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Attachment style and identity construction : the choice of profession as one method of culturally mediating, locating and fulfilling attachment needs both interpersonally and societally

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ABSTRACT

This mixed method study was undertaken to determine if successful professionals who are away from home for extended periods for work due to long hours and travel have particular types of close relationships, coping skills and identities. Secondly, the study examined whether their attachment styles as assessed by the quantitative measure, the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale -- ECR (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998), revealed any relationships to their interview narratives concerning their professional successes, identities, close relationships in childhood and coping mechanisms.

Using snowballing methods, successful professionals were recruited who had been in their careers for at least two years, had freely chosen these careers and were over 25 years of age. Participants were interviewed using a qualitative interview questionnaire and a quantitative self-report measure, the ECR. The 13 participants were asked to describe their views of their career paths and professional lives and to describe their coping skills at work related to these demands. They were also asked to describe both their current and childhood relationships with others, and to describe how they related to their current professional lives.

The findings of the quantitative research showed the respondents' attachment styles to be mostly secure. Variations among the participants in attachment security scores were significantly related with the cohesiveness and integration of their qualitative narratives concerning childhood experiences, as well as to current personal and professional relationships (Main & Hesse, 1990). Of further significance for this sample was the fact that early adversity consistently formed the impetus for types of careers chosen and spurred the development of many skills and coping mechanisms used throughout professional life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Attachment research is increasingly being shown to be relevant not only psychologically, but also across species for developing critical biological foundations and survival skills (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Siegal, 1999; Suomi, 1999). Healthy attachment is also increasingly understood to be the foundation for successfully negotiating many aspects of adult life including intimate relationships. However, little information is available for clinicians about the intrapsychic aspects of attachment, identity and professional life and how these relate to professional success and satisfaction. Professionals who travel frequently or work long hours away from home regardless of profession are interesting to examine. These could include business and technology consultants, those with long hours such as lawyers, those who work in meeting and convention planning, airline staff, doctors and nurses, military or truckers. As an example, truckers are interesting because they have a strong and self-contained community, they frequently travel away from home, many have a strong professional identity, and they also are often dislocated and isolated from intimate attachment relationships (Mills, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between attachment, identity and profession, examining professionals who travel frequently or work long hours away from home.

Through using a group of professionals who travel, this study hoped to explore how issues related to attachment and profession are negotiated based on attachment types and also how professional identity construction might help meet attachment needs. This qualitative, flexible methods study, using one quantitative attachment measure as well as personal interviews, attempted to explore the following question: What is the relationship between attachment style, identity and profession in those who travel and work long hours away from home, and how do these factors contribute to the job selection, satisfaction and success?

Several terms were defined for the clarity and purpose of the research study. For the purpose of this study, *"attachment"* was defined as close bonding and proximity seeking-behavior that also includes strong emotional investment (Bowlby, 1969/1982). *"Identity"* has many meanings and definitions. However, for the purpose of this study, it included personal and social self-definition that has boundaries and signifiers. Individuals may have multiple forms of identity at the same time. *"Professionals"* were defined as persons who have worked consistently and successfully in jobs that require some expertise and require them to be away from home either because of travel or long hours. This study did not explicitly define the number of hours or days away from home as it greatly varied, but excluded those who are under 25 years of age, had been working in their field for less than two years and who had not had at least one intimate relationship in their lives.

Overview of and Items Missing from the Previous Attachment Theory and Research

By nature of its development which began with Bowlby (1969/1982), the body of attachment theory and research is extensive, cross-species and multidisciplinary. As a

result, it has wide reaching implications and spans many disciplines including psychology/social work, relational theory, child development, sociology, education, trauma and neurobiology. As discussed further in the Literature Review, research conducted to date has indicated a link between early attachment and attachment as an adult later in life (Main & Hesse, 1990; Main & Goldwyn, 1984). Much of this research has focused on trying to establish whether early attachment patterns persist into adulthood and whether they remain relatively unmodified or change as new attachments are formed For example Beslky (1999) encourages the examination of the impact of adult relationships and support systems on attachment.   Other research attempts to uncover how adult attachment patterns will affect various relationships, especially those with children and spouses. For example, Feeney (1999) suggests in her overview of adult attachment literature that early caregiving does impact adult relationships, but that understanding all the contributing factors to adult attachment is a mult-variable research process. As found by other investigators who are currently undertaking studies in this area, such as Dory Schachner at Uinversity of California Davis (Attachment style and career choice, n.d.), research on adult attachment styles and their effects on professional life are scarce. While this researcher found a few studies exist in industrial psychology and organizational design, the focus of the research is fostering adult attachment to consumable goods or celebrity figures, not in interpersonal relationships (Thompson, 2006; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

Identity and Professional Identity

In the anxiety, uncertainty, technological transformation, and fluidity of post-modern life, the subject of identity has become of increasing interest (Glas, 2006 &

Martin & Barresi, 2006). It has been extensively written about in various fields including social work, gender, race and sexuality studies, sociology, cultural studies, theology, corporate marketing and philosophy. Many of the liberal arts and sciences disciplines, especially attachment theory, understand identity to be developed and maintained in a secure relationship with another (Bowlby, 1969/1982). However, in modern society, concepts of identity are multi-faceted, fluid and constantly need to be renegotiated. In the United States' capitalistic economy, professional life is an identity marker not only in one's internal self-concept, but also one's external life, often serving as a symbolic place marker in relationships and community (Thompson, 2000). Professionals who travel or work long hours were of interest as they have faced some of the perils of post-modern life such as transience, isolation and long-term dislocation that are typically understood to be disruptive to various kinds of attachment relationships.

Study Description

This research was a mixed methods qualitative study using flexible methods of investigation, but using a standardized questionnaire to further elucidate participants' attachment styles. The study was conducted using 13 interviews either in person or by telephone with professionals who work long hours or travel. The participants were solicited for the study through other students who knew these types of professionals and through personal contacts. The participants were asked some basic demographic information (see Appendix B), a series of qualitative questions (see Appendix C) about their professional lives and identities, about personally meaningful metaphors and symbols of their working lives, as well as some questions related to their close relationships and families. Close attention was paid to narrative contradictions of the

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kind discussed in Main's explication of the principles for assessing adult attachment in her own Adult Attachment Interview method (Main & Goldwyn, 1984) Participants were asked to complete the ECR standardized quantitative questionnaire that assessed adult attachment styles using a self-report method (see Appendix D).

The audience for this study was intended to be social workers and other mental health professionals counseling clients who have issues concerning attachment, personal and professional relationships, life transitions, education, training, employment, job satisfaction, and career advancement. As it broadly addressed the relationships among attachment, identity and profession, it was thought that the results of this study might have implications for future research across a variety of populations, professions and communities, as employment, profession, and social identity are inextricably intertwined throughout most structures of our society.

Contribution to Social Work

Research concerning the relationship between attachment and negotiating professional life and identity can be an important contribution to social work as professional stability and satisfaction are intricately related to poverty, health, mental health and child welfare. Social work is theoretically underpinned by the consideration of the whole person in its multiple contexts. Out of necessity, work life is one of these contexts for the majority of those living currently in the United States. American life and societal structure are founded on ideas of hard work and economic success. However, these can be difficult and complex to negotiate, particularly for oppressed populations. Problems in these areas can create extreme stress, as no adequate social and economic safety nets exist, and such problems are stressors that can be risk factors for child abuse

and neglect as well as marital discord and violence. It was hypothesized that results of this research might be relevant for better articulating some of the external sources of stress and mental health difficulties which are then brought into clients' intimate relationships. For clients experiencing dissonance between their attachment styles, identities and professional lives, these results might stimulate questions for further research related to adapting various assessments, therapeutic approaches, vocational counseling and psychoeducational approaches.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review addresses the two main components of the research

question in order to better understand the previous research, its missing components and

potential links between adult attachment styles, social identity and professions requiring

significant travel. First, the review discusses the attachment literature, and then more

specifically discusses adult attachment literature related to intimate relationships and to

professional occupation in order to understand the possible effects of adult attachment

style on personal and professional life. Second, the review examines the literature on

identity with an emphasis on modern concepts of identity as it mediates social

connections or attachment in order to consider the implications of identity in facilitating

attachment needs.

Attachment

Foundations of Attachment Theory

Attachment literature began with John Bowlby (1969/1982) who introduced ideas

that all mammals, including human infants, are born with the instinctual need to remain

close to their parents for physical safety and protection. Within the relational context of

this proximity seeking behavior by a child and response of caretaking behavior by a

parent, a complex system of relating and expectations is built up inside a child. All

children adapt their behavior as needed in order to optimally maintain the relationship

with the caregiver, given the child's experience of the best way to elicit what protection is

available from his or her particular caregiver. According to Bowlby (1969/1982), this internalized system of relating can be broadly categorized into several attachment styles which are a template for what a child expects and how a child relates to others. These attachment styles were defined in research conducted by Mary Ainsworth (1978) as secure, insecure/anxious, and insecure/ambivalent. Although it has been refined, much of this early research has withstood repeated testing both in humans and primates (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Siegal, 1999; Suomi, 1999).

Attachment and Adult Relationships

Since Bowlby, who was an object relations theorist, many have elaborated on his work by studying other attachment styles and examining adult attachment styles in various contexts including parenting, intimate relationships, school and professional life. Mary Main added another attachment style, disorganized attachment (1990), and examined adult attachment styles using the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (1984). Through her research on adults, she discovered that an individual's early attachment styles persist through life and, in turn, will predict his or her own child's attachment style (Main & Goldwyn, 1984). Of critical importance to her findings was that emotionally integrated experience, rather than any particular experience of childhood, was predictive of secure attachment status (Main & Goldwyn, 1984). That is, it is not the absence of adverse experiences in childhood, necessarily, that leads to security; some secure adults had experienced trauma, deprivation, and other adversities, but were able to discus these coherently and with a sense of their impacts both negative and positive; such secure adults did not require defensive idealization or avoidance. Despite their strengths, these early studies tended to be conducted on uniform populations especially in terms of race,

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gender, class, sexuality and nationality, focusing primarily on stay-at-home, white, married mothers in the United States and England. In other research, more recent efforts have attempted to determine if attachment theory is universal, a middle-class Western phenomenon or a universal theme with specific cultural determinants (Van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Although the research is still in the early stages of cross-cultural application it does seem to show consistent patterns with particular variations (1999).

Later attachment research supports the social work profession's core belief in the contextualized person and tends to move even further away from pathologizing individuals, especially mothers, around attachment security. This later research has emphasized the biological basis of attachment, the ongoing importance of attachment relationships throughout adult life for maintaining a sense of security, and -- according to some -- the flexibility of childhood attachment patterns which can be modified in the context of new relationships.

Siegal (1999) comprehensively examines how biology is intertwined with the emotions and relationships in the development of attachment. He concludes that the parents' narrative, emotional, and relational patterns correlate to a specific attachment style; shape what their child internalizes both psychologically and neurologically; and are very reliable predictors of attachment in later life. Using neurobiology and brain development evidence, Siegal argues that attachment in early childhood is predictive of resilience under stress and mental well-being, and that difficult childhood experiences are not necessarily predictive of insecure attachment as much as how the engendered emotion is comprehended and mediated by an available caregiver. Siegal's research, especially his examination of adult asymmetrical relationships, offers clinicians a theoretical base from

which to explore how adult social and professional experiences may relate to how anxiety was mediated in early childhood relationships. This research also offers a method for considering the biological implications for these types of relational patterns and stress. However, Siegal did not address how differing cultural, expressive and linguistic patterns affect attachment, nor, perhaps being overly deterministic and predictive, did he explore how attachment patterns change over the life cycle.

Belsky (1999) argues that it is important to broaden thinking concerning attachment as solely related to maternal intra-psychic states to examine how other attachment relationships and socio-contextual factors influence the internal security of adult attachment for parents. He presents an important contribution by widening the development of attachment security beyond the mother-child dyad to include multiple systems and external factors. However, he neglects to integrate important systemic influences such as oppression and discrimination that impact security and therefore could influence attachment.

Feeney (1999), in a comprehensive study of the body of quantitative and qualitative research on attachment and adult relationships, concludes that adult romantic love relationships are based on previous attachment relationships with caregivers in childhood. However, she emphasizes the complexity of understanding this correlation, calling for much further research in order to isolate the particular variables that influence adult attachment. She is particularly interested in exploring whether, and if so how, adult attachment styles change based on later relationships, and in examining the particular effects of attachment styles on couple relationships. Feeney argues that research is still discovering the complexities of attachment in adulthood, and that despite advancements,

further examination is needed of the lifetime stability of attachment and as to whether

these attachments are qualities of the individual or various relationship dynamics.

Attachment and Professional Life

As discussed above, the relationship between early attachment styles and adult

relationships has been established, but there is limited research on the connection

between attachment, relationships and professional life, and no available social science

research concerning attachment and professions requiring substantial time away from

home. Broadly speaking, the research on attachment and professional life examines the

relationship between attachment and job success or health.

Hazan and Shaver (1990) have examined attachment styles and professional

success. They hypothesized that the three principal attachment styles from childhood

(secure, insecure/avoidant, and insecure/ambivalent) will persist into the workplace and

affect professional relationship attachment quality, decision-making processes and work

performance. In an umbrella study (three exploratory studies) using a single-item

measure based on Ainsworth's work, Hazan and Shaver asked participants to describe

their experience in romantic love relationships. They discovered that the attachment style

of the participants was related to their attachment style at work. Secure workers

displayed confident attachments, had little fear of failure, valued relationships over work

and reported better overall well-being as their work relationships were not conducted

either in an avoidant pattern or to meet unmet attachment needs. Conversely,

anxious/ambivalent workers struggled with love concerns, fear of rejection, and laziness

after praise; they were motivated by a desire for praise and admiration. Even controlling

for educational differences, anxious/ambivalent workers were the lowest earners.

Avoidant workers used work to avoid relationships, derived little satisfaction from work (despite equivalent earnings as the securely attached) and did not enjoy vacations. The study accounted for a number of aspects of contextual cultural variability, and attempted to address how socio-economic factors may affect both attachment and performance. Additionally, Hazan and Shaver (1990) connected love and work as inter-related realms using Freud's theoretical construct ("a healthy person is able to love and to work").

This article offers an understanding of how attachment patterns may affect an individual's work and economic situations, and both of these appear to be basic psychological and practical aspects of adult life that must be assessed and addressed in therapeutic treatment. Additionally, it is a frame from which to understand job compensation and satisfaction which, when inadequate, are stressors widely thought to affect marriage and child-rearing capacity, especially in a capitalist economy without a safety net. Despite finding correlations between adults' capacity for exploration, and the shape of professional life and attachment styles, further study is necessary, as the authors also conclude, to adequately address factors of racial oppression and examine actual work performance and satisfaction, rather than only relevant earnings.

Another study draws important links between attachment style, hope, and health. In a study of the effects of adult attachment style on the hope and health of nurses, Simmons, Nelson, & Quick (2003) conducted exploratory research with 175 nurses to establish the links between attachment styles, health and hope using surveys mailed to their homes. Previous studies had established a relationship between attachment style and health, but not considered hope as a mediating factor. Three separate scales were used to measure hope, attachment, and health. The research discovered that there was a

significant correlation between attachment style and levels of both hope and health under stress. The nurses with an interdependent style of attachment (secure) remained hopeful and healthy, the counter-dependent nurses (avoidant) were less healthy and more stressed, and the dependent nurses (anxious-ambivalent) were less hopeful, but reported remaining healthy.

A body of attachment research has also been conducted for corporate marketing and branding purposes and reveals the extent to which attachment is pertinent in the social realm where it is symbolically mediated. Many bodies of thought have spoken of the power of symbols in the psyche to mediate meaning. More recently, Baudrillard (2005), a French philosopher and cultural studies expert, has commented on the power of symbols to convey socially constructed meanings, but also to pervert meanings unconsciously so that they are either emptied of their contents or represent the opposite of what is intended in a process he refers to as symbolic exchange.

This perversion phenomenon is happening with regard to attachment. For instance, Thompson (2006), coming from a corporate marketing perspective, examines through quantitative and qualitative measures the factors that create attachment to celebrities to demonstrate effective ways to create consumer attachment and identification with a celebrity. The intent of this study is to capture long term devotion, reduce brand churn, and increase the spending of the attached consumer. He examines the factors which create this "secondary object" attachment or "intimacy at a distance," and hypothesizes that the "responsive object" creates an intense attachment not only in relationships, but branding. Thompson's research, which is comprised of three separate studies, concludes that consumer attachment is created based on two specific emotional

factors related to attachment, "autonomy" and "relatedness," with a third, "competence,"
which only impacts attachment if it is negative rather than neutral or positive.
Additionally, the study concludes that brand attachment is also not influenced by other
characteristics thought to impact brand relationships such as trust, satisfaction and
commitment. Thompson finds these conclusions exciting, as attachment is known to
elicit stronger and more lasting bonds while also being unaffected by these other factors.
The real strength of this article is its description of how people are both actively and
passively constructed by psychological and biological forces. This article also provides a
model for better understanding how people may be unconsciously manipulated as
employees and consumers by both lures and threats to unconscious attachment needs, and
by the urge to construct a more socially acceptable self to receive more positive
mirroring. The article never mentions multi-cultural factors except for nationality, gender
and age, but clearly shows a bias towards manipulating those consumers who may have
both unmet mirroring and attachment needs interpersonally and at a societal level.

Another view on symbolic meaning is posed by Firat and Venkatesh (1995), who
suggest that consumption be reexamined through a postmodern lens whereby more
meanings than just the economic are allowed to emerge. They suggest that consumption
creates symbolic markers which involve consumer agency. They argue that to
understand consumption only through the lens of economics is limiting and reductionist.
They call for understanding consumption practices as related to identity formation in a
more fragmented society. This type of analysis of how identity is mediated through
culturally understood symbols is a similar process to how individuals must negotiate
identity in many ways and in each context. Choice of professional life, besides being a

practical necessity for most, is also one of the tools at an individual's disposal for

mediating identity socially.

In summary, the research on attachment in adult life needs to be further expanded

in numerous areas, most of which are beyond the scope of this study. This study focuses

on the particular need to better understand how attachment affects various aspects of

private and public life, and personal and professional identity.

Identity

As mentioned above, in the anxious, uncertain, technology-driven fluidity of post-

modern life, the subject of identity has become of increasing interest and has been

extensively written about in many disciplines (Glas, 2006; Martin & Barresi, 2006). Glas

(2006), in a discussion of philosophical constructs of personality disorders, refers to the

virtual impossibility of defining qualitative identity, or the qualities that people share that

make them human. He instead argues with the European continental philosophers that

identity is not only socially conferred, but also is inherent within a person as well as

coming from others. This view is essentially in contrast to the Anglo-Saxon view of

concepts of identity: that it can be defined objectively.

Many of the liberal arts and sciences theories, including attachment theory

(Bowlby, 1969/1982), understand identity to be developed and maintained in a secure

relationship with another. Identity is not only established interpersonally, but also

established at a societal level using many of the same interpersonal mechanisms such as

attachment, mirroring and metallization (Fonagy, Gergely, Jursit & Target, 2002). It

would seem logical that to a certain extent these mechanisms are used in building an

integrated sense of self and reality on a social level.

However, in contemporary society, many forms of security are more elusive and concepts of identity are multi-faceted and fluid, needing constant renegotiation (Glas, 2006; Martin & Barresi, 2006). Additionally, current ideas about reality are constantly challenged intellectually, symbolically and concretely as they are de-constructed and re-constructed (Baudrillard, 2005). Symbols have mediated meaning consciously and unconsciously for millenniums. For instance, the early Christian church used many signs, symbols and metaphors to create containers of meaning, many of which remained stable. Meaning about personhood and identity was also more stable and largely defined in the context of the church (Martin & Barresi, 2006). Baudrillard (2005), a post-modern philosopher and cultural commentator, focuses on an aspect of modern life where these traditional signifiers are emptied of meaning, or worse conceal the opposite meaning (e.g., good hiding bad). The rapidity with which this occurs in the technological age means it is hard to consciously mediate these changes. Modern identity is subjected to the same process of symbolic transformation. As society is less able to provide its symbolic containing functions and constructs for people, it might be reasonable to conclude that a person's internal capacities must be further relied upon to compensate for the external chaos.

In a more hopeful example of symbolic exchange, Lear (2007) discusses how symbolic transformation can be harnessed to transform a culture. He uses the oppressive disaster that befell the Native American Crow tribe when they lost their lands and identity as an example of using symbolic exchange to navigate a traumatic journey of loss. The Crow people transformed their symbolic cultural and male identity from that of the warrior to a chickadee, which was wily, clever and patient, and in the process changed

their ego ideal. This symbolic exchange allowed the Crow to navigate this journey with

wisdom and success and led to significant cultural resiliency (Lear 2007).

Professional identity is one of the strongest social identity markers existing in our

society (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Mills, 2007; Thompson, 2000). Professional

identities are assumed and internalized personally and socially, and create a kind of

asymmetrical attachment relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 1990) with one's employer and

professional group. Professional life is an identity marker not only in one's internal self-

concept, but also one's external life, often serving as a symbolic place marker in

relationships and community, especially in the United States' capitalistic economy

(Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Thompson, 2000).

For example, long distance trucking is a profession where this identity

construction process and marking is exemplified. In their strong internal cultural identity

and its intersection with American cowboy mythology, there is a strong body of

narrative, symbolic and mythological material available (Mills, 2007). This material

provides much insight into the collective psychology and meaning-making of the

trucking industry (Rushing, 1983). Mills (2007), based on 300 interviews with truckers,

details the various mythologies that the truckers have constructed in order to develop a

cohesive professional identity in part in reaction to the onslaught of negative ideas about

their work. Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) outline a model for workers to create a positive

enough identity to function effectively in the face of outside denigration which includes

reframing by infusing or neutralizing meaning, denial, recalibrating standards and

refocusing on better features of the job. Mills (2007) argues that partially by using these

techniques and partially through the archetypal American male characters, truckers are

able to create a strong positive identity and a cohesive community. Traditionally, truckers have most closely identified with the American cowboy image where the qualities that they value most about the job – freedom, independence and control – are embodied as they roam the roads (Mills, 2007; Stern, 1975). This is a power-laden image in the American unconscious. Cowboy mythology, which has been extensively written about, is closely correlated with both the strong mythology surrounding collective ideas about the American dream and with the American optimism and defense against hopelessness (Rushing, 1983).

In conclusion, identity is an increasingly complex idea. It is fluid and constructed in multiple relationships including those that are intimate and personal, professional and institutional, and societal. This fluidity increases with the mobility and travel of modern life that locate individuals in multiple contexts in relatively short periods of time. Identity may include layers of the personal, professional and institutional which are intertwined. Like personal identity, social and professional identities are partially developed through societal mirroring and feedback. Often identity provides an entrée into individual and group relationships where attachment needs such as emotional support and coping with vulnerability are fulfilled.

Summary

Attachment literature clearly reveals that attachment systems internalized early on persist in some form into adulthood, as does the need for attachment. Most adults satisfy their attachment needs in some way both interpersonally and in society. Social identity, despite its fluid nature, is one way that attachment needs can be mediated. Professional life is a major part of the American identity, and those who travel or work long hours for

their jobs are pertinent to examine because their attachment relationships are under significant stress from outside forces, and such workers face extended periods of physical separation from family and friends. Consideration of this group raises many interesting questions about how its members manage to select and enjoy what some would consider difficult careers, in that they require long periods of time away from close attachment relationships and routines that typically connote familiarity, comfort and safety in the human psyche. Little research has been done to understand workers' attachment styles and internal world as individuals, while rather more is understood about how professionals symbolically mediate the profession in the internal community and external world. Examining the attachment of professionals who spend long periods away from home poses many interesting questions which this study hopes to address – in particular, questions as to how the personal and collective identities of these professionals relate to their attachment styles.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As discussed in the previous chapters, earlier research has shown that attachment is important for well-being throughout the lifespan and occurs in realms outside intimate relationships such as in social identity, but these wider-ranging attachment dynamics are not well understood. Attachment style is thought to be related to occupational choice, working life stress and success; again, these relationships are only loosely understood. There is almost no existing research on the attachment styles of professionals who spend long periods of time away from their home due to the travel or working hours demanded by their jobs. Therefore, this qualitative study which also uses a quantitative research tool attempts to explore the following questions: Is there a relationship between attachment style, and choice of profession as described by selected workers who choose careers that require spending long periods of time away from home? How do such workers say that their professional choices contribute to their satisfaction and success, and how do they cope with the challenges of spending long periods away?

The research design is within a frame of fallibilistic realism (Anastas, 1999) and is primarily qualitative because this design offers the best method to explore the in-depth meaning of a little explored phenomenon: professionals' attachment, professional success and coping skills. The mainly qualitative design allowed for complex evolving and changing observations to be gathered about the participants as individuals and in their communities. This inductive research study used flexible methods because of the uncertain nature of the material being gathered and the need for an iterative process of constant revision and elaboration (Anastas, 2004). The interviews were conducted using

a semi-structured interview guide, with open ended questions that were developed thematically and were intended to gather narrative, symbolic and attachment data from the professional participants concerning their attachment style, professional life and various identities (see The Interview Guide in Appendix C). This type of questioning was used to preserve the uniqueness of the responses and to respect the individualism of the participants. However, due to the limitations of the study size, the type of sampling and potential issues around diversity, the results cannot be considered generalizable to a larger population. In addition to the in-depth qualitative interviews, this study employed a quantitative tool by Brennan, Clark and Shaver (1998), Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECR) to measure participants' attachment security in close relationships (see Appendix D). The ECR is a measure available over the Internet. It is in the public domain. Authors required no permission for its use and there was no cost involved.

Sample

The researcher interviewed 13 professionals of varying ages, both male and female, who had been in their profession for at least two years, were over 25 years old, and spent long periods of time away from home for work. The researcher used non-probability samples which created some bias in the sample because of both the places that the researcher recruited and the self-selection of participants -- again making generalization to a larger population more difficult. However, this method of sampling was an efficient and effective method of recruitment for a transient population. In order to contact this population, the researcher recruited participants through various personal contacts who were willing to help her network to obtain study participants. The

researcher had personal contacts with individuals who knew successful professionals who spent long hours away from home due to work and had the particular assistance of a Smith School for Social Work student who knew potentially willing participants.

Therefore, based on the conditions outlined above, participants were selected using purposive and snow-balling techniques. First, participants were contacted through personal contacts at several businesses and organizations that worked with professionals who spend long periods away from home. Second, participants were recruited using a snow-balling technique with the help of as a classmate at Smith had friends and family working in these types of jobs. These contacts were made over the Internet using an email request for participation or by telephone (see Appendix G containing the text of the email request for participation). After these participants were screened for inclusion and exclusion criteria using a brief set of questions (see Appendix I). The inclusion criteria selected for those who were over 25 years old, had worked in professions for at least two consecutive years which required long periods of time away from home either at the office or traveling (e.g., flight stewardesses, long distance truckers, surgeons, etc.), who have had at least one intimate relationship, and who stated that they have had other career options open to them – therefore including choice as a factor in their selection of a profession. The researcher asked participants whether they did have other such options and accepted their statements about this. Those excluded included any that were under 25 years old, had not worked in their professions for at least two consecutive years, who stated that they have had no other career option, or who stated that they have not had at least one intimate relationship.

The researcher did not use the convenience sampling technique (or its associated recruitment flier (see Appendix F), as the snowballing method worked much better than expected and the desired number of 12- 15 participants volunteered through this method alone. However, this meant that the researcher was not able to easily diversify her sampling group. The final sample was comprised of a fairly homogeneous group of Northern European participants, although there was diversity in age, gender and religion. Clearly, professionals who travel or work long hours away from home are more diverse than this sample suggests. Obtaining many kinds of ethnocultural diversity in the sample would have been an asset important for both identifying differences, but also attempting to separate more universal personality and attachment characteristics and themes. Therefore, the lack of racial diversity was a weakness in this study. Despite these hopes for diversity, there were limitations on the number of participants in the study. There were also limitations in the capacity to analyze attachment data based on diversity given the small sample size and the limitations of existing research concerning attachment and culture. In a sample as small as 12-15 persons much diversity could also have caused a sampling weakness in that some ethnicities might have been represented by only one or two persons. Only with the capacity to repeat this study with a large group could the results be generalized to a larger sample.

Ethical Issues and Safeguards to Protect Human Subjects

There were possible risks for participants associated with this study. During the hour-long interview, questions were addressed that contained personal material. By talking about their professional lives and identities as well as personal relationships, participants sometimes felt uncomfortable, emotional, anxious, or restless. A list of

resources (see Appendix J for Referral Sources) was attached to the informed consent

form (see Appendix A) including national associations or referral sources which could be

used when away from home to locate counseling services. The list was given at the

beginning of the interview with the informed consent which had to be signed before the

interview could proceed. Interviewees were also reminded at the beginning of the

interview that participation in the study was completely voluntary and participants had

the right to not answer questions and to withdraw from the study. After the interview

was completed, they were informed that they would still have the right to withdraw their

interviews from the study until April 1, 2008.

There were also potential benefits to professionals through participation in this

study. Detailing their professional lives may have helped them gain further

understanding of themselves and the effects of their profession as well as their coping

skills. As some participants indicated, the interview may have also helped them gain a

new perspective or even simply to have the opportunity to share reflections with someone

else.

By volunteering for this study, professionals may have also benefited by

providing essential information for future research and practice. The data collected here

could potentially help other researchers to provide better care and advocacy for various

types of professionals who spend long hours away from home, and their families.

Monetary compensation was not provided to the professionals for participating in the

interview.

The researcher maintained confidentiality while collecting, coding, analyzing and

presenting the data. In order to ensure confidentiality, an identification number was

assigned to each participant upon joining the study. Participants' names and corresponding numbers as well as their signed informed consents will be kept locked and safely stored for at least the next three years. All other information including printed transcriptions, audio tapes and field notes will be kept locked in a separate location to ensure that participants' names cannot be matched to their numbers. Participant names were not stated on the audiotapes; only ID numbers were used to identify them. It is realistic that if participants were referred by a friend or colleague, those associates may know that the individual participated in the study, though not which persons generated specific content provided in the interviews. In some cases, where the researcher believed that particular information from the interviews could be too revealing if used, no direct quotations were provided.

Those who have had access to the data were the researcher's advisor, an administrator who aided in data analysis and signed an agreement of confidentiality (see Appendix H) and the researcher. The researcher ensured that all identifying information was coded or removed before sharing data with anyone including the research advisor, and statistical analyst. In this and any future publications or presentations, most data will be represented in the aggregate (or whole). If and when quotations or vignettes were used, the researcher carefully disguised identifying information so that no one could be identified. All tapes, notes, and transcriptions will be kept locked for a period of three years in accordance with Federal regulation. Beyond the three-year point, the data will continue to be kept locked and secure until the researcher personally destroys them.

Data Collection

Once individuals met the stated selection criteria and agreed to participate in the study, they were mailed, emailed, or given in person the informed consent letter (see Appendix A) with a cover letter (see Appendix E) which clearly stated the risks and benefits of participating in the study, safeguards for the information including the Federal regulations regarding their confidentiality, and the participants' right to refuse questions or to withdraw before the study results are written. The process of receiving informed consent was generally brief, but for some took a period of time as they were traveling for work. Once the signed forms were returned, interviews were scheduled and conducted. Due to the nature of their transient work and the timeframe of the study, all but two of the interviews were conducted by telephone and recorded. The quantitative and qualitative questionnaires were not mailed ahead of time as it may not have been be convenient for participants, would have violated one of the conditions of the research design: the questions were meant to be considered individually in conversation with the interviewer/researcher, rather than discussed beforehand, such as with family members.

The researcher planned to do these telephone or in-person interviews for one hour using a semi-structured style. A number of interviews took significantly longer. As mentioned early in this chapter, this method of research is ideal when investigating subject matter which is largely unstudied and which lends itself to a narrative and flexible inquiry method. The interview was semi-structured using an interview guide (see Appendix C) in order to provide a frame from which to explore narrative themes, symbols, metaphors, and attachment themes and language in a thoughtful, but flexible manner according to a particular individual's style. The questions in the interview guide

were intended to gain a deeper understanding of themes related to profession, attachment and identity. Additionally, successful professionals are often known for their individualism and this method allowed for their individuality to be expressed. Finally, this method may have elicited more information, including that on diversity. The researcher distributed the quantitative measurement, the ECR, by email or fax to the participants, all of whom elected to return them via fax or email rather than completing them orally over the telephone.

The researcher began the interview by collecting basic demographic data (see Appendix B) which included age, education level, profession, number of years in the profession, amount of travel and long hours, race, religion, and family/relationship status. The researcher indicated that these questions were optional and also turned off the recorder so as to preserve participant confidentiality. Then the researcher moved to the questions in the interview guide that attempted to cover the following areas: description of the work and working community; internalized metaphors and symbols of family, work, self, and profession; the path to choosing the career; rewarding and difficult aspects of the career; how relationships with friends and family members were experienced and maintained now and in childhood; and coping mechanisms.

The themes explored in these questions were analyzed and, after the first participant interview, future interviews with other participants were adjusted to compensate for a new theme that arose concerning what professional and coping skills were learned in childhood and from which relationship. The information collected was recorded and transcribed as appropriate. In addition, extensive notes were taken during each interview including those concerning non-verbal material, the process of the

conversation and the feelings elicited in the interviewer. All of this information was organized into files for each participant. The files are anonymously labeled and have been kept secured separately from the participant names. Major participant themes were identified both for the group as a whole and each individual.

Data Analysis

The data collected during interviews were recorded and transcribed so that a narrative data analysis could be performed. The narratives were examined manually in a number of ways including by theme, participants' demographics and their attachment styles. The data collection plan excluded data that were extraneous; however, given the study's search for relational themes in the interviews, any data in the interview that revealed abstract, latent and subjective material such as information about attachment style or defenses were included.

The content analysis of the narratives began by organizing the data by participant responses and question themes and then by other major themes that emerged during the course of the interviews and analysis, such as those around life themes, metaphors, attachment, identification and cultural symbols.

In keeping with its constructivist approach, the data analysis also examined themes related to subjectivity including participants' evident affects, conversation styles and object relations, where these were noted. Several approaches were taken to increase reliability and validity in the areas of data observation, interpretation and coding. First, the researcher examined her own biases as a researcher. Second, quotes were used to validate these interpretations and to minimize interviewer bias. Third, the interview used an alternative coder who was also the statistical analyst to increase reproducibility and

self-reflection to minimize bias in identifying themes and coding (Maxwell, 1996).

Lastly, the coding process was developed with a methodical and documented approach

and that could be repeated by the researcher to increase stability.

Coding is a two-step process. Coding began with open coding where labels are

assigned to the data after the researcher reviewed all the interview transcripts for themes.

Codes were developed and defined around these major themes using both intratranscipt

and intertranscript analysis and be given names, defined themes, and indications of the

themes. For example, themes concerning childhood loss were identified as significant.

Qualifications and exclusions around the coding were identified and positive and

negative examples were given for further clarification. Contradictory information was

examined for new themes or counter trends. Analysis was based on a grounded theory

approach. Analysis then proceeded to axial coding, where categories are assigned to the

data so that core coding emerged. For example, the themes around childhood loss were

examined in detail as a category to determine which kind of childhood loss was prevalent

and its relationship to other themes such as relative professional success. In addition to

this method, predetermined coding categories were used which looked for attachment,

job identity and social identity. For example, the attachment security was a theme that

was predetermined as an important category of analysis as a quantitative attachment tool

was used. The study's replicability will be determined by the clarity of the theme

identification, definition and coding process as detailed above so that other interested

parties could replicate this study (Anastas & Macdonald, 1999).

The ECR quantitative tool was scored using instructions obtained from the

researchers' website (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998). Participants' results as they

reported them on the measure were then scored and the scores on each dimension of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance placed the respondent into one of four categories of attachment style. Participants' scores were then plotted on a scatter chart wherein each category of attachment style was represented. Secure participants were low on both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Insecure participants were either preoccupied (high on attachment anxiety and low on avoidance), avoidant (high on avoidance and low on anxiety) or a category the developers called "fearful" – high on both anxiety and avoidance.

<center>*Discussion*</center>

Expected findings of this research project included that attachment and professional identity were positively correlated with attachment style and security, with participants expected to have a tendency towards a more ambivalent style of attachment based on the ECR quantitative measure. Among the unexpected findings were the fact that professionals' social and internal identities might be unrelated to their professional identities and attachment style. Some correlation between these was discovered, but the results were inconclusive as the correlation might be related to other factors including coincidence, self-selecting similarities of participants, recruiting methods, sample size, the researcher's interview and attachment style or other unknown factors. The researcher's bias was that some correlation existed between attachment and the choice of a profession which required long periods of time away from home. In addition, the researcher was possibly biased due to her female gender and membership in a dominant cultural and racial or ethnic subgroup.

The results of this study were not thought to be generalizable beyond the study population due to the qualitative nature of the study and the sample size. It was thought that the results might inform practitioners' questions and thoughts about clients' attachment, professional choice and identity within the personal, familial, professional and societal realms. The current results do suggest that further research with larger and more diverse samples might well be worth doing, because of the reality that a need to work is pervasive and so often rewarding for individuals in modern U.S. culture, efforts to explore and document the costs and benefits to individuals of professional choices involving long hours away from home and relationships, as well as ways to mitigate the challenges of long hours away are certainly compelling topics. Clinicians of many disciplines, but especially social work, will likely find workplace satisfactions, relationship issues, and professional choices to be important areas of focus for many of the people they serve.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Participants

This study, which was mostly conducted by telephone, surveyed a group of 13 people who chose to work long hours away from home either due to travel or extended work schedules. All participants were required to have had at least two years in their professions. The intent was to examine a successful professional population who had been steadily employed for any links between attachment styles, professional choices, identities and job satisfaction. The intent was also to eliminate those who had no choice about spending long hours away from home due to economic pressures or issues of oppression. All participants were currently working, with several retirees in non-paid part-time work, but all had traveled for work during an extended period of time in their careers. In these cases, the collected data refer to the career that involved travel. All participants had successful working careers and had been in their current careers for at least seven years. The mean career length was 22.5 years, with 6 participants having over 30 years of experience in their career. The median career length was 24 years.

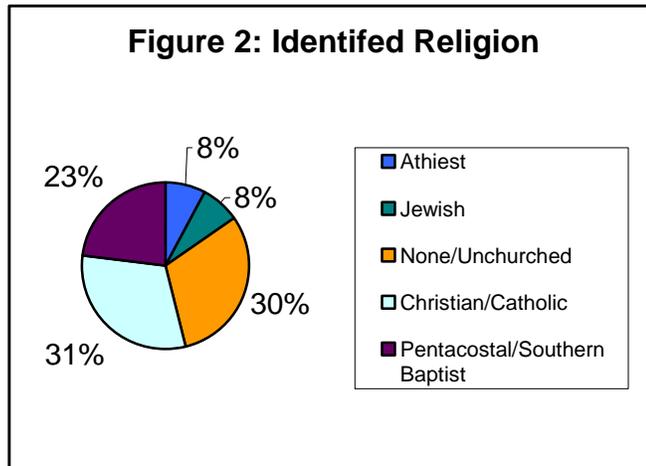The survey respondents came from a snowball sample that originated from four main sources. The participant group tended to vary in age, as did the snowballing sources, ranging from 35-82 years, and no professionals in their 20's were represented. Although there was only one male originator (those who were originally contacted about the survey and suggested other participants), gender was evenly represented among the

13 participants, seven of whom were women and six men. Additionally, the sample was not racially diverse with only one participant identifying as of mixed race and all other participants identifying as Northern European (although one of the four originators was of color).

Various attempts were made to diversify the sample; however, the predominately Northern European racial make-up is reflective of that of the researcher and those residing in her local area. Ethnicity was more diverse than race, with 31% identifying as Jewish, 8% as mixed-race and one as "Heinz 57" wishing not to answer the question in this way (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Identified Ethnicity
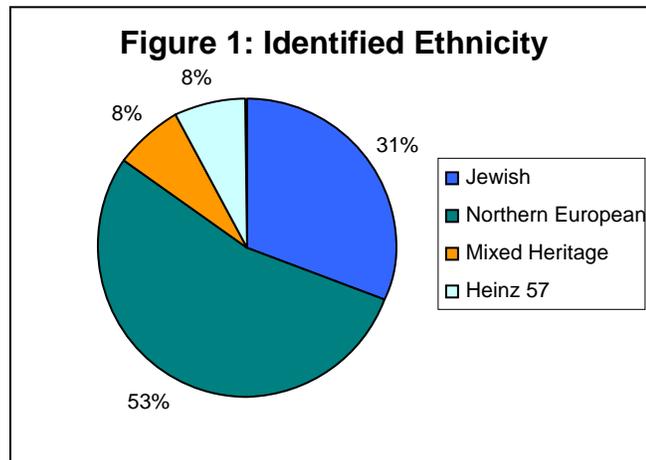
The religious distribution of the group varied with the majority, 54%, being Christian (see Figure 2). The Christian group was split between more conservative religions, such as Pentecostal and Southern Baptist (23%), and other Christian religions (31%). Eight percent categorized themselves as Jewish. The rest of the participants

Figure 2: Identifed Religion

23% 8%

8%

30%

31%

Athiest
Jewish
None/Unchurched
Christian/Catholic
Pentacostal/Southern Baptist

(39%), categorized themselves as not religious in any way, with 31% categorizing
themselves as "nothing" or "unchurched" and 8% categorizing themselves as atheist.

As stated earlier, the age of the participants varied (see Figure 3). The average
age of the participants was 55 and the median age was 57. The group of those over 70
years old represented the smallest part of the sample, only 23%. The other age groups, in
their 30's and 40's as well as in their 50's, were evenly distributed among the sample at
38.5%. The impact of age is discussed in the section titled *Theme 2: Attachment Security
and its Relationship to Age and Developmental Context.*

Figure 3: Age Distribution

23%

39%

38%

Age=35-43
Age=50-59
Age >70
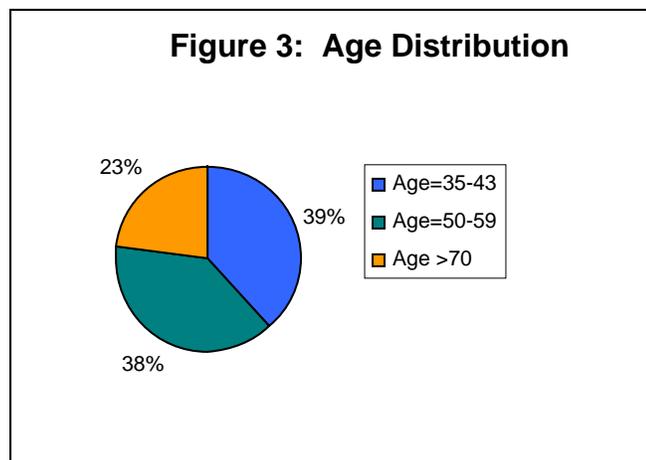
The participant group represents a socio-economically more privileged

demographic with the majority of the respondents being highly educated (a minimum of

two years of college). As represented in Figure 4 below, the majority of the respondents

(62%) had graduate degrees (this includes one participant who is currently a candidate).

The graduate professions varied in type including international relations, law,

Figure 4: Level of Education
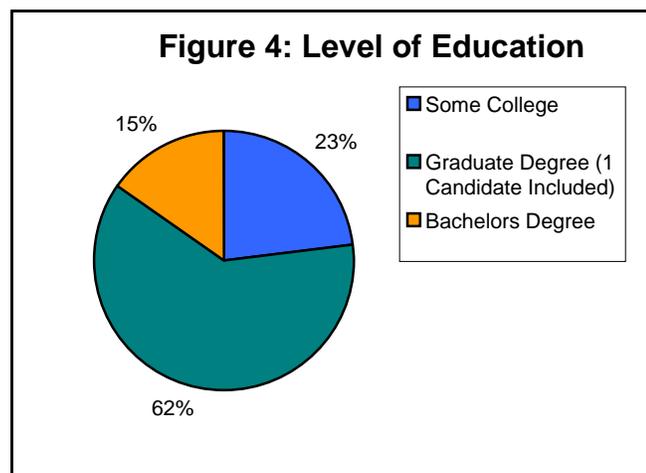
nursing, and business. Only 15% had not completed college, but all three of these

participants had at least two years of college. Interestingly, all three of these were

working in professions that did not require a college degree at the time they entered.

Among all 13 participants, three appeared under-employed and were working in

professions in which their education was under-utilized. This level of education reflects

the urban and highly educated population of the city where the study was performed as

well as the education level of the snowball originators. Such education and privilege

tends to confer more opportunity and higher levels of income, as well as more social

capital. However, participants' perceived levels of education and related status also

appeared to be influenced by the actual type of profession and its social status. For

instance, all three participants who worked in professions generally considered to be

more working class tended to underestimate their educational levels to the interviewer. Two of the participants who had completed two years of college described themselves as "high school graduates" and had to be convinced by the interviewer that two years of college counted as education. Another participant with graduate education also seriously downplayed her graduate degree. Possible explanations could be personal belief systems, negative internalized beliefs from society about their professions, some factors related to the reality that the interviewer was pursuing a graduate degree, or the desire to conform to their own professions' normative education.

Of interest as well is that one participant (#8) who was working well above her education level, as she had not completed her BA, but was employed in a management role and seemed almost embarrassed by the professional level that she had achieved. She answered the question saying, "I probably could not get this position today without a degree."

The majority of the participants (69%) was married or had been married (see Figure 5). One of the participants included in this group was widowed and in her 80's

Figure 5: Marital Status and Children

- Married/No Children — 15%
- Married/Children — 54%
- Not Married/No Children — 31%
- Not Married/Children — 0%
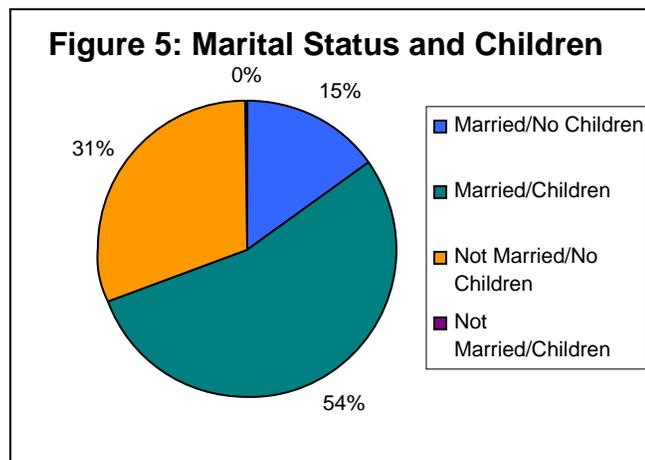
and no others were currently single. Additionally, all but one of the participants who had

been married had children. None of the participants had been single parents. There were

a number of never married participants of varying ages; they were mostly women. They

represented 31% of this sample. The youngest unmarried participant was 39. It is

interesting to note that close to one-third of the sample had never been married and to

wonder if this reflects the demands of the participants' long hours and extended travel.

     In conclusion, this study represents a particular demographic which seems

different from national and regional averages except in gender composition, which was

close to being representative of the population at large. Age, race, ethnicity, religion,

educational background and marital status differed. It is difficult to know the exact

reasons, but contributing factors may include the geographic area from which participants

all came and its demographic characteristics, the researcher's methods of obtaining

participants, the first links in the four snowballing threads, the inclusion and exclusion

criteria and the particular subject being studied.

Discussion of Themes in Findings

Theme 1: Attachment Security of Participants

     The group of professionals who participated in the study was in general fairly

securely attached based on the ECR (1998) self report measure (see Appendix with D)

with 77% being securely attached. The relative security would support views held by

some researchers previously discussed that secure attachment is an advantage in

negotiating personal and professional relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1990) as well as

Figure 6: Attachment Security of Participants (Based on the ECR)
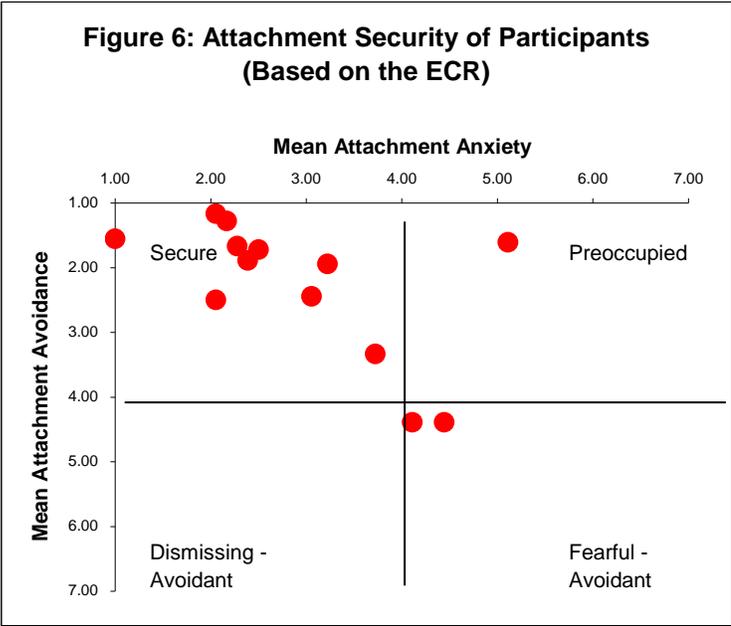
a source of hopefulness in stressful situations (Simmons et al., 2003). This group of

participants tended to provide the most contented descriptions of both their professional

and current family lives. Secure attachment in individuals generally requires a certain

level of security with intimacy and autonomy (Feeney, 1999). These participants tended

to have an integrated view of the good and bad in their childhood. Representing the

narratives of the more securely attached participants, the most securely attached

participant according to her ECR (1998) scores said even though she had had some quite

adverse early experiences,

> I had very loving parents. …I was lucky with family and relationships. If I
> needed them they were there… .Mom had the ability to make each of us feel
> special… .Mom was positive and happy… . There was not a lot of negativity in
> my house growing up.

Another participant who reported great satisfaction in his profession and his personal life

using an integrated narrative described his blue collar upbringing as an only child saying,

> My family was very loving, very supportive and encouraging. They took pride in
> what I did. We were emotionally close, but it was not like we spent a lot of time

together. Dad worked hard… .We were really emotionally close… .A lot came from my home. Dad was one of the greatest people I know. I never heard him say an unkind word. Dad worked hard… .Mom worked so I was on my own. I had to stay in on my own until Mom got in… .Mom was accepting. Grades didn't matter. She was my biggest fan. It didn't matter what I did.

Of the three participants who fell into the insecure category according to the ECR (1998), none had particularly high insecurity scores. The insecure group consisted of one participant whose scores were in the preoccupied category and two who scored as fearful-avoidant. Preoccupied adults tend to have more unresolved narratives concerning their childhood experiences, have more entangled and long narratives, experience more overt anxiety about the availability of attachment figures, tend to be more uncomfortable with closeness and more dependent and compliant (Feeney, 1999; Hesse, 1999). The participant who fell into this category was very anxious about the process of having a telephone interview and preferred to have personal communication. Her narrative about work and friends contrasted greatly to that of the one about her childhood which she felt had been more isolated from emotional intimacy. She described her work environment as being like a family and described interpersonal conflict with difficult supervisors. However, this participant was quite successful and in a significant leadership position at her organization, and had constructed an intimate supportive network around her. These facts serve as a reminder that despite the ECR's reputation as a predictive measure, it does not relay the whole picture.

Fearful-avoidantly attached individuals, which two participants were categorized as, tend to want intimacy but due to their lack of trust in others avoid closeness for fear of loss or rejection -- which in turn creates a sense of isolation (Feeney, 1999; Crowell, Fraley & Shaver, 1999). Despite what may appear as indifference, those in this avoidant

category also experience high levels of anxiety about the availability of attachment

figures (Feeney, 1999; Crowell, et al., 1999). The two participants in this category spoke

of such dilemmas related to attachment in their interviews. Both of these also had

narratives about work and particularly close relationships which were conflictual and at

times confusing which is consistent with the literature discussed above. Their narratives

(no quotations are used to protect their privacy) both included explicit descriptions of

work as a place where they could learn to develop closer relationships. Both had chosen

professions and environments which demanded a particularly high level of forced

intimacy with co-workers and long periods away from home. They both also described

their families as "unhappy" with their avoidant behaviors; each described the avoidance

as a deliberate but unsatisfactory strategy. Both also discussed their difficulties in close

relationships in the present and, when asked to describe their families at various points in

the interview would contradict themselves from sentence to sentence, leaving the

researcher very puzzled at how to describe their intimate relationships. Both also

described in various ways being profoundly unsupported by their families in childhood.

There were other study participants, falling into the securely attached category according

to the ECR, who described much more painful childhoods than the fearful-avoidant

group, but used a more integrated narrative. This seems to support Main's (1984)

hypothesis that in adults' emotional integration is more predictive of security than lack of

adversity.

Interestingly, none of the participants fell into the dismissing-avoidant category of

attachment where attachment is denied and counter-dependence is asserted (Feeney,

1999). The researcher wonders if this is due to the self-selection of participants who

would be inclined to participate in an in-depth research interview, or perhaps due to the

participants' level of career achievement which may require a certain comfort with

relatedness, or some other factor. Additionally, as discussed later, the results of the ECR

as a self report measure may be downplayed in this research report due to the less

anonymous snowballing tactics for participant recruitment and may have been influenced

by the exposure of this participant group to similar quantitative measures in professional

self-awareness workshops and in pre-employment screening.

In conclusion, this was a fairly secure group of participants who did not report

extensive current conflict in personal and professional relationships. All participants

reported long careers and stable intimate relationships, whether those were with

colleagues, friends or family. Perhaps the relative attachment security ratings are

correlated to these successes as Hazan & Shaver (1990) argue or perhaps as Feeney

(1999) suggests, these are also influenced by relationship dynamics, and this researcher

would wonder about relative socioeconomic privilege.

Theme 2: Childhood Experiences of Adversity and Loss Leading to Strengths

The most intriguing and unexpected theme to emerge from the study was that all

of the participants had had adverse childhood experiences that had led to the development

of critical strengths and attributes which in turn led to their significant career successes.

All of the participants discussed adverse childhood experiences unprompted by the

interviewer. These themes generally arose in the discussion of Question 10 of the

Interview Guide (see Appendix C). The guide asked the participant to use five adjectives

to describe relationships with family and friends in childhood.   Although this section was

intended to be a simple word list at the end of the interview, it elicited long descriptions

which included many intimate stories of childhood experiences, mostly with parents.

Some participants talked for over one-half hour or more on this topic. In a number of

cases, the interviewer encouraged participants to finish the descriptions due to the intense

and personal nature of the material. However, from these descriptions emerged a picture

of the significant strengths that participants had developed in learning from adversities

experienced during latency or early adolescence. These strengths were a combination of

an internalized configuration of relating based on the participants' positions in the

situation at the time of the adverse experience and the defensive strategies, skills for

coping, and new personal goals that they established as a result of the experience.

All of the participants described using these skills throughout their careers and in

their current work. Although most did not seem aware of the connection between these

childhood experiences and their current work situation and professional skill sets, many

made the connection in some way during the course of the interview. Some expressed a

degree of surprise that these experiences had contributed to or explained some of their

current professional successes.

The nature, severity and age of occurrence of these adverse childhood experiences

as well as participants' reactions to them varied. However, despite these differences, the

consistency of the emergence of strengths in patterns of coping and relating was striking.

The varied types of adversity could be grouped into two categories; those related to loss

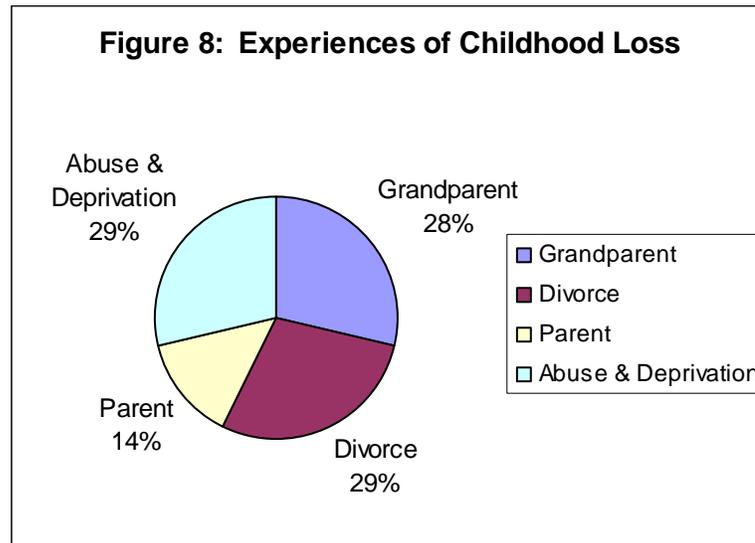and those related to other adverse experiences.

Of the 13 participants, 53% reported or gave evidence in the interview of loss and

47% did not (see Figure 7). For the purposes of this analysis, loss was categorized as

death of a close family member or friend, loss of a parent through divorce, and loss of

childhood as described by the participants because of abuse and deprivation. Although

some participants said they had not experienced loss, they later went on to describe

experiences of loss in great detail, but still maintained no significant loss had occurred.

In these instances, based on the participants' descriptions of the experiences of losses,

rather than acknowledgement of it, they were categorized as experiencing childhood loss.

Those who did not acknowledge their losses were categorized as 'Yes/Unconscious.'

The researcher had to rely on the participant reports for these individuals' experiences

and there is the risk that some experiences of childhood loss were not revealed even in

the narrative interview or when the question was asked.

Figure 7: Experiences of Early Childhood Loss

15%

38%

47%

- Yes/Conscious
- No
- Yes/Unconscious
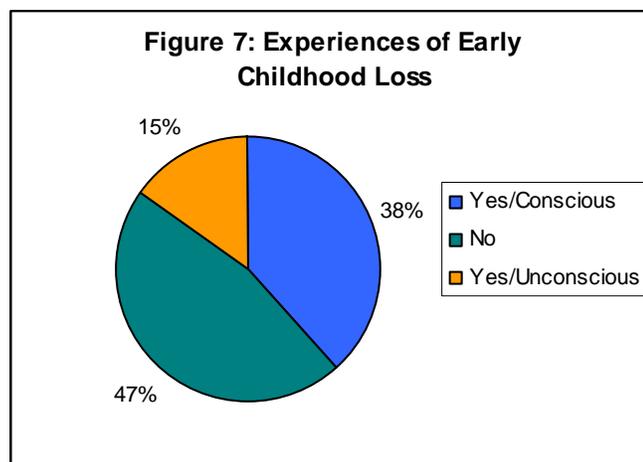
Those who experienced loss in childhood spoke of the lifelong impact of such

loss particularly when it was a parent or parental figure such as a grandparent lost

through death or divorce (see Figure 8). These participants spoke of growing up quickly

and having to cope with the lasting personal impact of their losses during adulthood as

well. For these participants – all women – the experience was felt to be disruptive to

their capacity to form close, lasting relationships with men. None of them directly

referred to the impact on their professional lives; however, all spoke of independence as a

key quality that had helped them succeed at work. For example, one participant (#8) described herself as " …incredibly independent and self-reliant … " and said that she was " …autonomous at work where there was not a lot of structure."

Figure 8: Experiences of Childhood Loss

Abuse & Deprivation 29%
Grandparent 28%
Divorce 29%
Parent 14%

Legend:
- Grandparent
- Divorce
- Parent
- Abuse & Deprivation

None of the respondents expressed a belief that the extensive separations they currently experienced due to long work hours had impacted their personal relationships in any significant way, as they felt that in general they worked hard to stay connected with others. Those who had lost grandparent figures were generally more emotionally removed from the loss except for when they had been witness to the experience. In these cases, the experience was described in vivid terms and brought into the interview voluntarily by the participants who seemed to still associate the loss with the witnessing of death. Additionally, two participants experienced suicide outside their families, but in close ways, during childhood. These participants also had experienced other losses, but mentioned the suicides immediately when asked about experiences of loss.

Participants with loss histories due to neglect tended to speak more openly and intensely of their experiences of loss than others who had experienced childhood loss. In

44

these cases, the participants' professional careers did not appear to fully utilize their intellectual and educational resources. These participants spoke in bleak terms about their childhoods and some of this depressive affect and dynamic appeared to be carried into their professional lives, where they had isolating professions or neglectful professional relationships. They also downplayed their successes and appeared in the interview to be more preoccupied with the narrative of loss when asked to describe their family with five adjectives. They often focused little attention on adjectives for friends, themselves and professions, and became preoccupied with long descriptions of their neglect and its emotional impact. For instance, they downplayed their educational achievements. They also doubted the worth and purpose of their professional careers which were, as reported, long-term and successful.

Those who had no reported significant childhood loss all voluntarily reported adverse childhood experiences when asked to use adjectives to describe their childhoods (Question 10, see Appendix C). These experiences also varied greatly (see Figure 9), but could be characterized as leaving an impression on the participants' inner worlds and the on the interviewer as a listener. The interviewer noticed that these experiences were described by all participants in an intense and vivid manner either through accompanying affect or narrative style.

The types of experiences described by these participants included parents' marital conflict, economic and class issues, family military experiences and being witness to other close family troubles. Again, these experiences were present enough in the minds of participants for them to talk at length about their impact on them as children and adults. Generally, participants in this group had been witness to the conflict, rather than being

directly involved. They often spoke of how their observation of conflict had shaped their

decisions about the kind of person that they had become. The impact of this on their

professional lives was revealed in their achievements and coping mechanisms for dealing

with the challenges of traveling and working long hours. These participants were more

direct in verbalizing how these adverse experiences impacted them than those who had

experienced loss.

Figure 9: Other Adverse Childhood Experiences
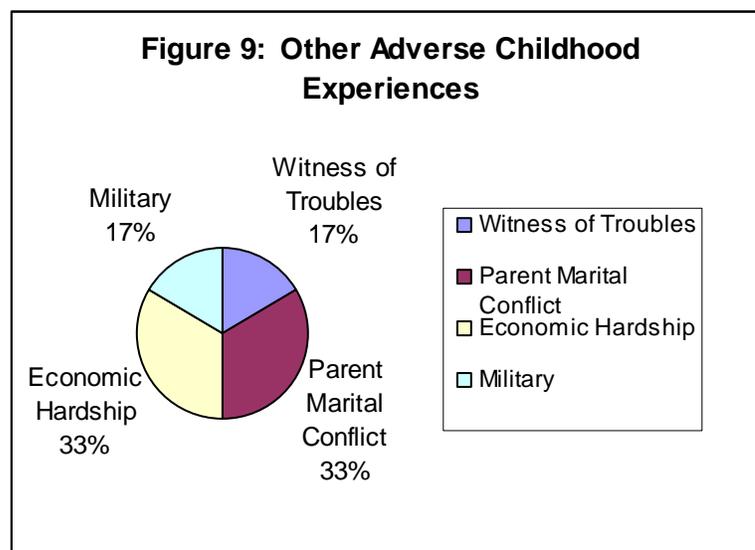
For example, participant #9, who had a prestigious career involving conflict

resolution, spoke of his professional efforts to get people to listen and communicate with

each other, and yet also described distance between him and his colleagues due to the

nature of the work. This same participant described experiencing a parental marital

relationship as dreadful, with layers of conflict and unresolved immigration trauma which

left him with distant family relationships. In this participant's work there was evident use

of skills and passions developed in childhood to solve many problems with similar

dynamics and configurations. Another participant (#1), who also experienced a minor

loss, said in speaking about her coping mechanisms that she " …didn't take myself too

seriously… .Things will pass and they are not crises for the long-term." She then elaborated saying, "I was not ambitious." but had had a successful career, saying that "I don't dwell on things." She also mentioned her life on a farm that taught life lessons and grounded her, saying "I am a simple Irish peasant – uncomplicated." Her next comment revealed an association to an earlier life lesson. She remembered at puberty a relative visiting who was very preoccupied and upset about being wronged many years previously. Her relative's preoccupation and conversation with the participant's parents about a hurtful relationship had made a big impression on her and who she wanted to be as a person – someone who " …does not dwell … " on things.

Other participants expressed joy about their experiences at work and the skills they used, both of which appeared to be related to the experiences of childhood adversity. For example, participant #6 spoke of his high-powered, intellectual job as one of a "professional questioner and observer." and said that he was, "Curious about what people do and why." He stated that he loved the part of his work that involved being close to "captivating" action and excitement as a sideline observer who bonds with other observers over what he has seen. His perspective on his work was "The sense of purpose is very important for this job. They pay me to do this – I can't believe it." He said "I am connected to my work. It really meshes with my personality." Later he described his childhood in remarkably similar terms to his description of his job saying it was "buttoned-down" and "formal," with much intellectual stimulation. He stated that in early adolescence he " …saw bad stuff and felt I was special to get to know that stuff about grown-ups. I was an observer. I connected to my parents over it."

In addition to loss, participants described other childhood adversity that led to powerful professional skills. Participant #2 described his career as head of a national organization saying, "I am a fighter. I took this cause personally." He described wanting others to "see" who his clients were and wanting to fight for the underdog. He then connected this to a family history of catastrophic class and financial slide from virtual nobility to working class, as well as immigration in his childhood. As he described it, these events left his parents seen very differently by society than as they viewed themselves, and feeling like outsiders. He then went on to describe how living on a farm in a rural working class town forced him to learn coping skills and how to cleverly maneuver into the best positions. For example, as a smaller-sized child, he learned to ally with bigger local girls by doing class secretarial work for them so as to not be physically attacked on the way home from school. He said

> I developed two ways of dealing with it. First, I was a smart alec. You… make them look like a bully. Best them verbally and they get a bad reputation. Second, I ran faster then the others. I could escape by running. I was smart and was bullied for being the teacher's pet… .I had to believe in myself – that something was wrong with them, not me.

The translation of his experience to his career was revealed later when, in describing why he chose his field and how he had learned to be successful, he said that it was an opportunity to be

> …supportive of the underdog. My personality is to take the conventional established organization and show that [the underdog] can prevail with a better idea. It is built in annoyance with the establishment. I like to stick needles in it. I like to stick in needles. That is why I stayed in my career.

He also said that he was "nimble," which the researcher observed was similar to his descriptions of what he learned from being bullied. He also added, like another

participant discussed earlier, that farm life as a child had grounded and given him perspective on life that he felt had helped him in his career. He said

> The farm is an instructive environment. You realize that many things are outside your control – the weather, the seeds from the seed maker, yield on the crop, cows die. [There are] a lot of imponderables. Dad said, 'hope for the best and expect the worst.' It was pessimistic but a primer. There is a lot you can't control. You only control what you can, and deal with the others.

Interestingly, this group of participants with non-loss adverse childhood experiences talked at much more length about these experiences than those who had experienced profound losses. The exceptions to this were the 23% of participants categorized as experiencing childhood loss due to abuse and deprivation. All of these participants openly referred to the loss of their childhoods. These participant interviews had to be curtailed by the interviewer so as to protect the interviewee from over-stimulating material and in the interest of time. To protect these participants, quotes and detailed descriptions have not been used. Some participants who had both loss and adverse experiences were categorized under loss.

In conclusion, the nature of the childhood adversity seemed to bear little negative relationship to the success of the participants in their career. Rather, the participants' experiences all seemed to have provided an organizing frame for coping with the world. These frames have carried into their adult relationships and professional choices and careers as a strength, interest and even passion. In some ways, the experiences appeared to the interviewer to have spurred the development of passions and interests, coping skills and defenses that have worked well for the most part in long and successful careers.

However, extensive experiences of abandonment that were not related to parental conflict, but rather felt due to the specific neglect of the participant, appear to have negatively impacted the participants' self-confidence and full utilization of their intellect and education at work, as discussed above. As expected, the extent of this experience seems to be related to where participants fall on the attachment security spectrum. Mary Main noted that attachment security tends to be related to the child's experience of the parent and the parent's own attachment style (Main & Goldwyn, 1984). This dynamic seemed to hold true along a continuum for participants based on their narrative concerning their relationship with their own parents.

Some participants described avoiding the demands of preoccupied parents. As one participant (#4) with parents appearing to have preoccupied tendencies commented about her current relationship with them, "[It is] a burden. … it's easy to avoid them; I just don't answer the phone." Another (#9) who described dismissing/avoidant parents described himself as " …pretty much on my own for most of my life." He then indicated that he had to end the conversation.

However, it must be noted that despite the persistence of the dynamic discussed above, all of the participants have had long and successful professional careers, using their adverse experiences as formative developmental experiences and perhaps as a basis of their success.

Theme 3: Attachment Security and Its Relationship to Age and Developmental Context

The participants' ages ranged from 35 to 82 years old. They generally fell into three groupings. The first three participants (two men and a woman) were in their late 70's to early 80's. The second group consisted of five participants (three men and two

women) in their 50's. The third group of four participants ranged in age from 35 to 42, with only one over 40 years of age. Of this group 75% were women, with only one a man.

There appears to be a very strong correlation between age and security among the study groups, with some unanticipated results. The two attachment ratings for anxiety and avoidance on the quantitative instrument used are both measured on a scale of 1 to 7, with lower scores reflecting more secure attachment. If the average of the two attachment ratings measuring anxiety and avoidance is used, it gives a picture of the overall security of a participant and allows for participants to be ranked next to one another according to attachment security. The results, although representing a small sample, were striking in that age appeared related strongly to overall attachment security. The naturally occurring age groupings also appeared related to attachment security (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Relationship Between Attachment Security and Age
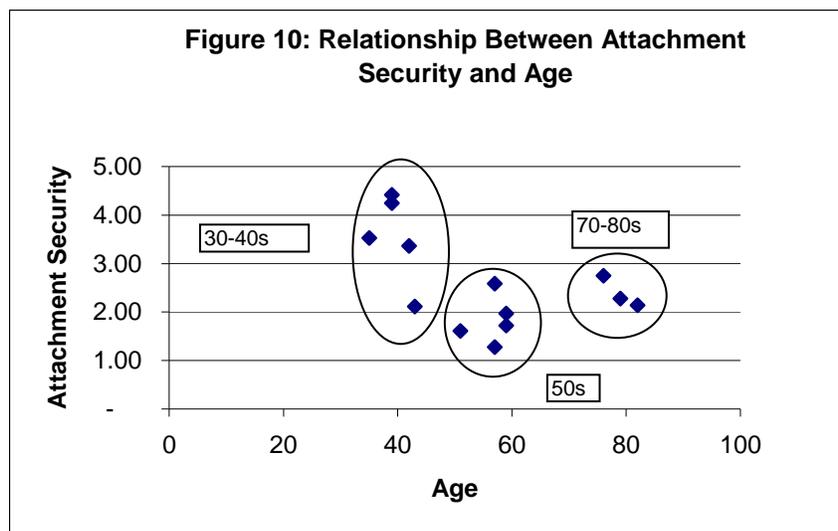
The most secure group was the group of five in their 50's. All but one of the participants in their 50's are rated below 2.00 on the scale, with the mean being 1.83. The outlier had a score of 2.58 and was in a different socio-economic bracket with

different social stressors and lived in a non-urban area. The least secure group was the

group between 35 and 42 with the scores ranging from 2.11 to 4.42 with a mean score of

3.53. The low score represented an outlier in a marriage to someone older with whom the

participant traveled; this participant also ranked in a different socio-economic bracket.

The group which fell in between as a distinct group of its own were the three participants

in their late 70's to early 80's who had an average attachment security score of 2.39

ranging from 2.14 to 2.75 with no outliers.

Although not all participants referred directly to their ages during their interviews,

all referred to their life stages as well as their social class standing. The elderly group

referred to age more frequently and directly in their narratives and seemed more aware of

it as a context for their perspectives. For example, one participant (#1), after completing

the quantitative instrument but before the interview began, said that from her perspective

as an older person, modern lifestyle made people less secure in their relationships with

partners, work colleagues and friends. She finished by saying she thought this would be

reflected in the survey results.   In another example of contextual meaning-making, an

elderly participant (#9) in referring to his path of career choice, said "Yes, it is similar to

others who entered in the 50's. They went in to serve the country… [and] wanted to do

good things." This group also was in the middle range for attachment security. It is

possible that the effects of aging and its associated effects of loss of contacts due to

retirement, increasing health issues and losses of spouses and family members lead to a

greater sense of insecurity.

The least secure group of participants, those in their 30's and 40's consisting of

three women and one man, referred to age less directly in their narratives, but all seemed

more preoccupied with the tasks of their age in life. Erikson (1963) discusses the tasks of two stages, young adulthood and middle age, as establishing intimacy and generativity. These stages are perhaps blended a bit more, especially for educated urban-dwellers, than when Erikson first wrote of them in 1963. It is a well-noted phenomenon that marriage and children are currently delayed longer, especially for more educated urban-dwellers than in previous periods as such individuals pursue careers and education. For this group of participants, these tasks were central to the themes of their meta-narratives, but often not explicitly stated. Thematically, this group's narratives revealed struggles, pain and frustrations as they tried to successfully establish intimacy and generativity both for their own desires but also to meet internalized social expectations.

In the clearest example, one un-partnered participant (#13) spoke about such struggles, saying

> I see my life and job as intertwined. There is no real time I am off the clock. I feel attached to my computer. I would be anxious without it. It is not a big deal for me... .You mix business with pleasure. That is how I see a career. Not a means to an end. You are part of a club. If you are not into it will show. People who succeed the best intertwine the two.

Later this same participant revealed the contradictions and dilemmas of socializing at work, saying "I certainly would go out if I was invited, but ... I am in management now. I can't get in trouble. It puts a damper on your social life or forces you to look elsewhere." In reflecting on how successfully the personal relationships had been managed given career demands, this participant said "I have managed it poorly... [and] had a hard time joining these two lives. It is hard to move from one to another. Friends are inviting me out all the time and I can't get away, am tired or not comfortable."

Supplementing this statement was an unlinked reflection that all of this

participant's long-term friends were now married with children. Considering how this

participant had managed his personal relationships with the demands of his profession led

to his concluding

> It is on me to take the responsibility for maintaining relationships. …
> family would say the same. I need to get out more. I took this job so I
> could do something else but travel. To enrich the richness of my life.
> Right now it is unsatisfactory. Mine is really unsatisfactory by anyone's
> standards.

This statement was representative of the themes of all the participants in this age

grouping, as it appears to reveal not only personal views and struggles perhaps

established early on, but also internalized self-blaming perceptions from one's social

milieu about what constitutes a successful life, personal and professional.

Erikson (1963) clearly states in his writings that intimacy and generativity could

be achieved without the social milestones of marriage and children, as these intimacy and

generativity attainments were also related to one's internal orientations towards life and

other relational connections or achievements. For the youngest grouping of participants,

although all upper-middle class, there appeared to be internalized class expectations

related to life stage that were more rigid than Erikson (1963) meant. Many writers have

referred to issues of internalized classism with many referring to the hierarchy-based

inter-class experiences of shame (Ashford & Kreiner, 1999; Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston

& Pickett, 2004). However, even intra-class expectations can operate with the same

dynamics when behaviors and feelings related to relationships and work fall outside

normative expectations in one's milieu.

For example, female study participants in this age grouping all seemed to be struggling with themes of insecurity as well as other themes more relevant to life stage and social expectations. Despite their narratives all containing the universal themes of intimacy and generativity typical of the early and middle adulthood life stages, there were also some unique concerns common to women particularly, such as guilt over not meeting socially held expectations about marriage, motherhood, and work. For instance, one participant (#4) said about her difficulty with balancing marital difficulties, motherhood, and a rewarding work life, that she felt family " …was a burden. Isn't that awful?" as if expecting a social judgment for verbalizing this feeling. She later said that she wanted to " …move across the country and not tell a soul, not even friends, because then my parents would find me. … my husband is a huge source of stress." Another participant (#7) spoke of " …a lot of conflict with my husband about work and life priorities … " and later spoke of the difficulty in seeing her girlfriends who were an integral part of her life and support system now that she was a mother saying, "It is definitely hard the way my life is scheduled."

Participant #5 spoke in a way that reveals the frequent contradictions between idealized social images and expectations that are internalized in gender-specific ways, saying that she imagined family as "Close relationships, having kids, Norman Rockwell and sitting at a dinner table." She contrasted this with the actual reality of many people's lives, stating that childhood "… losses impact me today, not with work, but with boyfriends, obtaining and retaining… " adding that lack of education or role models for healthy stable relationships meant that they were " …hard to maintain… " and that she doesn't "…trust guys." Like others, her statement seems to reveal several layers of

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internalized intra-psychic feelings about identity – both internalized childhood experiences and internalized social expectations related to gender.

The outlier in this category was participant #12, who was as securely attached as the 50 year old group. It is difficult to speculate on the reasons, but is of note that she was in a working class profession, did not face much separation from her spouse, was married to someone older, and seemed secure both in her personal choices and with being an individual. Also, her profession allows for a more independent work life and identity construction, and the negative class projections by society on her profession seemed to be managed through intra-profession collective social support.

The group of five participants in their 50's contained the most securely attached adults with one outlier on the quantitative instrument. This group of five had a sense of calmness and security in their narratives independent of gender, or marital and family status. On the whole, with this group, there was a sense that they were struggling less with issues of intimacy and generativity, and had learned to cope with the challenges of their lives with perspective. However, each participant also spoke of some loss or lack of an intimate relationship or lack of children, of demanding jobs, and of struggles with balancing family and work. They also displayed a stated and integrated self-awareness in the interviews about their experiences and about who they were as people.

In an example of this integrated perspective, participant #10 spoke of his demanding and stressful career, "I was wired for what I do… what I was called to do and be. The subject drew me in. I love my job. There is nothing I would rather be doing." When speaking of the effect of his working life on his relationships, he attributed his success in balancing this to his partnership with his "amazing wife" saying that as he

" …looked back as I am older and wonder---God blessed our family and our kids turned out great." In reflecting on the nature of his admittedly difficult choices he said, "I was there for the relationships and the love, not things. They [family] knew I was there if I could be [for concrete events]." Later he referred to himself to explain why his job fit with his personality and life: "I am a strong-willed person who liked to do things my way. I have no problem with accountability."

Participant #8 shared perspectives on herself and her coping skills as well, stating that at work,

> I used to stress out more [when I was younger]. I don't get so upset[now]… .I do the best job I can, and I have a wonderful support system in the office. Talking about it takes a lot of the stress away. I come home to my wonderful little puppy.

She talked of being able to maintain satisfactory relationships with family because

> I make sure that people know that I am thinking of them. It's more of a priority than work. I love [my job] and I am good at what I do, [but] I would rather be a good family member or friend. To be honest, family and friends would say that I do a really good job of it because I really work hard at it.

Participant #6 spoke of this integration most clearly when he was asked to give several adjectives to describe each – work, self, friends and family. He responded, "I look at things as connected now. This was not true before when professional life took precedence over all. I wanted to get ahead. Now with kids and marriage -- it is all tied together. Each influences each part." He then used a metaphor of himself which symbolized the narratives of most of this age group saying that his sense of self was symbolized as "A tree with branches coming out that encompass the various parts of me [work, self, friends and family]."

The outlier in this group was participant #11 whose security was more similar to those in the elderly grouping. The reasons are uncertain, but of note is that he was in a working class profession which required a certain amount of physical stamina, did not face much separation from his current spouse, and had experienced in the past significant loss and disruption of family relationships due to his job demands and resulting economic strains.

Interestingly, this group had all been in their careers for 30 years with the exception of one who had been in her career for 24 years. It could be speculated that working this long in a career had allowed people to build up a reservoir of knowledge which allowed them more security, particularly if they did not have to rely on physical strength to perform their jobs as the 50's can be a time when one's body may not have as much stamina as in earlier decades. It is also interesting that all the participants in this group, with the exception of the outlier, had reached positions of success and influence within national organizations and, therefore, as a group held the most social influence and power in a sociological context. Except for the outlying participant, all the participants worked in smaller headquarter offices where they had spheres of significant influence and close relationships as well as being part of influential national organizations which were related to government, media and national associations. It is possible that social position influences their attachment security and integrated narratives as their working and economic lives are not subjected to as much outside social power structures: they belong to the group of those who exercise influence.

Because none of the females in this age-grouping were married or had children and the men were all married with children, it was the men who faced the challenges of

balancing family life with work. These men seemed to find it much easier than the younger women who were partnered with children. It is difficult to know which of the possible contributing factors – including gender, age, finances, and attachment security – best account for this difference.

Theme 4: Importance of Work Identity to Sense of Self

In the qualitative section of the interview, participants were asked to consider how their professional choices related to their sense of identity. The participants were then asked to classify their work identity as essential (E) or non-essential (NE) to their sense of self. Of the 13 participants, seven (54%) considered their work identity to be essential to their sense of self and 6 (46%) considered their work identity to be non-essential.

Participants generally were taken off guard, stirred and emotional when responding to this question. One participant cried, several others became visibly emotional, while others became thoughtful and contemplative as they considered the question. The question seemed the most emotional for those who indicated that their personal relationships in adulthood had not been satisfactory. Their responses did not appear linked to their marital status or gender. The three participants in their late 70's and early 80's were generally the most aware of the role that their work identity had played for them and more comprehensively able reflect on the meaning of the role of work in the overall context of their lives and society, with all saying that it had been meaningful and satisfying. Their narrative stances tended to be reflective and integrated as they spoke. All were involved in some paid work, and two described giving back to others. One described his current work role metaphorically as "An owl to spread wisdom." He had worked to help the world. Another described her work role as a

"service animal" and participated heavily in volunteer work to help various people in need in the local community. Interestingly, these two were the more secure; the one who was more insecure was also preoccupied with a more internal task which involved understanding a difficult family history.   Perhaps this reflects the stage that Erikson characterizes as old age where people often become more philosophical, having more universal concerns and a sense of integrity and wisdom if despair and disdain are not dominant (1959/1980).

In general, almost everyone (five out of six, or 83%) who categorized their work identity as non-essential fell on the more secure end of the distribution along the attachment security spectrum. Of these five, all fell in the group of seven participants, or 53% of the sample, with the highest sense of security.

Conversely, five out of the six, or 83% of the least secure study participants categorized their work identities as essential to their sense of self. Participants who were the highest in attachment insecurity, being either preoccupied (high on anxiety) or fearful (high on both anxiety and avoidance), tended to provide narratives revealing internal conflict about their jobs as well as their personal relationships in childhood and adulthood (discussed in the section for Theme 5: Experiences of Childhood below). For instance, these participants' descriptions and reported behaviors reflected conflicts in their feelings towards both work and family.   In discussing work, they tended to describe behaving in ways in their lives that indicated that their jobs were essential to their identity, and verbally state that they liked their jobs. Yet in descriptions of their work they often appeared to have the least integrated narratives, the strongest affect and the most

complaints and dissatisfactions. These descriptions are not illustrated with extensive

direct quotes to preserve participants' privacy.

However, some brief examples of narrative inconsistencies and conflicts about

feelings towards identity, work and relationships are discussed below for the least secure

30% of the participants.

One participant (#4) from this group exemplified this tendency stating, "My

identity is essential now because it's all I do. It accentuates me, but doesn't define me."

Another participant (#5) said,

> I have no idea. Professional identity is not an essential part of me. I don't
> understand the question. I won't lose myself. I can get another job. It would be
> harder if I was an artist and let out my being. My profession does not define who I
> am.

In another part of the interview, this same participant said that "If I had an eight-to-five

job I wouldn't see my friends more or less. I need to think about it more… about my

friends in my neighborhood. I need to think about it and make time."

Another participant (# 7) illustrated this conflict in another way. After talking

openly, enthusiastically and descriptively about work, when asked about family said,

"Wow. That's really hard. Let me skip that." After some encouragement from me, she

said family was "Comfort, home, joy and life." and "I love being with my family," and

later added "guilt-inducing" and then described them as "not work." She then talked of

choosing endless hours at work and travel which caused difficult conflicts in her

marriage, friendships and parenting:

> My profession is essential to my identity. I would do this work even if I wasn't
> paid. I am part of what I do. That is why I am not a stay at home mom. It is not
> part of my identity. I don't get the same fulfillment from it.

Participant #13 stated simply that work was "essential" to personal identity and family was "close," "fun," and "nurturing." And yet when asked if travel impacted relationships, the participant said:

> I have managed this poorly [work vs. family and friends]. I have a hard time joining these two lives. It is hard to move from one to another. Friends invite me out all the time and I can't get away, am tired or not comfortable. Right now it is unsatisfactory. Mine really is unsatisfactory by anyone's standards.

These types of narratives illustrated above are consistent with Mary Main's (Main & Goldwyn, 1984) research findings that adults who are not securely attached are unable to integrate the negative and positive aspects of their childhood into a cohesive, coherent narrative. Conversely, the capacity for narrative cohesion and integration is more predictive of secure attachments later in life such as with one's own child than a childhood without difficulty.

There are several possible explanations for the one outlier whose interview was inconsistent with the answer given to this question. One possible explanation is that this outlier was the most avoidant of the participants and tended to be contradictory in her narrative, which is consistent with an avoidant (dismissive) attachment style (Main & Goldwyn, 1984). Another possible explanation is the impact of the snowballing technique and the generally socially prominent and well-educated nature of the participant group, which may have led them to produce censored answers. This theme is further discussed in the evaluation of snowballing as a recruitment technique.

Theme 5: Reported Impact of Professional Demands on Close Relationships

This research project interviewed only included participants who had worked for an extended period at time-intensive and demanding jobs which required extensive time

away from home and travel. All participants were asked about the impact of their

professional lives on their personal relationships, and whether or not they and others

close to them, such as family and friends, would say that any impact had been

satisfactorily managed. The way that participants answered this question was of note as

it was either answered quickly and definitively or the answers became quite confusing to

understand. This phenomenon is further elaborated below.

Figure 11: Impact of Job on Personal Relationships

46%

54%

■ Well Managed
■ Not Well Managed
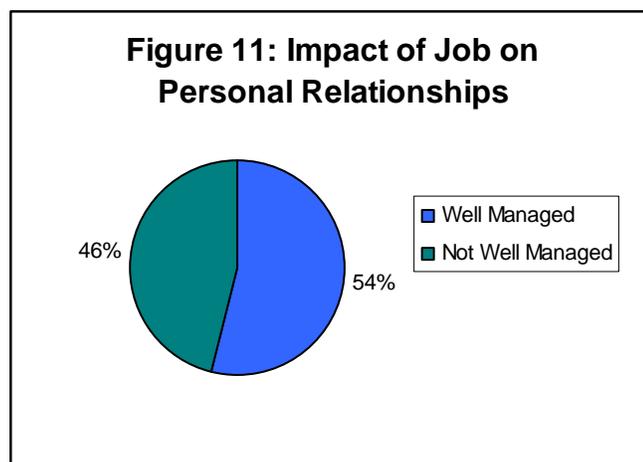
Over half of the participants, 54%, felt that they had managed the balance

between work and relationships well and that others would agree (see Figure 11). Most

were able to answer this question quickly, definitively, and with the same answer both for

how they and those close to them felt. However, many of the people who felt that they

currently managed this well referred to troubles in the past. As they learned to manage

the difficulties satisfactorily, their lives had moved on internally and externally to a better

situation. For example, participant #2 spoke of the excitement of traveling around the

world in his youth when he was immersed in work and professional relationships, but

referred to his life now being more centered on family. Another participant (#8) who

travels extensively for work spoke of learning to manage better, saying that she became

less stressed out now that she had learned that she " …needed not to please all the time or you become a mess," and said that "…at times it is more difficult to manage relationships, but I am very aware… ." All of those who indicated that managing relationships had caused problems said that they had taken deliberate but varying types of action to change the situation to be more satisfactory for themselves and others. Interestingly, most of the participants in this group tended to also fall into the more securely attached quadrant and were able to answer the questions quickly.

Of the remaining participants, almost half (46%) said that they and those close to them felt that personal relationships had not been well managed due to long office hours and travel. For one participant the response was difficult to code as this person said relating was well managed, then contradicted that, and went on to provide a substantially conflicted narrative. This person has been included in the 'Not Well Managed' category along with all the others who clearly stated that the response had not been well managed. With these participants, all spoke of others in their lives as more unhappy about separations than they were; however, these participants also tended to speak of their own loneliness directly or indirectly. These participants also spoke of unresolved conflict and broken relationships with family and friends.

Unlike those who said that they had managed the balance between work and professional life, among this not well managed group, there was a noticeable detachment in the narrative from others' distress at being separated from them. It was not that this group was necessarily away from family and friends more or less, but rather that the way it appeared to be managed and experienced appeared different. (There will not be specific quotations provided about this in order to protect participants' privacy.)

Although the current sample is too small to draw any generalizable conclusions, these results are interesting to note, as attachment research has shown that in children with a tendency towards avoidant behavior, the distress of separation is not apparent, but is physiologically felt, as opposed to those who have more ambivalent attachments and are preoccupied by separations, finding them difficult to resolve and being angry upon reunion (Ainsworth, 1978). There was a direct relationship between the average levels of attachment insecurity and how successfully conflict over time away from home was managed (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Insecurity and Managing Time Away From Close Relationships

Those who said that they managed relationships poorly all fell on the highest end of the attachment insecurity spectrum, while those who said they managed this well all fell on the lowest half of the spectrum of attachment insecurity.

Among this group of participants whose professional life had caused conflict, there were some contradictory narratives that left the interviewer confused. These participants' answers were contradictory in two ways. First, they switched their responses back and forth about whether conflict had been satisfactorily managed from

one answer to another in the narrative, without apparent recognition of the contradictions. Second, some of these participants stated that conflict had been better managed from their own perspectives, but then spoke of others in their lives being very unhappy or angry with them. This left the interviewer confused about the participant's conclusions about separations being well managed, given the extent of the conflict that it had caused.

Partnership status did not seem to influence attachment security or whether relationships with others, including friends and family were satisfactorily managed (see Figure 13). The four single participants in the study were evenly split between those who were in the most securely attached group and those that were in the least securely attached; gender also did not appear to influence the result. Those who were insecurely attached also felt relationships had been poorly managed. Of those 15% of participants who reported divorce, all were male and all fell into the highest attachment insecurity grouping.

Figure 13: Marital/Partner Status

- 54% Married/Never Divorced
- 15% Married/Previously Divorced
- 31% Never Married/Not Currently Partnered
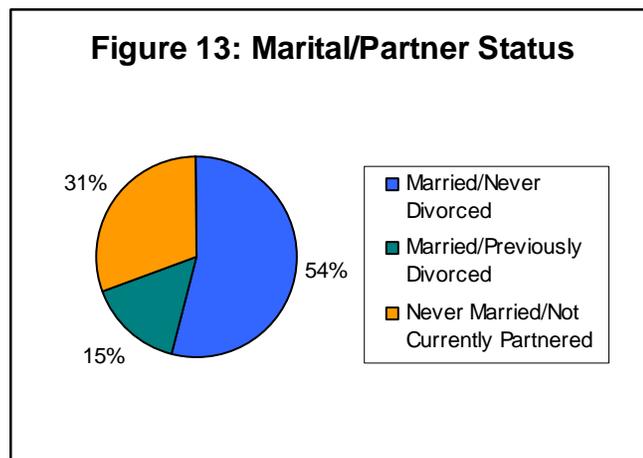
This is a small sample, but there were some clear results within it about the relationship between the level of attachment security and how well separations were managed and experienced. For some, this separation difficulty is a conflict that appears

to be better managed with age. For others that were more anxious with respect to attachment, it appeared to be a more consistent theme with their narratives being pre-occupied with past events. Gender and relationship status do not appear to be a factor. There may be many possible explanations for these results including that healthy adult attachment is important to attachment security, that many people can serve as attachment figures, and/or that attachment insecurity leads to poorer coping skills in times of stress, such as with a demanding professional life.

Theme 6: Description of Self

Participants' responses to Question #5 (see the Interview Guide in Appendix C) asking them to pick an animal to describe their profession revealed some themes that, although again related to a statistically small sample, correlate to varying degrees with a number of variables including gender, rank and class. All participants managed to turn the question from their profession to themselves. The animals that people chose to represent their profession tended to fall into three general categories: predator, workhorse and service animals.

Figure 14: Type of Animal Associated with Profession
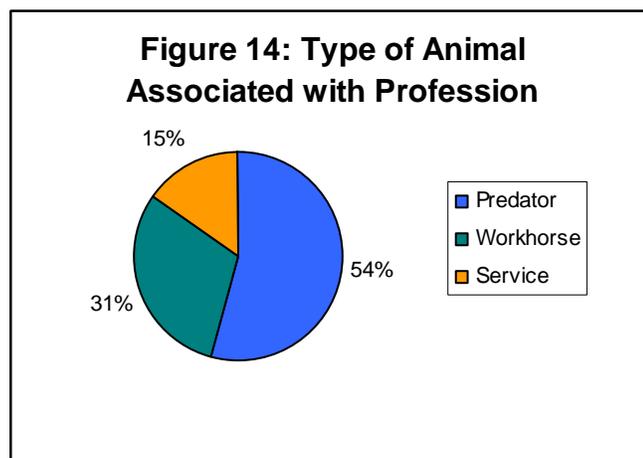
Predators represented the largest group at 54% of the participants (see Figure 14). This group chose animals that represented aggression, especially when they explained why they had chosen an animal. The factors associated with the choice of a predatory animal appeared correlated to a number of factors. Gender appeared related to the association to aggression with five of the six men using these images, while only three of the seven women chose images of aggression. Those three women tended to be in more aggressive careers where competition played a larger role in obtaining and maintaining their career positions.

The other factor associated with naming predatory animals was the participant's type of career. Those with careers which emphasized aggression tended to choose aggressive animals. Another factor that seemed of importance was the social impact -- class and prestige of position -- of the chosen profession. Those who chose aggressive animals tended to hold positions of significant rank within their organizations and within organizations that hold some institutional power. This might have been expected given that all the participants were from Washington D.C. or working with institutions based in Washington D.C., a center of national and international power. It would also appear that those in positions of privilege have internalized both the social and institutional views of their power as part of their internalized psychic and social structure and understanding of themselves. They also had a higher propensity to use the defense of externalizing aggression in their narrative. In describing their professions, this group used images such as a cat, lion, or pit bull. Several used images of the owl for wisdom, but then described the predatory nature of the owl. The most common animal selected was the lion with three participants selecting it. The descriptions varied in their aggressiveness.

Participant #10 said, "[A] predatory animal. If you are really good at what you, do you are a pit bull." Another participant (#5) chose a lion saying that it was "aggressive" and "the king of the jungle to make money or to get on top," and in other places in her interview used images such as "survival of the fittest" in describing her job. Another participant (#13) said, "A lion. It's a competition for the survival of the fittest. The highest performers survive. The weakest go."

The smallest group was the 15% of those participants who characterized themselves as service animals. This group consisted of two participants either in a caring profession or part of a more elderly generation who viewed their work in government-related jobs as a service. These participants used language to describe their work that reflected an internal commitment to serving others. One participant described her profession with words such as "contributor" or "a service animal in service of the country." The other, using the bird as the animal of choice said,

> I am trying to think of a nurturing animal, and …well, birds are nurturing
> and have a sense of community. I see my profession as giving people what
> they need to take flight on their own. Realized potential. Giving people
> the potential to take off on their own.

Interestingly, from a gender perspective, none of the men categorized themselves as service animals although three were in a service profession. Instead, they described themselves using aggressive animals or described the predatory nature of the animal that they chose. One of these men, who had the least aggressive descriptions of his professional life, still described himself using images of lording it over others. He answered "I am not sure. I can't think of an animal that comes to mind. I can't visualize an animal doing this job." He then went onto say that he chose an elephant because of

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wisdom and power and " …a wise old owl spreading understanding to people who don't want it or need it." Of the six participating men all but one used images of aggression to describe their profession. The one outlier had not completed college.

The 31% of participants who categorized themselves as workhorses included both women and one man. These participants tended to see their careers as representing the workhorse functions of society and appeared to reflect the nature of the actual work performed. They often used images of mules and other animals which carried heavy burdens on a daily basis. They described their choice of animal saying, like participant #11 who chose a mule, that they are, "Strong and hardworking, steady all day long [pause] stubborn, strong and irritating." They went on to elaborate about their work conditions that, " …many times out here this is miserable."

These images often reflected a social location or position where one was burdened by others from above. For instance, participant #4 chose a dog for reasons of loyalty, then continued, "Paramilitaryish with rank and responsibility. You don't bad-mouth the job or bosses. You do as you are told [with] obedience." Another participant (#3) who had the most socially prestigious job, but not the most education, listed a few animals instinctively saying, " …work horse, rabbit because it runs around, hamster because it runs in circles and a snake because there is a beginning and end." All the descriptions of the animals, even the snake which is typically thought of as more of a predator, were described in more passive language or in less powerful ways. Participant #3 then revised her choice of animal, "Workhorse because it carries a lot of responsibility." This participant also chose a racehorse because it had to be quick and nimble, and "win."

In this group of participants who provided images of workhorses, 75% were performing tasks that are not perceived as prestigious by others in society and rather are in service of those in more powerful positions. For the most part, these participants were aware of their professional social ranking and referred to it in subtle ways over the course of the interview. Their self image, like those who described predatory animals, appears to be internalized both from society and from the tasks of the job. One participant (#12) described her work as misunderstood by America and chose a phoenix because her profession "has problems and yet rises up again." She added that it was " …an old and noble profession because someone has to do it. It is a hard job and is put down a lot." This group of four participants contained the three participants who had not finished college. The fourth outlier was someone who had a graduate degree but had experienced economic hardship due to downsizing.

Despite their choice of animal, the participants identifying themselves as workhorses had successful and long-term careers in their fields. They also had increased their rank or compensation for their expertise and experience. The source of these internalized images for this group was interesting and reflected in their narratives. Their internal image of a workhorse did not necessarily appear to relate to poor internal self-regard (when other parts of the interview are considered), to their achieved rank within their company or class at birth. Rather, the internal image of their professional work as a workhorse or mule appeared to be related to society's view of their current profession. For example, participants said things like, "someone has to do it," or, when speaking about the image of a mule, "They are strong and hardworking [pause] steady all day long." Of note, this group mirrored the group of participants that identified their

profession with images of aggression in that the most important internalized image for their profession seemed to reflect the current work position and the general social status of their work.

Although a small sample, the internalization of others view of their profession reflects the impact on individuals of class and education in our society. Despite the often idealizing United States national social narratives about equality, the capitalistic economic model appears from the results of this study to act as a mirror which values and devalues its members based on the type of work they perform and the function of this work within our society. Among participants in this study, these external social values appear to then become internalized as part of a professional identity.

Theme 7: Coping Skills

An additional twelfth question (see the Interview Guide in Appendix C) was added during the first interview which inquired as to what kind of coping skills participants used to deal with their jobs and create success, and where they felt that these skills originated. Most answered this question quickly and easily as if they operated in life with a conscious awareness of their coping skills.

The first coping mechanism that almost all of the participants surveyed reported using was relationships, regardless of their attachment styles in close relationships. Two participants, who were characterized as high on relationship avoidance and anxiety, were exceptions. These avoidant and anxious participants spoke of using tools and strategies rather than people and relationships to learn to manage stress and to cope. Apart from these exceptions, participants described close relationships as important to them as they coped with the stresses and demands of their professional careers. These close

attachments were varied in expression and included many types of attachment objects

including partners, friends, family and pets. Some participants were philosophical and

practical, such as participant #1, who spoke of coping as "not letting it take over" and of

"venting to her husband" at the end of a frustrating day. She also spoke of "working hard

at making friends" and having hobbies. Others spoke of their partners offering them

support in practical ways by caring for the home and family. Participant #10 said that, "I

give more credit to my wife than me. She raised four kids and managed the house… .

She wanted me to do what I wanted to do and I wanted her to do what she wanted to do."

Another participant (#2) spoke of the intimacy of his relationship with his wife saying,

> Personal relationships are important. Her love and affection… and
> physical relationship. You get down sometimes about the world. Your
> last resource is to have someone to hug. To love you and make things
> better. I would not have coped easily without this.

This coping strategy reflects the earliest ideas of Bowlby (1969/82) that attachment

figures are people we go to in times of stress and danger to gain a sense of safety.

The second coping mechanism that people mentioned to manage the stresses of

their demanding work and travel schedule was keeping perspective on things. Most felt

that when asked how they acquired or who had taught them to keep the perspective that

had made them successful at work, people tended to mention either learning these skills

from their parents or acquiring these skills through experience and age. For instance,

participant #13 said his father was the most influential saying that he would ask the

participant "'Did anyone die? No, good: calm down.'" He went on to reflect on his

father's statement saying how, "In the Army people worry about dying. It's the only

important thing. All else pales in comparison." This participant described how it

allowed him in his professional life to remain calm in a pressured professional job saying,

"I can walk into a room and size it out. For that kind of thinking, Dad is number one."

Others described the family environment and roles like participant #8, who described her

family as helping her to develop a positive and balanced life view and later she had

developed additional skills throughout her professional career. She said,

> Mom was positive and happy. Middle children [like the participant] are
> pleasers… .There was not a lot of negativity in my house growing up. I've learned
> not to please all the time or you become a mess. I created a balance. It helps in
> work too. It's the same as private life. The same thing.

Interestingly, those who had experienced more entangled parental relationships

tended to report that they had acquired these skills independently when first asked the

question. When the interviewer repeated the question about an early childhood role

model, most of the participants with the difficult parent child relationships

acknowledged, albeit begrudgingly, that they had taken something of their current skill

set from a parental attribute. One participant mentioned their educational opportunities as

the place wherein they had learned coping skills, but when the question was repeated,

listed their parent as helping them with practical relational skills. Another participant

repeatedly distanced himself from the conflicts and failures of his parents while

discussing them in a preoccupied manner throughout the interview. Finally, the

participant acknowledged that his sense of humor originated from his father. Another

participant with a difficult family life first spoke of the skills that she had developed

herself and then said, "I have an extremely expressive family. They are good at laughing.

It helped at work."

There were two outliers among the 13 who did not include family as a place they had learned something. They were on the more avoidant spectrum with regard to attachment style and were also the two youngest participants. Perhaps this reflects a developmental stage of separation from family that tends to occur later in modern society, or perhaps it relates to their more fraught family environment from which they developed avoidant coping mechanisms. One of these participants responded to the question saying, "I always think that I am on the brink of snapping." Unlike other respondents, family only represented stress; friends comprised her containing relationship. She added that, "Honestly my friends are a coping mechanism. I don't always get a solution, but they just understand. It is the same at work." However, this participant finished by saying, "I wish I had coping mechanisms." The other participant responded by saying that the source of professional success came from "a fairly good sense of drive and motivation. I am money oriented." This participant then said, "It takes will and self leadership." Again, it is worth noting the attachment theory premise about the lack of an integrated narrative of childhood -- saying it is the lack of integration, rather than the quality of the childhood experience, that is predictive of secure adult attachment (Main & Goldwyn, 1984).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the six themes were separate but all related to various components of the attachment style themes. The ECR attachment instrument categorization of attachment appeared related to other factors in grouping people into categories for a number of questions on the Interview Guide (see Appendix C). A major finding that was not intended at the outset of the research was that for these participants adversity did not

predict problems at work and in many cases seemed to give people skills that became the foundations of their work. Additionally, the extent of travel did not appear to impact participants' attachment security. However, attachment security did appear to impact people's lives either professionally or personally, and those with unresolved, incoherent and less well integrated childhood narratives who scored as more insecurely attached seemed to struggle more. These struggles were accentuated by their often avoidant coping patterns that did not involve relationships. Others, while still scoring on the higher end of insecurity, appeared better able to use attachment figures -- however inadequate -- and seemed to cope better. Attachment security was far from the only factor to impact people. Internalized social constructions such as gender, class and job type, as well as social experiences of an era all impacted participants' experiences of themselves, their intimate relationships and their place in the world.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between attachment, identity and profession by examining professionals who travel frequently or work long hours away from home. Through using this group of participants, this study was an attempt to explore how issues related to attachment and profession are negotiated based on attachment styles, and also how professional identity construction might help meet attachment needs. This mixed method but primarily qualitative, flexible methods study explored the following questions: Is there a relationship between attachment style and choice of profession as described by selected workers who choose careers that require spending long periods of time away from home? How do such workers say that their professional choice contributes to their satisfaction and success? How do individuals cope with the challenges of spending long periods away?

Summary of Findings

This research study led to a number of findings concerning professional life and attachment that fell into two major themes. The first theme concerned participant reactions to adverse and challenging external circumstances beginning in childhood, which fostered development of coping skills and resilience than and later at work as well as in managing close relationships. The second theme related to ideas about the self and particularly to personal values in professional life, which appeared to be internalized from society and appeared to interact with ideas internalized from childhood.

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The first theme encompassed four findings, two of which were the most important and consistent findings from the study. The first was that among this group of successful professionals the majority, or 76%, fell into the securely attached category. Of this secure group, they tended to have more avoidant than anxious characteristics. Of the 24% who fell into insecure categories on the quantitative attachment scale, none were severely insecure. This participant group of successful professionals was generally securely attached and able to succeed at challenging and demanding careers over significant periods of time without becoming too distracted by intrapsychic forces. This is consistent with research showing that severely compromised attachment is related to compromised self-agency and reflective functioning, which allows accurate understanding and assessment of others' intentionality and actions and is thought to predict meta- and micro-cognitive functioning (Fonagy, et al., 2002).

The second important finding was that the participants all voluntarily reported experiences of adversity in childhood during latency and early adolescence although they were not directly asked about these. The study interviews seemed to reveal, among its participants -- although this was not an initially intended research topic -- that adversity can often shape people's motivations, intentions and meaning-makings in ways that influence the course of their lives positively. Virtually all of these participants described developing many strengths and skills out of their adversities. These coping capacities they carried into their professional lives as aptitudes, familiar ways of operating, and even as passions. Most participants volunteered adverse experiences rather than positive ones as shaping experiences for professional life. The results of this research study highlights the importance of not being certain as researchers and as clinicians about the

effects of "negative" experiences on individuals, as experiences of adversity may create the foundations of success.

Related to the above finding was a third finding that generally the most successful, secure, and personally content of the participants were able to manage and integrate their feelings about adverse experiences in a way that acknowledged some strength from a parent even if the parent or the childhood experiences the parents facilitated had been inadequate. Perhaps the capacity to integrate the good and bad in a caretaker, and the capacity for gratitude, are foundations for greater peace. The capacity to give credit to a parent in adulthood may also relate to Erikson's (1982) ideas of adulthood as a time of generativity, care of others, and a sense of the generational perspective. Problems in the developmental tasks of adulthood may be related to an inability for integration and gratitude that could be fostered by what Erikson (1982) understands to be problems developed at this age such as a sense of rejectivity, authoritism (or authoritarianism) and isolation.

The fourth finding was that more securely attached participants generally reported a greater ability to manage time away from close relationships in ways that were satisfactory to them and to those close to them. Generally, poor management of relationships, if it had occurred, was resolved from practical and applied learning from their environment and from earlier mistakes. However, those who reported relationships that had not been well managed tended to focus on others' discontentment with the situation rather than their own, and this group was the least secure on the attachment spectrum. This group also generally did not report learning from unsatisfactory experiences, but rather focused on the relationship as the problem. A related finding was

that those participants who reported using close relationships to cope with the stresses and demands of their careers tended to be generally more contented with their professional and personal lives. These last two findings from this study relate to the literature which suggests that strategies for coping with vulnerability and patterns of relating are learned in close relationships during early childhood and tend to consistently replicate themselves during adulthood, with the associated satisfactions or contradictions they involve (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Fonagy, et al., 2002).

The second grouping of themes found in the study was related to participants' sense of themselves. Based on the results of the study, societal hierarchies and symbolic place markers seem to be internalized with impact on identity and self-perception, as Thompson (2000) discussed. The facets of personal and professional identity seem to be shaped by societal experiences and professional choices as well as childhood experience, with the current profession being quite relevant to participants' sense of themselves. The social capital and privilege conferred by some participants' current professions and the power conferred with their particular institutional associations aligned closely with the type of animal selected as representing their profession (which participants then spontaneously related to themselves). For example, one participant in a position of institutional power put it more succinctly and directly than the others saying, "I like the cachet or prestige associated with this career. I like to talk about what I do." However, the participants' belief that profession was essential to their own sense of identity was not consistent with any other factors in the study except perhaps their explicitly reported sense of satisfaction with their chosen profession even if this profession was described ambivalently.

These results remind the social work profession to consider not only early experience of clients, but also the impact of the messages and mirroring from society that occur daily, and how these may shape self-worth and achievement. United States society places individuals in a class-based hierarchy based on wealth, profession, and education with often little importance placed on other factors that make up an individual including interests, intelligence, thoughtfulness, happiness and relationships.

A final and surprising finding was that attachment security was very strongly correlated to age, with the most insecure participants being the youngest in their 30's and early 40's, and the most secure being in their 50's. The elderly group of participants in their 70's and 80's all fell in the mid-range of attachment security, perhaps suggesting that old age may be a time of more uncertainty due to issues such as health, loss of relationships and increasing isolation and economic insecurity, whereas the 50's may be a time where life feels more settled and calm. The reasons that the younger group felt more attachment insecurity were unclear, but may be aggravated by social factors such as longer periods of settling down along with the career demands caused by less seniority and positions of power in their careers. This is an area that needs further research and clarification to draw any meaningful conclusions.

Results that were not of significance to attachment style among the participant group were religion, marriage/partner status and amount of time away from home. This was a small sample, so it may be that these factors need to be further examined with research that includes a larger number of participants to more accurately determine their significance.

Consistency of the Results with Existing Literature

The findings of the study were consistent with the research literature on attachment in several ways. First, the literature on attachment suggests that those with less anxious or avoidant attachments will have more integrated narratives (Main & Goldwyn, 1984). The results of this study were consistent with these findings, with the relative integration of the participants' narratives being related to their placement on the attachment security scale. Second, the very limited literature available suggests that those who are more avoidant earn more that those who are anxiously attached. In this study, all of the professionals were successful at their careers, and only one fell into the anxiously attached category. For this participant, attachment anxiety appeared to have had no impact on professional success.

A finding that did not correlate to the literature was the strong relationship between age and attachment in the participants. The younger participants were all in the most insecurely attached group and there were no older members in this group.

Another finding among the participants was that attachment security appeared not to be related to gender or to partner/marriage status. The literature on this subject as discussed earlier is still emerging and somewhat incomplete, but did not contradict these findings.

Strengths of the Study

The study had a number of strengths in its methodology as well as a few weaknesses that would need to be adjusted for if it were to be replicated in the future. The strengths of the study were that the mixed methodology of the study, using both qualitative and quantitative measures, yielded rich responses which would not have been

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as meaningful if either was used alone. Although the results did not fully answer the question of the relationship between profession, attachment and identity, perhaps because the question is so complex, it did reveal other important strengths-based information about the origins of professional success such as the strong correlation between childhood adversity and the development of key strengths that shape professional life and coping skills. The qualitative questions provided rich insight into people's professional and interpersonal lives and the manner in which these intertwined. The questions were also successful in that they were not intrusive and could be answered briefly, revealing little information other than adjective lists; but they were also evocative for all participants who spoke at great length about childhood adversity and coping skills although they were not directly asked.

Additionally, the process of interviewing became an interesting source of information as it evoked some strong responses. All participants spoke unprompted and at great length about their childhoods, sometimes for as long as 45 minutes, when asked simply to use five adjectives to describe relationships with family and friends in childhood (see Appendix C). Generally, participants who described themselves as loners talked the longest in the interview and often commented on this contradiction. This group also tended to be on the more avoidant end of the spectrum with more contradictory personal narratives about their lives. Generally, the most securely attached participants were the ones who were able to most clearly discuss childhood experience with emotional distance and adult perspective.

Another interesting part of the interview process was people's responses to the quantitative measure (see Appendix D) as compared to the qualitative interview guide

(see Appendix C). One snowballing source stopped when a prospective study member who had agreed to participate saw the quantitative measure and wrote an email stating that, "After reading the survey instrument, I am going to withdraw for personal reasons. Sorry to disappoint you. Best Wishes." Others who were prospective participants were in this snowball strand considering participation in the study grew silent after seeing this measure, which may or may not be coincidental. Additionally, another prospective participant agreed to participate and then, after she saw the survey, repeatedly avoided all attempts at contact. Others participated but were slow to return the survey, having to be repeatedly asked. Interestingly, this contrasted to the experience of the qualitative interviews where most participants talked unprompted at great length about personal experiences and vulnerabilities in adulthood and childhood, and a number had to be curtailed by the researcher as they became too revealing or emotional to maintain the intended study parameters and protect participants' privacy.

Weakness in the Research Process and Suggested Changes for Replication

The quantitative measure was also successful and generally mirrored the qualitative interviews. However, a concern about the reliability of the quantitative measure was two-fold. First, this professional group may have been knowledgeable about quantitative self measures as some referred during the interview to personality and other types of quantitative measures being administered at work. Because the measure uses self reporting, it may be transparent and be easy to adjust answers based on socially acceptable normative ideas. Second, manipulation of answers may be especially prevalent if one is using a snowball sample where participants feel less anonymous than they do in other sampling strategies, and particularly among a well-informed and

generally professionally visible group. If the study is replicated, elimination of snowballing is suggested to engender increased feelings of privacy and eliminate the potential bias that this may introduce into participant answers.

Another suggestion if this study is replicated would be to adapt the qualitative questionnaires to include several more direct questions concerning identity and childhood towards the end of the survey to obtain more analyzable responses to compare against the narrative. These types of questions were not asked, as the researcher imagined that they might elicit avoidant or incomplete answers, but the survey interview process revealed that participants were generally more open after talking for a period of time and might indeed have answered additional questions at the end of the interview.

Limitations of This Study

The sample size of 13 participants was small and therefore not generalizable to the broader population despite some consistent findings. Additionally, the sample was not racially diverse, did not represent a complete diversity of ethnicities and religions, and did not include any participant in their 20's. The researcher hoped at the outset to recruit an ethnoculturally diversified sample, but encountered few respondents from other demographics before the study was full. This again means that the results are not generalizable to a broader group, but may rather represent only the experiences of the group studied. Had a widely diverse sample with regard to ethnicity been chosen, however, the study could have had another limitation, in that in a designedly small sample of 12 -15, too few representatives of any one ethnic group might have been present. Additionally, not all socio-economic classes were examined by design, as the study was intended to examine attributes of success rather than examining a more

vulnerable population coping with other hindrances such as societal oppression. Questions related to sexuality and disabilities were not asked as they were deemed to be too invasive and revealing. The lack of racial and class diversity leads to some further questions about success, class mobility and privilege in American society, and how these relate to professional success. This is an area that necessitates further examination and clarification in order to fully understand the impact of attachment.

Implications for Social Work Policy and Practice

The implications for this study for social work policy and practice include areas for further research and some clinical reminders from the individual stories of this group of participants. First, among these participants, it seems that attachment security and professional success may be linked in some way, as earlier research suggests. Although the results are not generalizable until further work is done, they do suggest that clinical inquiry about attachment security may be relevant for those who are experiencing problems in their work lives. Additionally, these results suggest the importance of fostering social policy which is family-friendly on all socio-economic levels so that adequate bonding can occur between the caregiver and child, as well as the importance of early intervention to helped stressed families with young children.

Second, the results perhaps suggest that adversity can build strengths, which can be significant assets in professional life. These findings are reminders of the importance of finding the individual client's strengths and coping skills to build ego functioning and competence in the face of a society that may not hold a positive narrative and reflection about them.

Lastly, the results from this participant group seem to suggest that class and the prestige of the type of work performed may become internalized and impact professionals' sense of themselves and the worth of their professional and educational lives. The impact of this societal message should be noted and addressed on a clinical level, especially when negative projections from early childhood have been internalized..

Further research on the impact of profession, employers' institutional power and self-image is needed, as is further research on attachment and oppression so as not to confuse the impact of attachment issues on professional life with issues of oppression. For instance, one important area of further research would be to expand attachment-based theory to a societal level to understand how the interaction of childhood attachment successes or challenges with societal oppression might impact an individual's attachment to society and, therefore, the capacity to interact professionally with its various oppressive institutions and professional organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, professional life and attachment do appear related in ways that need further elaboration and further study. Study of the applications of attachment theory to a broader array of areas and particular groups seems relevant for study particularly because such study may impact both the successes and the configurations of individuals' professional lives, and therefore their economic security base (Bowlby, 1969/82). In particular, it seems important to distinguish the factors that drive and impact resilience to discover what they are and to discriminate which are internally generated, family related or socially acquired.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

January 21, 2008

Dear Participant,

My name is Gwendolyn Cutting Wishard. I am a graduate student at Smith School for Social Work who is completing a master's-level thesis researching aspects of professional choice and relationships. Information gathered will be used in the construction of my thesis, and for possible future publications and/or presentations. The data collected in these interviews will be used to make recommendations for helping professionals, those in your profession and other types of workers. The thesis will be disseminated to colleagues at the Smith School for Social Work while maintaining your confidentiality in accordance with the guidelines of the college.

I am looking for a sample of men and women who are twenty-five years old or older who have been working continuously at a job for at least two years that requires extensive time away from home. By participating in this study I am asking you to contribute to my research by completing a brief survey which will be administered in person (the ECR-RR Survey is published on-line), an hour-long semi-structured interview that would address topics such as your feelings about your profession, and its impact on personal life. I am interested in your ideas about professional choice related to independence and closeness in relationships. I am especially interested in how you coped with being away from home for long periods of time. The interview will contain specific questions gauged at collecting information on these topics. I will also collect demographic data such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, and level of education which you can decline to answer if you so choose. The interviews will be conducted either in a convenient and mutually decided place, or on the telephone. I will audiotape and take hand-written notes.

There are possible risks associated with this study. During the hour-long interview, I will be addressing personal material. By talking about your professional life as well as personal relationships you may feel uncomfortable, anxious, or restless. A provided list of resources is attached to the informed consent.[Appendix J] Please take the list with you after the interview and consider contacting these agencies if any discomfort arises. Participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to not answer questions and to withdraw from the study. After the interview is completed, you still have the right to withdraw your interview from the study until April 30, 2008 when the results will be prepared.

Benefits may be had through participation in this study. Asking you to detail your professional life may help you gain further understanding of yourself and the effects of your professional choice. The interview may also help you gain a new perspective or even simply to have the opportunity to share them with someone else. By volunteering for this study, you may also benefit from involving yourself in a study that will provide essential information for future research and practice. The data collected here will help other researchers in their work in striving to provide better care and advocacy of various types of professionals, especially those who must be away from home for extended periods, and their families. Monetary compensation will not be provided for participating in the interview.

I will maintain your confidentiality while collecting, coding, analyzing and presenting the data. In order to ensure confidentiality, an identification number will be assigned to you upon joining the study. Your name and corresponding number as well as your informed consent form will be kept locked and safely stored. All other information including printed transcriptions, audio tapes and field notes will be kept locked in a separate location to ensure your name cannot be matched to your number. Your name will not be stated on the audiotapes; only ID numbers will be used to identify you. Even though you may have been referred to the study by a friend or colleague, I will not reveal that you participated in the study. However, complete confidentiality as to your participation may not be realistic in that if you were referred by a friend or colleague, they may infer that you are participating. All identifying information will be removed before sharing data with anyone other than me. Those who may have access to the data will be only my advisor, possibly a transcriber, a statistical data analyst and myself. In publications or presentations the data will be represented in the aggregate (or whole). If and when quotations are used, identifying information will be carefully disguised. All tapes, notes, and transcriptions will be kept locked for a period of three years in accordance with federal regulations. Beyond the three-year point, the data will continue to be kept locked and secure until I personally destroy it.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may also refuse to answer any question without stating a reason. The final date for withdrawal from the study will be before the results section of the paper is prepared, April 30 2008. If you decide to withdraw, all materials relating to your participation will be destroyed. Again a resource list for outside counseling assistance is attached to the informed consent. Please take it with you following the interview and contact any agency if discomfort is experienced. If you have any additional questions, have lost your resource list or wish to withdraw, please contact me:

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY. PLEASE KEEP THIS CONSENT FOR YOUR RECORDS.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Interviewer   Date

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION. IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS OR NEED TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY PLEASE CONTACT:

Name: Gwendolyn Cutting Wishard

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

I am interested if the questions asked during the interview impact people differently depending on their various experiences and identities. Therefore as part of this study I have included some brief demographic questions about how you may self-identify. You are free to omit any and all responses to these questions.

1. Age
2. Gender (male, female or transgender)
3. Race
4. Ethnicity/religion
5. Years in your profession
6. Highest education level obtained
7. Days per month you travel or average hours at the office per day
8. Close relationship/family/marital status
9. Children   (yes / no)

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. What is your profession?

2. How long have you been in your profession? What did you do before choosing
    your current profession (e.g., trucking/stewardessing, consulting, etc.)?

3. How would you describe the culture of your working community? For example,
    close versus distant relationships, or free flowing versus tightly structured
    community?   How do these characteristics impact you?

4. What images, symbols or adjectives would you use to describe the concepts of
    family, friends, profession and self? How would you describe your ideas of
    family, friends, profession and self? For instance, some might describe their
    profession using the adjective "heroic" or the symbol "a warrior."

5. What symbols would you pick to best characterize your profession? For example,
    in describing your industry, if it were an animal, what animal would you pick and
    why?

6. What was your path to choosing your professional as a career? Do you think that
    this is similar to the experience of other professionals that you know?

7. What are the most rewarding and difficult aspects of the career? Could you
    describe why?

8. Do you professionally socialize and/or develop friendships with others in your
    profession?

9. In light of your profession, how have you experienced relationships with friends
    and family members? How have you experienced the challenges of maintaining

these relationships? Do you think this way of maintaining is satisfactory? Would your partners say that it is satisfactory?

10. Could you use five adjectives to describe what relationships with friends and family members (i.e., father, mother and siblings or others close to you) in your childhood were like?   Did you experience absences from family or friends such as losses of relationship through death or divorce etc? Do these losses impact you today? If so how?

11. How does your professional choice relate to your sense of personal identity? Is your professional identity essential or non-essential?

12. What are any coping skills that you utilize in managing the challenges and stresses of your working life as you described them, and where do you think you learned these? What skills do you think you learned in childhood and from whom? (question added during the first interview)

Quantitative Adult Attachment Research Tool

Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R)

Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory
Brennan, Clark, & Shaver (1998)

The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Write the number in the space provided, using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly			Neutral/ Mixed			Agree Strongly

___ 1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
___ 2. I worry about being abandoned.
___ 3. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
___ 4. I worry a lot about my relationships.
___ 5. Just when my partner starts to get close to me I find myself pulling away.
___ 6. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
___ 7. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
___ 8. I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.
___ 9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
___ 10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.
___ 11. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
___ 12. I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes scares them away.
___ 13. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
___ 14. I worry about being alone.
___ 15. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
___ 16. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
___ 17. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
___ 18. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
___ 19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
___ 20. Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.

___ 21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
___ 22. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
___ 23. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
___ 24. If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.
___ 25. I tell my partner just about everything.
___ 26. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
___ 27. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
___ 28. When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.
___ 29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
___ 30. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
___ 31. I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.
___ 32. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.
___ 33. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
___ 34. When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.
___ 35. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
___ 36. I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.

Appendix E

Cover Letter for the Informed Consent Letter

January 21, 2008

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my thesis research for a master's

degree at Smith School for Social Work. The research that I am completing will involve

researching professional identity and relationships. As we discussed, I am forwarding to

you an informed consent form which must be read and signed before your participation

begins. Please read this carefully as it is for your information and protection. If you have

any questions, I can be reached at my cell phone number: 202-406-0066; if not, please

return this form to me in person when we meet or by mail if we are to conduct your

interview by phone. I suggest that you keep a copy for your own records.

Thank you again for your interest,

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Cutting Wishard

Flyer to Recruit

- **Are you someone who is away from home frequently at work or traveling for work?**

- **Would you be interested in giving your thoughts and opinions on this subject by participating in a study about modern professionals who are required to spend many hours away from their close relationships because of work?**

I am a graduate student completing my master's thesis research. I am interested in your thoughts and ideas about modern professional life and close relationships. If you would like to learn more about this study, please contact me.

Appendix G

Email for Request for Participation

Dear_____,

It has been suggested to me that you may be interested or willing to participate in a study on professional life and close relationships that is being conducted as part of my research for my master's thesis at Smith College for Social Work. I am interested in better understanding the relationship between these factors in modern life so as to help those who are in the process of selecting careers or managing the challenges of balancing work and home life.

Your participation would take approximately one hour in total and involve a short demographic survey, 36 questions to rate from agree to disagree as well as answering several questions in an in person or telephone interview about the nature of your profession and its impact on personal relationships. If you spend long period of time away from home traveling or at the office, have been working at your profession for at least two consecutive years in a row, and are 25 or over in years of age you probably meet the criteria for participation in this study.

If this is of interest to you please contact me at gcutting@email.smith.edu to let me know you would be willing to participate. Thank you very much for your time.

Gwendolyn Cutting Wishard

Appendix H

Transcriber Confidentiality

This thesis project is firmly committed to the principal that researcher confidentiality must be protected and to all the ethics, values and practical requirements for participant protection laid down by federal guidelines and by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee. In the Service of the commitment:

- All volunteer and professional transcribers for this project shall sign assurance of confidentiality.
- A volunteer or professional transcriber shall be aware that the identity of the participants in research studies is confidential information, as are identifying information about participants and individual responses to questions. The organizations participating in the study, the geographical location of the study, the method of participant recruitment, the subject matter of the study, and the hypotheses being tested are also confidential information. Specific research findings and conclusions are usually confidential until they have been published or presented in public.
- The researcher for this project, Gwendolyn Wishard, shall be responsible for ensuring that all volunteer and professional transcribers handling data are instructed on the procedures for keeping the data secure and maintaining all of the information in and about the study in confidence, and that they have signed this pledge. At the end of the project, all materials shall be returned to the investigator for secure storage according to federal guidelines.

PLEDGE

I hereby certify that I will maintain the confidentiality of all information from all the studies with which I have involvement. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate or provide access to such information, except directly to the researcher, Gwendolyn Wishard, for this project. I understand that violation of this pledge is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of professional or volunteer services with the project, and may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

_____ Signature

_____ Date

_____ Gwendolyn Wishard

_____ Date

Appendix I

Initial Screening Questions

1. How long have you been in your profession? Have you been there at least two consecutive years?

2. What is you profession?

3. Do you spend long periods of time away from home? If so how long and how often on average are you away from home?

4. Have you had a close personal relationship at some point in your adult life?

5. Are you over 25 years old?

Appendix J

Referral Sources

1. National Association of Social Workers (www.socialworkers.org) Click on "Find a Social Worker"

2. Clinical Social Work Guild 49 (1-800-398-5365) Ask for counseling referrals.

3. American Psychological Association (www.**apa**.org)

4. American Psychiatric Association (www.psych.org)

5. In case of an emergency or if these resources do not work for you, your local hospital emergency room where the staff can refer you to a counselor.

Appendix K

Human Subjects Approval Letter

SMITH COLLEGE
School for
Social Work

Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

January 24, 2008

Gwendolyn Cutting Wishard

Dear Wendy,

Your amended materials have been reviewed. You have done a good job on a very extensive revision and all is now in order. We are, therefore, happy to give final approval to your project.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your most interesting study.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman / Dhw

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Gael McCarthy, Research Advisor