioning and societies' perspective on a person's ability to achieve and succeed (Irvine et al., 2023). I believe that my research will show that higher self-esteem will be correlated with a higher likelihood of connecting with others and building friendships. Socially, attachment and self-esteem play a large role in people's abilities to connect with each other and achieve long-term relationships.

Findings

In the following literature, I hope to show the connection between attachment and self-esteem, and how the development of self-esteem can positively impact young adults in romantic relationships. As I begin to research attachment styles and self-esteem, I wonder if there will be a connection between the self-esteem developed from a secure attachment style and romantic relationships. I also wonder about how the insecure attachment styles will impact people's ability to create relationships later in young adulthood. Because of how instrumental attachment styles are to people's understanding of relationships and connections, I wonder if securely attached individuals will have a greater ability at creating healthy and secure bonds within romantic relationships. My greatest hope from all my research is to better equip myself for working with children and young adults around the idea of attachment.

Definition of Terms

- **Attachment:** human's ability and desire to connect and form relationships with each other in hopes of building a safe and secure framework for relationships (Bowlby, 1969)
- **Disorganized/Unresolved Attachment Style:** Attachment style given to children who have complex and traumatic relationships with caregivers because of neglectful or abusive caregivers (Duschinsky, 2015).
- **"Earned" secure Attachment:** attachment style that develops in adulthood despite the individual having an insecure attachment during childhood. This attachment style has many of the characteristics of a secure-autonomous attachment style, and usually is the result of the individual being able to create a healthy attachment bond with a person other than their primary caregiver (Dansy Olufowote et al., 2020; Venta et al., 2015).
- **Insecure-Avoidant Attachment/Dismissing:** attachment style that is characterized by an unstable relationship with a person's caregiver, where connection and support are generally not available, and as a result, an individual avoids and flees from connection and intimacy in their current relationship with their caregiver and in future relationships (Çağlayan & Körük, 2022; Desrosiers et al., 2014; Lee & Hankin, 2009)
- **Insecure-ambivalent/Preoccupied (Anxious):** attachment style that is characterized by inconsistent affection and love from a caregiver creating an internal framework within an individual that feels unstable and stressful. The individual moves towards connection with their caregiver but the caregiver's responses are

inconsistent. As a result, individuals anxiously seek out other people hoping to fill the void that their caregiver's lack of connection left (Homan et al., 2018; Wallin, 2015).

- **Internal Working Model:** framework for how individuals relate and connect to people as well as themselves. This framework is developed through a person's relationship with their primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1973; Shen et al., 2021).
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):** is a self-esteem measurement tool that consists of ten questions that assess a person's view of self, including their acceptance of themselves and confidence. It is the most used self-esteem scale in academic research and has been used cross-culturally (Monteiro et al., 2022).
- **Secure-autonomous attachment:** attachment style that is characterized by a close relationship with one's caregiver and self and is associated with a consistent, close, and safe connection where a person feels cherished and highly valued by a caregiver (Bowlby, 1973).
- **Self-Esteem:** a person's framework for understanding their worth, value, and identity (Mruk, 2006; Rosenberg et al., 1995).
- **Self-worth:** A person's desire to feel valued, loved, and competent (Bowlby, 1973; Van Der Horst et al., 2008)

Outline of the Capstone Project Chapters

In chapter two, the literature review will cover a brief overview of what self-esteem is and how to define it, before going on to explain the different types of self-esteem. The literature review will then cover attachment, types of attachment, and how attachment can help in the development of self-esteem. This section will also cover how insecure attachment and secure attachment styles impact the development of self-esteem differently. This moves the

conversation into how attachment and self-esteem impact romantic relationships. For the third chapter, the writer will explore the limitations of the literature review, develop an outline for a workshop directed at clinician's working with clients with insecure attachment styles, and suggest further research for the field of 'earned secure attachment. In this workshop, the presenter will explore practical implications for working with the young adult population around attachment and provide skills for clinicians to help insecure attached clients work towards an 'earned' secure attachment. The third chapter will end with the writer's reflection on their learnings from the paper and summarizing thoughts around the idea of attachment styles.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the following paper, the story of self-esteem and attachment will be explored. Attachment is a building block of the human experience as children in the first five years of life try to connect with their primary caregiver. This relationship impacts a person's understanding of self and begins to shape a person's understanding of others as well. Although attachment is formed in childhood, the outcome of attachment is seen for the rest of that child's life. For this paper, attachment and its impact on a person's self-esteem will be looked at in young adulthood, mainly from the ages of 18-25 years. These are pivotal years of a person's life, as young adulthood is full of large changes including moving from home, beginning work, and experiencing first romantic relationships. Attachment styles and self-esteem impact each of these changes in a youth's life, but for this paper, the experience of a romantic relationship will be

explored. Often romantic relationships reflect the attachment style that children formed with their parents—and then are replayed in young adulthood with romantic partners. Because of this, young people in romantic relationships can experience grief and stress when attachment styles are insecure, leading to stressful relationship formations. Impacting the formation of a romantic relationship is the self-esteem that develops from the attachment style of the individual. As a result, these three components including self-esteem, attachment style, and romantic relationships influence and build upon each other. In the following chapter, the formation of attachment styles as well as self-esteem will be explored throughout late adolescent into young adulthood; the research will also examine how the attachment styles formed and the self-esteem developed impact young adult's romantic relationships.

Self-Esteem

The roots of self-esteem research grew from Bandura's work—a psychologist who researched social relationships and ultimately self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) reported that a person's belief in themselves is key to how a person shows up in the world around them. Although Bandura's research looked specifically at self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-efficacy are in many ways the same pieces in understanding how a person values themselves, as they both relate to how people see themselves and how that impacts a person's future relationships. For this paper though, the writer will use the word self-esteem when discussing these concepts.

Studies have shown that young people struggle with self-esteem, especially through adolescence and into young adulthood. Women especially have been seen to have lower self-esteem as there is less confidence around body image and their abilities, which can lead to difficulties when finding successful occupations and careers (Magnusson & Nermo, 2018). This paper will consider the influential piece of attachment in the development of self-esteem.

Although attachment and self-esteem are critical pieces at any stage of a person's life, young adults are in a critical period of their life, especially in terms of romantic relationships. As secure attachment is believed to be a protective factor for building self-esteem, the following research review will explore the outcome of lower and higher self-esteem and the attachment styles that may predict an individual's self-esteem. Through this paper, the writer will explore how self-esteem forms in young adulthood and how attachment plays a large role in the foundation of self-esteem, and then in romantic relationships.

In Mruk's (2006) book, the author notes the importance of self-esteem in understanding identity. In young adulthood, people may be transitioning from their families into living on their own and making significant decisions about education and work. All these choices are heavily influenced by an individual's identity. Along with identity, Mruk (2006) points out that research shows a strong correlation between lower self-esteem and depression and anxiety. In many ways, self-esteem impacts an individual's perspective of themselves and their sense of worth. The young adult years are complicated with individuals facing new challenges and moving into the responsibilities of adulthood, and so having a sense of security in oneself is a critical piece of moving healthily through this stage of life. In Mruk and Skelly (2017), the researchers make the argument for how self-esteem is not only a North American idea but crosses the globe. The authors acknowledge that even beyond the framework of gender, self-esteem plays a universal role in people's characteristics and sense of self (Mruk & Skelly, 2017).

Types of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is represented in literature in two veins: global and specific. These two aspects represent part of the complexities of self-esteem. Global self-esteem is often related to a person's psychological well-being as well as a person's self-respect for themselves in their

situation in life; while specific self-esteem is related to a person's view of themselves and is often directly related to a person's behaviour (Rosenberg et al., 1995). For this research paper, both global and specific self-esteem will be considered as different research articles consider different aspects of self-esteem. Overall, the purpose of looking at acknowledging both aspects of self-esteem is because in many of the research articles the Rosenberg scale is used which measures both specific and global self-esteem.

Attachment Styles

Family and caregivers play a large part in building the foundations from which a child can grow in their self-esteem. John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth are known for being the creators and founders of the theory of attachment, which postulates that children's connection with their primary caregiver is foundational to how they see themselves and others. Bowlby and Ainsworth expanded upon this theory of attachment and explored different types of attachment, including insecure and secure attachment (Bowlby, 1956). Since these foundational writings, other researchers have expanded on Bowlby and Ainsworth's work by exploring the outcomes of different attachments as well as adult attachment styles based on childhood attachment styles.

Internal Working Models

In Shen et al.'s (2021) research, the authors hypothesized that childhood attachment and self-esteem were closely tied, as Bowlby's (1973) early work around attachment theory found that children who are securely connected to their caregiver can move beyond their caregiver and feel safe and secure. Bowlby's (1973) theory around attachment is based on the internal working model—a model that suggests that children begin to understand themselves and their expectations of others based on how their caregivers respond and meet their need. Bowlby was most interested in the development that occurred between a child and a parent when the child

was between the ages of 12 months to four years old (Van Der Horst et al., 2008). If a parent's response to their child's needs is reliable and safe, then children begin to build stable frameworks around who they are and their self-value. From these early responses, children begin to see themselves as lovable and deserving, because their caregiver is responding and caring for their needs. According to Bowlby's (1973) research, if a child has a strong internal secure working model, then they will be able to develop a greater degree of self-esteem and self-worth. These attributes will lead them to connect better with individuals outside of themselves as they will have a higher sense of self-worth and believe that they are deserving of love. Individuals with a stronger secure internal working model tend to trust others more as they assume people are reliable and trustworthy rather than assuming the worst of people because their own caregivers were not responsive.

Children though cannot bond with their caregiver if the primary caregiver avoids creating connections with the child or does not respond appropriately to the child's needs (Bartholomew, 1990). According to Bowlby (1973), insecure attachment styles were the result of parental absence over an extended period, and although long absences impact the child to caregiver bond, the quality of the primary caregiver interaction when they are present is key as well as the overall formation and connection (Bartholomew, 1990).

Ainsworth expanded Bowlby's theory by creating the various attachment "styles". These different attachment styles for children include secure, anxious-ambivalent, and anxious-avoidant (Shen et al., 2021). In Shen et al. (2021), the researchers hypothesized that adult attachment styles as well as one's self-esteem and emotional regulation is formed in childhood as a result of the child's relationship with the caregiver. These researchers hypothesized further that a person's self-esteem is key to observing the person's attachment style. They surveyed 2,373 participants

with 72% of them being female. In reflecting on the research, Shen et al. (2021) found that participants who had more secure attachment styles with their caregivers also scored higher on self-esteem reports and lower on psychological distress scores. The findings also showed that individuals who had secure attachment styles tended to have better relationships in adulthood. Although this research may not necessarily reflect a young adult's experience, it does show the importance of secure attachment in an individual's life and how it impacts a person's understanding of self, as well as how secure attachment in childhood impacts adult relationships. With a secure attachment an individual is more likely to trust others and be more open to creating relationships with people. These socialization aspects of attachment are critical components in developing healthy relationships with others.

Attachment Terms

For the following paper and because of the many variations of attachment terms in the articles below, the writer will use the adult terminology for attachment styles instead of the language used for children's attachment styles. About 21% of infants have an insecure-avoidant attachment style, but the term that will be used in the following paper is dismissing. For insecure-ambivalent attachment styles, the definition that will be used is preoccupied (anxious). Another insecure attachment style that is discussed in literature is disorganized with the adult attachment style term being unresolved, but because of the complexities of this term and the uncertainty around it, unresolved attachment styles will not be discussed in the following paper. Finally, secure attachment styles are simply called secure when discussing children's attachment, but for this paper, the term will be secure-autonomous (Dagan et al., 2020)

Attachments Styles and Self-Esteem

In Homan et al.'s 2018 article, the researchers consider Bowlby's internal working model as being critical to an individual's understanding of self, as when the internal working model is secure then a person can build a secure and safe view of themselves—this includes a person's understanding of their worth and love. When the internal working model is not secure, then a person struggles to gain a positive view of themselves and often sees themselves through a negative vantage point. The building of a secure internal working model (or secure-autonomous attachment) can impact a person's friendships, view of self, and self-esteem over a whole life, yet in many ways these attachment styles become the most obvious and pivotal through young adult years. Homan et al. (2018) focuses on dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) attachment. A preoccupied (anxious) attached person tends to seek love and acceptance from outside themselves as those primal needs were inconsistently met by their caregivers—while an dismissing attached person removes themselves from relationships and flees from any type of intimate connection (Homan et al., 2018). The study researched young adult students at university, gathering insight into their relationship with their self-esteem and body image. The study showed that preoccupied (anxious) attached individuals showed lower levels of self-esteem, while dismissing attached individuals were not as conclusive, with some showing normal amounts of self-esteem and others showing lower self-esteem. The results of levels of self-esteem in dismissing attachment style individuals are explained as this of attachment style tends to create individuals who avoid expressing emotions, including any negative feelings about themselves. Homan et al. (2018) looked specifically at attachment and self-esteem and how they relate to body image, but a key to this study is that the author showed the impact of how higher amounts of self-esteem leads to a more positive view of self and increased sense of security. All

these feelings increased the women's sense of self-esteem in their bodies but also created better and healthier relationships with themselves and others.

In Irvine et al.'s (2023) article, the researchers found that secure-autonomous attachment built upon an individual's self-esteem and acted as a protective factor against externalizing and internalizing behaviour. Signs of attachment are often visible in adolescence through how children relate to each other in social settings. As in Irvine et al. (2023), the researchers show how secure-autonomous attachment creates a healthier self-esteem in adolescents which then acts as a moderator in social interactions. The researchers attest that the attachment styles that are formed in early childhood are most evident in the early adolescent years where children move into more independent activities from their caregivers. The researchers hypothesized that securely attached individuals would have higher self-esteem which would lead to lower externalizing and internalizing issues in school. Through having the participants complete inventories that measured self-esteem, attachment, and peer interactions, the researchers found that secure individuals had higher amounts of self-esteem and led to lower struggles with relationships. The findings around internalizing versus externalizing showed that individuals with secure relationships with caregivers had more positive views of self and as a result lower amounts of internalizing behaviour. This study shows the power of self-esteem in adolescents as it positively impacts their relationship with themselves and others. These positive characteristics that are visible in adolescents continue into young adulthood and help to create healthier and more successful relationships.

Insecure Attachment and Self-Esteem

In Irvine et al. (2023), the researchers focus on how secure attachment is a predictor of self-esteem, while in the Lee and Hankin (2009) article the researchers found that insecure attachment styles cause higher anxiety and depression in adolescents.

In the Lee and Hankin (2009) research, the authors consider the connection between attachment and mental health. To introduce their topic, the researchers recall Bowlby's research around attachment and the formation of attachment as it exists as an evolutionary response, as when a children feel fearful or worried, they reach out or call for a caregiver. If a caregiver responds consistently, then the child feels reassured and starts creating its model for human interactions. The operation for order and expectation in human relationships is formed in these early connections. Yet, because these responses are not always expected or the caregiver is inconsistently or consistently absent, then an insecure attachment form. A person's internal working model forms one's understanding of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and so if not formed healthily can create unhealthy patterns that are more evident later in young adulthood. As a result, Lee and Hankin (2009) hypothesize that insecure attachment styles are predictors of anxiety and depression. The researchers note that the moderating factor for this development of mental health difficulties is the development of self-esteem or the result of underdeveloped self-esteem in the case of insecure attachment. The researchers studied children at schools in Chicago where they observed students in the classroom and had the students complete a self-report questionnaire. The results showed that insecure attachments were a predictor of emotional distress and poor mental health. Dismissing attachments again were not found to be associated with poor self-esteem but with higher depressive symptom. Like in Homan et al.'s (2018) finding, dismissing attached individuals in Lee and Hankin's (2009) study were less likely to

show signs of lower self-esteem. Lee and Hankin (2009) presume that individuals with dismissing attachment styles tend to avoid relationships, and so there is overall fewer interactions to report in total—meaning that the self-reporting about human encounters positive or negative were less in general. The researchers did find that insecure attachment styles were predictors of greater emotional dysregulation, which has been found to cause lower self-esteem in individuals.

Menon et al. (2018) discuss the impact of narcissism and self-esteem upon insecure attachment in the adolescent years. Although narcissism is not relevant to the discussion, Menon et al.'s (2018) findings have many relevant points that are worth mentioning and highlighting. The researchers begin by stating that insecure attachments put a child's self-worth in turmoil as inconsistent responses and care from a primary caregiver can skew a client's understanding of their worth and their trust in others. The result of a lower self-worth and insecure attachment often leads individuals into mental health challenges where there may be the misuse of alcohol, depression, and in some cases eating disorders. As Bowlby (1973) acknowledged, the result of insecure attachment follows an individual from the beginning of their life until the end. Menon et al.'s (2018) research decided to look at the adolescents' experience with self-esteem, attachment, mood, and bulimia. The authors wanted to know if insecure attachment would impact eating disorders, and how self-esteem and mood played a role in the connection between attachment and eating disorders. This study sampled two college population, one from the United States and the other from South Korea, with a total of 692 female participants (Menon et al., 2018). The study used the Rosenberg self-esteem scale when measuring self-esteem in the women. The results of the study showed that insecure attachment was positively associated with bulimic behaviour and that self-esteem played a role in their connection. As self-esteem impacts a person's view of themselves, so women with insecure attachments were more likely to have a

negative view of self. Negative views of self can lead to unrealistic standards of one's body and increase dissatisfaction with oneself leading to an eating disorder (Menon et al., 2018). Although the research around body image is not as relevant to this paper, Menon et al.'s (2018) research clearly showed how insecure attachment developed in childhood can have a lasting negative impact on an adolescent's view of self and their self-identity.

Attachment and Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are typically formed in young adulthood and are often reflections of an individual's past relationships with caregivers. In Parkes et al.'s (1993) work, the authors discuss how childhood attachment often mirrors romantic attachment, as it is one of the first connections that is just as intimate as a child's relationship with their primary caregiver. Even after couple's divorce, there is still a close emotional connection that is left between the separated couple, as the level of intimacy and closeness found in a romantic relationship is rarely experienced by those who are not in a long-term relationship (Parkes et al.,1993). The authors also pointed out the positives of healthy romantic attachments as they act as stabilizers throughout challenging and difficult life circumstances, similar to in early childhood attachment when a child feels able to move from beyond their parent's presence because they trust the connection and relationship that they have built with their parent (Parkes et al., 1993).

In adolescents, children are beginning to explore the world beyond their relationship with their caregiver, but in romantic relationships these early attachments are mirrored in the relationship an individual forms with their partner. In Carr et al. (2019), the authors explore how these early internal working models are reflected in romantic relationships. The researchers wanted to explore the specifics of the relationship between the father and mother and how each relationship individually impacts a child. The authors studied children from divorced families,

and specifically consider how the relationship between an adolescent living with their mother and with the outside support of their father. This specific direction was chosen because it was seen as a common theme with the participants of the study. The researchers hypothesized that having a close and secure attachment between the mother and adolescent without the father involved would provide healthier and more positive romantic relationships. It was predicted that romantic relationships would have the worst outcome when both adolescents and parents do not have a close relationship. All the participants (N=72) in this study lived primarily with their mother. The researchers gathered information by having the youth complete assessments about their relationships with their mother and father as well as complete surveys related to their romantic relationships.

The research found that having a close relationship with a father figure compensated for a poor relationship with a mother, yet the relationship with the father figure was only critical to the romantic relationship when the female caregiver's relationship was absent. The researchers presume having supportive parents, even if it is just one parent, is critical in the process of creating healthy romantic relationships. In this research, the healthiness of the romantic relationship was not immediately attributed to the attachment style of the adolescent, instead it was more focused on the bond the youth had with their caregiver. The youth's ability to feel safe in their relationship with their parents was then transferred into their relationship. The main findings of this article suggest that supportive parents can provide healthier romantic relationships, and specifically the study proved that father's outside of the youth's home can still help build a healthier working model when the relationship with the mother is not positive. In this way, Carr et al. (2019) shows that forming secure attachments with parents helps to establish healthy and secure attachments with romantic partners.

In Desrosiers et al.'s (2014) research, the authors explore how different attachment styles impact romantic relationships. To start this discussion, the authors explain the difference between preoccupied (anxious) attachment and dismissing attachment styles, as anxious attachment is rooted in the fear of abandonment while dismissing attachment is the dislike and discomfort of connection and closeness with another individual (Desrosiers et al., 2014). When one partner models preoccupied (anxious) attachment and the other, dismissing attachment, then the preoccupied (anxious) attached partner tends to seek close connection which can easily turn to depressive moods as the close connection they are looking for is tainted by the fear of abandonment. The dismissing attached partner will keep moving away as the other partner wants closer connection. In Desrosiers et al.'s (2014) article, the researchers studied 296 pregnant females and their male partners. After responding to the surveys, the researchers found that men scored higher in dismissing attachment styles, while women were generally more preoccupied anxiously attached. Feelings of depression were higher in both preoccupied (anxious) and dismissing attached individuals, which aligns with previous studies from Lee and Hankin (2009), who suggested that insecure attachment styles were predictors for higher anxiety and depression in individuals.

Desrosiers et al.'s (2014) research also found that partners with insecure attachment styles were more likely to express unhealthy attachment styles under stressful situations, which is interesting that they decided to study pregnant women—as they would be experiencing more stress than the average person. Higher stress activates the different attachment styles. Like a person's fear responses like flight, freeze, or fight—attachment styles are humans' programmed reactions to difficult experiences (Desrosiers et al., 2014). The researchers also found it interesting that dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) attachment styles tend to exacerbate each

other, as one person is always looking for a closer relationship while the other partner is pulling further away. Dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) attachment often connect with each other, as both insecure attachment styles feel anxious about the commitment of their partner. In a dismissive attachment style though, a person generally will struggle to trust a romantic partner's commitment, making it hard for them to stay in the relationship when conflict arises. While in preoccupied (anxious) attachment, a person will cling to the relationship for fear of being left. Later in this paper, the idea of changing one's attachment style will be explored, as the researchers concluded that insecure attachment styles could be changed in healthy relationship environments, which ultimately reduces stress in romantic relationships and improves the child's development in the womb (Desrosiers et al., 2014).

In his book *Grief and romantic relationship dissolution*, Blue (2017) writes about attachment styles and romantic partner relationships. He addresses that insecure attachment styles tend to focus on the negative parts of the partner, specifically around the partner's dependability and support, while securely attached individuals are more likely to have a positive view of others, including their romantic partner. Just as Desrosiers et al (2014) pointed out that insecurely attached individuals usually seek out each other, and, according to Bowlby (1982), securely individuals usually are attracted to each other. This is because Bowlby (1980) theorized that an internal working model not only anticipates one's beliefs about others, but also reflects understanding of self. Blue (2017) believes that just like personalities, a person's attachment style tends to remain the same across time, although he does admit that life events (negative and positive) can alter internal working models including experiencing the death of a romantic partner or experiencing the constant support of a romantic partner. Significant events like these

can alter a person's perception of others and begin to alter one's internal working model for human relationships.

In a more recent article by Çağlayan and Körük (2022), the researchers consider the role of attachment styles, self-esteem, and family of origin in a couple's conflict style. The researchers define conflict as a structure of conversation where new ideas and thoughts can be stated and challenged, as well as a space where social change is encouraged and ultimately, acts as a tool to build peoples' sense of identity. Çağlayan and Körük (2022) believe that a couple's ability to hold healthy conflict allows them to reach higher levels of marital or relationship satisfaction, as the dyadic of the relationship is further explored. In counselling, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is a popular therapeutic method that upholds the idea of dialectics as critical to the human experience. Dialectics means that two things can be true at the same time. When two people are agreeing to a relationship, they are coming from two different perspectives into a united relationship. As a result, they learn at times to express their differences of thought and also agree to disagree that the other person might have a difference of perspective from themselves. There are many different types of conflict that couples move towards, but often a person's attachment style moves them towards a specific framework during conflict. For example, individuals with a dismissing attachment style often pull away in arguments, while preoccupied (anxious) attached partners pull closer as they worry that their partner will pull away. In the Çağlayan and Körük (2022) article, the authors also consider if self-esteem impacts an individual's conflict style. Çağlayan and Körük (2022) predict that individuals with higher self-esteem need less approval from partners and will also have healthier conflict methods, while partners with negative self-esteem will have a more difficult time with conflict as they will want

more encouragement and attention from their partner and respond problematically when experiencing conflict.

Attachment and an individual's understanding of self-esteem are formed during childhood, and so Çağlayan and Körük (2022) extended their research to the family of origin and the conflict styles of the family of origin as a reference for a person's individual conflict style. In the research experiment, there were 265 participants from 19-56 years old, with the majority of the participants being in their late twenties. The individuals could be in current relationships or single but had to have had a serious relationship in their past. The results of the research found that securely attached individuals would look for the root of the issue during conflicts, try to communicate to their partners, admit disagreements, and find solutions to issues when disagreements arose. Individuals with a dismissing attachment style avoided intimacy and when conflict came, they would emotionally distance themselves from their partner. Çağlayan and Körük (2022) also found that preoccupied (anxious) attached individuals would be more likely to obsess over their relationship and worry that their partner would abandon them when conflict arose. Not only did the research examine attachment styles, but it found that the families of origin conflict styles were main predictors for how a person dealt with conflict in their future relationships. The study did not show any clear correlation between self-esteem and conflict styles, which may be the result of more focus on the relationships between the attachment and family of origin and less on self-esteem. Overall, Çağlayan and Körük (2022) found that the behaviours and actions of the family of origin influence are mirrored in adult romantic relationships. The study also found that attachment styles play a large role in how individuals handle conflict in romantic relationships and how different attachment styles are demonstrated most heavily during conflict. Although Çağlayan and Körük's (2022) research does not find a

strong connection between self-esteem and relationships, Mruk (2006) sees the limited connection between self-esteem and conflict styles within a family of origin as a positive outcome as it shows the resilience of human nature, as individuals who overcome immense conflict within families can still go on to have healthy levels of self-esteem.

Self-Esteem, Attachment, and Romantic Relationships

In Yasemin Erol and Orth (2016), the authors consider the impact of self-esteem in romantic relationships. The authors are quick to point out that sometimes it can be difficult to acknowledge which relationship comes first, that is, if it is self-esteem that impacts a relationship or a healthy relationship that can healthily impact self-esteem. Self-esteem is found to increase throughout a person's life, being the highest throughout a person's fifties and sixties, yet throughout young adult years it remains generally lower (Yasemin Erol & Orth, 2016). Fincham and Bradbury (1993) found that in their longitudinal research, self-esteem positively impacts a person's life and leads to higher relationship satisfaction. A key part of their findings is that self-esteem is positively related to a couple's happiness over an extended period. While in Neyer and Asendorpf's (2001) study, the researchers did not find that self-esteem relates positively with romantic relationships. As a result, it appears in some studies that are done for shorter periods of time that there is no positive correlation but in a longitudinal study there appears to be a correlation (Yasemin Erol & Orth, 2016).

In Fincham and Bradbury (1993), researchers considered the impact of self-esteem on a romantic relationship. The goals of the study were not just to look at self-esteem but to consider the main factors for marital satisfaction. The researchers also wanted to consider the impact of depression on a relationship. To gather results, they sent two waves of questionaries each twelve months apart to their 130 couples, so that their findings could be both simultaneous and

longitudinal. The participants answered questionaries that examined the participant's marital satisfaction, depression, and self-esteem (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993). The results showed that depression had a negative impact on marital satisfaction, while self-esteem had a positive impact on marital satisfaction (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993). This study has been used often to acknowledge the connection between self-esteem and marital satisfaction, yet a main difference between this current study and other research was its ability to gain a longitudinal perspective on these relationships. Fincham and Bradbury (1993) showed that self-esteem does impact romantic relationships in adults, but in the study by Homaei et al. (2016), the researchers looked at how self-esteem impacts young adults' relationships.

In Homaei et al.'s (2016) research, the authors begin by explaining how self-esteem impacts people's lives positively as it encourages people to have a positive view of themselves, and in doing so, they create positive views of others. As a result of this, the authors hypothesized that having a healthy self-esteem would positively impact a person's marriage as self-esteem encourages a strong sense of self and understanding of one's core values. The researchers believed that individuals, who had self-recognition, would be able to open themselves up to others and ultimately improve intimacy in a romantic relationship.

As a result, the researchers studied university students to gather more information about the impact of self-esteem in young adults' relationships (Homaei et al., 2016). They found that self-esteem as well as optimism and religiosity are all positively associated with greater marital satisfaction. The research procedure gathered 200 participants to have them answer a series of questionaries about their marriage as well as their relationship to self-esteem, optimism, and religiosity. The findings showed that all three of these areas (optimism, religiosity, and self-esteem) impact positively a person's life and marital satisfaction (Homaei et. al., 2016).

Earned Attachment

Throughout this paper, the research has explored the formation of attachment and its impact on self-esteem and ultimately how that impacts romantic relationships. Yet attachments formation can feel finalizing in a person's life, as it is ultimately based on the caregiver's actions if the attachment is secure or not. In more recent research though, the idea of earned-secure attachment has been explored, which is the relearning of a healthier attachment style later in life. This relearning of attachment can happen through positive relationships in a person's life, as well as through a healthy romantic relationship.

Differentiating Earned-Secure and Secure Autonomous

Venta et al.'s (2015) article also considered if earned attachment could be gained in early adolescence and how that would differentiate from secure attachment. The researchers specifically wanted to know if attachment patterns were something a person kept for their whole life. As the greatest critique of the theory of earned attachment is the idea that "earned" securely attached young adults are securely attached children who also endured many negative childhood experiences. To challenge and examine this past critique, Venta et al. (2015) looked at a sample of participants through the adolescent years and hypothesized that adolescents with earned secure attachment would show emotional regulation that was like a securely attached individual. Yet with this hypothesis, the researchers wondered if there would be a difference in emotional regulation, as emotional regulation in adolescents is a large predictor of their attachment style. The researchers continued to hypothesize that earned securely attached individuals would have higher emotional regulation than insecurely attached participants. They conducted interviews and had the 284 participants fill out questionaries. Through using different interventions including Child Attachment intervention (CIA), the researchers found that many of the subjects who

reported negative childhood experiences with their caregivers were still securely attached. The research showed that nineteen of the participants scored low on the parenting scale as well as adverse childhood experiences, and so they were acknowledged as earned securely attached. These findings also showed that there was a strong difference between earned secure attachment and securely attached participants when it came expressing anger (Venta et al., 2015). When it came to emotional regulation, the earned secured clients were found to have lower emotional awareness than insecurely attached participants. The researchers believe that is because not being aware of emotions is a coping method for many adolescents, allowing them to appear calmer and more regulated on the outside while internalizing their emotions. This internalization was also seen as earned secure clients scored very high on internalizing stress (Venta et al., 2015). As a result of this research, the researchers wonder if adolescents who show signs of earned attachment are more likely to have insecure attachment styles but tend to cope by internalizing their adverse childhood experiences (Venta et al., 2015). The researchers also acknowledged that their data may be skewed as the participants were all from a psychiatric clinic. This research shows that earned secure attachment is something that is still being researched and is difficult at times to pinpoint.

Formation of Earned-Secure

In Dansy Olufowote et al. (2020), the researchers wanted to examine how ‘earned’ attachment came about and what were the influencing factors to creating this earned attachment. In their introduction paragraphs, the authors acknowledged that there appears as if there is a close relationship between therapy and earned attachment styles. In their theoretical model, the researchers are influenced by constructivist grounded theory which breaks down the perspective of change in humans. As the researchers believe that to hypothesize that childhood insecure

attachment styles can change to an ‘earned’ secure attachment then humans must be able to change. The study occurred through a serious of semi-structured interviews where the participants answered a series of questions including one about what the participants thought about the idea of becoming ‘more secure’ (Dansy Olufowote et al., 2020). After the interviews, the information was gathered and processed through a series of charts to find where the information and answers were similar and different. In reviewing the results, the researchers found a similar response around change in ‘earned’ secure respondents, as they realized that change only occurred after a period and was an often-difficult thing to accomplish. Other variables influenced ‘earned’ secure attachments to form including individuals having a surrogate attachment figure who gave that individual an understanding of what a secure attachment figure looked like and how that relationship could work—this surrogate figure could be a romantic partner. Another relationship that could provide a framework for a safe and secure relationship was a person’s relationship with a deity figure. Having a close relationship with a God or other religious being allowed for a person to develop that connection and closeness that they may not have received from their caregiver. Finally, a key aspect to this development of change in a person was therapy. Most of the participants interviewed who had experienced a change in their attachment style went to therapy for a period, including some participants attending Sue Johnson’s Hold Me Tight workshops around relationship and attachment styles (Dansy Olufowote et al., 2020). Sue Johnson’s created a workshop for couples to help work through relationship stressors, but her work is based in attachment and so she uses to program to educate couples about their attachment styles (Conradi et al., 2023). Her program has been used in many research projects including high risk couples who often have insecure attachment styles. As a result, in Dansy Olufowote et al. (2020) work, the researchers find that Sue Johnson’s Hold me

Tight program is another influential piece in helping individuals develop an 'earned' attachment style. The research by Dansy Olufowote et al. (2020) shows the complexity to a person creating change in their attachment style and how change of any kind takes a lot of time and developing relationships with other people helps to build a new attachment framework.

Romantic Relationships and Earned Attachment

This idea of developing a 'earned' secure attachment through relationships later in life is explored by Moller et al. (2002), as the researchers consider earned attachment in light of participants who had just experienced a break-up with a romantic partner. The researchers chose to observe clients during a heightened emotional period, because Bowlby found that during emotional stress people's attachment styles were the most obvious. As a result, Moller et al. (2002) studied college students and specifically looked at earned attachment styles. The researchers aimed to gather students who reported difficult family of origin issues but were able to create close relationships with other people later in life. The 250 participants were gathered from the university, and those that were selected had to have recently gone through a break-up and so would present with higher emotions. The different attachment styles that were being considered for this study were earned secure, continuous secure attachment—which is secure attachment that starts in childhood and goes on for a person's life, and insecure attachment. The results from the research showed that securely attached individuals had higher scores on their parental relationship index and their attachment questionnaire, while earned secure attached individuals were able to score above 50% on the attachment questionnaire but still score poorly on the parental relationship score (Moller et al., 2002). The attachment score was based of many different elements including confidence, relationships, and the need for approval from others. In many ways, participants who scored higher on the attachment scale were also individuals who

had developed self-esteem and so were able to be more confident and self-assured even when they had a negative experience with their family-of-origin. As a result, the researchers were able to demonstrate that earned attachment is something that can potentially be developed later in life.

In Hartel (2022) research, the author acknowledges the power of romantic relationships in the development of earned-secure attachment as living and interacting with a partner can relate the same messages that a parent would supply. In romantic relationship, new behaviours are learned and practiced, helping individuals who are insecurely attached to learn new ways of communicating. An individual who develops an earned-secure attachment style since childhood progresses further into a relationship, creating stronger communication and regulating emotions. As a result, romantic relationships appear to be a space where individuals can begin to develop and build their attachment styles, and ultimately, grow in their sense of self.

Summery and Synthesis

From this research, we can see that attachment is based around the foundational principles that a child's connection with their caregiver creates the foundation for them to connect with others (Magnusson & Nermo, 2018; Shen et al., 2021). Yet, attachment in this paper is only the opening to a larger conversation, as attachment builds into a person's view of self. Although many of the studies done on attachment show that a secure autonomous attachment style leads to many positive external experiences, like building a bigger social group, this paper ultimately shows that the internal wiring of a person who is securely attached is pivotal to a person's ability to value themselves (Bartholomew, 1990; Shen et al., 2021). Our ability as humans to find value in ourselves leads us to having stronger and more positive romantic relationships, as we know ourselves and our needs. In the following chapter, this idea of building a stronger romantic relationship will be further articulated, as well as ways to build

healthy attachments with partners when our initial connections with our caregivers were insecure (Moller et al., 2002; Hartel, 2022). The final aspect of the above paper focused on 'earned' secure attachment, which is still a new area of study, but what research we have available demonstrates that people can re-learn new attachment styles later in life and rewire those first insecure attachment styles (Hartel, 2022). Although an 'earned' secure attachment style may vary from a secure attachment style built with a caregiver, it is possible and hopeful that the human is resilient and can build healthy bonds despite early relationship fractures.

Chapter 3 Final Thoughts and Workshop

Introduction

In the following chapter, the author will expand upon the topic of attachment, self-esteem, and romantic relationships by considering the limitations in the field, as well as detail how the author would create a workshop about attachment styles, romantic relationships, and 'earned' secure attachment for counsellors working with adolescent and young adults.

Limitations of the Current Literature

Attachment literature is expansive, as since Bowlby and Ainsworth the topic of attachment has risen in popularity. This paper's goal was to add to the conversation around attachment and to bring together the ideas of attachment and self-esteem in a concise and concrete way. When considering how to help individuals with insecure attachment styles, the research struggles with the nuance of 'earned' secure attachment, as it is a newer topic that can be difficult to pinpoint (Olufowote et al., 2020). As a result, the concept of 'earned' secure attachment is still undergoing research, which makes it difficult for counsellors working with

insecure attachment styles. If attachment styles are permanent, then a client may feel frustrated that the way they understand their world and relationships is an unchanging event that cannot be reformed due to events in childhood. The topic of 'earned' secure attachment brings new hope to the attachment research but because of the limited work in that specific field, it can be difficult for counsellors to expand on and fully understand its nuances.

Another limitation around the current research are the findings around 'earned' attachment taking time to develop and the reality of what public health counselling services offer (Olufowote et al., 2020). As a current public health employee, the author can work with clients with a brief therapy lens, which means that the therapeutic interventions should take between six to twelve sessions. In the private counselling world, there is flexibility to work with clients for a more extended period of time, but insurance companies may cover only a small percentage of those sessions, again leaving clinicians trying to do work in a short period of time that in reality could take years. Yet, when considering the amount of time that it takes to build trust and establish a connection between client and therapist, six to twelve sessions does not always give space for trust to form and for relearning of attachment styles that have been ingrained in a client's life since childhood. As a result, the literature seeks to share how to go about relearning attachment patterns in 'earned' secure attachment, but the funding for clients seeking therapy does not mirror the information that the studies give around building therapeutic bonds (Lawson-McConnell, 2020).

Ethics

Countertransference and Transference

Another important and ethical concept in the field of counselling and attachment is the idea of countertransference. Countertransference is the way in which the counsellor is impacted

by the client in the counselling room. Often this means that the client's story relates in some personal way to the counsellor, and they feel emotionally or mentally activated. When working with insecurely attached clients, counsellors face their own history around attachment and need to be aware of how their own attachment styles might impact the therapy relationship. Transference is how the client perceives and is impacted by the counsellor. When working with clients who have an insecure attachment style, the counsellor's mannerisms and behaviour towards the client is critical to the therapeutic goals, as the client's insecure internal framework of relationships can be relearned in relationship with a therapist (Lawson-McConnell, 2020). Yet, because these internal frameworks are ingrained in the client, the counsellor must allow for a flexible approach when working with this client. Insecurely attached clients tend to be more rigid in their ideas about relationships and so the flexible counsellor can help to disarm previous assumptions about relationships and use positive transference to create a healthy relationship between client and counsellor (Amari & Mahoney, 2022).

Another aspect when working with clients around attachment is a therapist's understanding of their own attachment style (Wallin, 2015). To be fully aware of the countertransference occurring in the counselling room, a therapist first needs to understand their own attachment style. Once the therapist has an understanding of their attachment style, they can use mindfulness while in the counselling space, to notice how their attachment style may impact the therapeutic interventions or relationship (Wallin, 2015). Beginning to understand our attachment style takes time and having the support of a supervisor to direct this process can help give more clarity and direction to the process.

Workshop Guidelines and Outline

For the following workshop, the author will take into consideration how the ethics and limitations of the research around 'earned' secure attachment may impact counsellors in their work with young adults. This workshop would be offered to clinicians working with children and youth in private and public health, because the topic of attachment is relevant in both spaces. This workshop will be specifically a psychoeducation group for counsellors around attachment styles, self-esteem, and 'earned' secure attachment, and will not focus on a specific therapeutic intervention. The workshop takes place over a morning and could occur both virtually and in-person depending on the accessibility that participants have to electronic devices or proximity to the centre that the workshop is taking place in. Although the workshop would be recommended to clinicians working with both children and young adults, the workshop has relevant information for most therapists as attachment impacts people their whole life.

Session Layout

The sessions would run in three chunks, with the speaker starting by giving some foundational information about childhood attachment and self-esteem, but then focusing on the development of 'earned' attachment and how attachment styles impact romantic relationships. To help guide and create structure for the sessions, the presenter will provide a handout with the main bullet points for the session (Appendix). The session will begin with a conversation about the ethics, limitations, and cultural considerations when working with adolescents and young adults. Next, the writer will discuss attachment styles and how that impacts self-esteem. The author will acknowledge the importance of self-esteem in a young adult's life, but not focus on it for the sake of time, and so that the conversation can focus more consistently on attachment. In the second session, the topic of 'earned' attachment style and romantic relationships will be

explored, and as the takeaway and practical part of the discussion, the speaker will address how to work with insecurely attached clients, and the skills to help build an 'earned' secure attachment. The sessions will also include a ten-minute question and discussion period after each hour, to allow for discourse between the attendees and queries for the presenter.

Appropriate Population

The appropriate population that this workshop is focusing on is anyone who falls into the ages of children to young adult. Because the information around romantic relationships is more applicable for young adults, the workshop will focus on that specific population. Yet, knowledge about early attachment experiences and 'earned' attachment is relevant to counsellors working with children as well. Attachment is a universal experience and so if the information is presented in a culturally sensitive way, it can be applied to most cultural backgrounds (Brown et al., 2008).

Ethical Dilemmas

To begin the workshop, the presenter would highlight some of the ethical considerations that counsellors should consider when working with adolescents and young adults. The presenter would remind the clinicians about informed consent, as well as a clinician's duty to report, and family's involvement when working with adolescents. When working with children and families from a family systems approach, there can be conflicting values that arise between parent's concerns and children's wants. Often, parents have a reason for their child to go to therapy that looks different from what their child may want to focus on. Yet when a child is younger than twelve, the counsellor must have the client's caregiver sign consent forms. This can cause a complicated relationship between client and therapist, and so it is something that should be acknowledged and talked through in the counselling space. When a counsellor works with a young adolescent, they are working with the family as well, which is where the counsellor can

feel triangulation happening between client, parent(s), and counsellor. Because of this, the clinician needs to set clear standards and boundaries before entering a therapeutic relationship with a child and their family (Herlihy et al., 2022).

When working with older adolescents and young adults these ethical considerations look different, as the client is older and has the right to consent to services. Yet, clinicians are still held to the code of ethical conduct by the BCACC (BC Association of Clinical Counsellors) that dictates five principles that a clinician must follow to provide ethical care. These principles include: “Respect the Dignity of All Persons; Respect the Dignity of all Peoples; Responsible Caring; Integrity of Relationships; and Responsibility to Society” (Code of Ethical Conduct). In the principles, it acknowledges that they all come back to respecting the dignity of a person. When working with clients with insecure attachment styles and romantic relationship challenges, it is important to acknowledge that their life and stories are confidential, that the clinician respects the client’s background and culture, and the client’s experience is unique and personal to them. When the counsellor holds space for a client and shows them the respect that they need and want, then the client is safe to open up and feel heard by the counsellor. The presenter will start with this information and a review of ethical considerations, as it is foundational to the work that counsellors do, and important to review when considering a vulnerable population like children and adolescents.

Cultural considerations

When discussing attachment, the presenter will also acknowledge the cultural considerations that are present when presenting attachment styles. Attachment styles through a Western lens focus on building of an individual’s sense of self so that a person can leave their caretakers and live a more independent life. Yet in many other cultural backgrounds, the idea of

independence from caretakers is not applicable and may be against the cultural norm (Brown et al., 2008). Another aspect of attachment in the west is the focus on the main caregiver to be the child's parents, while in many cultures the raising of children is more communal or given to the grandparents, and so this attachment style might appear less traditional (Gernhardt et al., 2016). To carry a culturally sensitive lens, clinicians need to be aware of the differences in how attachment styles can manifest in different cultures.

Limitations

The focus of this workshop will be on the dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) attachment styles, and so the speaker will acknowledge the limits of the information shared as an unresolved or disorganized attachment style will not be explored. As a result, if a counsellor is specifically wanting to work with this population, then this workshop may not be as applicable. This workshop will also not cover specific therapeutic modalities like Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and instead the focus will be on giving clinicians psychoeducation about attachment styles as well as tools that they can bring into the therapy room.

Psychoeducation on Attachment

The workshop will address some psychoeducation pieces around attachment and self-esteem, to lay the foundation for the following conversation around tools for building an 'earned' secure attachment style.

The presenter will focus on how important attachment is to help regulate children. When children's needs are not met and they do not feel attached to their caregiver(s), they can often struggle to regulate themselves (Lawson-McConnell, 2020). The beginning pieces of emotional regulation are built in connection with others, and for children, this is in their relationship with

their primary caregiver. When a relationship with a caregiver is supportive and healthy, the internal working model of the child will form an understanding of how relationships work outside of this framework with their parent. If children's needs are not being met and supported, then there is a greater likelihood of them developing an insecure attachment style. There are a few different types of insecure attachment styles, including dismissing, preoccupied (anxious), and disorganized. For this workshop, the instructor will briefly define dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) attachment, but to learn more about the disorganized attachment style, the instructor will encourage therapists to do their own research. Dismissing attachment styles are visible in children who tend to be more de-attached from others, and in adulthood are visible in people who tend to pull away from the people that are close to them and exhibit a great deal of independence. Preoccupied (anxious) children long for closeness and security and tend to cling to and be dependent on others (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2021).

In more recent research on attachment styles, researchers consider the idea of 'earned' secure attachment which is the ability to change an insecure attachment style into an attachment style that looks similar to a secure attachment (Olufowote et al., 2020). Research around this topic is still new and controversial, but researchers like Olufowote et al. (2020) have shown that children who have experienced traumatic childhoods have been able to develop a more secure attachment style in their young adulthood. In most cases, individuals found a figure that replaced their primary caregiver and were able to form a secure attachment style with that person (Olufowote et al., 2020). When working with people with insecure attachment styles, having an understanding about how people transition from an insecure attachment to a more secure attachment style as well as some tools to use for supporting clients with insecure attachment can help to better support and care for our clients' primary need for connection. As a result,

researchers found that when the attachment needs of the client are being met in therapy, then the therapy is more likely to be successful (Egozi et al., 2023).

Psychoeducation on Self-Esteem

The presenter will focus on some psychoeducation around self-esteem to demonstrate how self-esteem plays a role in this conversation around attachment and romantic relationships. Because of this, the author will describe how secure attachments to caregivers promote the ability for individuals to have a secure sense of self, which leads to a person having higher self-esteem (Mruk, 2006). Higher self-esteem leads to many positive outcomes, including a person's ability to think more positively of themself, increased confidence, and the ability to accept responsibility when in the wrong (Alguzo & Jaradat, 2021). As a result, secure attachment styles predict higher self-esteem leading to a more positive view of self. Because of this, both securely attached individuals and individuals with higher self-esteem are more likely to flourish in romantic relationships, while the insecurely attached client may have difficulty building strong connections with their partners.

Psychoeducation on Romantic Relationships for Young Adults

During the session on romantic relationships, the presenter will explain why the conversation around attachment was important, as the attachment styles and relationships that people build with their parents in childhood are then mirrored in their relationships with their romantic partners (Parkes et al., 1993). Romantic relationships are important to talk about, because most of the teens and young adults that counsellors work with go through a romantic relationship while in counselling. When forming these romantic relationships, attachment styles play a large role in the health of the relationship, as a person with a preoccupied (anxious) attachment will often feel insecure in their relationship with their partner and worry about their

partner leaving them. An individual with a dismissing attachment style will be more likely to distance themselves in a relationship when they feel uncomfortably close to their partner, as connection and closeness is foreign to their internal framework (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2021). Individuals with secure frameworks have more partner satisfaction as they accept the love that they are receiving and connect on a close level without it feeling unsafe (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2021). Insecure attachment styles make it difficult for clients to have a healthy romantic relationship, which is why it is so applicable for this workshop to give tools to therapists so that they can help their clients build an 'earned' secure attachment style. This section on romantic relationships wraps up the psychoeducation piece of the presentation, and the presenter will take some time to dialogue with the audience about the findings and perspectives that the workshop attendees may have on this specific topic.

Building an 'earned' secure Attachment Style

The presenter will start this section by giving a brief overview on what 'earned' secure attachment is versus other types of attachment styles. 'Earned' secure attachment assumes that adults with an 'earned' secure attachment style will present as securely attached, but they may have experienced many negative life experiences which they have overcome to gain a more secure attachment style in later adulthood (Roisman et al., 2002). In Shibue and Kasai's (2014) research, the authors found that individuals, who had broken the cycle of abuse and were able to form a secure attachment style in adulthood, were often highly supported by others. Their formation of a secure attachment style was the result of many corrective positive experiences and relationships that redefined connection for these individuals. For these corrective experiences to happen, individuals need supportive and positive relationships with other people. Counsellors

can be a part of that reshaping of relationship, as they have the opportunity to form relationships with insecurely attached clients and offer these client's a different perspective on relationships.

The presenter can move then to focusing on how the therapy space can become a place where healing of attachment styles can begin. To help the client understand attachment styles and how they are impactful, the therapist can also give some brief psychoeducation around attachment styles to the client. Even creating the simplest diagram for a teenager to understand how they are wired can help build knowledge around attachment styles and how they are impactful for all humans. Understanding the psychology around a person's experience can give teens the ability to feel like they can take steps forward to heal and grow. Providing this psychoeducation can also take the stigma or uncertainty away from people wondering why they struggle with relationships or feel they are wired differently from their peers (Brown et al., 2008).

Building Relationship

When working with insecure attachment styles, the clinician may begin to differentiate the attachment style between secure, preoccupied (anxious), and dismissing by using the *Patient Attachment Coding System Scale* (Talia et al., 2019). The PACS scale helps to break down the different types of attachment styles and place people within categories through defining the different characteristics that make up attachment styles (Talia et al., 2019). These characteristics include: clients' desire for proximity, if a client is willing to explore beyond their circle, the contact the client is willing to provide, client's avoidance attitude, and the relationship resistance that shows up in the therapy room. These five characteristics help to define a client's ability to connect with others and helps the therapist to understand the attachment style of the client (Talia et al., 2019).

Another factor that may indicate the client's attachment style is the narrative style that client's use to tell their story. For example, a client with a secure attachment will describe their past with an equalised approach by using both positive and negative language. Clients with a dismissing attachment style tend to use more succinct and distant language, and their narratives are usually devoid of emotions. These clients will also downplay their emotions and at points dismiss their feelings from their narrative (Egozi et al., 2023) Finally, clients with a preoccupied (anxious) attachment style struggle to fully express their past and the narrative that they share is usually unclear, disjointed, and emotional (Talia et al., 2019). Preoccupied (anxious) client's narratives are often spoken as complete truth and because of that, it leaves little space for therapists to ask leading questions. In this way, the preoccupied (anxious) client's narratives can shut down the therapeutic experience as much as the distant and avoiding or dismissing client (Egozi et al., 2023).

Becoming familiar with the PACS scale and how insecurely attached clients discuss their narrative can help to give direction for the therapist. When the therapist understands the attachment that shapes the client's worldview, they can better understand how to support the client's specific needs and relationship struggles. For example, a dismissing client will most likely struggle to bring emotions into the therapy room, while a preoccupied (anxious) client will need help understanding their emotions and support for learning skills for how to express their emotions. Different attachment styles impact client's understanding of themselves and others, and when clinicians help clients learn and understand their unique attachment style, then the client can better understand themselves and what they need.

Building Skills

The presenter will then explain some of the tools that therapists can bring into the therapy room that can be useful when working with clients who have learned an insecure attachment style. Although these tools may feel typical in most therapy, the presenter will emphasize how pivotal they are in the therapeutic journey with insecurely attached clients. Some of the first ways to help develop a relationship with a client with an insecure attachment style is through providing a stable base from which a client can explore (Lawson-McConnell, 2020). In the same way, parents who build a close connection with their child give space for the child to move towards and away from. Both the parent and counsellor's connection are building and creating an emotionally safe space, where individuals can share their feelings and feel valued. As a clinician, mirroring a client's emotions through body language speaks volumes, as a client feels like their emotions are being recognized and seen. When a client shares their feelings, clinicians need to mirror the language that the client is using to show their appreciation for the client's thoughts and let them know that they are being heard (Lawson-McConnell, 2020). These skills of mirroring, validating, and active listening come back to emotional regulation. Emotional regulation is the ability of counsellors to remain a calming centre that a client can move to during the chaos of life. With insecurely attached clients, the clinician mirrors the role of the client's primary caregiver, yet this time the clinician ensures that the client's needs are met and their emotional responses are heard. According to Shibue and Kasai's (2014), the therapist needs to approach a client with unconditional support and connection. This type of relationship will feel strange for a client with an insecure attachment style, but the clinician's acts of connection are beautiful acts of love for a person who may have experienced the opposite for most of their developmental years.

Insecurely attached clients will enter relationships in a similar way that they have learned from their caregivers, and so the therapy room becomes a place where clients can begin to relearn these relationship formations. If the therapeutic bond is close, then the therapist has an opportunity to help clients begin to seek healthier relationships and learn to make boundaries within the relationships.

Workshop Conclusion

At the end of the presentation and workshop, the presenter will encourage the therapists to consider their learnings and seek peer support and supervision when working with clients with childhood trauma that has left them with an insecure attachment style. Because of the client's struggles to connect with the therapist, the therapist can be left with a lot of the load when helping the client make connections and build bonds. As a result, these clientele can be challenging to work with and tiring at times. Another reflection the presenter will suggest is for the clinicians to consider their own attachment styles, as that will impact their counselling styles and biases. The presenter will finish a period of questions and comments to finish out the workshop.

Further Research in the Field

The study of the 'earned' secure attachment style began when Bowlby (1969/1982) commented that a person's working model of relationships is something that stays with a person their whole life but can change depending on more recent social interactions. Since Bowlby, researchers have explored if 'earned' secure attachment is possible and how it comes about (Olufowote et al., 2020). Researchers like Sue Johnson spent their careers creating attachment related counselling modalities to work with clients with different attachment styles, yet still the longitudinal research around early attachment and adult attachment styles is limited (Lawson-

McConnell, 2020). To add to the literature around ‘earned’ secure attachment, more longitudinal studies need to be done that follow insecurely attached children into later adulthood to study the progression of attachment. As a result, the studies around ‘earned’ attachment rely on adults who have memories and experiences of traumatic childhood experiences (Roisman et al., 2002). To further this research, more longitudinal studies would help to flesh out the subject of ‘earned’ attachment.

Another area of research to develop more is the topic of ‘earned’ attachment style in romantic relationships. Researchers have explored how attachment styles impact adult relationship styles, but information around individuals who develop an ‘earned’ attachment style in a romantic relationship is much less common (Conradi et al., 2023). Yet, research around working on one’s attachment style while in a relationship is critical, as most ‘earned’ attachment style are the result of relearning unhealthy patterns and building a healthier attachment style in relationship with other people (Shibue & Kasai, 2014). In Shibue and Kasai’s (2014) article, the authors discussed how clinicians can help clients build an ‘earned’ secure attachment style by connecting and building a healing relationship with their clinician. Research like Shibue and Kasai’s (2014) research needs to be expanded upon to further detail how individuals can build ‘earned’ secure attachments with romantic partners. Authors like Hartel (2022) have explored this idea of romantic relationships helping clients build more secure internal working models, but Hartel’s (2022) research is one of only a few articles on this topic. Attachment styles are the lens for how people understand themselves and others. Because of this, secure attachment styles are pivotal for human development and so the research on the topic of building an ‘earned’ secure attachment style should be prioritized and built upon.

Reflections from the Writer

In writing this paper, I have felt every client I have worked with is in a piece of my research and writing. Their faces fill my words and push me on to continue to research and explore this field and learn more strategies for working with this population of young adults with insecure attachment styles. As I reflect on my research, I also see myself in the words and thoughts I have crafted. There is a piece of me in this work, and all the counsellors and caregivers that have stood in the room as I wrote. In my first day of school at City University, my professor asked us to share who stood in the room with them as my cohort and I started this long adventure of graduate school. In that moment, the question felt overwhelming, but now I know by heart the names and the faces of all the people who have carried me through to the very end. I am thankful to each one of them, and now, I add to that the clients that have shaped me as a counsellor. The clients that brought all the countertransference out into the counselling room and in doing so have made me a better and more reflective counsellor. I am thankful that this paper became my reflection and learning space as I made my way through this last year of school. I am also glad that I can continue to feel passion towards a subject that has fascinated me since my undergraduate years. Attachment and self-esteem grow from secure connections between child and caregiver, but the piece of hope that I cherish in this paper is the knowledge about 'earned' secure attachment. The relationship between client and counsellor can help to reshape pathways in a person's understanding around relationship and from that clients can form a more secure attachment style (Lawson-McConnell, 2020).

Although research shows that securely attached individuals and 'earned' securely attached people may look slightly different in their abilities to connect with others, there is still hope of building safe and secure connections with romantic partners and friends for children who

have experienced deeply wounding childhood experiences (Hartel, 2022). Knowing about 'earned' secure attachment is the hope and passion that I carry from writing this paper.

Conclusion

Attachment is the connection between child and caregiver in the first five years of life. It forms a child's understanding of self and how to relate to others. It wires the brain to know what safety and security feel like, and it can also do the opposite and teach children to not trust or rely on their primary caregiver. Yet as powerful as early attachment is in forming a child's sense of self, attachment can be rewired through positive relationships and connections with other people. Self-esteem is the product of a healthy attachment style, but it is also something that can be developed later in life if a person develops a more secure attachment style (Hartel, 2022). 'Earned' secure attachment style develop through healthy relationships with other people, which means that dismissing and preoccupied (anxious) insecurely attached individuals can move from these insecure attachment styles to a healthier and more secure internal working model. As a result, 'earned' secure attachment style gives hope and support that children can move from insecure attachment styles to a more secure attachment style with the help of counsellors and community.

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Appendix

'Earned' Secure Attachment within Romantic Relationships Workshop

- Ethics
    - Duty to report (parents involved in consent when working with young children)
    - Working with the whole family (family systems approach)
    - Being aware of triangulation between child and parent (Herlihy et al., 2022)
- Limitations of Confidentiality
    - Children and youth are a vulnerable population (how does this inform our work?).
    - Age of consent (educating parents and teens on this)
    - Respecting the dignity of personhood when working with people in romantic relationships (each person's experience is unique and personable to them).
- Cultural Considerations
    - Attachment styles can look different between cultures.
    - Be aware that the primary caregiver might not be the birth parent.
    - Less focus on individuality as the final outcome when becoming an adult (Gernhardt et al., 2016)
- Childhood Attachment
    - The relationship between child and caregiver is a means for children to learn how to regulate themselves.
    - Insecure attachment styles
        - Dismissing: distancing from relationships, fear of commitment (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2021)

        - Preoccupied (Anxious): longing for attachment and security, desperate for love and security (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2021)
    - 'Earned' Secure Attachment: move from insecure attachment style to an attachment style that looks similar to a secure attachment style (Olufowote et al., 2020)
- Self-Esteem
    - Secure attachment leads to a secure sense of self.
    - Higher self-esteem leads to increase in self-worth, confidence, and ability to accept oneself (Mruk, 2006).
- Romantic Relationships and Attachment
    - Young adults' romantic relationships mirror their relationships with their parents (Parkes et al., 1993).
    - Dismissing attachment style: desire to remove themselves from close relationships as it is not something that they were given from their parents.
    - Preoccupied (anxious): fear that their partner will leave them.
    - Secure: feel safe and secure in the romantic relationship as they have the self-esteem to believe that they are valuable and worthy of love (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2021).
- Building 'Earned' Secure Attachment
    - 'Earned' Secure Attachment is the result of overcoming difficult childhood experiences and to do that people need support (Shibue & Kasai, 2014).
    - PACS Scale: Useful to help therapists differentiate between the different insecure attachment styles (Talia et al., 2019).

    - Client's narrative: depending on a client's narrative about themselves, therapists can make assumptions about the client's attachment style.
        - Dismissing: Clients usually use succinct language about their life that is emotionally removed from the events
        - Preoccupied (anxious): Client's narrative is often disjointed and disorganized, as well as emotional.
        - Secure: Clients recount both positive and negative emotions in their recounting creating a more balanced narrative (Talia et al., 2019).

- Work with the Client
    - Therapeutic relationship is critical to build with insecurely attached clients (Shibue & Kasai, 2014).
    - The relationship between client and therapist is a place for the client to first learn what a secure relationship looks like.
    - Therapist shows healthy boundaries with the client as well as unconditional support and love (Shibue & Kasai, 2014).
- Conclusion
    - Seek supervision.
    - Difficult population to work with, and so finding ways to take care of yourself is critical.
    - Questions or Thoughts?