USING ATTACHMENT THEORY AS A LENS TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF AN ADULT EDUCATOR

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"The moment when someone can participate

in another's lived story – a different kind of

human contact is created"

Daniel Stern (2004)

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ABSTRACT

The attachment theory created by John Bowlby has had a lasting impact on our understanding of child development and more recently on adult development. The primary aim of this dissertation is to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. There is an abundance of literature on attachment from infancy to adulthood, incorporating all forms of relationships. However, there is little research carried out on attachment and the implications for adult teaching and learning. This thesis outlines the key tenets of Bowlby's theory, while drawing on the recent research studies of leading theorists, to lay the foundations for the study. Concepts such as the attachment behavioural system, secure and insecure attachment styles, internal working models and the strange situation are discussed. The study also explores how adult learners and educators are influenced by their own attachment styles and internal working models and how this impacts on the teacher-student relationship. The paper also looks at the implications for both the learner and educator when handling new situations and new knowledge. In addition, the concept of educational biography and narrative is explored as a means of altering or transforming an individual's internal working models and facilitating the creation of new knowledge.

A qualitative approach was used in the study. Three participants work in the area of counselling and adult education. The fourth participant is a project co-ordinator and adult educator with a children's charity advocacy organisation. The participants were invited to narrate their stories of their attachment experiences from childhood to

adulthood, which aimed to offer a potentially developmental and reflective space for each participant in revisiting their lived attachment histories. Stories were gathered through the interviews to gain insight into how these experiences play out in the educator-student relationship. The participants' stories were presented in the form of four core narratives. The narratives and findings were then further analysed and significant themes emerged in the stories told.

The findings from this study show that the attachment paradigm offers definite value and useful insights for educators and facilitators of adult teaching and learning.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Self introduction

I am a counsellor and adult educator with ten years of counselling practice who continues to practise in the field of counselling education. Based on my transformative experience of returning to education, I had a wish to help others achieve a similar successful outcome. My motivation for teaching in the area of Adult and Community Education comes from personal experience of wanting to make a difference.   Over the past ten years I have been lucky enough to share in other peoples' experiences as they seek answers in their own lives, both in the counselling room and classroom. As well as establishing a successful private practice, I have been fortunate to tutor in the field of counselling and psychotherapy over the past six years – an environment where I never cease to learn and be amazed with the lives and learning of my learners.   I have an interest in teaching and learning processes that support the learner and promotes self development, enabling each individual to become competent practitioners.   One of the ultimate satisfactions for me in facilitating adult learning is observing participants blossom on their journey over the year and listening to students describe their personal development. Even though I have not travelled very far yet, in terms of teaching and learning, I feel that I have covered thousands of miles - many of them across uncharted territory, trying to explore new ways of teaching and learning with my adult learners.

For me, teaching offers an opportunity for continual learning and personal growth. One of my hopes as an educator is to infuse a love of learning in my learners, as I

share my own passion for learning with them. As a tutor on a counselling training course, I believe it is essential for me to professionally develop research knowledge, in order to firmly ground me in my work. Given that I work as a counselling educator I wished to research a topic that might usefully contribute to my teaching practice and student learning.

1.2   Inspiration for the study

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) provides the framework for this current thesis. Last year while completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Adult and Community Education, I decided to research attachment theory and adult learning as part of the 'Psychology of Adult Learning' module with Dr. Ted Fleming. It was a revelation to discover my own attachment style. This was prized new knowledge for me as I had never thought about my own attachment style on a deeper level until this point in my life. I became curious as a teacher and as a counsellor about the nature of one's attachment experiences and how this influences the teacher-student relationship.

Attachment theory proposes that we learn to form and continue relationships based on our accumulated experiences of relationships (Bowlby, 1988). Both the students and teachers initial approach to new relationships is therefore formed based on previous experience. Riley argues that unless teachers' internal working models of professional relationships and the connections these have with the personal internal working model are examined and articulated they will remain for the most part, if not completely, outside of conscious awareness, and as a result less open to active change and growth (2011, p. 41). However I do believe based on my experience that it is

possible to change once you become aware of your attachment style. Carl Rogers (1961) the founder of the person-centred approach believed that three attributes, namely (1) congruence (genuineness or realness), (2) unconditional positive regard (acceptance, prizing, caring) and (3) accurate empathic understanding (an ability to deeply grasp the subjective world of another person) contribute to creating a growth-promoting environment in which an individual can move forward and become what they are capable of becoming. If I as a educator can foster the creation of a 'secure base' within the classroom by creating an environment that is based on the these conditions, I believe it will allow my learners the space to explore, grow and reframe their internal beliefs, values and perceptions of self. I am also aware that as an educator, it is vital for me to be aware of the different adult attachment styles as it can make known important information about the type of behaviour that educators and students employ in the educator-student relationship.

In having to choose a topic for a master's thesis, I was particularly interested in hearing other people's stories to see if there was evidence to support my hypothesis that "*Attachment theory is a useful lens in understanding the role of an adult educator*".

1.3   Main focus of the study

This study aims to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. The reasons for undertaking this research are threefold:

1. By becoming aware of the mechanisms of attachment, it will allow educators to become better informed about the process of relationship building, which is a crucial aspect of professional practise.

2. To identify and understand one's own attachment style and how this influences one's role as an educator

3. To highlight the importance of the educators' role as the 'secure base' in the learning environment.

I was particularly interested in the learning process that occurs through learning from our lives through our life story and how this process is a vehicle which can facilitate construction of knowledge (Dominice, 2000). Mezirow's (1991) theory on transformative learning writes about people's need to make sense of their experiences and links meaning making to the learning process. Learning is about change. This can occur when we change the way see ourselves and the world we live in. I was also interested in learning if, as a result of participating in the research, the participants have discovered any new awareness of their own attachment experience and how this plays out in educator-student relationship.

1.4   Research aims

In my view, knowledge of attachment theory has the potential to facilitate educators in understanding the significance of their interactions and relationships with their learners. The relational underpinnings of attachment theory may provide educators with valuable information and insights into the tutor-student relationship.   In my research, using qualitative interviews I set out to explore each participant's narrative

of their attachment experiences. Stories are gathered through the interviews to gain insight into how these experiences play out in the educator-student relationship. Understanding attachment theory has the potential to help educators understand the importance of their interactions and relationships with students. The relational underpinnings of attachment theory can provide educators with valuable information about individual attachment styles and the importance of the educator's role in creating a secure base within the learning environment. It is envisaged, therefore, that this piece of research might prove to be a useful resource not alone for existing counsellors and educators, but also counsellors and educators of the future.

1.5   Relevance of the research to my own practice

This study was a great learning experience for me for the following reasons. Firstly, I developed a new understanding of my learner's attachment styles. Secondly, I learned more about my own attachment experiences and how these play out in the classroom. I know that since beginning to connect with this research, I have learned valuable information about my own practise, both as a counsellor and adult educator. However, while writing up this dissertation represents the end of my fieldwork in exploring attachment theory and the educator-student relationship, it also marks the beginning of a journey of continuous exploration of my own attachment history. As part of this research journey over the last year, I challenged myself to explore deeper into my own attachment experiences. I became part of an experiential group, facilitated by Dr. Una McCluskey, called *"Exploring the dynamics of adult attachment"*. This new knowledge is evolving into a new personal practise of teaching and learning.

Reflexivity has been a central part of this thesis. Etherington (2004, p. 19) defines reflexivity as:

> an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings. To be reflexive we need to be aware of our personal responses and to be able to make choices about how to use them. We also need to be aware of the personal, social and cultural contexts in which we live and work and to understand how these impact on the ways we interpret the world

I have kept a reflective research diary throughout the process. It is not just the data and transcripts that are central to my study, but my journey as a researcher has been a fundamental part of the process leading to my narrative being interwoven throughout the data.

1.6   Overview of thesis

This thesis is in six chapters, including this, the introductory chapter.

Chapter two will describe the research methodology and methods by which this study was carried out.

Chapter three will provide an overview of attachment theory incorporating a review of empirical literature that utilises the concepts consistent with attachment theory. I will also address the impact of student-teacher relationships and how an individual's attachment style influences these relationships

Chapter four will present the findings in the form of four core narratives to represent each of the participant's stories.

Chapter five will focus on analysing the main findings from my study.

Chapter six will provide the conclusion, recommendations and reflections on my journey as a researcher.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, my aim is to contextualise the aim of my study and show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. For the purpose of my research, I intend to use various forms of literature, from the work of leading theorists, to lay the foundations for the study.

Attachment theory has been claimed to be "one of the broadest, most profound, and most creative lines of research in 20th century psychology" (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008, p.xi). One need only conduct a literature search on the topic of 'attachment' to find that the last 25 years have witnessed a growing interest in the field of attachment. The growing interest in attachment theory is not surprising considering the fact that it is a life-span theory that attempts to explain human behaviour *from the cradle to the grave"* (Bowlby, 1969, p.208). Attachment theory as developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and elaborated on by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall (1978) and others (e.g. Cassidy & Shaver 1999, Bretherton 1992) focuses on primary caregivers as protectors and providers of safety to children and the psychological safe refuge of security (Ainsworth et al., Bretherton 1992). It has evolved as a "multifaceted theory of personality structure, functioning and development, as well as a theory of interpersonal behaviour, emotional bonds, and close relationships". (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p.116) propose that the psychological consequences of early

relationships, and the individual variations in attachment patterns that they create, to a great extent influence and shape the human personality, cognitively, emotionally, and socially (Bowlby 1988, Bretherton 1992, Cassidy and Shaver 2008).

The attachment theory created by Bowlby has had a lasting impact on our understanding of child development and more recently on adult development.

2.2   John Bowlby's Background and Influences

John Bowlby (1907-1991) trained as a child psychiatrist and a psychoanalyst in the 1930s and 40s. After graduating from the University of Cambridge in 1928, Bowlby volunteered to work at a school for maladjusted children. During his time at the school, Bowlby was inspired to pursue a career in psychiatry   From his earliest work with children from poor backgrounds which led him to explore the causes of delinquency, it became evident that his interest was in the process of development and how early events are significant to everything that follows in both normal and abnormal behaviour.   Bowlby underwent training in psychoanalysis at the British Psycho-analytic Institute as part of his studies in medicine and psychiatry (Bretherton, 1992). While studying, Bowlby was exposed to the work of Melanie Klein and her colleagues who followed an object-relations approach. The Kleinian approach holds that a child's emotional responses are almost entirely due to fantasies generated from internal conflict between aggressive and libidinal drives, rather than to events in the external world (Bretherton, 1992). However, Bowlby disagreed with this concept, and felt that it did not fully encapsulate the phenomenon of attachment. From then on, he

began study ethology for useful new concepts. He was impressed by the work of two contemporary researchers, Conrad Lorenz and Harry Harlow. Lorenz's (1935) account of *imprinting* in geese especially intrigued him, because it suggested that social bond formation need not be tied to feeding (Bretherton, 1992). Harlow's study saw baby monkeys separated from their biological mothers at birth and reared with the aid of 'wire mothers'. The findings of these studies showed that Lorenz's geese bonded without feeding and Harlow's monkeys showed feeding without bonding (Riley, 2011, p.123).

Bowlby developed the concept of attachment over a number of years (e.g. Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). He drew on concepts from the psychodynamic approach of Sigmund Freud, developmental psychology, cybernetics and ethology, the study of animal behaviour to form a theory about the bonding relationship that develops between parents and their children and the disruption that can take place in the relationship through, emotional deprivation, separation and bereavement (Barnes, 1995, p. 5). Bowlby posited "attachment seeking as a primary human motivation, rejecting the traditional psychoanalytic view that attachment is the derivative of sexual or oral instinctual drives" (Ells, 2001, p.132).

2.3   John Bowlby's View of Attachment

In his landmark trilogy, *Attachment, Separation and Loss* (1969, 1973, 1980), Bowlby posited a theory of development that challenged the prevailing theories of the time and proved to be a fundamental way of understanding the nature of attachment bonds

between infants and their caregivers.   The central theme of attachment theory is the nature of a child's tie to his or her primary caregiver (or 'attachment figure'), which is considered to be of vital importance to current and later psychological functioning. Bowlby's key finding grounded in the empirical evidence, was that "to grow up mentally healthy, the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" (Bowlby, 1951, p.13). Reebye, Ross & Jamieson & Clarke (1999) study of Bowlby claim that: "He held that the first tie, usually with the mother, determines much of our future well-being. He identified two environmental factors of primary significance, the death or prolonged absence of the mother and a mother's emotional attitude to the child" (p.1).

However, while attachment theory accepts the customary primacy of the mother as the primary care-giver, there is nothing in the theory to suggest that fathers are not equally likely to become primary attachment figures if they happen to provide most of the childcare. The goal of the attachment bond is ***felt security***, which produces a relaxed state in the infant, allowing the infant to get on with the developmental task of exploring the world (Holmes, 1993, p.69).

According to Bowlby, this ***affectional bond*** is the basis upon with the infant forms all other relationships, which includes the teacher-student relationship (Riley, 2011, p.13).

2.4   Key Characteristics of Attachment Theory

2.4.1   Attachment Behaviour

The development of the attachment system starts at birth, with the baby's strong interest and responsiveness to the primary caregiver, and continues throughout life. Bowlby (1988) classifies the key behaviours that take place between a child and its mother (primary caregiver) as attachment behaviours. All these behaviours such as smiling, cooing, crying and clinging are signals to ensure that the primary caregiver will remain close to the child and as a result form a bond together. He called the desire of the child and mother to stay close to each other, ***proximity maintenance***. Bowlby believed that these behaviours had their own internal motivation system which is distinct from either feeding or sex, the two sources of motivation widely regarded as the most fundamental. He defined attachment behaviour as:

> any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is better able to cope with the world (Bowlby, 1988, p.29)

According to Bowlby, these behaviours are activated by separation or threatened separation from the attachment figure. He described this as ***separation anxiety*** (Bowlby, 1988, p33). When the child feels in danger or threatened, and can return to his mother for safety and comfort, he refers to the mother as the ***safe haven*** *(secure base).* Once the child feels that the mother is close by, he is encouraged to explore his surrounding environment. Bowlby defined these behavioural systems of moving between **'*exploring'*** and **'*safe haven'*** as a homeostatic control system (Bowlby, 1988; Riley, 2011).

2.4.2   Attachment Behaviour System

According to attachment theory the propensity to form an attachment to a protector and the tendency to explore the environment are innate tendencies regulated by interlocking behavioural systems. Holmes (1993) writes that:

> The basis of the attachment behavioural system comprises of a reciprocal set of behaviours shown by care-seeker and care-giver in which they are aware of and seek each other out whenever the care-seeker is in danger due to physical separation, illness or tiredness. (p.218)

Bowlby theorised that human beings possess a biologically based 'attachment system' that is directed at maintaining a balance between seeking attachment security and exploring the environment (Berghaus, 2011, p.6). Attachment and exploration are linked as follows: "to learn about and become competent at interacting with the physical and social environment, one must explore. But exploration can be tiring and even dangerous, so it is desirable to have a protector nearby, a haven of safety to which one can retreat" (Hazen & Shaver, 1990, p.1).

2.4.3   Secure Base

Mary Ainsworth, a psychoanalyst and student of Bowlby's first used the term *'secure base'* to describe the warm caring atmosphere created by the attachment figure. The exploration system can only function optimally when the primary attachment figure is sufficiently available and responsive, a state that Ainsworth et al. 1978, refer to as having a *'secure base'* and Riley, 2011 called *'felt security'*. Holmes (1993) writes that "the essence of the secure base is that it provides a springboard for curiosity and exploration" (p.70). Gomez (1997) asserts that "our primary attachment figures

constitute the 'secure base' from which we can sally forth into the world knowing we have a refuge to which we will return" (p.156).   The child who 'knows' that he can venture into the world with a support team on hand if needed is more likely to explore the world around him. However, this is not the case for the child who fears the loss of the attachment figure, and therefore is afraid to explore.

In other words, attachment needs are primary, they must be met before exploration can proceed.   The parent-child relationship is similar to the educator-student relationship. If we substitute the word parent for teacher as a secure base in the classroom, attachment theory offers a new viewpoint on what is needed to enable the student to feel secure in the classroom. It is significant however, to note that teachers deal with numerous students at the same time parents rarely do. This is an important difference and needs to be taken into consideration by educators as they engage with students with varying attachment styles. Educators engage with students who present with diverse developmental and life histories (Riley, 2011, p.19-20). Understanding the concept of the secure base offers educators' insight on what is needed for the student to feel secure in the classroom.

2.4.4   Making Strange: The Strange Situation Study

Mary Ainsworth was not convinced at first by his ethological observations and took on the initial task of empirically testing Bowlby's hypotheses. The theorised link between attachment and exploration was initially tested by Ainsworth et al. (1978) who recognized three patterns of infant attachment, secure, avoidant and

anxious/ambivalent. Ainsworth's studies moved the focus from clinical inquiry to empirical research which provided much support for Bowlby's theory. Bowlby (1969) described how Ainsworth used the *'strange situation'* as an investigative tool to observe attachment styles and the quality of early childhood attachments (p.336).

Her groundbreaking *Strange Situation* study revealed the profound effects of attachment on behavior. Ainsworth was interested in testing Bowlby's *secure base* hypothesis, that children will explore their environment when they feel they can trust their primary caregiver. Ainsworth was particularly interested in how infants would use the mother as a base from which to explore, and how they would act in response to two short separations. The study was carried out during her time working in Uganda. Crain (2005, p.55) described the process where a sequence of events took place. Firstly, while the mother was present, a stranger entered the room and approached the child. This was testing Bowlby's *safe haven* hypothesis that the child would return to his mother when he feels in danger or threatened. In the first separation, the mother left the baby in the room with a stranger. This was testing the *separation anxiety* hypothesis where the child would show visible signs of distress when the mother left the room. In the second separation, the baby was left alone in the room. This was testing Ainsworth's own hypothesis with regard to how the child responds to the mother on reunion. Each separation lasted three minutes, but was shortened if the baby showed too much distress. The entire separation lasted twenty minutes. According to Holmes (1993, p.105) the aim of the study was "to elicit individual differences in coping with the stress of separation". McCluskey asserts that "Ainsworth found that the infants explored the toys and the playroom more vigorously when in the presence of their mothers than after the stranger entered or

while the mother was absent" (2005, p.57). McCluskey goes on to say that: "Ainsworth's stroke of genius was not just to observe what the infants did while mothers were absent but to notice that they differed in their response to her when she returned" (p.57).

Wallin (2007, pp.159-160) states that while her studies clearly confirmed many of Bowlby's ideas, most important perhaps, she discovered that inborn, biologically driven attachment system is actually *malleable* – and that qualitative differences in attachment behaviour of individuals depends on the differential behaviour of caregivers. The key to security or insecurity, she argued, was to be found in the ***patterns of communication*** between infant and caregiver that was of paramount importance.

This study led to the classification of attachments styles in infancy and adulthood that is such a central part of what attachment theory brings to our understanding of adult learning. The patterns identified were *secure, insecure-avoidant* and *insecure-ambivalent* which are discussed in the next section.

2.5   Attachment Styles

When an individual feels threatened, anxious or emotionally upset, the attachment system will become activated. The principle strategy for dealing with the attachment system activation is for the child to seek proximity to an 'attachment figure', that is someone the individual considers able to provide comfort and support in stressful

situations, in order to regain a sense of security (McCluskey, 2008). Studies carried out by Ainsworth & Bowlby (1991) found that by the age of three years the child is noticeably *securely* or *insecurely* attached.

2.5.1 Secure

A *secure attachment* is based on the caregiver responding consistently and predictably to the child's need. "Children introject their experience of being cared for and as a result have a model of themselves as valued, have a greater sense of '*felt security'* and more optimistic views of social relationships" (Fleming, 2008, p.36). The secure child is happy to explore his/her environment whether or not the primary caregiver is present.

2.5.2 Insecure Anxious Avoidant

If the child has experienced their relationship with their primary caregiver as unpredictable or rejecting, the child will develop an insecure attachment style. Insecure attachments lead the child to try to minimise his unmet needs for attachment in order not to experience the pain of separation when it occurs (Riley, 2011, p.14). Bowlby speculated that "this defensive behaviour can become a fixed and persistent part of the personality. The child becomes an adult who is overly self-sufficient and detached, a person who can never let down his or her guard and trust others to form intimate relationships with them" (1988, p.140).

2.5.3   Insecure Anxious Ambivalent

Insecure-ambivalent infants "are highly distressed by separation and cannot be easily pacified on reunion" (Holmes, 1993, p.105).   These infants were so clingy and preoccupied with their mother's whereabouts that they hardly explored at all. They became very upset when their mother left the room, and they were noticeably ambivalent toward her on her return. At one moment they reached out for her, and the next moment they furiously pushed her away. The ambivalent pattern is sometimes called 'resistance' because the children not only desperately seek contact but resist it (Cain, 2005, pp. 56-57).

Further studies using the strange situation technique (Main & Solomon, 1986) have added a further insecure pattern which is seen as 'disorganised attachment'.

2.5.4   Disorganised Attachment

This pattern is seen most frequently in families where there is parent pathology, child abuse or very high social risk. Here the child appears dazed, confused or apprehensive, and shows no coherent system for dealing with separation and reunion (Barnes, 1995, p.14).   He goes on to say that this disorganised attachment style display a varied range of confused behaviours including 'freezing', or stereotyped movements, when re-united with their parent (p.104).

Understanding attachment styles is useful information for the teacher-student relationship as many separations occur as a normal function of the education environment. Each separation increases the possibility of separation anxiety both for

the teacher and the student. However, by becoming aware of the attachment dynamic, each reunion can provide the opportunity for a corrective emotional experience (Riley, 2011)

2.6   Internal Working Models

Bowlby (1969) proposed that "from a very early age children develop *internal working models* of their relationships with their primary caregivers and that these persist relatively unchanged, throughout their life" (p.354). The internal working models "forms a set of unspoken rules, beliefs and expectations about the environment self and others" (Riley, 2011, p.20).   This is used to predict the behaviour and attitude of others, in order to feel safe in the world.

Holmes, summed this up well when he said:

> We carry a map of self, and others, and the relationship between the two …
> the map is built up from experiences and is influenced by the need to defend
> against painful feelings (1993, p221).

Holmes asserts that "a securely attached child will store an internal working model of a responsive, loving, reliable care-giver, and of a self that is worthy of love and attention".   On the other hand, he claimed that "an insecurely attached child may view the world as a dangerous place in which other people are to be treated with great caution, and sees himself as ineffective and unworthy of love" (1993, pp.78-79). A child builds internal working models based on his real life experience of everyday interactions with his parents. Consequently the internal working model that the child internalises mirror the images that his parents have of him, images that are

communicated not only by how each treats him but by what each says to him. Once built, evidence suggests, "these models of a parent and self in interaction tend to persist and are so taken for granted that they come to operate at an unconscious level" (Bowlby, 1988, p.146).

Berghaus (2011) asserts that "the internal working model carries the person's expectations for all attachment relationships on into the future and remains generally stable unless altered by significant new experiences" (p.6). The child uses the inner working model as a template for future relationships that she or he forms. As a result the child expects subsequent relationships with significant others to be of a similar quality to the primary attachment relationship. Bowlby argues that "the attachment system, through the internal working models, comes into play throughout life, whenever an individual feels under threat, stress or fatigue" (Riley, 2011, p. 20). This is a useful model for educators when reflecting on the relationships they construct with their students and why some of these relationships seem to be more complicated than others. Riley goes on to argue that if one's inner working model says "I am not worthy of praise" then praise offered by the teacher can create emotional dissonance within the student who must consider it by either changing his internal working model to include positive judgements or by rejecting the praise as incorrect (2011, p.21). This is a critical point for educator's to be aware of with regard to their relationship with their students. It suggests that interactions within the educator-student relationship that are responsive, nurturing and encouraging may influence the internal working models of students and either support a secure state or possibly alter an insecure state of mind.

2.7   Adult Attachment

Notwithstanding Bowlby's claims that attachment behaviour plays a fundamental role throughout the life cycle and his extensive writings about attachment processes in childhood (see Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980), the attachment perspective on adult relationships did not become an active area of research until the 1980's. As the children assessed in the strange situation grew up, research data on the continuity of attachment patterns began to emerge.

In 1985, George, Kaplan and Main devised the adult attachment interview (AAI) which allowed researchers to study attachment representations in adolescence and adulthood. The AAI is a semi-structured interview consisting of eighteen questions that addresses individuals' experiences in primary attachment relationships and the way these experiences have impacted on their own personality and behaviour. The questions range from asking an individual for a description of their relationship with their parents in childhood, to asking them what they did when they felt unsafe, and how their parents responded. The individual is then asked how these experiences have impacted on their adult development and personality. The development of the AAI was based on two key concepts: firstly: that mental representations of relationships are based on significant attachment experiences and secondly, that mental representations operate partly at an unconscious level (De Haas et al., 1994, pp. 471-474). The findings show that attachment styles displayed in childhood are similar to those displayed in adulthood. However, the terminology used for adult attachment is to some extent different from infant attachment. Citing George, Kaplan and Main (1996), Mary Main (1996) stated that "secure children are referred to as

autonomous adults. Anxious-avoidant children are referred to as *dismissing adults*. Anxious ambivalent children are referred to as *preoccupied adults*. Disorganised children, are referred to as *unresolved-disorganised adults*" (p.238).

Following on from this research, Main developed a fifth category which she called *earned secure*. This category describes how individuals who had insecure or traumatic experiences in their childhood but had overcome these earlier difficulties by having "had the opportunity to form a coherent representation of their lives" through psychotherapy or subsequent positive relationships (Hesse, 2008, p.588). In the aftermath of Main's investigation, van Ijzendoorn (1995, p.398) conducted a study which noted the intergenerational pattern transmission of attachment patterns. He highlighted that the attachment style of a potential parent will predict the attachment style of the child to that parent; with as high as eighty per cent predictability.

These explanations highlight important information about the type of behaviours teachers and students engage in, both positive and negative, as they construct and maintain teacher-student relationships.

2.8   Attachment and the Teacher-Student relationship

Applying the principles of attachment theory has important implications for understanding the teacher-student relationship. These include the importance of attachment styles, internal working models and the strange situation.

Bowlby (1969) argues that mental representation of the self and others, shaped in the context of the child-caregiver relationship, carry forward and influence thought, feeling and behaviour in adult relationships. Schaffer (2004) asserts that "this theory highlights the fact that attachment is a lifelong phenomenon and not merely confined to the earliest years" (p.110). According to Gomez (1997, p.168), the fundamental message of Bowlby's theory is that "human beings are contact seeking and that our well being rests largely on the condition of our relationships". Gomez goes on to say that attachment is not something we grow out of, although our means of relating develop and attachment patterns may change. Bowlby highlights the role of a therapist as "being one of providing the conditions in which his patient can explore his representational models of himself and his attachment figures with a view to reappraising and restructuring them in the light of new understandings he acquires with new experiences he has in the therapeutic relationship" (1988, p.156). Substitute the word *therapist* for *educator* and the role of the educator has a great deal in common with the role of the mother towards the child, from the initial stages of the relationship to separation. The teacher-student relationship can be seen to parallel the parent-child relationship.

2.8.1   The Educator as the Secure Base

The educator can be most helpful by serving "as a reliable, secure base from which an individual can begin the difficult task of exploring and reworking his or her internal working models" (Bretherton, 1992, p.26). With the teacher's encouragement, support and understanding, the person will begin to explore their internal and external world in the past and in the present in their effort to express and know themselves.

Each student views their relationships with each teacher through a lens that is coloured by previous experiences with their parents or caregivers (Davis 2003). Bowlby stressed that the quality and consistency of relationships are as important, or more important than events, even disturbing ones, in the configuration of one's expectations, assumptions and capabilities structured into the internal working model. For that reason it is important for the teacher to note the quality of the student's relationships 'whether they display, secure, avoidant, ambivalent or disorganised patterns of attachment and how these patterns are perceived, experienced and acted out (Gomez, 1997, p.169).

Bowlby (1969) outlined a series of stages in attachment development, namely, "pre-attachment, attachment in the making, clear-cut attachment and goal-corrected attachment". Like the process of developing attachment that occurs in the child-parent relationship, the development of the teacher-student relationship will follow a comparable process. The ability of the educator to provide a secure base is the foundation for working with all students and is particularly crucial when working with insecure adults.

2.8.2   Internal Working Models

Attachment theory proposes that we learn to form and continue relationships based on our accumulated experiences of relationships. Based on our inner internal working model, it allows us to anticipate other people's behaviours. Fleming writes that:

> Internal working models in adults affect our cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to others in family, work and in all communications …

the thoughts we have, what we remember, what we consider important, how we interpret and make sense of events, are influenced by these models (2007, pp.87-77)

Both the students and teachers initial approach to new relationships is therefore formed based on previous experience (Riley, 2011, p.40). Hazen & Shaver (1987) point out that it is unrealistic to assume that an individual's attachment style remains unchanged from childhood into adulthood, however if negative belief of the self and others are strengthened through differing life experiences and relationships, then these beliefs can become quite rooted and difficult to change. However on the contrary, "the average person participates in several important friendships and love relationships, each of which provides an opportunity to revise mental models of self and others" (p. 517). These insights from attachment theory research offer a clear understanding of how individuals bring with them, internal frames of reference which may facilitate or hinder the learning process. This is valuable information for the teacher as it can facilitate a corrective emotional experience for the student.

2.8.3 Attachment styles

Fleming (2007) argues that it is vital to be aware of the different adult attachment styles as it can make known important information about the type of behaviour that educators and students employ in the educator-student relationship. The student who is securely attached will have a positive and balanced view of self and others. Securely attached students "… appraise stressful events as less threatening than do less secure persons. They hold optimistic expectations about their ability to cope with the causes of their distress" (Belsky, 2002, p.167). Secure adults integrate emotional

and cognitive responses and are not preoccupied by one or the other (Fleming, 2008, p.38)

The insecure adult scores high on attachment-anxiety (i.e. preoccupied tendencies) is often preoccupied and feels less worthy than the secure individual.   Elliot and Rees (2003) noted that:

> Anxious attachment and the preoccupation with acceptance and rejection that it engenders, may heighten fears about the interpersonal implications of failure on any task that involves the possibility of success and failure, leading individuals to focus primarily on the avoidance of failure. (p.328)

This can cause a difficulty as experience has taught the insecurely attached individual that it is not safe to trust others as they may be left feeling rejected. They protect themselves from this rejection by avoiding close contact with others. According to Riley "… they become preoccupied with gaining the acceptance of others to feel good about themselves. This lowers their curiosity about the world around them, as they must remain focused on the opinions of others" (2011, p.26). In the classroom the anxious adult may appear to be preoccupied with the emotional element of their experiences and as a result are unable to move to more task oriented activities.

"Insecure avoidant individuals (i.e. dismissing tendencies) are inclined to distance themselves cognitively and behaviourally from the source of stress" (Belsky, 2002, p.167). Fleming (2008) notes that "avoidant students may be more difficult to recruit to classes and as a result neither looks for support nor accept it as easily as the securely attached". He goes on to say that "whether students are secure or insecure,

that this will impact on their feelings, attitudes, and behaviour and how they react to the learning situation" (p.41).

This provides insightful information to our understanding of the adult learner.

2.8.4   Strange Situation

The strange situation as devised by Mary Ainsworth is a useful tool for identifying an individual's attachment style. Fleming (2008) writes that adult education provides 'strange situations' for students when the student joins a course for the first time or when they are confronted with new ideas and new knowledge. Students make meaning of the strange situations in ways that are coherent with their internal working models. The student's ability to handle new knowledge is very much influenced by their mechanisms for coping with the strange situations provided by new knowledge. He goes on to state that "new knowledge is a strange situation that triggers attachment behaviours" (p.41). This concept can also be applied to the teacher who also makes meaning of new ideas and knowledge or 'strange situations' in ways that are consistent with their internal working models. Fleming argues that "one's attachment style plays an important role in how one reacts to the interpersonal engagements that are involved in all classroom and other encounters between teachers and students" (2008, p. 38).

Bowlby's work as outlined in this chapter places this in a definite theoretical context and offers educators insight into the psychological dynamics within the teacher-student relationship. It also offers potential solutions and strategies for supporting students who find themselves unsettled in a strange situation.

2.8.5 Educators' attachment style and internal working models

As an educator, understanding one's own attachment style and internal working models has significant implications in how one views the teacher-student relationship. In relation to the teacher's attachment style, the secure teacher's interest is mainly focused on understanding and supporting her students. She uses her experiences in the classroom to shape and improve her practise (Riley, 2011).

The teacher who is insecure and preoccupied may appear to be inconsistent in her treatment of students, overvaluing some and undervaluing others. The teacher who scores high on insecure anxiety would appear vulnerable emotionally, when confronted with stressful situations in the classroom. Teachers who exhibit insecure avoidant attachment patterns both as dismissing and fearful may experience an increased sense of worthlessness and places little value on oneself. They may also display vulnerability through defensive behaviour's preventing them from reacting reflexively. For the fearful teacher, proximity is both sought and pushed away at the same time. The teacher who displays an insecure attachment may avoid conflict and confrontation in the classroom and perceive it as personal rejection (Riley, 2011, pp. 33-37). This is important information for educators as avoiding conflict and confrontation may stunt the opportunity for growth both for the student and educator.

McCormack (2009) argues that

> vulnerability is an inevitable part of the learning process in adult life; that it is vital, in every sense of the word, part of change; that when it is your job to facilitate change there will inevitably be all sorts of emotions stirred up, not least in yourself, and that supporting yourself to face this distress is an essential resource in a facilitators work (p.17)

However, "unless teachers' internal working models of professional relationships and the connections these have with the personal internal working model are examined and articulated they will remain largely, if not completely, outside of conscious awareness, and therefore less open to active change and growth" (Riley, 2011 p.41). Fleming (2007) posits that:

> Working with students the teacher will too think, feel, act and have expectations based on their own internal working models that act as basic assumptions. These working models will influence the educator's reactions to learners who in turn are secure or otherwise. (p.87)

Research carried out by Riley suggests that one's internal working model can play a role in an individual's choice of career. He describes how "an insecurely attached person may be drawn to the teaching profession as a consequence of a positive experience of teachers as a student, or the possibility of having students to attach to. He states that both offer the chance of a corrective relational experience for the teacher" (2011, p.33).

Sonkin (2005) refers to the educator's state of mind with a view to attachment as " a significant factor in both the development of the relationship and also in the ultimate outcome of the education experience" (p.6) Adult educators need to be able to manage the emotional dynamics of teaching and learning, doing this most effectively by becoming attuned to their own emotional lives as educators, particularly concerning the impact of the educative relationship on them' (McCormack, 2009, p.21).

Research suggests that internal working models are not static but are subject to change throughout the lifespan as a result of new experiences in the world (Riley, 2011, Fonagy et. al, 1996). According to Riley the fact that attachment styles are not static is good news as it offers teachers "…the opportunity to provide security and hope of a better future to insecurely attached students" (2011, p.13). One's internal working models are not inert and can be adapted and changed over time as a result of new experiences in the world. Researchers have begun to stress the importance of attachment style differences in patterns of communication (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). The primary way in which attachment needs are expressed in adulthood is through verbal and non verbal communication. Bretherton et al., (1999) study of Bowlby proposes that verbal and nonverbal communication patterns are "the processes through which the internal working models of secure and insecure attachment relationships are generated and maintained" (p.94).

Like the mutual regulation that occurs between child and parent, a comparable process is happening in the educator-student relationship. By applying the ideology of attachment theory it can help reframe our understanding of the educator-student relationship

2.10   Life history narratives prompt new learning

In this section, I will engage with the process of using life history narratives as a medium to discovering one's attachment style and internal working models. The attachment framework followed throughout this dissertation suggests four patterns of narrative styles in adult learning, namely, secure, avoidant/dismissive,

avoidant/preoccupied and disorganised. Attachment stories are linked to the individual's world of meaning. Important contributions have been made to our understanding of how educational biography (Dominice 2000) and narrative (Fleming, 2003) can provide a medium to facilitate new learning. The purpose of my study was to reconstruct with counselling educators what they had learned in the course of their attachment experiences, in order to have a better understanding of how these experiences play out in the educator-student relationship. As outlined earlier, as one's internal working models "operate at an unconscious level" (Bowlby, 1988, p.146), one of the goals of narratives and educational biography is to act as a vehicle "to empower educators to become more reflective" (Dominice 2000, p. 174).

Learning from our lives is a key aspect that Pierre Dominice (2000) puts forward in his book about life history. Dominice describes how "life history narratives can reveal the ways in which living systems form a web of life" (2000, p.6). He discusses how personal and societal aspects of life are linked and how adults have different ways of learning which are influenced by the ways in which people organise their lives. He observes that

> We each bring forth our world by living, because to live is to know, and what we know serves as a lens through we interpret new experiences. We help to construct our own reality, thus each biography has its own truth (Dominice, 2000, p.6)

Fleming's (2003) describes narratives as "a way of making sense of our experience" (p.1). He goes on to say that the transformative dynamic lies in the recognition that one is not only the main character but also the author of that story and that on can get

a more critical and empowered perspective on their life story through narrating and understanding one's story (p.1).

Dominice suggests that the learning process that occurs through narrating especially when a life history approach (educational biography) is used actively in higher education can act as a vehicle which can facilitate the construction of new knowledge. He describes an educational biography as "a version of a life history that an adult is invited to construct in order to think about the dynamics of his or her learning" (2000, p.171). Looking at one's life history as a whole "will assist the adult learner and educator to recognise what characterises their relation to knowledge, in other words, how they construct their own knowledge" (Dominice, 2000, p.175). Frequently, these assumptions originate in childhood. Dominice goes on to say that "most adults have images of themselves as learners that result from family members and teachers opinions …. narratives are full of references to the people who played an important role in the individuals' learning processes" (pp.175-180). However, the educator is only one of the students many companions along their life history. Based on previous experiences, adult students often project onto the tutor their expectations, beliefs and attitudes that have little to do with the educator. According to Dominice "as adult learners improve their critical thinking, they are better able to recognize assumptions and beliefs, make sense of the complexities of their lives, and understand major societal influences …. and help them become more self-directed learners" (2000, p.5). When writing an individual's life history, it facilitates the connection between individual learners and the societal contexts within which they function and can help them. This is suggestive of a process of altering or transforming ones internal working models and attachment style.

Reviewing their own life histories can facilitate both educator and student to become more self-directed learners. Life history can be used in education as a means for critical reflection, both for the adult learner and educator.   It can act as a medium to allow the individual to reflect critically about the knowledge, values and meanings constructed through their life experiences and can act as a tool to transform one's internal working models (Dominice, 2000; Mezirow, 1990).   This is a valuable tool both for the educator and student as it provides an opportunity to revisit ones internal working models and core beliefs, and assist in the construction of new knowledge.

The main role of the adult educator is to empower the adult learner and "the interpersonal relationship between educator and adult learner remains a source of motivation" (Dominice, 2000, p.128). Domince highlights the fact that life histories show that in adulthood, individuals remember the teachers they had in school more for how they were than for what they taught. He suggests that "people do not remember the personalities of their teachers in isolation as much as they remember the relationship they had with those teacher" (2000, p.129). This confirms Bowlby's findings (discussed earlier), in that the *affectional bond* is paramount to the outcome of the teacher-student relationship

Dominice also emphasises how adult educators should be aware of their own motivations for teaching or group facilitation, and their reasons for choosing to do what they do. Reflecting on one's own life history is an important part of the process of being an adult educator to the point where he suggests that "continuing one's own education is a *condition* of being an adult educator" (2000 p.124). He alerts us to the

fact that "adult educators have their own life histories and should not forget to work on interpreting and making sense of those histories" (p.189) and he goes on to say that adult educators who have gained insights and awareness from their own lives can better serve as mentors to their adult learners as they in turn learn from their life histories (p.7). The teaching profession is one where human relationships play a central role. If adult educators are encouraged to work on their own life history, it will allow them to become more alert to the attachment dynamics present in the teacher-student relationship.

These writings also support Mezirow's (1991) concept of the value of guiding learners' efforts to understand such complex relationships at the personal level. Mezirow's theory on transformational learning recognises that engaging the participants' life experience is a necessary condition for transformation. He suggests that transformative learning occurs when there is a transformation in one of our beliefs or attitudes, or a transformative of one's entire perspective. Critical reflection is therefore a necessary ingredient of transformational learning where adult learners are actively encouraged to think for themselves.

Each individual follows a frame of reference, which Mezirow (1991) refers to as a "*meaning scheme*" or *"meaning perspective"*, Dominice (2000) refers to these meaning schemes as *"a kind of structure of interpretation*, mediating the way the adult understands himself or herself and the world around him or her" (p.84) and Bowlby's refers to the individuals *"internal working models"* which are a set of mental representations that an individual builds up based on one's childhood

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attachment experiences. The interpretations and assumptions commonly originate in childhood. In transformation theory, "it is such meaning schemes, meaning perspectives and frames of reference that get transformed" (Mezirow, 1991, p.94). Fleming writes that "the process of transforming a frame of reference commences with a disorientating dilemma and concludes with a reintegration into community with a new set of assumptions …. this is suggestive of a process of altering or transforming ones attachment style and internal working models" (2008, p.42). Engaging life history in adult learning enables both the educator and student to make meaning in their lives. Using narratives to engage learners in ideas that are part of the course content can act as a vehicle to allowing understanding to occur.

2.10   Conclusion

In this chapter, drawing on research and studies carried out by leading theorists in the area of attachment, I sought contextualise the aim of my study and show how the attachment paradigm can be most useful in providing a comprehensive framework to inform educators about teaching and learning. The study of attachment theory attachment theory is a vehicle to allow us to understand more comprehensively how culture and the environment not only has a profound effect on the child but also influences the entire life of the individual. Like the relationship with the primary caregiver, the student-teacher relationship is also a dynamic, interactive dance. Revisiting one's attachment stories and life histories form a set of narratives that are significant to understanding adult teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Methods

3.1   Methodology

I have chosen a qualitative research paradigm for this study because this paradigm employs an "interpretive, naturalistic approach" to gain understanding about human experiences (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). In order to assist the reader assess its reliability, qualitative research takes into consideration two philosophical concepts, ontology and epistemology, which underpin methodology (Crotty, 1998). I will begin by giving a brief account of qualitative research including explanations of ontology and epistemology.   I will then outline the methodological underpinning relative to this particular study.

3.1.1   Qualitative Research

According to Mason (2002),

> Qualitative research can allow the researcher to explore a wide range of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understanding, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the way that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate (p.1)

Qualitative research seemed to best suit my study, as my aim was to develop an in depth understanding of my participants' lived attachment experiences and how this influences their role as an adult learner and educator. I believe attachment experiences are by definition individually interpreted. My focus was on the common differences between secure and insecure attachments styles and the participant's life histories of attachment, rather than between differing types of insecure attachments.   By

reflecting on the participants lived experiences in the context of their personal circumstances and life history, understanding the role of an educator could be better understood. Once this was achieved the conditions for change would be in place for both the participant and for me as the researcher. This approach afforded me the opportunity to hear each participant's life story which would otherwise have been difficult to articulate by means of a quantitative survey.

3.1.2   Study Approach

This study aims to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. The reasons for undertaking this research are threefold:

1. By becoming aware of the mechanisms of attachment, it will allow educators to become better informed about the process of relationship building, which is a crucial aspect to professional practise.

2. To identify and understand one's own attachment style and how this influences one's role as an educator

3. To highlight the importance of the educators' role as the 'secure base' in the learning environment.

I was particularly interested in the learning process that occurs through learning from our lives through our life story and how this process is a vehicle which can facilitate construction of knowledge (Dominice, 2000). I was interested in learning if, as a result of participating in the research, the participant has discovered any new awareness of their own attachment experience and how this plays out in their role as both a counsellor and educator

3.1.3   Interviews as Narratives

As the subject of this research was to explore attachment experiences, I chose to carry out qualitative research interviews using a narrative approach as I considered this most suitable to gain an in depth understanding of each participant's attachment experience. This approach gives the participants the opportunity to tell their story during the interviews. "In open interviews people tell stories, narratives about their lives" (Kvale, 1996, p.43). Reissman (2003) describes narratives as "… a storied way of knowing and communicating" (P.1). A narrative approach is used by asking the participants to reflect on their experience of their lived attachment experiences. Gergen & Gergen, (1986) assert that "perhaps the most essential ingredient of a narrative accounting (or storytelling) is its capability to structure events in such a way that they demonstrate, first, a connectedness or coherence, and second, a sense of movement or direction through time" (Gergen & Gergen, 1986, p. 25).

Mishler (1986) outlines the "plot" as the storyline or series of events which unfolds during the research interview where the storyteller transfers knowing into telling. This concept certainly fits with my research where the purpose is to show coherence (relating attachment styles to theory) over time. Considering that my main aim was to develop an in-depth understanding of my participant's lived attachment experiences and how these experiences have impacted on their development as adult educators, the core message of the stories seemed crucial to examine so that I could learn from their explanations.

3.2   My Professional Lens as a Researcher

Ryan (2006) states that "the way you choose to collect data is illustrative of your beliefs about knowledge and human experience.   Techniques or methods for collecting data, are not simply neutral procedures, but carry assumptions that are inextricably related to the epistemological stance of the author" (p.74).   As a researcher it is crucial that I am aware of my own assumptions and subjectivity and how these may impact on the data collecting and analysis.   My professional lens comes from a background in counselling and psychotherapy and a postgraduate diploma in adult and community education. Later in this chapter, I will describe how these two lenses may have influenced the research data gathering, analysis and presentation of findings.

3.2.1   Ontology

Ontology refers to our most basic beliefs about what kind of being a human is and the nature of reality (Giddings & Grant, 2002). From this stance, I have chosen to use a social constructivism approach which is post modernist in that "truth" is viewed as socially constructed between people and this representation of reality is always historically and culturally situated in context (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). Social constructionism sees that "all reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed" Crotty, 1998, p.43).   He goes on to say "we enter a social milieu in which a system of intelligibility prevails.   We inherit a 'system of significant symbols'.   For each of us, when we first see the world in a meaningful fashion, we are inevitably viewing it through lens bestowed upon us by our culture" (p.54).   My belief is that reality is socially and culturally constructed therefore the methodology that I chose to carry out

my research, proposes to discover a little about how those constructions and internal belief systems came about, and the meaning that each participant has attached to them.

3.2.2.   *Epistemology*

Epistemology is the theoretical viewpoint on knowledge. It is "… a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. It involves knowledge, therefore, and embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that *is how we know what we know*" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). With a background in counselling and psychotherapy, central to my epistemological position is the concept of "knower" as "expert".

Crotty (1998) writes that "meaning is not discovered, it is constructed" (p.9). I believe people can construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. In my opinion there is no single reality, and that people construct their own reality through their own lived experiences. I construct my own truths, and each participant constructs their own truth as they comprehend it. It is through communicative and open relationships that new truths and new narratives can be socially constructed (Ricoeur, 1998). My view of reality or way of being (ontology) and my understanding of what it means to know (epistemology) are interwoven. I concur with Crotty when he writes that "it becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it" (Crotty, 1998, p.10). I am also aware that the reality put forward in this study is filtered through my own interpretation of each participant's story.

3.3   Method

As the researcher I played several different roles during the research, such as interviewer (or data collector), listener (to listen to each participant's story), interpreter (to interpret the stories told), analyst (to analyse what the stories mean) and writer (to rewrite the story and represent the data collected).   I will now outline the methods used to carry out this research. I will include information about participant selection, preparation for the interviews and data collection, followed by data analysis, ethical considerations, limitations of method while weaving my reflexive process throughout.

3.3.1   Selection of Participants

The sampling method used was well considered as I aimed to select information rich participants for an in-depth study to examine meanings, lived experiences and theory. I had an interest in interviewing adult educators who had experience of counselling either personally or professionally. I felt this particular group of people would provide an in depth view of their lived attachment experiences and how these experiences played out in their adult life.   I decided to announce this research by emailing out invitations (see Appendix 1) to adult educators/counsellors whom I had previously met through my professional work and also from my college group. The criteria for participating was that the participant should be an adult educator who had some previous experience of personal or professional counselling, and also had some knowledge of Bowlby's theoretical framework on attachment theory.

3.3.2   Participant Information Sheets

I included a participant information sheet with all invitations. (See Appendix 2). I also included a short list of questions that I thought might be helpful in prompting participants' memories, thoughts and experiences before the actual interview session (Appendix 3). On one hand, I wanted to give clarity around the type of data I hoped to collect, while on the other hand being mindful not to place possible participants under pressure, whereby they might feel that they were expected to reveal information or experiences of an extremely personal nature. Following this, I engaged in a one to one discussion with each individual to clarify any questions or concerns that arose. Before each interview took place, I showed each participant the information sheet again and checked whether they had any concerns. In order to ensure openness, I informed my participants of the overall purpose of the study, the main aspects of the design, their right to access of the transcripts, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as other possible benefits and risks associated with the study (Kvale, 1996, www.bacp.com). A consent form was then given to each participant where they were asked to read and sign if they were happy to continue with the interview.

3.3.3   Data Collection

Kvale (1996) refers to the interview as a conversation and states that "the qualitative interview is a construction site of knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p.2).   In his book, *InterViews*, Kvale (1996) portrays two types of interviewers metaphorically as "miners" and "travellers". The interviewer as miner is searching to unearth some valuable knowledge buried with the person he is interviewing. The traveller, on the other hand, is journeying through the other's

landscape gathering stories that lead to a story to be told upon returning home (p.3).

Whether traveller or miner, I believe as a researcher it is crucial to provide a facilitating environment to encourage each participant to tell their stories and lived experiences in relation to important events in their lives. In order to hear these stories and the lived experience of each participant I chose to carry out individual semi–structured interviews as I believed this would add more depth to my study. Kvale (1996) defines semi-structured interviews as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.5-6). I consulted the adult attachment interview protocol as devised by Mary Main (1995) to act as a guide for my interview questions. I formulated my own questions based on my research aims. Participants were invited to tell their attachment experiences from childhood to adulthood and look at how this now impacts on their role as an educator. However, I did steer them through some open-ended questions along with using a combination of probes to illuminate the participant's responses to the questions used, in order to gain insight into the life history of each participant (see appendix 3). I intentionally decided not to carry out a "focus group" as attachment experiences are by definition individually interpreted. While a focus group may highlight general trends that could be inferred, I believed that it would not capture individual experiences.

3.3.4 Interviewing

Prior to commencing the interviews, I prepared by familiarising myself with the process of qualitative research. As an experienced interviewer in counselling settings, I observed my skills as both an advantage and possibly a drawback. While reading

some literature, I became aware of my responsibility as a researcher to do my utmost to carry out each interview in such a way that my voice was not privileged over the participant's voice. I reflected on this awareness and gave some time thinking of how I was going to carry out the research interview differently from the counselling interview while focusing on the differing purposes.

Josselson (2007) notes that:

> All interviews are interventions. Unlike the therapy situation, where the task of the interview is to effect change in the participant, the research situation treats the interviewee as the expert, with the task being to effect change in the interviewer's understanding of the phenomena of interest (p.546)

The above quote reminded me of my epistemological stance of the "knower" as the "expert" and to observe each participant as the "knower" and "expert" who would teach me as the researcher.

Mishler (1986) writes that:

> Research interviews can never fully represent a participant's reality due power in the relationship, research setting, interpretation and limits of transcripts of taped interviews which can omit subtle nuances of language-tone, pace, breath and non-verbal communication (p.59)

While reflecting on the possible influence of power in the research relationship, I likened Mishler's observation of the participant as the "interpreter" of their experience and I as the researcher, the "writer" of their story. I was also mindful of the social context in which I as the researcher was perceived to be the "expert" and to have more power and status than the participant as the researched. I noticed that at some point during the interview each participant asked "Is this what you are looking for? or "I'm not sure if I'm making any sense …" Mason (2002) portrays the research conversation as a "co-production" between the researcher and the

interviewee' (p.63).   I now see that I would have had some influence on the content of the research interview given that the participants were known to me on some level in my professional capacity. Four interviews were carried out and all participants were female.

3.3.5   Location of Interview

In considering the place and time of interview, I invited each participant to choose a place where they would feel most comfortable, whether at their home or in a location that I would arrange. Likewise, I tried to fit into each participant's schedule as much as possible. The choice of location was interesting in that three of the participants chose to have the interview conducted in their home.

3.3.6   Reflection

After reflecting on the first interview, which I noted in my research diary, I became aware of how my anxiety of wanting not to influence the interview direction and to give the participant a voice to tell their story perhaps led me to feeling "forced and anxious" in my efforts. I found that I was forcing myself not to interrupt with a question. I began to feel anxious that I was not getting the information that I had set out to gather.   The participant seemed to have picked up on this and seemed somewhat worried that she had not presented the "right" information for my research. As my initial approach was to carry out the interview using semi-structured questions, after completing the first interview, I found that to be truly present to the relationship and to the actual experience of the participant telling her story I needed to set aside the theory. Phillion (2002a) describes this succinctly when she noted:

> …. I found one of my greatest difficulties in learning to think narratively was learning how to deal with theory. The more I learned to pay attention to my relationship with Pam (the subject of her research) the more I experienced theory as abstract and decontextualized. I actually had to set theory aside for simply being present to what was happening …. in my relationship with Pam
>
> (Phillion, 2002a, p.538)

I became aware that I was more interested in hearing the participant's stories. I found myself adapting and refining how I carried out the research interview. I spent time chatting to the participant for about fifteen minutes before turning on the voice recorder. I shared some of my own world and experiences with the participant along with addressing any concerns that arose. This was done not only to gain their trust, make them feel at ease and encourage them to talk more freely, but it was also done in a way as to present myself as "genuine' and 'real". I also asked less questions, but rather gently guided the conversation in order to illicit, the necessary information. After the interview was over and the voice recorder was turned off, I thanked each participant for sharing her story. I also asked each participant to choose a pseudonym for the purpose of this interview. We then had a conversation in a "debriefing" way with shared self-disclosure.

On reflection, changing how I carried out the interview added deeper meaning and more depth to the interview. Whilst the change in approach did not invalidate the first interview, I definitely gathered more information in subsequent interviews. I also became more aware how in approaching the research interview I brought with me my own values, my own attachment experience, my own internal working model along with my perceptions and ideas.

3.4   DATA ANALYSIS

3.4.1   *Core Narratives*

After giving a lot of thought and consideration into how to represent each participant's data, I was drawn to the concept of using a "core narrative" to represent what the story is about by illustrating each individual's character, voice, story and language. Reissman (1993) writes that a core narrative is "a kind of radical surgery, a way of rendering 'the whole story' into a form that allows for comparison" (p.43). To maintain focus on the "core narrative" other parts of the transcript are not included although these are attended to later in the analysis chapter. The core narrative provides "a skeleton plot, a generalizable structure that researchers can use to compare the plots of individuals who share a common life event". (Reissman, 1993, p.61).   This method allowed me to see the data more clearly. Clear themes began to emerge after I had rewritten the data into a core narrative. To confirm whether I had interpreted the stories in line with the participants' experiences, I forwarded a copy of their 'core narrative' that I had written to each participant for checking.

3.4.2   *Thematic Analysis*

For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to use a form of narrative analysis, "Thematic Analysis" as outlined by Reissman (1993).   The Personal Narratives Group (1989a, p.261 as cited in Reissman, 1993, p.22) write that, "narratives are interpretive and in turn, require interpretation. They do not speak for themselves or provide direct access to other times, place or cultures". After listening to and transcribing the recorded interviews, I started to familiarise and analyse the interviews

examining both content and form. I began by organising narratives by themes, which were established by the most significant and emphasised concepts expressed by each participant. I became mindful that as a researcher "although the goal may be to tell the whole truth, our narratives about others' narratives are our worldly creations" (Reissman, 2003, p.15).

3.5   Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical considerations when planning to carry out a qualitative research study. Qualitative research provides a way of engaging with human subjects and requires the researcher to provide a duty of care to the participant who must be treated with dignity, respect and not be harmed in anyway. As a counsellor, adult educator and researcher I abide by the Professional Code of Ethics as outlined by the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (www.bacp.com). This suggests that all research should be undertaken with rigorous attentiveness to the quality and integrity both of the research itself and of the dissemination of the results of the research. The standard ethical principles of getting informed consent, safeguarding anonymity and the minimisation of harm, among others were outlined in detail in the information letter sent to all participants (Appendix 1). The participant information sheet (Appendix 2) provided information about possible risks and stated that if required, the participant could avail of a counselling session after completing the interview. One of the key risks to the participant was they may be identified through their stories. This risk had been highlighted in the participant information sheet.

3.6   Limitations of Methodology/Reflexivity

One of the possible limitations of qualitative research methodologies using data as narratives is the risk of researcher bias in the design of the study, data collection and analysis. According to Burke-Johnson (1977) "one potential threat to validity that researchers must be careful to watch out for is called *researcher bias* ...... researchers find what they want to find, and then they write up the results" (p.283). Polkinghorne (2007) contends that "because interview texts are co-created, interviewers need to guard against simply producing the texts they had expected" (p.12). Burke-Johnson (1977) observes that "researcher bias tends to result from selective observation and selective recording of information, and also from allowing one's personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted" and suggests that researchers need to pay particular attention to understanding their own biases through the process of reflexivity by reflecting and engaging in critical self reflection about his or her potential biases and predispositions (p.284).

Reflecting on the use of thematic analysis as discussed above, I became aware of how in the process of transcribing the participants' stories in the form of written language, the use of non verbal communications, body language, breath, emotions and nuances that are used to create meaning are absent in the written version. For example, during two of my interviews, the participants became quite emotionally and visibly upset. I stopped the voice recorder for a while to allow them to talk about what was happening and to regain their composure. We then continued on with the interview however this does not show in the transcripts. Nevertheless, significant insights related to the

interviews were recorded in my diary which allowed me to be reflexive on the nature of what was happening during the interview.

3.7   Conclusion

Considering that qualitative research entails a close relationship with participants who are the subjects of this study, in this chapter on methodology and methods I have attempted to weave ethics and self-reflection throughout the dialogue with the data. In the next chapter I will continue on to present the findings of my study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

Completing the process was one of the most insightful and enjoyable parts of this study as I found myself immersed in the participant's world. In this chapter, I will begin by presenting the findings in the form of four core narratives (as discussed in methodology chapter) to allow you the reader to enter into the participant's world.   I have attempted to include some of the participant's own voice, use of language and metaphors in the 'core narrative' to encapsulate their account of the story.   I decided to centre the participant as the main voice in the story. Ely (2007) suggests the participant is very much at the centre. She goes on to say that the participant's voice "must be communicated with just enough of her own colour, cadence, and usage to 'show' her to the readers" (p.573). My aim is to allow these stories to speak to the reader as I have allowed them speak to me.

I will outline each core narrative in the format of plot direction (the narrated life story), the turning point (where there was a life change for the participant) and the impact of the interview on the participant.

4.2   Kym's Story

Kym has been working in a Drug Rehabilitation Programme since 2007 and her roles include key-working, group facilitation and delivery of Relapse Prevention modules. She is a qualified counsellor and group facilitator.

4.2.1 Plot Direction

Kym recalled her childhood memories and spoke of her early attachment experiences and how her attachment experiences have played out throughout her life. She is the eldest of five children. Her early memories are of living at home with her mum, dad, siblings and granny. Kym recalls happy memories until the age of nine when things completely changed, *"I remember me mother and father splittin up at that age and it had quite a negative impact on the family'*. She goes on to say '*I felt huge shame, and not really knowing what was going to happen".* Kym spoke lovingly of her relationship with her granny, *"it was gentle, supportive, non-judgemental, safe, yah, definitely safe, I was closer to me granny out of everybody, we were very close, we slept in the same room, you know".* She spoke of her mother and expressed that their relationship was more of a friendship than a mother and daughter, and that she took on a lot of her mother's problems. When she spoke of her father, she talks of how *"I feared him and at the same time looked for his approval a lot of the time".*

Kym's story moves around in time from the past, to the present to the future. The story begins in a progressive direction where she describes her early childhood experiences and the secure relationship she felt with her granny right up until she was fourteen years of age. Her granny then became ill and moved away to a nursing home. At this point she spoke of her mother's boyfriend moving into the family home, and she goes on to say *"I didn't build a relationship with him".* The plot changes to a course of decline, as Kym sets on a course of destruction. This direction leads to dropping out of school, becoming a drug addict at fourteen and moving out of home and *"hanging around, and living in different houses".*

4.2.2   Turning Point

There is a sudden turning point that emerges in the story. Kym begins a methadone programme and as part of her recovery plan, returns to education.   On this journey, she connected with a tutor to whom she was to return to when she decided to turn her life around. She describes her relationship with this tutor: *"I was really interested in her, I felt safe, I suppose, I felt safe with her, I didn't feel judged, the same thing with me granny, you know, she would encourage me, she kinda gave me a little bit more which I felt great about, I felt special"*. She talks about how this tutor gave her the confidence to continue on with her education and complete a Certificate course in Childcare. On this journey Kym experienced a tutor with similar qualities. *"she took a similar interest, she would listen to me"*. She then travelled abroad and worked as an au pair for two years. The plot then changes to a course of regression where on returning to Ireland, for a short while she describes how she returns to the familiar path of drug addiction.

She again returns to personal gains as the plot direction resumes a progressive direction with the introduction of a recovery programme and making the choice to return to adult education. In her story Kym clearly describes a process of taking responsibility and seeing choices to continue to choose a different life. She speaks of her journey of self discovery during her counselling training and recovery, along with the challenges encountered throughout the process. As an adult educator, she acknowledges counsellor/tutor accountability for facilitating a safe and exploratory process for her students and clients. She speaks of emotions that arise within the classroom setting and *"you know sometimes it would tap into me own pain and I can*

keep me own boundary with it". Kym spoke of her attachment experiences and her awareness of how this can trigger off her own insecurities *"again it's the unknown, I would be fearful"*. She goes on to talk about her motivations for becoming an adult educator and says that *"certainly me experience, with me own addiction, and me recovery from that, would've motivated me"*.

4.2.3   Impact of interview on self

She said *"it was good, it was good to make the connections between your past, your childhood, your experiences and where it leads me today, it makes sense"*. This was an emotional moment during the interview where Kym stayed silent for some time as she reflected on how it makes sense how her attachment experiences are played out in her life today. She spoke about becoming aware of how having tutors, and people whom she connected with and trusted played a huge role in facilitating transformative change.

4.3   Alison's story

Alison has been working as a counselling psychologist and adult educator for the last five years. Her roles include working with individuals, group facilitation and adult education. Alison lectures in the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

4.3.1   Plot Direction

Alison spoke of her childhood memories and early attachment experiences and how her attachment experiences have impacted on her life. She is the youngest of four children. Her early memories are of living at home with her mum, dad, and siblings.

She spoke a lot about her mum and says *"I remember if my mother went three or four foot away I would be hysterical, I'd just lose the plot, I'd always have to have her in my vision where I could see her"*. When she spoke of her dad, she said *"my dad would be emotional but like he'd give you a hug and then like he'd push you away because it was too much"*. Alison's story moves around in time from past to present to future. She talks about her relationship with her mum a lot and how she constantly tries to please her mum. She spoke about how this was impacting on her adult life. Alison talks about being a *"caregiver"* and a *"peacekeeper"*. The plot direction continues in a positive progression when she says *"I had to change because it wasn't getting me anywhere"*.

4.3.2   Turning Point

Alison described a transformative experience as a result of attending personal therapy. She spoke of how insightful it was to understand the origin of her early childhood conditioning and internal core beliefs. She was able to go back in time and from her adult self to look at her early childhood experiences to make sense of the beliefs she had held most of her life. She learned that she could choose differently, *"I see how I allowed myself be kind of like I suppose like my therapist would always say, who's allowing so and so to do that and about taking responsibility"*. As a result of finding a secure place to explore in the relationship with her therapist, she made the decision to return to adult education and complete a degree in psychology. On this journey Alison met tutors who took a similar interest and encouraged her on her quest.

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When Alison speaks about her motivations to return to education to become a counsellor and tutor, she says *"I suppose it stems right back, I was never thought to be academic, there was never any kind of expectation of me, it's kinda like, you know she wouldn't be the sharpest tool in the box"*. She goes on to speak about her role as an educator and when she *speaks* about conflicting arising within the classroom she goes on to say *"I find it really really challenging, I was totally anxious, she (student) reminded me of my mother, totally challenging"*. Alison portrays herself as someone persistent who '*surpassed my own expectations'*. She talks about her role as a tutor and says *"I like being a tutor, I like imparting my knowledge, I suppose it goes back to that kind of idea that people are saying she knows stuff, she is quite smart"*. She goes on to say *"I like other people learning because I understand what it's like when people are like well you can't learn coz you're not really that smart"*.

4.3.3   Impact of interview on self

She describes how on reflection, she now sees herself as a stronger person who is empowered and now leading the life that she wants along with being more equipped to help others on their journey. Alison found empowerment through her learning process and became a person who could act differently in the world. Reflecting on our conversation together, she goes on to say *"when you look back over the life history, yah, it makes sense"*.

4.4   Mary's story

Mary is a married lady and a mother of four adult children. She works as a project co-ordinator and adult educator with a children's charity and advocacy organisation. Her roles include facilitating parenting courses with individuals, carers, parents and all people working with children.

4.4.1   Plot direction

The plot direction begins in a progressive direction with Mary describing having very positive attachment experiences both her mother and father *"I had a different relation with each one of them but they were very positive in their own way"*. She describes her mum as *"very nurturing, she was very caring, and just had a great way about her, she would always be the person I would turn to"*. She describes her dad as *'a quiet man'*. Mary speaks lovingly of her early childhood experiences and goes on the say *"home was always a real safe place for me, I loved being home"*.   The plot direction continues in a positive direction when at fifteen, she met her boyfriend who was to become her husband. Mary narrates that her husband *"became my best friend and played a huge influence on my life'*. She says *'I feel I went from a stable home to another stable home"*.

4.4.2 Turning Point

The plot continues in a positive direction. Mary got married, and had four children. When her children were in secondary school, she returned to adult education to study childcare, followed by psychology.   She describes how having such positive attachment experiences encouraged her to work with children and their families, *"I*

know I've had a really positive family life, and feel for people who don't have good experiences in their life … so it actually really gives me a desire to be able to give some of what I got". She speaks about her desire to create a secure base in her work for the children and families that she works with. She goes on to talk about her role as an adult educator and describes a clear focus on her strengths and displays great empathy and understanding for her students. When speaking of emotions that arise within the classroom, she goes on to say *"I have fairly good coping skills in dealing with emotional issues, I would empathise and you know, I would let them speak".* Mary speaks with enthusiasm and energy when she talks about her motivations when working as an educator *"I do believe in the group (process), I find it really stimulating, I love to see the progression, I find that a really good experience".*

4.4.3   *Impact of interview on self*

Mary talks about how she is always open to learning new things. Reflecting on our conversation, she went on to say that *"it was only last year that I started looking at it (attachment theory) from an adult perspective, I had never actually thought about it before, that you can actually get those secure attachments at a later stage', it makes sense now".*

4.5   Anna's story

Anna has been working as a psychotherapist and adult educator since 2002. Her roles include working with individuals, group facilitation and adult education.   She currently lectures in the field of counselling and addiction studies.

4.5.1 Plot direction

Anna recalls her early childhood memories and attachment experiences and how these now impact on her adult life. Her early memories are of living at home with her mother, father, brother and sister. She goes on to say *"I was a twin, and premature, so I was separated from my mother'*. She talks of how her dad worked away from lot and *'kinda yearning for him"*. She describes her relationship with her dad as being *'loving, yet distant'* by the fact that *"he was loving but it was piecemeal you know, he'd give you the loving you craved but he was gone before you'd even kind of consumed it so the distance was always as he was hugging you, he was gone"*. Anna describes a difficult relationship with her mother. She goes on to say that she was fearful of her mother and describes her as *"very rigid so if you were bold there were severe consequences"*. She talks about how she constantly yearned for her mother's approval and as a child *"I learned very quickly to be quiet, to be docile and to stay on the right side of her, I had to be for survival because the alternative was out of control panic is what I used to feel … I felt if she disowned me there was nobody because my dad wasn't there"*. She went on to say how this internal belief system continued with her right into adulthood.

While Anna describes her childhood as *"very lonely and isolating",* she describes how she found great solace in her twin brother. She goes on to say *"I can't imagine how I would have got through it without him because we were inseparable and we had no-one else"*. She talks about how herself and her brother were not allowed outside to play with other children. At this time Anna spoke about having a teacher in school with whom she had *"a fantastic positive experience with"*. She learned to

trust this teacher and was encouraged to talk about her feelings. She goes on to say *"she was like a shining light"*.

4.5.2 Turning Point

Anna goes on to talk about how her early experiences have impacted on her adult development, *"it had a profound effect on me… so I got into addiction"*. She describes hating herself and goes on to say *"I internalised her view of me (mother) and I felt bad through and through and if I was a better person she wouldn't have treated me this way, I lived out of that truth"*. The plot changes to a course of decline. Anna went to live in England and struggled with alcohol addiction which continued right into her late twenties. She then met her husband and her life began to change. She returned to Ireland and the plot takes a progressive direction with the introduction of a recovery programme and making the choice to return to adult education.

When Anna speaks of her motivations to return to education to become a counsellor and tutor, she says *"I would say it's the scenario of the wounded healer, having lived and surmounted my own difficulties ….. it's a passion in me that has come out for helping others realise their true spirit"*. She goes on to say *"you know there was a sense in the early days, unconscious and then it became conscious that these people will love me and need me in a way that I wasn't"*. Anna talks about her role as an educator and when she speaks about conflicting arising within the classroom she goes on to say *"I become fearful and the anxiety is in my stomach, what I've learned to do is to quiet that anxiety and say this is not coming from the room, its coming from my past"*. She describes how she is much more comfortable dealing with emotion in the classroom and says *"It's my home, I've never been fearful of emotion"*. As an

educator Anna speaks of the importance of creating a secure base in the classroom and giving her students *"a voice and the freedom to explore who they really are"*.

4.5.3   Impact of interview on self

Reflecting on our conversation, Anna goes on to say *"when you look back over the life history, I can now make clearer sense of how I am the way I am"*. She went on to say *"I suppose just that it's an ongoing process of self reflection that never really ends, that would be my sense of it"*. She also identified how a kind teacher *"makes all the difference in the world"*.

4.6   Conclusion

While each participant's story was unique and narrated in a different way, my perception was that six main themes emerged in the stories told.   The following themes emerged as significant in attempting to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning.

1. Attachment styles of educators (participants)

2. Internal working models of self

3. The educator as the secure base for exploration

4. Earned security

5. Motivation to become a counsellor and adult educator

6. Life histories as a medium to facilitate new learning

In the next chapter, I will develop these themes to a greater extent.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

5.1   Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. This chapter seeks to look deeper into the findings of my research by relating theory to the lived experiences of the participants. The theory I will use to converse with the data is that which was discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2). Having collected and analysed the data, the following themes emerged as significant in attempting to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning.

5.2   Attachment styles of Educators

In attachment terms, of the four participants, three of the participants described an insecure attachment style in childhood and their life histories confirmed this. In one case, the attachment history of one of the participants demonstrated an intergenerational pattern of insecure attachment as highlighted by van Ijzendoorn (1995) which the participant describes as *"emotional neglect"* by her primary care-giver, particularly during her formative years when the internal working model is constructed. Anna describes how as an adult and in trying to understand why her mother behaved in the way she did, she goes on to say:

…now after many years, I believe that she (mother) couldn't give to me what she hadn't been given herself so looking back on her history, she grew up in a chaotic household where there was poverty, there was a lot of physical abuse. She has a lot of brothers and witnessed a lot of beatings from an early age. Her (mother) father did have quite a temper and so did her mother. She is a very rigid person and she'd cope with that by being very rigid and controlling and you know its taken a long time to really believe that because I felt for a long time that she just hated me and that there was no reason for the rage and abuse except that it was badness, whereas now the older she gets and having children of my own I can really see that she gives herself very little nurturing… she has always seen herself in a negative light … it's a way of me making sense of some of what doesn't make sense especially some of the cruelty that she carried out

Three of the participants who took part in the study described parental relationships that were distressing in some way, rather than warm, loving and responsive as outlined in the findings chapter. The research in this area would suggest that teachers who described a preoccupied attachment style could be classified according to Bowlby (1969) as having an anxious/ambivalent attachment style as children, fearful of exploration, clingy and unsure of the primary caregiver's response. In adulthood these individuals become preoccupied by their relationships and have a tendency to value themselves in relation to how others think of them (Main et al. 1985). Anna talks about what happens when she perceives a student to dislike her:

I wish I could say it wouldn't affect me but it would … there would be a kind of a worrying pattern going on and I'd wonder is there something about me …. I'll get into the criticism and it might dip into that wound of low self worth and say there must be something I'm not doing right…

All participants spoke of conflict and emotion in the classroom. Three of the participants spoke of the anxiety that arose when dealing with conflict in the classroom. In some ways this represented a model of familial relating and had unconsciously moved them to repeat behaviours learned while growing up rather than

adapting and responding to the needs of the student and the education environment (Riley 2011). In the case of each of these three participants, they noticed patterns of *"avoidance"* and *"anxiety"* that they saw as typical of their way of responding to students when conflict arose within the classroom.

Alison describes how:

> *I don't like conflict, I feel really really uncomfortable. About two weeks ago I was tutoring and this older lady asked me a question … she was quite challenging and didn't give me a lot of information. This went on for ten to fifteen minutes, really, really challenging and then another student turned on me and she said you're supposed to be a psychologist … I was just thinking to myself oh my good Jesus like … I was totally anxious, I could feel myself going, oh my God, this is horrific in front of everybody. I kinda got … like I didn't get defensive but I kinda got like you need to back off and I went on to something totally different. I wondered had the rest of the class thought oh she's not managing the class too well …. She reminded me so much of my mother, very, very challenging…*

Kym describes how she acts when conflict arises within the classroom

> *I would be quite anxious. I would need to know very clearly how I was going to deal with it prior to going in. If conflict arises in the group, at the present moment I do manage it well but afterwards I come away very doubtful, very unsure, very in conflict within myself, if I said the right thing, did I do the right thing, sometimes I would come away drained or upset … I suppose internally I don't want to deal with it … I would go to another team member .. sometimes I would get feedback as to how they may have dealt with the conflict and I would take that quite personally. I'd become very closed so although I'm asking for one thing when I get it you know ….*

Anna goes on to say:

> *If I'm honest internally I become fearful and the anxiety is in my stomach... what I've learned to do is to quiet that anxiety and say this is not coming from the room this is coming from my past … but definitely it takes its toll because even when I'm aware of all that I can carry it with me so I leave the room and carry the anxiety with me*

It was interesting to note from my findings that while the above three participants spoke about the anxiety that arose within when dealing with conflict, the three participants also describe how they felt comfortable when dealing with emotions in the classroom. Anna goes on to say *"I'm actually very comfortable with it, emotions you know, it like my home, I've never been really fearful of emotion as I'm a very emotional person myself"*. Alison describes how *"I'm fine when emotions arise, I'd try and I suppose help the person, I'd be quite soft and I think it's something special to be able to allow yourself to cry"*. Kym goes on to say *"I would feel that intensely, it would tap into me own pain, I'd be ok with that, emotions"*.

On the contrary, research in this area would suggest that individuals who display a secure attachment style in their role as educator, more than likely experienced secure attachments in childhood; happy to explore the world around them and assured of their primary care givers comfort when needed (Bowlby 1988, Ainsworth et al. 1978). The secure teacher's interest is primarily focused on understanding, encouraging and supporting her students (Riley, 2011). One of the participants, Mary, describes a secure attachment style and when conflict and emotion arises within the classroom she goes on to say

> *I have experienced quite a lot of emotion and conflict in the classroom … I think I have fairly good coping skills in dealing with emotional issues. I would consider myself fairly emotionally stable and fairly even tempered … I would empathise with them … I would let them speak. With regard to conflict I would try and diffuse it or address it. I wouldn't take it personally … I'd explore it a little. I'd be happy to be mediator, which I've done a few times*

As educators with these attachment styles, how might this affect the teacher-student relationship? Research suggests that the characteristics of the educator are an

important factor when determining the student-educator relationship (Riley 2011, Fleming 2008, Bowlby 1988). People with secure attachment styles tend to experience an open relationship, which result in open, flexible, and a non-defensive approach to attachment related issues. Secure adults integrate emotional and cognitive responses and are not preoccupied by one or the other (Fleming, 2008, p.38)

On the other hand, educators with preoccupied or insecure attachment styles who score high on anxiety and low on avoidance may appear vulnerable emotionally, when confronted with stressful situations within the classroom, that are also ambiguous. Educators who have high levels of avoidance may also appear vulnerable, which may be presented in the form of defensive behaviours (Riley, 2011, p. 31).

5.3   Internal working models of self

The model of self that was reported by three of the participants show that observing students act in a way that challenged the teacher's internal working model created an emotional discord that they found difficult to cope with for more than a short time. These three participants had completed a professional counselling training course. However understanding the impact of the internal working model offers an explanation of how one can revert to customary practices even after participating in professional development (Riley 2011, p.91). When speaking about stressful situations that arise within the classroom, Anna goes to say

> *I'm aware that I can leave the classroom and carry the fear and anxiety, I have to kinda process that and realise it's not threatening in the way I would've felt threatened before, there was no getting away as a child whereas*

> *I'm an adult now so I have to really work on the adult part of myself and the rational part of myself*

While Kym was telling her story, she made a connection between the feelings that arise inside of her when dealing with stressful situations, and the relationship she describes with her dad as outlined earlier in the findings chapter.

> *it's the unknown, if someone, are they going to get up and leave, be violent .. anger to me equals violence, even though now I know it's an emotion and a feeling, when I'm in a group, it's what happens for me, you know I would be fearful, (similar to the relationship I described with my dad) I'd know me own limitations, you know to a certain point like, I'd get uncomfortable.*

Alison refers to her relationship with her mother and describes how she took on the role of *"caretaker"* and *"peacemaker"*. She talks about how as a result of her professional training she is more aware of her role as a caregiver, however goes on to say

> *I can get pulled back into old patterns (of behaviour) and it's so easy as you're expected to fit back into that place again. I have to do a lot of work on having boundaries for myself …*

These findings confirm Bowlby's theory of how inbuilt these scripts can become, and "once built, evidence suggests, that these models of interacting tend to persist and are so taken for granted that they come to operate at an unconscious level" (Bowlby, 1988, p.146). It also supports his theory in that the attachment system, through the internal working model comes into play throughout life, whenever an individual feels under threat, stress or fatigue (Riley, 2011, pp. 21-22). These findings provide important information for educators and supports Dominice (2000, p.175) premise that reviewing one's life history "can provide an opportunity for the teacher to

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recognise what characterises their relation to knowledge, in other words, how they construct their own knowledge" thus providing a medium to revisit one's internal working models and assist in the construction of new knowledge.

5.4   The educator as the secure base for exploration

Three of the participants interviewed endured many experiences of their trust in others being betrayed, often with emotional consequences, as outlined in the findings chapter. These three participants also describe how as a result of the fear they experienced as children growing up, they were unable to explore their surrounding environment in an exploratory way. This supports Ainsworth et al (1978) findings which states that the exploration system can only function optimally when the primary attachment figure is sufficiently available and responsive. Kym describes how *"I much preferred to be at home and maybe knowing what was going on, that's was I did for years"*.   Anna expresses how *"I learned at all costs to be good, there was a constant thing of not putting a foot wrong"*. Alison goes on to say *"I'd be able to tell her mood, when she (mother) walks into the room, by how she's walking"*.

The notion of the educator as providing the secure base for exploration is consistent with attachment theory; within the security of the relationship, students have the opportunity to explore their relationship with self and others (Riley, 2011). The findings show that two of above participants experienced a corrective emotional experience in the consistency of their relationship with a tutor which supports Bretherton's (1992) argument that the educator can be most helpful in serving as a reliable, secure base to allow the individual to explore and rework her internal working models.

Kym describes her relationship with Marie (tutor):

She (teacher) did encourage me, she would say things like, you know, you are very bright. I felt safe with her, I didn't feel judged. I felt special … she would listen to me, she would ask a question in the class and I would answer it and she would affirm it, she would say that's a really good answer and it must have been that then I used love going to her class

Anna talks about her experience with one particular teacher and how this relationship had a significant impact on her life at that time.

I has a fantastic positive experience with a teacher… she was the first person I ever heard talk about self esteem and minding yourself … that was the beginning that maybe I matter. She modelled it's ok to talk about feelings. I began to start feeling that maybe what I feel is ok … I think the bullying stopped around her class cos I began to be able to stand up to them, never thought of that before

These findings verify Riley's (2011) concept that the student's perceptions of their teacher's availability, sensitivity, and responsiveness can be viewed as supporting the notion of the educator as a secure base for exploration.

The third participant mentioned above describes experiencing a corrective emotional experience with a therapist during her counselling psychology training. This will be discussed further in the next section.

5.5   Earned Security

One of the main themes that emerged from the interviews correlated with Mary Main's concept of *earned secure.*   Main asserts that insecure or traumatic attachment experiences in childhood can be overcome by having "the opportunity to form a coherent representation of their lives through psychotherapy or other positive

relationships" (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008, p.589). Three of the participants described experiences of childhood conducive with some form of insecure attachment. However, these three participants described having subsequent significant emotional relationships with a close friend, romantic partner or therapist which enabled them to develop out of an insecure position into a secure/autonomous one.

Ann expresses how:

> *Meeting my husband was without question the most affirming relationship I had because I really felt that he loved me unconditionally and he didn't go away, and he didn't threaten to go away, so I began in the first time in my life to feel safe. And then there was my therapist, you know, I began to feel that this man is what he says he is, and you know, he is there to support me and there is no judgement…. I don't feel he has another agenda in his mind. I believe what he says and then I can believe it for myself, I can do that, because I know by his face and I know by what he is saying that it's true. The teacher that I had was the opposite of my mother in that she could be positive without the dark side. She was more loving than she was cross whereas it was the opposite with my mother…that teacher had a hugely positive influence on my life*

Kym goes on to say

> *There have been women in particular in my life through all the different experiences that I have had, even up to today where I would get that safety, non-judgemental, that kind of freedom, that safe place to explore, to be able to say anything that I need to say to build healthy relationships. I would've got that in recovery, from me sponsor, in personal therapy, in work, me team leader is now me best friend and also from those two teachers even though I wouldn't see them now …*

Alison speaks of her relationship with her therapist

> *The relationship I had with my therapist allowed me to explore and change some of my perceptions. I have become more aware and more assertive. She listened to me and would say whose allowing so and so to do that and about taking responsibility for that … she encouraged me and supported me*

These findings suggest that the quality of the attuned relationship appears to be able to move individuals from an incoherent to a more coherent representation of their lives.

Gomez's asserts that the fundamental message of Bowlby's theory is that "human beings are contact seeking and our wellbeing rest largely on the condition of our relationships" (1997, p.168). A considerable body of theory and research indicates that the quality and conditions of the relationship are of paramount importance to the outcome of the educational experience (Riley, 2011, Fleming, 2008, Bowlby 1988, Rogers 1961). In other words, each relationship provides the opportunity to revisit core beliefs of self and others. These models, though difficult, are not impossible to change and "the quality and consistency of relationships are as important or more important than events, even disturbing ones, in the configuration of one's expectations, assumptions and capabilities structured into the internal working model" (Gomez, 1997, p 169). This is very important information for educators as research suggests that internal working models are not static but are subject to change throughout the lifespan as a result of new experiences in the world (Riley, 2011, Fonagy et. al, 1996).

5.6   Motivation to become a counsellor and adult educator

An interesting theme that emerged from the study was each participant's motivation to become an adult educator in the field of counselling education. Once each participant had described their attachment history, it was not difficult to draw the conclusion that in view of their attachment histories, the fact that three of the participants were attracted to the counselling and teaching profession supports Riley's hypothesis "that perhaps they had been yearning for a stronger connection with people and may have been unconsciously motivated to enter teaching to satisfy this relational need" (2011, p.90).

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Alison speaks of her motivation to return to education to train as a counselling psychologist:

> *I suppose it stems right back, I was never thought to be academic …in my family it was like she got her leaving cert, thank Christ, you know there was never any kinda expectation of me to do anything big or you know I often felt that way…so I thought to myself, no I just want to be really academic…I like being a tutor, I like other people learning, l like that because I understand what it's like when people are like you and can't coz you're not really that smart, I like counselling I suppose because my whole family would be different'*

Anna goes on to say:

> *I would say its that scenario of the wounded healer … I have huge empathy and appreciation for what people suffer, like I was saying earlier, that underdog, it's a passion in me that has come out for helping others realise their true spirit, and its not them and they can come out and see who they really are … in the beginning there was a drive to care for others so at times that was to the expense of myself so you know there was a sort of a drive for approval to be seen as a good girl that's kinda a fallout from the early days of wanting to be seen to be good, what better than being a counsellor and educator, I mean that's very good, helping people …. you know there was a sense in the early days, unconscious and then it became conscious .. these people will love me and need me in a way that I wasn't. I didn't feel loved or needed and of course that's not workable and not ethical in the long run so I had to challenge myself… it gave me a false sense of empowerment in the sense that I had no power as a child and right into my twenties I was still very fearful of my mother so it's a false sense of empowerment, I don't want to work out of that so it like putting a light on those shadow parts of what draws me in you know, nobody does if for self effacing reasons, there is a huge amount of motivation happening under the surface*

Kym speaks of her motivations to become an adult educator:

> *Certainly me experiences and me own addiction … finding an interest in people, in behaviours and how people cope. Certainly in the beginning it would've been me own experience, noticing maybe me own needs, and in being able to give back. I wanted to do more … When giving workshops on the dynamics of addiction, I would feel really empowered in that, I get a great sense of meself, I would feel really good coming away from that. At times when somebody gets what your trying to teach or explore, I would be very passionate about it, and if somebody gets it and understand it, then you know, I really enjoy that part, like I know they have it and I can make a difference to their life*

In light of Anna's attachment history, the findings outlined above also offer support for Riley's concept that "once they entered the profession, rather than receiving the corrective emotional experience they sought, each typically behaved in their professional role in a manner that reproduced familial responding" (2011, p.90).

On the contrary, it was interesting to observe from the findings the participant who described a secure attachment in childhood describes her motivations for becoming an adult educator. Mary goes on to say:

> *I suppose because I work with children, that was my original work, and you know understanding that children within the home need structure and stability and it depends on the parents or the guardian in the home so it was the natural course of events to start working then with the parents .. the goal was to help them with issues that arise with their children so that would have been how it came about*

This would support research which shows that the secure teacher's interest is mainly focused on understanding and supporting her learners (Riley, 2011, Fleming 2008).

5.7   Life histories as a medium to facilitate new learning

My reflection on the use of the life history as a medium for change, learned by completing this research, leads me to conclude that using narratives can act as a powerful catalyst to facilitate reframing one's internal working models. One of the strengths of using narratives is the life history aspect, as the telling of one's story is a powerful tool to exercise change. During the research interview process, participants were invited to tell their life story and their attachment experiences, which provided new perspectives and an opportunity for new awareness and change as contextualised in their life histories. Many of the participants used words such as, *"it made sense",*

"owned it" (knowledge)*, "moved from a head level to a more internal level", "taking responsibility"* to describe the life story process. From these four interviews, it appears that the key advantage of using life history and narratives is that it can act as a vehicle to implementing new learning and insights both for the student and educator (Dominice, 2000). At the end of each interview, I asked each participant if they had learned anything new about themselves as a result of our conversation, Kym went on to say:

> *Yah, it was good, it was good to make the connections between your past, your childhood, you own experiences and where it leads you today in work, or counselling or relationships in general, like, it makes sense. It's good in being able to go back and look at that (life history), it is a good thing for me you know, to be able to make more and more connections. Each time you go back you learn something different, you know, each time you look at your past from a different angle, you learn something different. I suppose the important thing is that you're always kinda learning more about yourself and you know, whether it's on a daily basis or a weekly basis, you learn something new, and being able to bring that back to the group, enhances what you do*

Anna's goes on to say

> *Reflexivity is important, it's an ongoing process that never really ends, that would be my sense of it … no sooner have you uncovered one shadow element of what you know, then another one pops up and I think what is powerful about working with people is they will always reflect back to you your own issues and they can be most challenging. If someone in the group reminds you of someone or touches into some part of you, you have to stay on your toes and you have to be constantly working on the subconscious because you know for me, it's never done. I think it's imperative that you stay working on yourself, because it worries me how the unconscious can project onto young people especially, who are impressionable and it makes all the difference in the world having a good teacher. Of all the teachers that I was frightened of and there were many, this one teacher who was nice to me had a profound effect on me*

Alison states:

> *I think what I learned by talking about my attachment style and life history made me think about the effect that some attachment figures have had and still have on me. I realise that I can be very critical of my own competencies and*

work when working with students as I feel I may have experienced much criticism with some attachment figures. In my work I realise that I need to keep my feelings and thoughts about my own insecure attachments in check and parked as they could impact on my work as an therapist and tutor. I enjoyed completing my life history as attachment is a theory and modality which I feel can be effective when working with both my students and clients, and also in understanding myself more in the process … yah, it make more sense now

Mary refers to the interview and goes on to say:

It was interesting to reflect on my attachment style and experiences which I only became aware of last year… and that secure attachments can be formed in adulthood…also as a facilitator I may be influential in helping someone to form a secure attachment. It is good to reflect on how I am in my interactions with the group participants

The findings provide important information for educators and confirm research in this area that highlights the benefits of using life history and narratives in education as a tool for critical reflection, both for the adult learner and educator (Dominice 2000, Fleming 2003, Mezirow 1990).

5.8 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. In this chapter, I have sought to look deeper into the findings of my research by relating theory to the lived experiences of the participants. I have shown excerpts from the participants stories and attempted to give my interpretation and understanding of their stories related to themes outlined in the findings chapter. On reflection, I believe that the findings outlined in this chapter support my hypothesis that *"Attachment theory is a useful tool*

in understanding the role of an educator". In the next chapter, in conclusion, I will discuss the implications and recommendations for teaching and learning. I will also reflect on my learning as a researcher on this journey.

Chapter 6

Conclusion, recommendations and reflection

The findings of this study suggest that informing adult educators of the principles and key concepts of attachment theory can enhance the educators' abilities to build and maintain relationships conducive to a positive learning environment.   Bowlby (1969) 1970, 1988) envisaged that attachment styles and its related adaptive strategies have implications for one's social and emotional experiences throughout the lifespan. The behavioural patterns or coping strategies associated with one's internal working models continue from infancy through to adulthood and this has been supported by spatial studies (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1988; Ainsworth et al, 1991) and adult clinical studies (Main et al. 1986). The way in which both tutors and students behave and interact within the educational environment is a reflection of their internal working models. Attachment styles, as identified by Ainsworth et al (1978) and Main & Solomen (1990), combined with the associated coping behaviours and strategies are shown to represent the individual's continuing adjustments to relational and difficult situations within the classroom environment.

The findings from this study show that understanding the nature and the dynamics of the attachment system can provide the adult educator with a richer view of both the student and their own functioning within the learning situation. While the interviews illustrate that the attachment stories of each participant display common themes, each person has a unique life story and developmental history, hence they present their stories differently.   The data provided by the participants' stories has provided

insightful knowledge, confirming that the attachment process is central to understanding the student-tutor relationship. The findings provide many implications for teaching and learning. By understanding the mechanisms of the attachment behavioural system, educators can identify and understand students' behaviours, enabling them to become more competent in creating an environment that is conducive to learning. For adult educators to understand their learners and teach more effectively, it is crucial that they understand their own attachment styles and how this plays out within the tutor-student relationship. Secondly, educators' need to have an awareness of their learners' attachment styles, and adjust their teaching style accordingly, if necessary. The educator can assist in the creation of a "secure base", which is the warm, caring environment in which exploration can occur. Understanding the concept of the secure base offers educators' insight on what is needed for learners to feel secure in the classroom. The findings show that a trusting, nurturing and supportive relationship makes for an improved and secure learning environment. Interestingly, two of the participants in this study experienced being 'held' and 'nurtured' by the relationship they experienced with a particular teacher. The context for them was that they experienced a relationship that was nurturing and responsive to their needs, which Bowlby (1979) refers to as an *affectional bond.*

The findings from this study show there is definite value in the practise of self reflection using life history and narrative as a means to facilitate new learning (Dominice 2000, Fleming 2003, Mezirow 1991). It was at this point that participants made connections between their relational style in the learning environment and their childhood family experiences. Telling one's story gives meaning to the past in order

to make sense of the present life of the individual. This practise draws together theory and self reflection and can act as a medium to facilitate new knowledge and personal growth both for the student and for the educator. Understanding the self and one's attachment history in the context of other relationships is what is necessary to explore the relational dynamics that play out within the learning environment. According to Riley (2011, p.108), "in psychodynamic terms the details of any act of behaviour is not as important for the teacher to understand as the underlying patterns that created it". Unless the educator becomes aware of her own attachment style and the personal triggers for her behaviour and explores new ways of responding, no sustainable change in the teacher-student relationship will take place (Riley, 2011).

Given the array of evidence as outlined in the literature chapter on the connections between early attachment and subsequent relationships, the life histories as told by the participants' confirm that relationship development starts with the relationship with the primary caregiver upon which increasingly more complex relationships are constructed – affective development, cognitive development, social skill, problem solving and peer relationships. The evidence from the findings discussed in this study, supports the literature outlined in chapter two, which suggests that the internal working models (representations) of early relationship experiences guide both the cognitive and emotional processes together with interpretations, expectations and memories, which consequently guide behaviour. Of course our subjectivities and our internal working models are formed in relationships at a very age as outlined by (Bowlby, 1969), however this is not static and can change as a result of positive relationships and new experiences in the world. This was highlighted in the participants' stories.

While conducting my literature research I found that there is a lack of teaching guides to inform educators of how attachment experiences play out in the teacher-student relationship. Therefore, I believe in this study it was important to hear from educators themselves in order to gain insight into understanding the dynamics of teacher-student relationship which I anticipate will contribute new knowledge to the community of adult teaching and learning.

The general implications from this study show that a very clear set of themes came forward and these themes were consistently discussed by all participants. The themes concern both the teaching and learning processes both for the student and educator. The findings from this study may make a small contribution to show how attachment theory can be used as a tool to inform educators about teaching and learning. To promote the integration of these findings in adult and community education, the following recommendations are made.

1. Adult and community education could gain by introducing the principles of attachment theory and interpersonal skills requirement into the teaching and learning curriculum.

2. Educators could be encouraged and supported to use educational biographies and narratives as a form of continuous professional development. This can provide an opportunity to deepen learning about theory and practise along with assisting personal and professional development. This concept could also incorporated into the teaching curriculum with their students.

3. The emotional dimension of teaching could be usefully integrated into many aspects of the teaching curriculum which have traditionally been mostly cognitive based. The findings from this research would suggest that the

educators ability to understand themselves, their emotional strengths and weaknesses is crucial, in order to help them manage the relational challenges they will experience when dealing with students in the learning environment.

4. Continuing professional development should be encouraged amongst adult educators as it is important both for the learner and the educator.

5. Insight into the dynamics of relationship building holds potential for informing educators about their role in assisting the learning process.

- *Reflections – "My Story"*

Reflecting on my journey as a researcher over the last year, I became more in tune with the attachment styles and behaviours of my clients, learners and colleagues. Recently when attending a conference for adult literacy tutors, while chatting with one of my colleagues, I became aware of how angry she became when she spoke of her students. This tutor went on to describe how she was on sick leave from work for the last few months as she could not handle the students behaviour in the classroom. She spoke negatively about a certain number of students. I sensed that her style or teaching was one of "boss management" rather than "lead management" (Glasser, 1998). She went on to talk about how she disciplines her students, such as, putting their name in the "black book", or punishing tactics such as "standing at the back of the room". I was struck by how she did not say anything positive about her experience. This made so much sense to me. I work as a therapist in a centre for the prevention of suicide and self harm. I work with many second level and third level students who present with suicidal ideation and self harming behaviours. The

students I see, describe tutors who they say offer little or no support and encouragement, and certainly do not listen to them. Many of the students would describe their tutors' behaviours as one of their main stressors. On the basis of my knowledge as a therapist I believe all educators should be aware of the relational underpinnings of the student-teacher relationship.

My own teaching has changed as a result of completing this research. I can now translate the concepts of attachment theory into my personal practise to gain a deeper insight into the relational underpinnings of the teacher-student relationship. In my work as both a counsellor and adult educator, I am more aware of attuning myself to the students' signals, both verbal and nonverbal, and at the same time attuning to my own internal experience. It has been challenging for me both as educator and therapist to examine my own attachment style and recognise how this impacts on me both as an adult learner and educator. As I listened to and retold each participant's stories, I had the opportunity to make meaning and sense of my own and understand my students' attachment experiences in new and different ways. I hope as you read the findings of this study that perhaps you too will be changed and find new meanings in your life as you resonate with the participants' stories of their attachment experiences both through the content of their stories and in the way in which they were told to you.

Reflecting on the life stories of each participant has highlighted for me, that as humans, we deeply need the experience of positive and nurturing relationships that is so often denied to us. I was inspired to learn that as an educator I can positively

influence and provide a positive learning environment to students thus allowing new learning experiences and changes to occur

"By learning you will teach; and by teaching you will understand"

Latin proverb

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APPENDIX 1: Letter addressed to potential participants

Note: *All identifying features, such as names and addresses, have been omitted respecting participants' confidentiality.*

Participant Invitation Letter

'Using Attachment Theory as a lens to understand the role of an Adult Educator'

My name is Siobhan Quinn. I am currently carrying out a study entitled 'Using attachment theory as a lens to understand the role of an adult educator'. This study will form part of a thesis required to complete my Masters in Adult and Community Education with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

I invite you to participate in this study and I am particularly interested in exploring the area of attachment styles and how this influences one's role as an educator. As a qualified psychotherapist and educator in the field of Counselling and Psychotherapy, I am hoping to interview educators who have experience of counselling either personally or professionally. I anticipate that knowing more about educators' experiences and my role as an educator will assist my teaching style and also have some positive influence on the teaching process in the future.

If you decide to participate in this research, your involvement would consist of an individual interview with myself for 60-90 minutes. The interview will be recorded so that I don't miss anything and for purposes of writing up experiences in a format using themes. Questions asked will be semi-structured and will give you an opportunity to tell your story. You are free to refuse to answer any question throughout the interview without prejudice.

Your decision to participate is completely voluntary and all information you provide will be securely stored until the research is completed and assessed by examiners and will then be destroyed. This limit of confidentiality applies to this interview, even if you withdraw from the study after disclosing such information. The data collected will only be available to me, my college supervisor and/or the appropriate academic body who will access the final research. Additionally, excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final research report. Under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the report. You need to be aware that I cannot guarantee your anonymity. Given that your personal story will be quoted in the thesis, it may be possible that someone who knows you will recognise your story. The transcript of the data can be accessed by you at any time if required. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time or withdraw your data up until the work is published. The interview does not constitute any kind of counselling however debriefing can be provided if required after the interview and will be discussed at this point.

Please feel free to contact me by phone or email if any other information is required prior to research taking place. We can arrange a place for the interview which would suit you otherwise I am happy to travel to you.

I have included full information with this letter.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact my Research Supervisor, David McCormack at the Department of Adult & Community Education, NUI Maynooth, david.mccormack@nuim.ie . Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

 I agree for the researcher to contact me at either of the numbers below:

Mobile _____ Work/Home _____

Please sign this form to verify that you have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information sheet dated 10/02/2012 and to confirm that you agree to participate in this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: Siobhan Quinn
Contact details: squinn40@eircom.net   Mobile: 087 9844225
Supervisor   David McCormack
Contact details: david.mccormack@nuim.ie   Tel No: 01 7083947

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX 2: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

'Attachment 'is the overall term which refers to the quality and condition of an individual's attachments. These can be separated into secure and insecure attachment. To feel attached is to feel secure and safe. In comparison an insecurely attached person may have a mixture of feelings towards their attachment figure: intense love and dependency, fear of rejection, irritability and vigilance' (Holmes, 1993, p.67)

Research Title

'Using Attachment Theory as a lens to understand the role of an Adult Educator'

An Invitation

I am inviting you to participate in this study to explore John Bowlbys' theory on attachment and how attachment style influences one's role as an adult educator. Please read this information sheet if you think that you would like to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time or withdraw your data up until the work is published.

This research will contribute to my Masters in Adult and Community Education with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, County Kildare.

What is the purpose of this research?

My starting point for this thesis is my own inquiry into the implications of attachment theory and in particular attachment style and how this influences one's role as an adult educator with regard to the educator/student relationships and learning. The reasons for undertaking this study are threefold:

Firstly, by becoming aware of the mechanisms of attachment, it will allow educators to become better informed about the process of relationship building which is a crucial aspect of professional practise.

Secondly, to identify attachment styles and how this influences one's role as an adult educator.

Thirdly, to highlight the importance of the educators' role as the secure base in the learning environment.

I think it is important for educator learning experiences to be heard as then educators can develop a more in depth understanding of these processes. I am really interested

in how one's attachment style influences one's role as an educator. As an educator and counsellor myself working in the area of adult education I believe that this research would add new insights and knowledge. I consider that knowing more about educators' experiences and my own awareness of my role as an educator will assist my teaching style and will also have some positive influence on the teaching process in the future.

What will happen in this research?
If you decide to participate in this research, your involvement would consist of an individual interview with myself for 60-90 minutes. With your permission the interview will be recorded so that I don't miss anything and for purposes of writing up experiences in a format using themes. I will transcribe, type up and condense the interview. I will analyse all of the interviews and look for themes. When I put everything together, the thesis will be a combination of excerpts from your stories, and a discussion of themes I have seen in the stories. Questions asked will be semi-structured and will give you an opportunity to tell your story. You are free to refuse to answer any question throughout the interview without prejudice. The thesis will also include theoretical information about the research process and the reason why I chose to do the study in this particular way.

What are the discomforts and risks?
When talking about personal stories of your attachment experiences it is possible that it may bring up some unsettling emotions for you. This might happen at the time of the interview or afterwards. During the interview you have the right to decide how much detail that you want to go into or not. If you tell me things that you later regret you have the right to delete these parts of your story. Debriefing can be provided if required after the interview and will be discussed at this point. If required, a counselling session will be made available you so that you can talk about any issues that may come out of the interview.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
This study will give you the opportunity to share your attachment experience from your point of view. Your story will allow you to explore your own attachment style and this knowledge may assist you in understanding how your attachment style influences you in your role as an adult educator.

How will my privacy be protected?
You will be asked to provide a pseudonym, a name which will be used when writing up your story. All the information that you give me will be kept in a secure place. Following the study, I am required to keep all the information in a secure place for five years, and then it will be destroyed. If you withdraw from this study, your information will immediately be destroyed. You need to be aware that I cannot guarantee your anonymity. Given that your personal story will be quoted in the thesis, it may be possible that someone who knows you will recognise your story.

Your privacy can also be protected by choosing a time and place to conduct the interview that will suit you.

What are the costs of participating in this research?
For the individual interview the main cost of participating is your time. We can arrange a place for the interview which would suit you otherwise I am happy to travel to you.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
If after thinking about the information of this sheet, you are interested in being a part of my research, I would be delighted for you to contact me as soon as possible.
After you have contacted me by phone or email, I will send you a consent form to complete. Then we will arrange an interview time.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?
If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Researcher: Siobhan Quinn
Contact details: squinn40@eircom.net   Mobile: 087 9844225
Supervisor   David McCormack
Contact details: david.mccormack@nuim.ie

Thank you for your time

Siobhan Quinn

APPENDIX 3: Sample of interview questions

Can you tell me what your childhood was like?

What was your relationship like with each parent – and were there other people with whom you were close as a child?

How, how do you think your earliest experiences have impacted your development as an adult?

Do you remember any other adult in your life that you felt close to or someone that you felt accepted you as you are?

How do you experience conflict and difficulties within the classroom?

How do you deal with emotions in the classroom?

What motivated you to become a teacher/counsellor /educator?

From our conversation today, have you learned anything new about yourself?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?