

**AN EXPLORATION OF FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS,  
CURRENT ATTACHMENT STYLES AND SELF-ESTEEM  
AMONGST ADULTS**

By

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## DECLARATION

I declare that: *An Exploration of Father-Child Relationships, Current Attachment Styles and Self-Esteem Amongst Adults* is my own work that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Williams', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Clare Marianne Williams

## ABSTRACT

This study explored and described the relationship between early attachment to the father figure and self-esteem and current adult attachment style. Specifically, the present study explored and described the impact of the internal working model of early paternal attachment upon adult attachment styles and levels of self-esteem. The data for this study was obtained by utilizing the following four questionnaires: The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) Part 2 as a retrospective measure, the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) and Battle's Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI). An exploratory descriptive design using a non-probability, convenience sampling method was employed for the present study. A sample of 105 adult participants from a religious institution within Port Elizabeth was selected. Participants, including both males and females, representative of all cultures and socio-economic status, were interviewed using the above self-report measures. The data for this study was analyzed using descriptive and correlational and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that the majority of the sample had a preoccupied attachment style, with Intermediate self-esteem levels.

*Key words:* Paternal attachment, Adult Attachment Styles, Self-Esteem, Identity, Attachment

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers...* (Malachi 4: 6)

Absent fathers and other indicators suggestive of diminishing paternal involvement with their offspring, form the rationale for this study. In South Africa an estimated 54 percent of men between the ages of 15 - 49 years old are fathers, but more than 50 percent of them do not have daily contact with their children (Posel, Devy & Morrell, 2004 in Richter, 2005). Desertion by fathers is often not only of a physical nature, but can also take place emotionally. Indulgence in alcohol and drugs are more obvious causes of the latter while unresponsiveness to the family is a subtle but equally devastating factor leading to emotional disengagement (Ramphela, 2002).

A survey conducted in 1998 found that 51.1 percent of South African fathers were physically absent from their homes (Posel & Devey, 2005 in Richter, 2005). These national statistics are cause for concern since a father's absence is inextricably linked to the child's sense of security, overall well-being and the development of a psychological identity. A key consequence of father absence is a child's lack of internal structure and security. "Lacking a father is like lacking a 'backbone'. An individual's psychological identity is based on a sense of his [sic] own 'spine', which provides him [sic] support from the inside" (Corneau, 1991, p. 37).

A father's emotional involvement with his children is imperative for the development of internal security and overall well-being in virtually all human societies (Blankenhorn, 1995). A sense of security is something every

individual needs and desires. Security enables individuals to enjoy healthy thinking and living. It means that individuals feel safe, accepted and approved of. When individuals are secure they approve of themselves, they have confidence and they accept and love themselves in a balanced way.

Research supports the view that a father has significant influence on the identity development on both his son and daughter. "A boy learns who he is and what he's got from a man, or the company of men" (Eldredge 2001, p. 62). The same applies to girls as substantiated by Levine (1993), in Gallo, 2004) when she explains that a mother who praises her daughter is seen as a cheerleader; but when a man praises his daughter, he is bestowing identity. Research findings (Biller, 1993; Corneau, 1991; Krampe, 2003 & Pruett, 1997) in general have found that the father-child relationship forms an important part of the foundation of the overall well-being and development of the child and who that child becomes.

Greenspan (1982) described the father as the 'second other,' as the one who introduces the infant to the world beyond the mother. In his relationship with the young child, the father's involvement helps to transform the intense, comfortable, symbiotic connection the young child initially forms with the mother, into a relationship that includes others and that promotes the development of age-appropriate independence and autonomy. According to Schaller (1995), the father-child relationship defines people's entire lives; influencing their dating and marriage relationship, degree of drivenness, identity, sexuality and work performance.

According to the object relations theory, the external world is known internally through the process of mental representation (Krampe, 2003).

Object Relations theorists recognise that the inner (subjective) world of individuals not only contains representations of the individual's present life but also images of the past that exercise influence on everyday experience, particularly interpersonal relationships.

Although, both object relations theory and attachment theory spells out the process of mental representation and its role in the subjective inner world, the present study is theoretically rooted in John Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Bowlby's work provides a theoretical framework against which the individual's perceptions of his or her father experiences can be explored. Bowlby was aligned with the Object Relations school of thought and referred to the individual perceptions or subjective mental representations as 'internal working models.' According to Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory, these internal working models appear to evolve from the generalisation of specific events and experiences early in the infant's life. These models, once formed, tend to be stable properties in the personality and usually operate unconsciously. Bowlby believed that attachment is an important life-long component of the human experience "from the cradle to the grave" (Bowlby, 1979, p.129). The process of attachment is an important development central to every life phase starting with initial attachment, which is formed with the caregiver, then with peers, followed by close adult relationships. He viewed attachment relationships as a significant factor influencing an adult's emotional life.

Krampe (2003, p. 3) supports Bowlby's theory and explains that,

When internal working models are based on early attachment relationships, they provide guidelines for the organisation of memory, including rules that

shape the person's access to subjective knowledge about self, the attachment object, and the quality of the relationship between self and other.

The caregiver-child relationship thus plays a key role in the development of self-esteem (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1969; Epstein, 1980; Sullivan, 1953). Feeney and Noller (1996) underscore the clear link between secure attachment and high self-esteem. This is further supported by Collins and Read (1990) who found that global self-esteem was positively correlated with secure attachment and negatively correlated with insecure attachment relationships.

The consensus in the literature overview (chapter 2 and 3) emphasizes the importance of children knowing and understanding their father. Knowledge of their father enhances a sense of identity, positively influences their self-esteem, sense of self, and provides a form of reference for the child as she or he matures into adulthood (Taylor, 1998).

Against this background, the present study explored father-child relationships, current attachment styles and self-esteem amongst adults.

Gender variables influencing attachment has been alluded to (Feeney and Noller, 1996, Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991) and evidence of possible differences exists. Given the existing breadth of the present study, gender will be referred to briefly, where appropriate, but will not form a central theme.

## Objectives and Problem Formulation

### *Problem Statement*

Existing research on paternal relationships generally focuses on the male parent, on the father role and on the father-child interaction (Marsiglio,

1995; Pleck, 1997 in Krampe, 2003). The present study focussed on the individual's "internal working model" or self-representation of their personal father and the impact this has had on their self-esteem and ability to form adult attachments with others. The personal father is the male figure that the child regards as 'father' and this could be the biological father or a surrogate (Samuels, 1985).

The present study placed an emphasis on how an individual's perception of having a father or being fathered has influenced their self-esteem and their adult attachment styles.

In order to describe and explore the relationship between father-child attachment, current adult attachment style and self-esteem, the following aims were identified:

1. To describe and explore participants' past paternal attachment.
2. To describe and explore participants' current self-esteem levels.
3. To describe and explore participants' current adult attachment styles.
4. To describe and explore significant differences between composite attachment styles categories.
5. To describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current adult attachment.
6. To describe and explore the relationships between past paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels.

This dissertation comprises of seven chapters. This chapter sketched the context within which the present study took place, provided the rationale

for the study and described the aims of this study. The second chapter describes the theoretical perspectives that underpin attachment, with a special focus on adult attachment and paternal attachment. Chapter three surveys the literature related to self-esteem with special reference to the development of self-esteem. Chapter four explains the methodology employed and provides a description of the data collection and data analysis procedures. The results are reported in Chapter five. Chapter six provides a discussion of the results in relation to previous research. This study is concluded with Chapter seven, in which the conclusions of the findings, the limitations and recommendations for further research are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### ATTACHMENT

*Attachment is an important life-long component of the human experience from the cradle to the grave. (John Bowlby)*

In order to provide a context for understanding the broader theoretical framework on which the present study is based, various theories and models relevant to the constructs of attachment and adult attachment will be discussed.

The overall aim of this chapter is to develop a clear understanding of the constructs of attachment across the lifespan. A key focus of the present study is upon the influence of attachment relationships developed in infancy on the internal working model formulated by Bowlby (1969). This internal working model (schema) acts as the filter through which subjective interpretation of close relationships in adulthood are viewed.

Finally, this chapter focuses upon the paternal relationship or the inner working model of the inner / personal father attachment. The participants in the current study were selected from a religious institution.

#### Attachment Theory

Individuals vary in the way they develop and maintain relationships. For the study of interpersonal adult relationships, attachment theory offers a comprehensive and well-researched framework. As such, attachment theory provides a foundation for the understanding of the functions and the developmental pathways of human affectional bonds, including close relationships between adults (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Attachment in relationships is part of a life long experience that shapes “human behaviour from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). Attachment theory postulates that the development of emotional attachment to other individuals is primarily developed during infancy and early childhood.

Attachment can be defined as the emotional tone between children and their caregivers (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). An attachment is an enduring affective bond characterized by a tendency to seek and maintain proximity to a specific figure (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1969). It should be noted that attachment is described as the emotional bond, not as the behaviour. These bonds develop as an evolutionary demand for infants to maintain close proximity to their caregivers during times of threat. Anything that threatens to inhibit proximity evokes anxiety. This causes the infant to engage in whatever behaviour is necessary to re-establish the desired closeness (Hazen and Shaver, 1994). These behaviours become the basis for future attachment patterns.

Attachment is not a static trait residing in the infant in a fixed amount (Sroufe and Waters, 1977). Instead, it is an affective tie between infant and caregiver that is influenced and mediated by feelings and the context (Tomlinson, 2004).

Infants relieve anxiety by having their adult caregiver in close proximity. The nearness of the adult elicits feelings of security and love in the infant. With this ‘felt security’ the infant usually displays playful and more independent behaviour that is best characterised by an active exploration of the environment. Conversely, if the infant does not experience adequate attention, responsiveness and proximity from the caregiver, the infant



becomes less self-assured and less trusting of the caregiver and may be at risk of developing insecure attachment relationships (Hazan and Shaver, 1994),

Proximity maintenance, a secure base and a safe haven are described as the three integral features of an attachment relationship (Bowlby, 1988). Proximity maintenance involves the infant's attempts to remain close to and resist separation from the caregiver. The caregiver becomes the secure base from which the infant moves in order to engage in more non-attachment behaviour such as exploration of the environment and exercising their developing motor and/or cognitive skills. Finally, the infant uses the caregiver as a safe haven for comfort, support and reassurance when s/he feels frightened or distressed. The extent to which these three features of attachment are available to the infant will lead to his/her primary attachment style. In the relationship with the caregiver, infants learn that they can depend on the caregiver, what to expect from the caregiver and that they can trust the availability of the caregiver. This primary emotional experience forms the basis of what Bowlby (1973) called the internal working model (Hazan and Shaver, 1994).

#### *Internal Working Model*

Attachment theory focuses on cognitive schemas that individuals use to organize and manage their relationships with others (Cassidy and Shaver, 1999). These cognitive schemas develop through the individual's assimilation of patterns of relationships. Assimilation is the process of incorporating a new object into an existing mental representation (Piaget, 1970). Thus, a child's

internal working model includes expectations of how the caregiver will respond in certain situations.

The internal working model that is formed during childhood reveals itself through an individual's beliefs about self, others and the social world (Diehl, Elnick, Bourbeau, and Labouvie-Vief, 1998). Internal working models activate characteristic attachment behaviour in stressful situations. These models are described as "templates for the child's future experiences, filtering perceptions and emotional appraisals: shaping expectations, beliefs, and attitudes about interpersonal relationship" (Kunze and Shaver, 1994, p. 211).

According to Bartholomew (1997), Bowlby's working models develop on the basis of two underlying dimensions. The first dimension refers to the child's representation of others (model of other) and assesses whether or not the primary attachment figure can be depended on, for protection and support. The second dimension refers to the child's representation of self (model of self) and determines whether or not the self is the type of person to whom anyone, particularly the attachment figure, is likely to react to in a positive manner. Based on the messages received in these two systems, the infant begins to develop a particular attachment style, which will be triggered and used to guide behaviour whenever the attachment system is activated.

Bowlby (1969) describes the attachment behaviour system as a motivational control system, which has the goal of promoting safety and felt security with the attachment figure. Therefore, individual differences in attachment behaviour or attachment style, are thought to reflect underlying differences in the working model (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985). These cognitive constructs are called "working" models because they are the basis

for action in many situations. This attachment style tends to become more stable as the individual grows, unless other disconfirming primary bonds are formed in childhood or adolescence (Kesner & McKenry, 1998). These models, which operate outside awareness, guide behavior in later relationships. These models can be characterized as attachment “prototypes” (Crowell & Treboux, 1995).

Working models of attachment are shaped by experiences outside as well as inside the family and such models are open to continued elaboration, refinement and modification as individuals develop and mature (Collins & Ognibene, 1998). Therefore, it is essential that internal working models must be adjusted continuously, either to incorporate new cognitions or to identify and modify any attachment behaviour that becomes maladaptive (Marvin, 1992). It is believed that adult experiences can overwrite an individual's internal working model but research indicates that models that are rooted in early childhood experiences are expected to remain influential (Collins & Read, 1994).

Adults with secure attachment histories should be better equipped to manage stressful situations, relying both on their belief that they can control their environment and on their faith that others will be able to help if needed. In contrast, individuals who had inconsistent or rejecting attachment figures will be less equipped to cope with stressful situations because of, in part, their negative expectations about their ability to control the environment or about the dependability and trustworthiness of others. Consequently, when insecure adults are faced with stressful or threatening situations, they lack the personal

and interpersonal resources needed to effectively regulate their emotions and cope successfully.

It is also fundamental to understand how insecure attachment develops. As mentioned earlier, attachment theory focuses on cognitive schemas that individuals use to organize and manage their relationships with others (Cassidy and Shaver, 1999). These cognitive schemas, which attachment theory refers to as internal working models, develop through the individual's assimilation of patterns of relationships. When inconsistent caregiving occurs, an insecure attachment system develops. The resultant insecure attachment system therefore stems from early maladaptive schemas (EMS). These schemas are the result of dysfunctional experiences with parents, siblings and peers during the first few years of an individual's life (Young, 1990).

EMS refers to extremely stable and enduring themes that develop during childhood and are elaborated upon throughout an individual's lifetime. These schemas serve as templates for the processing of later experience and are elaborated upon throughout an individual's lifetime (Young, 1990). Millon (1981 in Young, 1990) emphasizes the persisting influences of early negative experience:

Significant experiences of early life may never recur again, but their effects remain and leave their mark... they are registered as memories, a permanent trace and an embedded internal stimulus...

Once registered, the effects of the past are indelible, incessant and inescapable...

The residuals of the past do more than passively contribute their share to the present... they guide, shape or distort the character of current events. Not only are they ever present, then, but they operate insidiously to transform new stimulus experiences in line with the past. (p. 12).

Attachment patterns shift over the lifespan from the childhood goal of maintaining physical proximity to the adult goal of maintaining emotional proximity in the form of “felt security.” As this change occurs and peers begin to fulfil the needs once satisfied by parental figures, attachments are transferred one by one (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Eventually, parental figures become secondary in one’s hierarchy of attachment figures, although their importance is never completely relinquished in this process. This process, described by Hazan & Shaver (1987), explains why it is critical to assess perceptions/interpretations rather than actual events when assessing adult attachment. Adults have already developed a schema of the world, which inhibits them from making complete objective evaluations about the occurrence of actual events. They assess events based on messages received in the past and their individual interpretative processes.

Internal working models provide a mechanism through which an individual’s subjective view of experience, rather than their objective view of experience, can influence behaviour and development (Crowell & Treboux, 1995). It is therefore important to note that an individual’s internal working model of parent-child relationships should be understood in the context of that relationship, therefore Bretherton (1985) believes that, “even when the models of self and other have become distinct, they represent obverse sides of the same relationship and cannot be understood without reference to each other” (p.12). This is a very important factor in the present study as the present researcher is interested in exploring the relationship between the internal

working model of individuals' paternal relationship (the subjective view of the paternal relationship), self-esteem levels and attachment styles of adults.

The following section will address adult attachment and the various attachment prototypes.

### Adult Attachment

Attachment behaviours and the affective bonds to which they lead are present and active throughout the lifespan. For an adult to be attached to a spouse, lover, friend or parent is ordinary, normal and healthy (Colin, 1996). Recent research on adult attachment has shown that the attachment patterns that are formed in infancy and childhood seem to have equivalent counterparts in adulthood. Hazen and Shaver (1987) showed that the distribution of the three main attachment styles (secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent) in adulthood were relatively equal to the distribution of attachment styles in childhood. Subsequently, Hazen and Shaver (1987) have contributed greatly to increasing understanding of the changing nature of attachment over the life-course. They have specified a few basic differences between childhood and adult attachment bonds. One difference specified is that in childhood, attachments are asymmetrical. This means that one figure gives protection and care while the other figure is the recipient. Between adults, attachments are often reciprocal in which two partners provide mutual care and protection. Although the shift from the asymmetrical attachment of childhood to the reciprocal attachments of adulthood is not well understood, Colin (1996) believes that the shift probably begins in adolescence. In adult relationships, both attachment behaviour and serving as an attachment figure,

should be observable in individuals and the two roles may shift rapidly between partners (Crowell & Treboux, 1995). Other differences are that attachment relationships between adults often serve a wide variety of other functions, including sexual bonding, companionship, sense of competence and shared purpose or experience (Ainsworth, 1985; Weiss, 1974).

Ainsworth (1991), focusing on attachment behaviour in adult life, suggests that a secure attachment relationship will facilitate functioning and competence outside of the relationship. She observes that there is:

... A seeking to obtain an experience of security and comfort in the relationship with the partner. If and when such security and comfort are available, the individual is able to move from the secure base provided by the partner, with the confidence to engage in other activities (Ainsworth, 1991, p. 38).

In view of Ainsworth (1991), Colin (1996) states that, "excesses of attachment behaviour in an adult may indicate anxious attachment, but interdependency, including reliance on the partner as a safe haven and a secure base, is the norm" (p.18). Adult attachment is not an indication of immaturity or inadequacy (Colin, 1996). If an adult has no strong attachment relationship, the yearning, seeking and longing for one appear to be a general tendency.

According to Weiss (1982) the attachment figures in adult life need not be the protective figures but they can rather be seen as "fostering the attached individual's own capacity for mastering challenge" (p.173). It is imperative to highlight that attachment relationships in adults are distinguished as those which provide feelings of security and peace, without which there is loneliness and restlessness, as opposed to relationships which

provide guidance or companionship, opportunities to feel needed or to share common interests or experiences, feelings of competence, alliance and assistance (Ainsworth, 1985; Weiss, 1974).

The role of the secure base in adult attachment is similar to those observed in infancy. The behavioural elements of attachment behaviours in adult life show a desire for proximity to the attachment figure when stressed, increased comfort in the presence of the attachment figure and anxiety when the attachment figure is inaccessible (Weiss, 1982). Hazen and Shaver (1994) suggest a developmental progression in the acquisition of these elements across adolescence. Therefore, especially in early adolescence, close relationships are marked by proximity seeking and desire for physical closeness (Fisher, 1992 in Crowell & Treboux, 1995). Seeking the partner in a time of need or emergency is the next development hence the reference to the metaphoric safe haven. Finally, the partner, substituting the parent, is used as a secure base in late adolescence possibly because it is relatively difficult to sustain and support a relationship on a daily basis (Crowell & Water, 1994 in Crowell & Treboux, 1995).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a classification system in adults by using Bowlby's original dimensions of self and other. This classification system was derived from Hazen and Shaver's (1987) three category model of adult attachment and includes avoidant, anxious and secure categories. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) divided the avoidant category into "dismissing" and "fearful" resulting in four adult attachment styles viz. one secure, and three insecure attachment styles (dismissing, preoccupied and fearful).



Two critical dimensions of Bowlby's theory are two internal working models viz. the likelihood that caregivers (attachment figures) will respond to calls for protection and support (model of other). Secondly, the degree to which the individual perceives himself worthy of positive and helpful interaction from others (model of self) (Bartholomew, 1997). Taking into account these two internal working models, four possible prototypes are likely to arise as indicated in figure 1.

		<b>MODEL OF SELF</b>	
		<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>MODEL OF OTHER</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>SECURE</b>	<b>PREOCCUPIED</b>
	<b>Negative</b>	<b>DISMISSING</b>	<b>FEARFUL</b>

*Figure 1 Four-Group Model of Adult Attachment (Bartholomew, 1990).*

Two of these prototypes assess an individual's perception of self, by looking at the extent to which the individual feels deserving of positive response from others (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). This model of self can be viewed on the horizontal dimension as illustrated in figure 1.

The other two prototypes assess individual's perception of others (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). This model of other can be viewed on the vertical dimension as illustrated in figure 1.

From this two-dimensional model, four possible combinations are derived. The first prototype, known as secure, indicates a positive evaluation of self and others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The second, known as preoccupied, indicates a positive evaluation of others, but a negative evaluation of self (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This type is consistent with Hazen and Shaver's (1987) ambivalent type (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The last two prototypes are more specific forms of the avoidant type described by Hazen and Shaver (1987) (Brennan and Shaver, 1998). The third category, the dismissive avoidant, describes individuals who have a positive evaluation of self but a negative evaluation of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Lastly, the fearful-avoidant individual has a negative evaluation of both self and others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Each prototype is characterized by a unique set of motivations, which will be described with reference to existing research in the following section.

### *Secure Attachment*

Adults with a secure attachment style are likely to have experienced consistently responsive early caregiving, which fosters a positive view of self and others (Ainsworth, 1991). In addition, they are comfortable depending on others as well as being readily comforted by others. Karen (1998, p. 401) also adds another dimension to secure adult attachment styles:

...the key qualities of the secure-autonomous adults are not that they had secure attachments with their parents. Rather they were all distinguished by an open and coherent way of reflecting on their attachments. To the extent that they felt wounded by their parent, they managed to work it through, so that they were no longer either rigidly cut off from their true feelings about that

relationship or still embroiled with hurt, rage, and blame. Somehow they ... let the past rest and move on with their lives.

Hazen and Shaver (1990) further states that the secure adult was found to be more comfortable with intimacy and dependence on others, to have longer relationships, characterised as friendly, trusting and happy (Brennan & Shaver; Volling, Notaro, & Larsen, 1998; Kesner & McKenry, 1998). They also tend to be more outgoing, report less loneliness and have higher self-esteem than individuals with an anxious-ambivalent attachment patterns (Diehl, Elnick, Bourbeau, and Labouvie, 1998). At work, they generally feel appreciated and do not worry about failure (Hazen & Shaver, 1990). They maintain a healthy balance between work and friendships and do not have difficulty engaging in leisure activities or taking vacations. Secure individuals also uphold the importance of love and relationships over work (Hazen & Shaver, 1990).

#### *Dismissing Attachment*

Adults with dismissing attachment styles are believed to have experienced early caregiving that was consistently unresponsive and as a result, they tend to develop strategies in which they become "compulsively self-reliant" (Bowlby, 1977). Although they are uncomfortable being close to or trusting others due to their negative view of others, they nevertheless have a positive view of themselves based, to a large degree, on their self-reliance. Dismissing adults, successful in blocking emotional responses, tend to be susceptible to attachment arousal when interpersonal conflict focuses them on negative thoughts (Fraley, Davies and Shaver, 1998). Dismissing adult

memories are often contradictory. They present as detached and defensive, dismissing the value of emotional experiences and remembering little of their childhood, while depicting their parents in an idealized way (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). These adults often report feeling rejected, although they are highly independent and comfortable with emotional distance (Feeney and Noller, 2000). Their peer relationship is marked by reluctance to self-disclosure (Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991).

### *Preoccupied Attachment*

Adults with a preoccupied attachment style are likely to have experienced caregiving that was inconsistently responsive (Bartholomew, 1990). Consequently, they became excessively vigilant of attachment relationships and tend to be emotionally dependent on others' approval due to their positive view of others. Their emotional dependency often manifests in "clingy" behaviour. They generally have poor self-esteem, more subjective distress and a significant focus on negative affect (negative view of self) (Bartholomew, 1993). To disguise their own fragile self-concept, preoccupied adults continually strive for acceptance and admiration of others. Therefore, they tend to exaggerate emotions when discussing relationships (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Furthermore, they are overly consumed by their own attachment needs and are constantly seeking close relationships to fulfill these needs (Bartholomew, 1997).

### *Fearful Attachment*

Adults with a fearful attachment style share many of the characteristics of preoccupied individuals in that they desire social contact but this desire is ultimately inhibited by fear of rejection. These individuals are believed to have had overly rejecting or harsh caregiving. Thus, they have developed a negative view of themselves and others. Furthermore, as adults, they are more likely to demonstrate interpersonal patterns in which they flee after achieving a certain level of closeness, generally displaying an inhibition of intimacy. These individuals exhibit approach-avoidance behavior stemming from their fear of intimacy. Moreover, similar to individuals with preoccupied attachment, they have poor self-esteem and increased negative affect (Bartholomew, 1993).

Against the background of these four prototypes, the role of paternal attachment will be sketched in the following section.

### Paternal Attachment

According to Jungian Theory, the personal father is the male whom the child knows and by whom he or she is parented (Samuels, 1985 in Krampe, 2003). If the child had more than one 'father' or father figure, typically the personal father is the male whom the child considers his/her father. Within research into the family, the personal father is rarely specified and instead, is often the male residing with the child's mother at the time of the study (Dawson, 1991; Mott, 1990; Ottosen, 2001).

The father helps the child establish an internal structure and psychological identity, thus lacking a father is equated to lacking a backbone (Corneau, 1991). Paternal absence results in children experiencing confusion about their sexual identity, unsteady self-esteem, repressed aggressivity and need for self-affirmation (Corneau, 1991).

One of the significant factors influencing paternal attachment is the gate-keeping role of the mother. Traditionally, the mother is the nurturer and is usually the remaining anchor in the aftermath of broken relationships possibly caused by a divorce or separation from the father. "For sons and daughters, the way the mother talks about the absent father and the respect she may or may not have for him are crucial in their forming a positive image of the masculine" (Corneau, 1991, p. 23). Other factors causing the mother's non-verbal and verbal stance towards the father and his role in the child's life therefore, subtly defines the child's perception and internal working model of the father.

Many practitioners in the physical and mental health care facilities do not regard the quality of fathering (the child's feelings about his or her father) or even the father's absence as significant factors affecting the well-being of the infant or child (Phares, 1997). While infants become attached to fathers as well as mothers, the type of attachment differs. Mothers hold infants for caregiving while fathers hold infants for the purpose of play (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). According to Karen (1998) children who had been found to be securely attached to both parents tended to be most confident and competent. In addition, Karen (1998) highlights that everything that has been learned about mother-child attachment relates in some way to father-child attachment.

The primary caregiver, who is usually the mother, is very important but the formative power of the second parent – whether he is harsh or accepting, tyrannical or easygoing, highly involved or abdicating, living at home or long gone, is critical. The difference between affirmations from the father as compared with that from the mother is due to the fact that affirmation from the father seems more earned, as suggested by Fields (1983), who observed:

A father's love is often more qualified than a mother's. Where a mother's love is unconditional, a father's love often is given as a reward for performance. Because her love is blind, a mother confirms a child's sense of security in a general way. When the father approves a child generally assumes that the love was earned (p. 11).

Although fathers are secondary caregivers, they are not secondary nor substitute mothers. They provide a higher level of stimulation. Furthermore, father involvement has a positive effect on children's social confidence and abilities (Turcotte, Dubeau, Bolte, Paquette, 2001). For example, infants

whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to be securely attached to them, (Cox, Owen, Henderson, and Margand, 1992); are better able to handle strange situations; are more resilient in the face of stressful situations (Kotelchuk, 1976; Parke and Swain, 1975); are more curious and eager to explore the environment; relate more maturely to strangers (Biller, 1993); react more competently to complex and novel stimuli and are more trusting in branching out in their explorations (Pruett, 1997) (in Allen and Daly, 2002, p.195).

These benefits also positively impact on emotional development, self-confidence and self-actualization throughout the child's development into adulthood. Children enjoying such benefits are found to demonstrate a greater tolerance for stress and frustration (Mischel, Shoda and Peake, 1988). They

also have superior problem-solving and adaptive skills (Biller, 1993). According to Mischel et al., (1988), they tend to be more playful, resourceful, skilful and attentive when presented with a problem. In addition, they are better able to manage their emotions and impulses in an adaptive manner (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1990).

Young adults who had nurturing and available fathers while growing up are more likely to score high on measures of self acceptance and personal and social adjustment (Fish & Biller, 1973), see themselves as dependable, trusting, practical, and friendly (Biller, 1993), be more likely to succeed in their work and be mentally healthy (Health & Health, 1991) (in Allen & Daly, 2004, p.195).

Children who have healthy relationships with their fathers develop a better understanding of appropriate social behaviours and are more self confident in social relationships. These are critical transferable skills required in the development of relationships with peers and friends (Coleman and Ganong, 2002).

The forgoing discussion provides the rationale for exploring the possible relationship between an adult's internal working model of past paternal attachment and their current attachment styles and self-esteem levels. A consequence of the absence of a mature father-child connection creates a residual "father hunger". This is the result of receiving too little quality fathering as a developing child or young adult. Too little intimacy between child and father and the absence of such role modelling and support is associated with less fulfilment in life in general (Schaller, 1995).



The actual relationship with the father does not have as significant an impact on the child as the interpretation of those events associated to the relationship.

### Religious Attachment

Due to the fact that the participants in the present study were from a religious institution, religious attachment will briefly be discussed.

Kirkpatrick (1999) has persuasively argued that one's relationship with God can be described as an attachment bond. Images of God the Father and God as loving and protective, stand out in many Judeo-Christian faiths. Research participants in the present study were homogeneous; therefore other world religions are not discussed since it does not have a direct bearing on the current study. The participants for the present study are from a Christian institution therefore it is important to discuss the effects attachment to God has on individuals.

Most Christians perceive themselves as having a personal relationship with God and this relationship represents the core of their religious faith (Kirkpatrick, 1994). The relationship with God experienced by committed Christians is characterized by the defining features of attachment relationships (viz. proximity seeking, secure base and safe haven), as outlined earlier in this chapter.

The variable of religious attachment is therefore an important variable in this study. Even though the researcher is not assessing religious attachment, this variable though held constant, does impact on the results of

the present study. Justice and Lambert (1986) found a correlation between images adults used to describe their fathers and God and found that those who had the most negative view of their parents also had the most negative view of God.

In a pioneer study in this domain, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) derived two general hypotheses from attachment theory viz., the compensation and correspondence hypothesis.

Based on Ainsworth's (1985) discussion of insecurely attached individuals' need for surrogate attachment figures, the "compensation hypothesis" assumed that people with an insecure, compared to those with a secure attachment history, would be more likely to be religious and believe in and experience a relationship with a personal God. In contrast, the "correspondence hypothesis" (or mental models hypothesis) assumed that securely attached, unlike insecurely attached individuals, would have established the foundations upon which a future belief in and relationship with God could be built. This hypothesis was based on Bowlby's (1969) notion of relatively stable internal working models being responsible for relationship continuity over time. Hence, the individual's relationship with God was supposed to correspond to his or her internal working models with regard to attachment. Despite numerous studies testing both hypotheses there was consistent support for a complex relationship. This means that both correspondence and compensation hypothesis are valid at different points of an individual's development. Dickie, Eshleman, Merasco, Shepard, Vander Wilt and Johnson (1997) found that as a child gets older, they have less similar religious attachment to their parents and more similar attachment to

their idealized attachment figure. Dickie et al's (1998) findings suggest that complex relationships with both compensation and correspondence hypothesis may be true. "At any one point in time, security of human attachment is linked with security of attachment to God; that is people seem to hold similar models of human attachment and divine relationships "(Feeney and Noller, 1996, p. 78). An important fact to note with reference to the present study is that insecure attachment predicts conversion experiences at a later point in time (Feeney and Noller, 1996). Those individuals who fail to establish secure attachments with others are likely to seek substitute attachment figures (Ainsworth, 1985). Religious attachment often occurs due to its comforting and supportive role in time of stress.

### Gender

No discussion of a theory of close relationships would be complete without a consideration of gender differences and similarities. According to Feeney and Noller (1996) endorsement of a particular attachment style may have different implications for men and women, even though the two genders may be equally likely to choose that style.

Results in infant attachment studies reveal no gender differences in the prevalence of the major attachment styles (Feeney and Noller, 1996). However, categorical and continuous measures (likened to those utilised in the current study), which yield four attachment prototypes, have reported gender differences (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Continuous measure of four attachment styles support the following results: Males obtain higher mean ratings of dismissing attachment, whereas females obtain higher mean

ratings of preoccupied attachment (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Scharfe and Bartholomew, 1994). Males are therefore more dismissing of attachment and females show greater comfort with closeness and greater preoccupation with relationships.

### Summary

The first section of this chapter focused on attachment and how attachment develops in infancy. It was also established that attachment is an emotional bond and the attachment behaviour system serves as a drive that ensures proximity to a caregiver in times of distress. The link between attachment and the individual's internal working model was explained. The focus then shifted to adult attachment with an overview of the four prototypes of attachment measurement. Proximity to the caregiver and trust were clear cornerstones of felt security needed to establish secure close relationship with particular reference to paternal attachment. Cognitive interpretations (schemas) developed over the lifespan, directly influence attachment style. This chapter also looked at the influence of paternal attachment. The chapter concluded with a discussion of religious attachment since the participants in the present study were drawn from a homogeneous Judeo-Christian context. Supportive evidence based on the study of relevant literature, therefore support the broad aims of this study as conceptualised in Chapter 1.

Having established the significance of the paternal attachment as equal to, yet different to the maternal role influence, the key focus will fall on the relationship between attachment styles and self-esteem.

The next chapter will focus on how the subjective view of the internal working model of the inner father and adult attachment styles has affected

self-esteem and the role that the attachment relationship or close relationships has on self-esteem.

## CHAPTER 3

### SELF-ESTEEM

*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.* (Proverbs 23: 7)

Self-esteem is a widely used concept popular both in everyday language and in psychology. Thus, it has become a protean concept – so capable of changing form that its value is at risk of being diluted (Brown, 1998). Self-esteem and self-concept may often be treated as synonymous or at least closely related, therefore, it is conceptually important to distinguish between the two.

Firstly, this chapter aims to operationally define the concept of self-esteem for the purpose of the present study. Secondly, it aims to focus on the development of self-esteem and the enduring effect it has on attachment relationships. More specifically, it will explore the impact that the paternal relationship has on self-esteem. The overall aim of this chapter is to discuss how the development of self-esteem and early paternal attachment styles relate to current adult self-esteem levels in individuals.

#### Self-Esteem and Self-Concept

Researchers seem hesitant to distinguish between self-esteem and self-concept but in following their arguments, a clear distinction emerges. Huitt (2004) states that “self is generally referred to as the conscious reflection of one's own being or identity, as an object separate from others or from the environment” (p.1). Huitt (2004) further describes the self-concept as the “cognitive or thinking aspect of self (related to one's self-image)” (p.1). “Self-concept may be defined as the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic

system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence” (Purkey, 1988, p. 1). Fromm (1956) provides clarity to this definition when he eloquently described self-concept as "life being aware of itself" (p. 6). Therefore, it is clear that self-concept is different from self-esteem, which is described as feelings of personal worth and level of satisfaction regarding one's self (Purkey, 1988). Self-esteem is generally considered as the evaluative component of self-concept (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). It is also regarded as the affective or emotional aspect of self and generally refers to how one feels about or values oneself (one's self-worth). Franken (1994) suggests that self-concept is related to self-esteem in that "people who have good self-esteem have a clearly differentiated self-concept... When people know themselves they can maximize outcomes because they know what they can and cannot do" (p. 439). The latter aids ones understanding of the interplay between self-esteem and self-concept.

#### *Definition of Self-Esteem*

A range of definitions of self-esteem is found in literature. For this reason the challenge is to find the most appropriate one suited to the present study.

The most broad and frequently cited definition of self-esteem within psychology is credited to Rosenberg (1965), who described it as a “favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self” (p.15), while Guindion (2002) defined self-esteem as the attitudinal, evaluative component of the self and the affective judgements placed on the self-concept. Another widely used definition of self-esteem in literature reads as follows:

Self-esteem can be described as the evaluation that the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself [sic]; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself [sic] to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 4).

Battle (1981) defines self-esteem as follows:

Self-esteem refers to the perception the individual possesses of his [sic] own worth. An individual's perception of self develops gradually and becomes more differentiated as he [sic] matures and interacts with significant others. Perception of self-worth, once established, tends to be fairly stable and resistant to change. (p. 14).

Brown (1998) offered greater simplification to the definition of self-esteem by defining it as, "feelings of affection for oneself" (p. 191). Emphasis is placed on the evaluative component, perception and affect of the self. Therefore, it can be deduced that self-esteem is how one feels about the way one thinks about oneself. Theorists agree that self-esteem is a facet of self-concept or self-identity. For the purpose of this study, self-esteem will be regarded as the measurable and evaluative component of identity.

#### *Parallel Development of Self-esteem and Attachment*

The present researcher observed the link between the development of self-esteem and attachment. The two processes can be seen to develop simultaneously and can be interlinked.

By the time an individual reaches adulthood, an internal working model of the world has been firmly established and this inhibits them from making completely objective evaluations of relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1998).



Adolescence is a critical phase in the development of self-esteem. It is characterized by the development of increased cognitive capacities for logical and abstract thinking. This allows adolescents to perceive and reflect on the self as existing separate and apart from others. These cognitive developments result in substantial, increased differentiation between self and an individual's self-representations (Ricks, 1985; Allen & Land, 1999).

A central developmental task of adolescence, which builds on these gains in cognitive capacity, is the establishment of a self-concept (van Aken, van Lieshout, Haselager, 1996). Research conducted by Benson, Harris, and Rogers (1992) suggests that security may be a prerequisite for the healthy establishment of a self-identity in adolescence. These findings suggest that adolescents' perceived familial and social support may be related to individual differences in the development of a self-concept and in self-perception accuracy. Consequently, adolescence is a critical developmental period for identity development and for transformations in the self-system (Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996; Steinberg, 1999). Adolescence is when the internal working model becomes truly internal and stable.

This internal working model, which originates in childhood and stabilizes in adolescence, is influenced by the expectation of caregiver behaviour that persists throughout adulthood. It can be seen to have a direct effect on self-esteem therefore; one can deduce that an adult's self-esteem originates in his/her early formative parent-child relationship. "The roots of self-esteem would seem to lie within these different attachment styles" (Brown, 1998, p. 198).

Research supports the inference that different attachment styles in infancy predict self-esteem during the preschool and kindergarten phase (Cassidy, 1990; Sroufe, 1983 in Brown 1998), with securely attached children showing the highest self-esteem. Similar patterns have been found with adolescents and young adults (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). According to a study conducted by Moreira, Carolas and Hagá (1999, p. 4):

The analysis of the relation between level of self-esteem and attachment styles showed that the preoccupied style had the lowest level of self-esteem, which confirms results obtained in previous studies. Individuals with an avoidant style also had a low level of self-esteem, but not as low as those with a preoccupied style. Only a marginally significant relationship was found between stability of self-esteem and a preoccupied attachment style.

Bowlby (1973) developed the concept of an “internal working model” to illustrate why the early attachment relationship has an enduring effect on individuals. As children mature, they develop a cognitive representation or working model of the attachment relationship (Brown, 1998). Children who develop secure attachment relationships believe that they are essentially good and worthy of love. Conversely, children who develop insecure attachment believe that they are bad and unworthy of love. Individuals generalize these beliefs to other people and this forms the basis for the development of self-esteem. The level (or degree) of self-esteem, which develops, in turn serves as the foundation of identity development (Guindon, 2002). While developmental theories emphasize the effects of childhood experiences on individuals’ developing self-perceptions (Masten &

Coatsworth, 1998), research indicates that adolescence marks a critical period in development in which an individual first acquires the cognitive capacities to reflect on the self. The process of self-definition, called identity formation, is lengthy and complex. It provides continuity between the individual's past, present and future. In addition, it forms a framework for organizing and integrating behaviors in diverse areas of one's life, as well as reconciling the person's own inclinations and talents with earlier identifications or roles that were supplied by parents, peers, or society (Craig, 1998, p. 439). Subsequently, the most interesting changes in the self-system take place during adolescence.

Bowlby (1981) argued that attachment organization is critical to understanding an individual's model of self. Research supports the belief that attachment organization may be related to the development of self-perception in terms of a self-concept. Cassidy (1988), for example, looked at the relationship between self-concept and attachment in childhood and found a moderate association between attachment classification and views about the self. Similarly, Cooper, Collins, and Shaver (1998) examined individual differences in attachment style and self-concept among adolescents and found that secure adolescents were the best adjusted, whereas preoccupied and dismissing adolescents had poorer self-concepts.

Research conducted by Kobak and Sceery (1988) on the affective and representational correlates of attachment organization in late adolescence also suggests a relationship between self-perception accuracy and attachment. It is therefore possible that internal working models of self, others, and attachment experiences provide a useful framework for examining the

causes and correlates of individual differences in the development of self-perception and self-esteem.

*Paternal influence on self-esteem development*

The caregiver-child relationship is a significant factor in the development of self-esteem (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1969; Epstein, 1980; Sullivan, 1953). The paternal-child interaction plays a role in the psychosocial and attachment development of the child. Children need to know and understand their roots. Knowledge of their father gives them an identity, builds their self-esteem and sense of self, thus providing a form of reference for the child as future parent/adult (Taylor, 1998).

Forsman (1989) found that females' perception of their fathers' unconditional regard was significantly related to self-esteem, whereas their perception of their mother's unconditional regard was only weakly related to self-esteem. Richards, Gitelson, Peterson and Hurtig (1991) found that females who perceived their father as being warm and supportive had higher self-esteem and that their ego development was only weakly related to their perceptions of the mothering they experienced. Fields (1983), Owen (1983) and Sharpe (1994) found that a father's approval has a strong effect on his daughter's self-esteem and sexuality. Lebe (1986) described the importance of a father's encouragement in a young woman's emotional development and emphasized the detrimental effect that lack of such encouragement can have on a female's feelings of self-worth and sense of femininity.

Having discussed the father-daughter relationship, similar research findings exists for father-son relationships. Biller (1982) stresses the fact that numerous studies have shown that a warm, affectionate relationship between

a father and son results in a stronger development of the son's masculine identity. Corneau (1991) states that research revealed systematic deficiencies on social, sexual, moral or cognitive levels in all sons who lack fathers.

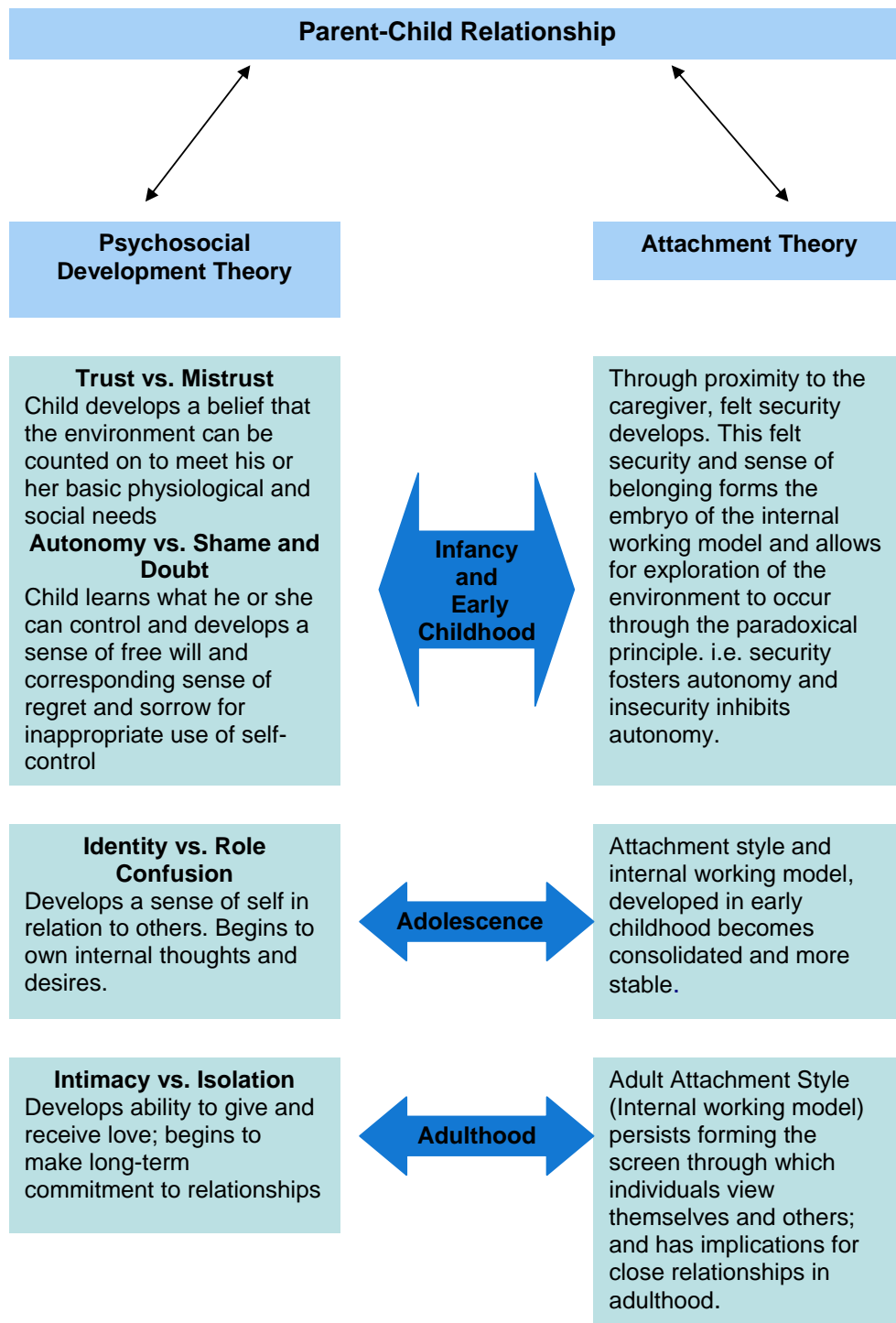
Taking into account the previous chapter, which stated that psychological identity is based on the paternal image, this self-esteem would then appear to lie within the internal working model of the paternal relationship.

Since self-esteem is the evaluative component of self-concept and since self-concept is described as a person's perception of him or herself based on external influence, self-esteem can be directly linked to the intrinsic father image the individual holds. Consequently, it can be assumed that an individual with a high level of paternal trust would have a higher level of personal and social self-esteem, which in turn would yield a more secure prototype of adult attachment.

Actual events within the family context do not have as significant an impact as one's interpretation of those events thus; the need for inquiry into the internal working model is required for the present study. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the integrative view of attachment and psychosocial development as observed by the present researcher.

The caregiver-child relationship is a central theme in Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory as well as in Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Psychosocial and attachment development are equally important in self-esteem development. The two developmental processes can be seen to run parallel. This has been illustrated on page 38.

Figure 2: Integrative model of attachment and psychosocial development as developed by present researcher:



In Erikson's first stage of psychosocial development (i.e. Trust vs. Mistrust), children develop an emotional bond (attachment) with the parent that facilitates the process of becoming autonomous. The second stage (Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt) involves the development of feelings of mastery. Children develop feelings of mastery when they are encouraged to explore, create and modify their world. They may fail to develop this when parents ridicule them or are overly critical of their efforts. Such a response fosters shame and doubt. Shame formation does not end in infancy but persists throughout childhood (Karen, 1998).

The internalisation of the aforementioned process in early childhood sets the foundation of the internal working model. This cognitive schema persists into adulthood and influences adult attachment styles and close relationship functioning. Attachment theory assumes that the expectations, beliefs and feelings that an individual develops because of the responsiveness of the caregiver are later transferred to and displayed in other close relationships (Hazen and Shaver, 1994).

### *Three models of self-esteem development*

Brown (1998) identified the three core models of self-esteem development namely: the affective model, the cognitive model and the sociological model. A discussion of these three models follows commencing with the sociological model.

#### Sociological Model

Sociological models are said to provide another perspective on the nature nurture origins of self-esteem. Building on the model of the "looking-glass self"

(Cooley, 1902) and Mead's (1934) ideas about perspective taking and the generalized other, sociological models assume that self-esteem is influenced by societal factors (Brown, 1998). If individuals think they are highly regarded and valued by society, then they have a high self-esteem. It would appear that from the sociological perspective, prestige, income, education and social status are assumed to influence self-esteem (Brown, 1998).

Evidence supporting the above association is very weak as Rosenberg (1979 in Brown, 1998) states that "members of stigmatised and minority groups sometimes report higher levels of self-esteem than do those who are more privileged" (p. 205). A second criticism negating this model is due to the fact that people do not passively register and incorporate society's views toward themselves or their personal identity (Brown, 1998).

#### Cognitive model

Cognitive models of self-esteem formation assume that self-esteem is the aggregate of the way people evaluate their specific qualities and attributes. This model assumes that self-esteem develops from a rational process. Brown (1998) believes that individuals survey their various qualities and somehow integrate these perceptions into an overall feeling of self-regard. These perceptions are summed or weighted by their importance. Brown (1998) states that another assumption of the cognitive model is that self-esteem depends on whether an individual's current self-image matches their ideal self-image.

"Although self-esteem is strongly related to what people think they are like it is virtually unrelated to what people are really like" (Brown, 1998, p. 225). Although cognitive models of self-esteem dominate social psychological



thinking, the notion that individuals' feelings towards themselves are dependent on how they evaluate their various qualities has not been established (Brown, 1998). A criticism of the cognitive model is that it paints too rational a portrait of self-esteem formation and functioning.

#### *Affective Model*

This is the model of choice adopted for the purpose of exploring self-esteem development in the present study.

Attachment theory has been called a theory of affect regulation. The underlying rationale is that individual differences in attachment styles reflect rules and strategies that children learn about handling negative emotions. Although these rules are learned through experiences of caregivers' responses to attachment-related distress, they are generalised to other distressing situations (Feeney and Noller, 1996).

The affective model assumes that self-esteem develops early in life and then functions through a lens through which people view their characteristics and experiences. According to Brown (1998), people who feel good about themselves, like the way they look and they appreciate their abilities. Overall affirmation and acceptance appear to be a pre-requisite to an individual's decision to evaluate his/her feeling about various aspects within themselves.

The affective model of self-esteem development postulates that feelings of belonging and a sense of mastery comprise the essence of high self-esteem. These feelings develop early in life, largely as a result of parent-child interactions. According to Brown (1998, p. 198) "research on attachment styles supports the notion that early parent-child interaction is related to the development of self-esteem."

Emphasis on early childhood development of self-esteem does not mean that self-esteem can never change. It simply means that the foundation laid in early childhood predisposes high or low self-esteem. Experiences later in life influence self-esteem but none is apt to be as important as the parent-child relationship. Consequently, adult relationships are less consequential since they are always viewed through the prism or schemas that are established earlier. Once high or low self-esteem develops, it guides individuals' view of themselves, other people and the experiences and events individuals confront (Brown, 1998). This guiding occurs at an automatic or preconscious level, similar to the automatic response to seek close proximity or a safe haven in anxiety provoking situations. Self-esteem appears to be operating in a similar manner. Perception of self-worth, once established, tends to be fairly stable and resistant to change (Battle, 1981, p. 14).

Taking cognisance of the above, it is difficult to reverse the pattern developed in early parent-child relationship, specifically the emotionally and psychologically identity bestowing relationship of the father. Close attachment relationships in adulthood either reinforce or alter existing patterns of attachment behaviour. A parallel to research on self-verification theory (McNulty and Swann, 1984 in Brown, 1998), which assumes that people want others to validate and confirm their self-perception even when those perceptions are negative, can be drawn here. Individuals with low self-esteem already hold a negative self-image based on real or perceived early-childhood rejection as a result whenever they make a mistake their responses to failure could possibly verify their existing negative self-image.

Father absence also accounts for a fragile identity and an external need for identity compensation. Self-protection behaviour therefore predicts an insecure attachment prototype as these individuals hold a negative view of others.

### Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, a comparison was made between self-esteem and self-concept. In defining self-esteem as the evaluative and measurable component of self-concept, a clear distinction between the two concepts emerged. A link between the development of self-esteem and attachment was drawn as both processes have their roots in the early parent-child relationship. An examination of three models of self-esteem development followed. The affective model adopted by the present study assumes that self-esteem develops early in life as a function of the parent-child relationships while cognitive models assume that self-esteem depends on the way people evaluate their various qualities. Sociological Models assume that self-esteem develops and is dependent on how the individual is regarded by society in general.

A parallel view of the psychosocial development theory and attachment theory yielded an integrative model illustrated in this chapter, which motivated the simultaneous development of self-esteem and attachment.

The influences of the paternal-child relationship with reference to self-esteem development was discussed. Lastly, the stability of the internal working model, in adulthood, suggests that since self-esteem is a dynamic

concept it has implications for close attachment relationships in adulthood, through the self-verification theory.

The following chapter will focus on the methodology employed in the present study.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

The research design, data analysis procedures and techniques utilised in the present study will now be presented. In order to describe and explore the relationship between father-child attachment, adult attachment style and current levels of self-esteem, it is important to review the research aims of the present study at the outset of this chapter. The following aims were identified:

1. To describe and explore participants' past paternal attachment.
2. To describe and explore participants' current self-esteem levels.
3. To describe and explore participants' current adult attachment styles.
4. To describe and explore significant differences between composite attachment styles categories.
5. To describe and explore the relationship between participants' past paternal attachment and current adult attachment.
6. To describe and explore the relationships between participants' past paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels.

An exploratory–descriptive, quantitative research design was considered appropriate for the present study and is discussed in detail. This is followed by a description of the selection of participants and sampling procedures used. The chapter provides a summary of the data gathering procedures and specifically describes the measures utilized in the present study.

Finally, the method of statistical data analysis is described, as well as an overview of the ethical considerations that were adhered to in the present study.

### Research Design

The research design is regarded as a flexible set of guidelines that provides the link between the philosophical paradigm and the methods used to collect and analyze empirical data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). A research design can also be seen to govern the choice of research methods, that is, the methods employed for data collection and analysis.

An exploratory-descriptive, quantitative design was employed in the present study. A descriptive study aims to describe phenomena, thus offering the researcher an opportunity to describe the relationships between the variables that may emerge (TerreBlanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The exploratory-descriptive design was chosen for the present study due to its suitability to the overall study aim. When participants provide data, survey methods are particularly useful since they provide access to the phenomenological data that includes the participants' perceptions of themselves, others and the world (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 1994). This access to participants' perceptions of themselves and others is appropriate as the researcher aimed to explore and describe the participants' internal working model (perception or cognitive schema) of their father-child relationship and its influence upon their current adult attachment style and levels of current self-esteem.

Extraneous variables may influence the formation of both attachment styles and self-esteem in individuals, as both concepts are dynamic. There

are numerous other variables that impact on identity development, which may impact on the levels of self-esteem and degrees of attachment and thereby influence the results of this study. Possible variables include amongst others, surrogate fathering, personal growth workshops, psychotherapy and religious affiliation. To minimize the impact of the extraneous variables on test performance, these variables needed to be controlled in the present study. This was achieved by holding the extraneous variables (such as surrogate fathering, personal growth workshops, psychotherapy) constant and by building these variables into the research design (Graziano & Raulin, 2000). In order to control the influence of extraneous variables the present researcher asked participants to reflect solely on their paternal relationships and not on any other influences or experiences. However, extraneous variables in the final data set, was not held constant due to inadequate sample sizes and the fact that many of the variables could not be quantified due to the limited scope of the study. The extent to which variables like psychotherapy and surrogate fathering could have influenced the participants internal working model was very hard to quantify. An enquiry of this sort would have needed a more detailed biographical information form and would have thus increased the breadth of the present study.

Since the present study is conducted within a Christian institution it is important to note that the variable of religious affiliation was built into the study as individuals' level of attachment to God is similar to their attachment in close relationships. A validation of the latter is described by Feeney and Noller (1996), "At any one point in time, security of human attachment is linked with security of attachment to God; that is people seem to hold similar

models of human attachment and divine relationships “(p. 78). The researcher is aware that, religious participation provides comfort and security to people (Wilson, 2000). This is consistent with a secure attachment relationship as conditions of security, sense of belonging, acceptance and warmth are met. “Religion helps people to develop a sense of identity, and helps answer the question ‘who am I?’ by providing membership in a special kind of organisation. Furthermore, religious organisation provides a stronger bond of identity than most others because they encourage people to share ‘ultimate’ values and beliefs” (Popenoe, Cunningham & Boulton, 1998, p.323).

All variables could not be controlled for and this is therefore a limitation of the study. While cognisance should also be taken of the influence of later life experiences that may have had an affect on attachment styles and self-esteem, it should be noted that these are not as significant as the parent-child relationship. Brown (1998) contends that once high or low self-esteem develops, it guides an individual’s perception of self, others and the world. Often this guiding process occurs at an automatic or preconscious level, making it difficult to detect and modify (Epstein, 1990). Self-esteem once consolidated, tends to be quite resistant to change. The same applies to attachment styles, as these internal working models appear to evolve from the generalisation of specific events and experiences early in the infant’s life. These internal working models, once formed, tend to be stable properties in the personality, and usually operate unconsciously (Bowlby, 1969).

Thus, having taken cognisance of the research design and the variables in the present study, the following sections describe aspects of the



research methods used in this study. The selection of participants, and the methods used for data collection and analysis are all regarded as aspects of the research method (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Jones, 2002).

### Participants and Sampling

A non-probability convenience sampling method was utilized for the present study. One advantage of non-probability sampling is the convenience and economy of cost. The present researcher has personal acquaintance with the target group, therefore this specific sampling method was utilised, as it was time and cost effective.

Non-probability sampling implies that the principle of randomization was not implemented when selecting the participants (De Vos, 1998). The two main disadvantages of the non-probability sampling technique are firstly, statistical theories of probability do not apply to non-random samples, making it impossible to know the degree of accuracy to which properties of the sample can be used to describe the population. Secondly, since the researcher plays an active role in deciding who should not be in the sample, bias can easily be introduced by the researcher. However, that fact that the present study was voluntary minimized the level of bias in sample selection.

Participants in the present study included 105 adult members of a Christian institution in Port Elizabeth. Participants were invited to participate on a voluntary basis and were included in the present study irrespective of culture, gender and socio-economic status. The mean age was 40 years with a standard deviation of 12 years. The participants consisted of 52 males and 53 females. 71 percent of the sample was English, 52 percent Afrikaans and 4

percent Xhosa speaking. 90 percent of the participants viewed their biological father as their father while 10 percent viewed a surrogate figure as their father.

A sample of 30 participants is a recommended minimum for a descriptive study and 50 for a correlational study (Bailey, 1997). However, a larger sample size was selected for the present study so as to ensure that even representations of secure versus insecure adult attachment styles were represented.

The inclusion criteria were that participants had to be older than 21 years of age as the present study aimed to explore adult relationships.

#### Procedure

The present study was conducted at a Christian institution in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. The researcher's personal affiliation to the institution made gaining entry more convenient. Permission to conduct the present study was obtained from the leadership of the Christian institution through a letter of application. This letter communicated the purpose of the research project as well as the inclusion criteria (See Appendix A). Upon receipt of the letter, the leadership and staff requested a meeting in which verbal as well as written permission was granted (See Appendix B). A discussion of the practical arrangements for data gathering took place.

Participation was voluntary and assurance of the anonymity of all participants was clearly stated on the consent form that all participants were required to sign (Appendix C). The measures were administered in a booklet-form at various home cell (small group) meeting venues. The data gathering

took place within a three-week time period in order to ensure that the time lapse did not compromise the validity of the data. Due to the fact that the researcher had to gather data from cell groups, which met at different times and venues, it was important that the researcher visited all the cell groups within the same three week period. The self-report questionnaires took approximately 20 -25 minutes to complete. Test administration was done by the researcher herself.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, debriefing sessions offered after the study, provided participants with the opportunity to resolve issues that may have been triggered by the questionnaires, which the researcher utilized (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991 in De Vos, 1998). Debriefing was done in order to minimize the effects and rectify any misconceptions, which may have arisen during test administration. Those participants who required additional debriefing were handed a business card with the researcher's contact details. This enabled them to contact the researcher telephonically to arrange such a meeting. A secondary precautionary measure was also set in place in the form of cell group leaders, who had been trained in basic counselling. They were also present and available at each testing venue.

The next section provides a description of the measures utilized in the present study.

### Measures

The following five measures were utilised for this study:

- A Biographical Questionnaire

- Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment Revised Version, Part 2
- Relationship Questionnaire
- Relationship Scales Questionnaire
- Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory

These measures were selected since they are all intended to measure individuals' perceptions of themselves, which in turn allows the researcher to assess the participants' subjective feelings and internal working models of their view of themselves and others.

The above measures were initially utilized by the researcher in individual counselling sessions, to allow the researcher to become acquainted with the administration procedure of the above battery. This was done to mitigate difficulties that may arise in the language, reading level and items of the measures.

#### *Biographical Questionnaire*

A questionnaire, designed by the researcher, was used to obtain relevant biographical information about the participants. This information was used to describe the sample group. The questionnaire included the following variables: gender, age in completed years, marital status, early childhood history and relationship with father (Appendix D).

#### *Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment*

The revised version of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1989) was employed to assess the positive and negative affective dimensions of attachment towards parents and peers.

This instrument assesses three dimensions: feeling of mutual trust, quality of communication and feeling of alienation and anger in relationship to parents and peers. These affective dimensions are defined as a quality of affect toward parents and peers. The instrument is a self-report questionnaire with a five-point likert-scale response format ranging from “Almost never or never true” to “Almost always or always true”, and consists of 25 identical items in each of three sections: for mother, father and peers. Attachment scores were computed according to standardized instructions (Armsden & Greenberg, 1989). For this study, the participants’ “quality of affect” experienced with regard to their paternal relationships were assessed. The “quality of affect” scores were obtained by reverse scoring where appropriate and summing all item responses.

Participants were asked to complete the test in a retrospective manner, to obtain past paternal attachment styles. This required answering this specific questionnaire as though they were adolescents. Since adolescence is a critical developmental period for transformations in the self-system (Harter, Marold, Whitesell, & Cobbs, 1996; Steinberg, 1999), Allen and his colleagues (1999) have suggested that adolescence may be a likely point in the lifespan when the internal working model becomes truly internal and stable. Armsden & Greenberg (1987) reported acceptable reliability coefficients over .87 and acceptable validity in scores amongst adolescence. A recent South African study by Stead, Schultheiss and Howcroft (2004) indicated a cronbach alpha score of .94 for the father attachment amongst adolescents (n = 571), indicating that individuals with stronger attachment had higher career decision making ability and lower anxiety.

Evidence of the inventory's construct validity is related to positive self-perceptions and positive family environmental characteristics (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The three subscales of the IPPA were derived by factor analysis and identified as trust, communication and alienation (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Quintana & Lapsley, 1987). The IPPA has been shown to have good reliability and validity (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Fishler, Sperling, & Carr, 1990; Lapsley et al., 1990; Lopez & Gover, 1993; Quintana & Lapsley, 1987). On a sample ( $n = 27$ ), three-week test-retest reliabilities were .93 for parent attachment and .86 for peer attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Among late adolescents, parent attachment scores have been found to correlate significantly with reported levels of family support and cohesiveness (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). In addition, parent and peer scores have also been found to correlate with personality variables such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, social adjustment and affective status (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Armsden et al., 1990; Fishler et al., 1990; Lapsley et al., 1990; Lopez & Gover, 1993).

Only part 2 of the IPPA which tests attachment to the father figure was utilized in the present study.

#### *Adult Attachment Styles*

Two related instruments measuring attachment style were utilised. Both the 30-item Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) and the four-item Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) we used.

As suggested by Bartholomew (2002) the composite for the attachment prototypes were computed by first converting all the raw scores for the participants into standardized scores. The standardized scores for a particular prototype of the first attachment measure were combined and averaged with the Z-scores of the same prototype from the second attachment measure. For example, to get the composite score for the secure attachment style, the Z-scores of the RQ secure attachment style were combined and averaged with the Z-scores of the RSQ secure attachment style.

No local statistics for these measures were found, however since they are self-report measures the researcher is confident that the measure can be used on a South African sample.

#### Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ)

The 30-item Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) was designed to measure four attachment styles: secure attachment, defined as being comfortable with becoming intimate with someone while maintaining an internalized sense of self-worth; preoccupied attachment, defined as having a need for excessive intimacy and reassurance from others because of a deep-seated sense of unworthiness; fearful attachment, defined as avoidance of intimacy because of anxiety due to a fear of rejection; and dismissing attachment, defined as having high independence and high self-esteem in intimate relationships coupled with a negative view of others, resulting in emotional distance in the relationship.

Participants were asked to read the 30 statements and rate the items on the RSQ on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 – “not at all like me” to 5- “very much like me”. Participants received four scores, one for each of the

four attachment styles. Higher scores on each subscale corresponded to a greater degree of each respective attachment style (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994).

The RSQ is consistently found to have strong test-retest reliabilities and discriminate validity (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). In a study by Sbarra (2005), alpha reliabilities ranging from .65 (for security) to .82 (for fearful-avoidance) was found. Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) reported convergent validity between the RSQ and interview based measures of the attachment styles amongst two-hundred fifty-three college students which were recruited from undergraduate education and psychology classes at a large midwestern university to participate in a study of "factors affecting college student distress and help-seeking preferences." The mean age of the sample was 20.95 years (SD = 4.25; range = 17-48), the participants' self models significantly predicted their overall level of self-reported problems: Those individuals with positive self models acknowledged significantly fewer current problems than did their counterparts with negative self models

#### Relationship Questionnaire (RQ)

The Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) is a measure of adult attachment style based on a four-category system derived from Bowlby's (1988) concepts of internal working models of the self and others that form the basis of the development of attachment styles. The RQ contains four descriptive paragraphs that describe the secure, dismissive, preoccupied, and fearful attachment styles. For each paragraph, participants were asked to provide a Likert rating on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 – "not



at all like me” to 7 – “very much like me.” The four-paragraph self-report RQ seems to relate meaningfully to a structured attachment interview and also to friends' reports of individuals' attachment styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Bartholomew (1989) reported that the four RQ self-classifications demonstrated moderate stability ratings over a 2-month period: secure, .71; dismissive, .49; preoccupied, .59; and fearful, .64. In addition, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) found with a college sample that the four attachment styles related in theoretically consistent ways with both self-reports and friend-reports of respondents' self-esteem and sociability. Scharfe and Bartholomew (1994) reported that 63% of the women and 56% of the men in their young adult sample retained the same RQ self-classification over an 8-month interval. Self-ratings indicating a secure attachment style were especially stable, with 71% of women and 61% of men retaining their secure self-classification across this time period. Indeed, RQ stability coefficients were comparable to those obtained by both interview-based and continuously scaled self-report measures of adult attachment style. Elsewhere, Kirkpatrick and Hazen (1994) reported an overall 70% correspondence rate in attachment style self-classification over a 4-year period within their adult sample.

#### *Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory*

The Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI) is a self-report scale which is intended to measure an individual's perception of worth, or self-esteem, in order to gain greater insight into the individual's subjective feelings (Battle, 1981). Battle recommends the use of the adult version (Form AD)

comprising 40 yes-no response type questions that assesses both global self-esteem as well as specific dimensions of self-esteem. These dimensions include: general self-esteem, social self-esteem and personal self-esteem. The general subscale refers to an individual's overall perceptions of worth. The social subscale refers to perceptions of relationships with friends. The personal subscale refers to an individual's intimate perceptions of his or her own self-worth.

Battle (1987) reported concurrent validity ranging from .71 to .80 when correlated with Coppersmith's (1967) Self-Esteem Inventory.

Scores of the Culture-Free SEI is derived by totalling the number of items checked which indicate high self-esteem. Thus the total possible score for form AD is 32 (see Table 1 for classifications of various scores).

Analysis of each subscale tends to provide additional information, which may not be readily revealed on inspection of the total score only. Thus, this measure makes it possible to assess the various components of self-esteem, for example, the personal self-esteem (See Table 2).

Table 1  
Form AD Classification of Global Self-Esteem Scores (Battle, 1987, p.54).

Score	Classification
30+	Very High
27 – 29	High
20 – 26	Intermediate
15 – 19	Low
14 – 0	Very Low

Table 2  
Form AD Classification of Subscale Self-Esteem Scores (Battle, 1987, p.55)

Scale	Very High	High	Intermediate	Low	Very Low
General	15+	12 – 14	8 – 11	5 – 7	4 -
Social	8	6 – 7	4 – 5	2 – 3	1
Personal	8	6 – 7	4 – 5	2 – 3	1

### Ethical Considerations

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that two issues dominate ethical guidelines for research with human participants: (a) informed consent, and (b) the protection of participants from harm. It is therefore necessary to ensure that participation in a given project is voluntary, and that participants understand the nature of their commitment prior to the commencement of the research. Furthermore, it is important not to expose participants to any risks that may outweigh the benefits derived from their participation. Bogdon and Biklen (1992) provide four specific guidelines for ethical research: (a) the terms of the agreement should be clear; (b) the identities of the participants should be protected; (c) at all stages of the research the participants should be asked for permission to proceed; and (d) lastly; the researcher should be devoted to reporting what the data reveal. De Vos (1998) adds debriefing as another important guideline in research, stating that debriefing allows the researcher to clarify any misperceptions that may have arisen during the research process and inhibited it from being a learning experience for the participants.

The present study has adhered to these core ethical guidelines. Permission to conduct the proposed research was requested and gained from

the Department of Psychology at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. At the start of each test administration session, the researcher obtained informed consent from all the participants that volunteered. Prior to obtaining informed consent, the purpose of the research was explained and all the advantages and possible risks (of which there were none) of participating in the research was made clear. Assurance of the researcher's credibility was emphasised and each of the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

The next section describes the methods of data analysis that were used.

### Data Analysis

In keeping with the exploratory-descriptive quantitative nature of the study descriptive, correlational and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis.

Preliminary statistics, in the form of frequency counts, was used to describe the research participants. This was achieved by utilizing the biographical information provided, in terms of gender, age, marital status, history (in relation to father) and relationship to father.

Data was analysed in terms of the six research aims. The statistical analysis techniques relevant to each aim are discussed as follows.

#### *Aim 1, 2 and 3*

Aim 1, which is to describe and explore participants' past paternal attachment; aim 2, which is to describe and explore participants' current self-esteem levels

and aim 3, which is to describe and explore participants adult attachment styles were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Measures of central tendency, such as means and standard deviations, were utilized for the first three aims. Means and standard deviations were investigated for each of the measures and their subscales. The mean, described as the most accurate measure of central tendency because it makes use of every score in the distribution was utilized in the present study (De Vos, 1998).

A measure of variability, known as the standard deviation, uses the mean of a distribution of scores as a reference to consider the distance between each score in relation to the mean (Gravetter and Wallnau, 1999).

#### *Aim 4*

The fourth aim was to describe and explore significant differences between composite adult attachment style categories used frequency counts to divide participants into one of four specific attachment styles. Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), described by Harris (1998) as the statistical procedure used for determining the statistical significance of differences among two or more means, with two or more dependent variables simultaneously, was utilized to investigate differences between groups. The independent variables were the four attachment styles and the dependent variables were the subscale scores on the IPPA and the SEI.

#### *Aim 5 and 6*

The fifth and sixth aim which was viz., to describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current adult attachment;

to describe and explore the relationships between past paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels; were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, or Pearson  $r$  and Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test for independence analysis techniques.

Pearson  $r$  is a correlational coefficient. A correlational coefficient is a number that represents the intensity and the direction of a relationship between two quantitative variables (Harris, 1998). Correlation studies aims to examine the relationship between two or more variables in order to identify whether they co-vary, correlate, or are associated with each other (Barker, Pistrang and Elliot, 1994). Although two variables are related to one another, causation is not necessary implied (Aiken, 1997).

Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test of independence is a non-parametric statistical procedure, which is used to determine whether or not, two variables measured on a nominal scale are associated or related (Harris, 1998). This purpose is achieved by comparing the actual frequencies obtained with those that would be expected if the two variables were independent. The Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test of independence can be viewed as similar to other measures of association like Pearson  $r$  and Spearman rho except that the latter measures cannot be used with nominal or categorical variables (Harris, 1998). A chi-square test does not provide a direct measure of strength of a relationship.

In order to assess the significance of the correlation for both the fourth and fifth aim of exploring past attachment to the father figure and current levels of self-esteem, correlational coefficients were generated. Once

correlations between the variables were established, the significance of the relationship was interpreted using guidelines suggested by Guilford (1946):

Less than .20	slight; almost negligible relationship
.20 - .40	low correlations; definite but small relationship
.40 - .70	moderate correlations; substantial relationship
.70 - .90	high correlations; marked relationship
.90 – 1.00	very high correlations; very dependable relationship

### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research approach and the methods utilized in this study. The chapter started with a review of the overall goal and the aims of the present study. This study is exploratory-descriptive and quantitative in nature. The methods used for the selection of participants, collection of data, data analysis and report of findings were discussed next. One hundred and five adult participants answered the battery of tests. Reference was also made to the ethical considerations adhered as well as the research procedures followed.

The next chapter reports the research results, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

*Not everything that can be measured is important. Not everything that is important is (easily) measured. (Albert Einstein).*

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. The overall aim of the present study is to explore the relationship between father-child attachment, current attachment style and self-esteem of adults. This aim was operationalised by firstly describing the father-child attachment, then describing self-esteem levels of adults as well as the four adult attachment styles. The differences between the composite categories of adult attachment styles were then explored. The relationships between the variables viz. paternal attachment, self-esteem levels and adult attachment styles are discussed using correlation analysis and chi-square techniques.

Since this is an exploratory study, the data cannot be generalised. It is therefore discussed in the context of the specific sample as described by the information gained from the biographical data.

#### Preliminary Analyses

##### *Biographical variables*

Data for this study was collected from 105 adult participants with a mean age of 40 years (standard deviation 12 yrs). All are members of a Christian institution in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. Table 3 summarises the biographical characteristics of the participants. As indicated in Table 3, the sample was comprised of 53 (50.48%) females and 52 (49.52%) males. A breakdown of the sample in terms of their home language indicated the



following: 75 English speakers (71.4%), 26 Afrikaans speakers (24.76%) and 4 Xhosa speakers (3.81%). The categories falling under marital status indicated that the majority of the sample was married (71.43%) with the second highest category being single (16.19%). With reference to father–relationship perception, 94 (89.52%) participants perceived their biological father as their father while 11 (10.48%) viewed another male person (for example, their grandfather, uncle, stepfather, or adopted father) as their father.

Table 3  
Biographical variables for all participants

Variable	Value	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	52	49.52
Female	53	50.48
<i>Age</i>		
Mean	40	
<u>SD</u>	12	
<i>Language</i>		
English	75	71.40
Afrikaans	26	24.76
Xhosa	4	3.81
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	75	71.43
Single	17	16.19
Dating	2	1.90
Engaged	2	1.90
Divorced	4	3.81
Widowed	3	2.86
<i>Father-Relationship Perception</i>		
Biological Father	94	89.52
Personal Father	11	10.48

Note. N's for all variables = 105

*Aim 1: To describe and explore participants' past paternal attachment.  
Past Paternal Attachment*

The inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1989) yielded scores for the following three subscales: (1) Paternal Mutual Trust, (2) Communication and (3) Alienation. These scores were computed as they pertained to paternal attachment using only Part 2 of the IPPA. All items were answered on a 5-point likert-type scale. High scores are indicative of good communication, high mutual trust and a high level of alienation, as perceived by the participant. Total attachment ("quality of affect") scores for paternal attachment were obtained by combining the three subscale scores (reversing all items on the Alienation scale) (See Table 4).

For the purpose of this study, "group" refers to the total sample.

Table 4  
Means and Standard Deviations for Paternal Attachment Scores for Gender and Total Group

Attachment Subscale	Group (N= 105)		Male (N= 52)		Female (N= 53)	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Total	63.46	15.76	64.69	14.94	62.25	16.57
Trust	66.01	20.00	66.67	20.16	64.38	19.90
Communication	56.64	17.89	58.85	17.82	54.48	17.87
Alienation	52.75	18.37	54.80	18.29	50.74	18.40

*Note. Alienation scores used in this table are not reversed.*

Inspection of Table 4 reveals that males obtained slightly higher mean scores on all the subscales in comparison to the mean scores for females and the group. Females obtained lower mean scores on all the subscales in comparison to the means score of the males and the group. It should be noted that higher mean scores on the alienation subscale is indicative of a

negative paternal attachment relationship. The relatively high standard deviations indicate that the scores are widely dispersed from the mean.

*Aim 2: To describe and explore participants' current self-esteem levels.*  
**Self-Esteem**

Four scores were computed from the Culture-free Self-Esteem Inventory for each of the following subscales: Global Self-Esteem, General Self-Esteem, Personal Self-Esteem and Social Self-Esteem. Items were scored on a Yes / No scale for each subscale. The means and standard deviations as well as the classification for each subscale are presented according to gender as well as for the group scores, in Table 5.

Table 5  
 Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (N = 105)

Subscales	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Classification
Global Self-esteem (N=105)	23.54	6.40	Intermediate
Males (N=52)	24.46	6.06	Intermediate
Females (N=53)	22.64	6.65	Intermediate
Personal Self-esteem (N=105)	5.15	2.38	Intermediate
Males (N=52)	4.60	2.36	Intermediate
Females (N=53)	4.60	2.36	Intermediate
Social Self-esteem (N=105)	6.58	1.28	High
Males (N=52)	6.60	1.25	High
Females (N=53)	6.60	1.25	High
General Self-esteem (N=105)	11.68	3.63	Intermediate
Males (N=52)	12.19	6.06	High
Females (N=53)	11.17	3.84	Intermediate

Closer inspection of Table 5 indicates that scores for the Global Self-Esteem subscales for the group (highest score equals 32), fell into the

intermediate range (23.54). Scores for males (24.46) and females (22.64) on this subscale also fell within this range.

Scores on the Personal Self-Esteem subscale (highest score equals 8) fell into the intermediate range for the group (5.15), as well as for males (4.60) and females (4.60). No significant gender differences can be reported as both the males and females obtained a mean score that fell into the same range.

The mean scores for the Social Self-Esteem subscale (highest score equals 8) fell into the High range for both the group (6.58), as well as for males (6.60) and females (6.60). No significant gender differences can be reported as both genders obtained a mean score that fell into the same range.

On the General Self-Esteem subscale (highest score equals 16) the group (11.68) fell into the intermediate range. A difference between gender mean scores can be reported for this subscale as males (12.19) fell into the high range and females (11.17) into the intermediate range.

The General Self-Esteem subscale reflects the way an individual usually feels about him/herself and can fluctuate since an individual's feelings vary greatly from situation to situation (Howcroft, 1986).

In summary, the findings of the present aim reveal that the self-esteem levels of the majority of the sample fell in the intermediate range across most of the subscales with the exception of the social subscale falling into the high category.

*Aim 3: To describe and explore participants' current adult attachment style.*

#### *Adult Attachment*

In order to obtain a composite score for adult attachment, two tests were utilised viz., the Relationship Questionnaire and the Relationship Styles Questionnaire. The results from these two tests were converted into standardised scores since a standard score permits comparisons across distributions that have different means and standard deviations (Harris, 1998). These scores were combined and averaged to obtain a composite score of adult attachment based on a prototype and continuous rating rather than a specific dimension.

Table 6 presents the composite adult attachment prototypes for the group in the present study. It is evident that a significant percentage (74.29%) of the participants fell into the preoccupied adult attachment prototype with the secure adult attachment prototype comprising the second largest percentage (13.33%). Only 8.57% of the participants fell into the dismissing adult attachment prototype with males dominating. It is important to note that none of the males and only 7.54% of females in the present study fell into the fearful adult attachment prototype.

Table 6  
Breakdown of Adult Attachment Prototypes for Total Group and Gender

Attachment Prototypes	Group (N= 105)		Male (N= 52)		Female (N= 53)	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Secure	14	13.33	7	13.46	7	13.21
Fearful	4	3.81	0	0.00	4	7.54
Dismissing	9	8.57	6	11.54	3	5.66
Preoccupied	78	74.29	39	75.00	39	73.58

Figure 3  
Four-Group Model of Adult Attachment (Bartholomew, 1990).

		<b>MODEL OF SELF</b>	
		<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>MODEL OF OTHER</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<p><b>SECURE</b> 13.33%</p>	<p><b>PREOCCUPIED</b> 74.29%</p>
	<b>Negative</b>	<p><b>DISMISSING</b> 8.57%</p>	<p><b>FEARFUL</b> 3.81%</p>

The above figure graphically summarizes the spread of the group across the four attachment prototypes.

*Aim 4: To compare differences between composite adult attachment styles.*

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was employed using the categorical attachment style variables as the grouping variable and the subscales of the IPPA and the SEI as the dependent variables. The purpose of this analysis was to provide further descriptive information regarding the specific attachment group differences implied by the correlational findings. The MANOVA was preferred to multiple ANOVAs in order to overcome Type 1 errors (i.e., rejecting the null hypotheses when they are true). The chances of gaining a statistically significant result increases as one uses multiple ANOVAs and therefore the use of the MANOVA was considered appropriate.

The independent variables were the four attachment styles and the dependent variables were the subscale scores on the IPPA and the SEI.

The results of the MANOVA analyses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7  
Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of the Four Composite Adult Attachment Prototypes and Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment and Self-Esteem Inventory subscales.

	Test	Value	F	Effect df	Error df	p
Intercept	Wilks	0.02	470.08	8	94.00	0.00
*Att. Type	Wilks	0.74	1.25	24	273.23	0.20

Note: Significance level =  $p > 0.05$ .

\* Att. Type = Highest Attachment Type.

The significance level has been set at .05, as the research was exploratory. The results of the MANOVA analyses indicated no statistically significant difference between the respective variables,  $F (1.25) = 0.02$ ,  $p < .05$ . Due to the fact that no significant differences were evident within the general population of the present study, analyses into possible gender differences were not pursued.

There was no significant difference between secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful adult attachment styles and levels of self-esteem and degree of paternal attachment amongst this sample. Since an even representation of the four attachment categories was not found in the present study it is statistically incorrect to compare groups of different sizes.

*Aim 5: To describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current adult attachment*

Pearson product-moment intercorrelations between past paternal attachment and adult attachment prototypes are presented in Table 8. The

correlations were examined among the total paternal attachment scores of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and Adult Attachment Prototypes variables.

Table 8  
Intercorrelations between paternal attachment subscales and adult attachment prototypes

Subscale	Secure	Preoccupied	Fearful	Dismissing
Paternal Attachment				
Group (N=105)	.18*	-.16*	-.45***	-.07*
Males (N=52)	.06*	-.34**	-.39**	-.08*
Females (N=53)	.25**	-.01*	-.49***	-.07*

Note.  $N = 105$ . According to Guilford (1946) \*slight, \*\*low, \*\*\*moderate, \*\*\*\*high, \*\*\*\*\*very high correlation

While the absolute size of many of these correlations is modest, the pattern of significant associations is informative. Positive correlations were found between paternal attachment and the secure attachment prototype for the group as well as for males and females. The paternal attachment was negatively correlated with the three insecure attachment prototypes viz, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful. Two of these negative correlations between paternal attachment and the fearful attachment prototypes can be described as moderate indicating that a strong relationship exists for the group as well as females. A low correlation indicating a definite but small relationship is evident for the males.



In summary, it is clear that paternal attachment is positively correlated with secure adult attachment and negatively correlated with the three insecure adult attachment styles.

In order to achieve the second part of this aim which is to describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current adult attachment, a chi-square test of independence was run in order to assess the relationship between the nominal variables viz., the highest attachment prototype and the highest Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment subscales obtained. This was completed in order to find out if any possible trends exist in the relationship between the two variables. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 9.

Table 9  
Highest IPPA Subscale Score x COMP: Highest Composite Adult Attachment Prototype

	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson Chi-square	5.02	9	.83
M-L Chi-square	5.31	9	.81
Phi	.22		
Contingency coefficient	.21		
Cramér's V	.13		

p greater than 0.05 = non significant group differences

Chi-square test of independence analyses were conducted comparing the attachment style prototypes (viz secure, preoccupied, fearful and dismissing) with the highest self-esteem subscale each individual scored. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant relationship ( $p = .83$ ) between attachment style and self-esteem subscales. Since no significant differences were found in the general population, there was no reason to pursue gender differences.

*Aim 6: To describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels*

Pearson product-moment intercorrelations between past paternal attachment and self-esteem subscales are presented in Table 10. Intercorrelations between the variables of the total paternal attachment score of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and Self-Esteem Inventory subscales were examined.

Table 10  
Intercorrelations between paternal attachment subscales and self-esteem subscales for the group

Subscale	Personal	Social	General	Global
Paternal Attachment				
Group (N=105)	.25**	.06*	.28**	.28**
Males (N=52)	.21**	-.14*	.34**	.26**
Females (N=53)	.26**	.24**	.22**	.29**

Note.  $N = 105$ . According to Guilford (1946) \*slight, \*\*low, \*\*\*moderate, \*\*\*\*high, \*\*\*\*\*very high correlation.

Pearson product-moment correlations between paternal attachment subscale variables and Self-Esteem Inventory scores are presented in Table 10. While the absolute size of many of these correlations is modest, the pattern of significant associations is informative. Positive, low correlations, indicating definite but small relationships, were found across the majority of the variables for both the group as well as for males and females. However, a slight negative relationship, between paternal attachment and social self-esteem is noted for males in the present study. This implies that the more a male is attached to his father, the lower his level of social self-esteem.

In order to achieve the second part of this aim which is to describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels, a chi-square test of independence was run in order to assess the relationship between the nominal variables (viz, the highest Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment subscale obtained and the classification of the Global score of the Self-Esteem Inventory) which ranges from Very Low to Very High. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11  
Highest IPPA subscale score x Classification of Global Self-Esteem Subscale Scores

	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson Chi-square	21.00	15	.14
M-L Chi-square	21.22	15	.13
Phi	.45		
Contingency coefficient	.41		
Cramér's V	.26		

p greater than 0.05 = no significant group differences

Chi-square analyses were conducted comparing the attachment style prototypes viz secure, preoccupied, fearful and dismissing with the classification of the global self-esteem subscale each individual scored. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant relationship ( $p = 0.14$ ) between attachment style and global self-esteem subscale classifications.

#### Summary of Results

Due to the number of measures employed in the present study, the first three aims were descriptive in nature. The sample of 105 participants comprised of 50.48% females and 49.52% males.

Three main results emerged from the initial descriptive statistics. The first being the group mean score of 63.46% for the paternal attachment. The second being the group mean score of 23.54 for global self-esteem, which fell into the intermediate range. Thirdly, 74.29% of the sample identified with the preoccupied adult attachment prototype.

A multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA), was conducted in order to explore whether any differences exist between the adult attachment prototypes. The results of the MANOVA indicated no significance difference between secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful adult attachment styles and the levels of paternal attachment and self-esteem subscales.

The correlational analyses between past paternal attachment and current adult attachment found that past paternal attachment correlated positively with secure adult attachment and correlated negatively with the three insecure adult attachment prototypes.

Positive correlations were also found between past paternal attachment and current levels of self-esteem with a slight negative correlation existing for males between past paternal attachment and social self-esteem.

Chapter 6 provides an interpretation and integration of the statistical results within the theoretical context of the present study.

## CHAPTER 6

## DISCUSSION

*Self-worth cannot be verified by others. You are worthy because you say it is so. If you depend on others for your value it is other worth. (Wayne Dyer)*

The overall goal of the present study is to describe and explore the relationship between father-child attachment, adult attachment style and current self-esteem levels of adults. In this chapter, the statistical results of the present study will be interpreted and integrated within the theoretical context of the study. The discussion will be presented thematically according to the aims of the study. The findings related to each aim will be discussed and, where appropriate, a graphic illustration is provided to aid discussion.

*Integrative Summary of First Three Research Aims*

The first three research aims of this study provide descriptive information about the group. The first research aim, which was to describe and explore participants' past paternal attachment, assessed the individuals' perceptions of how well their father served as a source of psychological security. This was achieved by utilising Part 2 of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. This measure assessed the individuals' perception of their personal father, that is, the male figure that the individual regards as father (Samuels, 1985).

The group mean score (63.46) for paternal attachment is interpreted as a percentage. This percentage (63.46) falls into the above average score and indicates that the group felt relatively strongly attached to their fathers. The groups' perceptions and internal working model of their paternal relationship was above average (score higher than 50), which indicates a psychologically

secure sample that has healthy intrapsychic images of and feelings about and toward their fathers. This is supported by Blankenhorn's (1995) findings, which states that a father's emotional involvement with his children is imperative for the development of their emotional well-being.

The group mean scores of subscales measuring the quality of communication and degree of mutual trust were 56.64% and 66.01% respectively. It should be noted that the higher the score the higher the presence of that specified dimension.

The score of 52.75 on the alienation subscale is indicative of an average level of paternal anger and alienation.

The dimension of paternal attachment also known as psychological security (Armsden and Greenberg, 1989) is thus directly related to the internal working model of early childhood experiences. Figure 4 (researcher's own conceptualisation) illustrates the above.

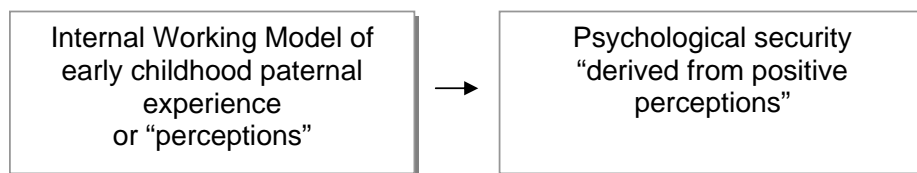


Figure 4: Development of Psychological Security

Aim two of the research intended to describe and explore participants' current self-esteem levels. This aim provided descriptive information about the group's self-esteem levels across various subscales. For the purpose of this study, self-esteem is regarded as the measurable and evaluative component of identity. By corollary it is the individuals' perception of themselves.

The self-report quantitative measurement of self-esteem provides a snap shot view of individuals. Consequently, the results are only reflective and accurate for that specific moment and have to be reported and interpreted accordingly.

The finding in the present study indicated that the group fell within the intermediate range for global, personal and general self-esteem subscales. According to Battle's (1981) classification of scores the intermediate range is a midway point on a continuum extending from very high to very low. According to the scores achieved, the present sample's evaluation of themselves can be interpreted as average. Franken (1994) states that self-concept is related to self-esteem in that people who have good self-esteem have a clearly differentiated self-concept. By implication the findings of present sample's self-esteem scores are indicative of a reasonably well-balanced perception of self.

However, the social self-esteem, describing how one relates to other people, reflected different results. The group mean score for the social self-esteem subscale (6.58 out of 8) fell in the "High" range. This is indicative of the sample's high perceptions of their social identity. Huitt (2004) provides a tentative explanation for this difference. The author believes that self-concept is not innate, but is developed or constructed by the individual through interaction with the environment and reflecting on that interaction. Thus, upon self-reflection of their social circumstances, the present sample regards themselves more positively.

Findings related to the third research aim, which was to describe and explore the participants' adult attachment styles, reveal that the majority of the

present sample fell within the preoccupied adult attachment style. This indicates that these individuals had a negative view of self and a positive view of others. This finding is inconsistent with previous research conducted by Hazen and Shaver (1994). They found that the secure attachment style was the dominant prototype in a sample comprised of 55 percent of adults (Hazen & Shaver, 1994). A tentative explanation for this difference could possibly be the variable of religion, since the present sample are all members of a Christian institution. This is consistent with Kirkpatrick and Shaver's (1990) "compensation" hypothesis, which assumes that people with an insecure attachment history would be more likely to be religious. Similarly, Feeney and Noller (1996) also indicate that insecure attachment predicts spiritual conversion experiences at a later point in time.

The second highest attachment prototype was the secure adult attachment style indicative of a positive view of self and others.

In contrast, adults with dismissing attachment styles are believed to have a negative view of others and a positive view of self. Findings in the present study revealed that 8.75% of participants fell into the dismissing category with males being in the majority. The finding is consistent with Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) and Scharfe and Bartholomew's (1994) findings, where males with a dismissing attachment style, obtained higher mean ratings.

A further finding of note in the present study is that only females obtained a fearful adult attachment style rating. This finding is consistent with Feeney and Noller (1996), confirming that females show greater preoccupation with relationships. A further tentative explanation for this



gender difference can be attributed to the fact that women are socialized to value emotional closeness, whereas men are socialised to value independence. As a consequence, both males and females who view their relationship negatively respond differently. Women tend to become very anxious thus fuelling the development of fearful attachment styles, while males become uncomfortable with intimacy, which in turn fosters the development of dismissing attachment styles (Collin and Read, 1990).

In summarising the findings linked to this third aim, there appears to be a complex link between gender, attachment styles and relationship perceptions. It is therefore essential for mental health practitioners to be aware of and assess the complexity and quality of each individual's pattern of emotional bonding in adult life.

#### *Integrative Summary of the Final Three Research Aims*

The fourth research aim was to explore differences between the composite adult attachment styles. Significant differences between composite adult attachment scores of the sample were not found in the present study. Since an even representation of each composite attachment style was not found in the present study, it is therefore statistically incorrect to compare groups of different sizes to each other. An implication arising from this is that the preoccupied group comprising 78% of the sample could not be compared to the 5% fearful group. This could be a tentative reason for the absence of significant differences between groups. Previous research by Moreira et al, 1999, Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) indicates clear differences between the

secure and the three insecure categories, with the insecure categories scoring lower on measures of self-esteem. Despite the small and limited representation in each category the present study did not confirm previous research. Bartholomew (1993) found that individuals with preoccupied attachment are likely to have poor self-esteem but the present study found no differences in the self-esteem across the four prototypes. Bartholomew also stated that preoccupied individuals were likely to have experienced care giving that was inconsistent but this was not observed in the present study.

Research aim five was to describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current adult attachment.

The findings of the current investigation suggest that past paternal attachment is associated with adult attachment. Overall, the association found between paternal attachment and adult attachment patterns were consistent with Bartholomew's four-category model of adult attachment (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994). Paternal attachment was negatively correlated with the three insecure attachment styles, indicating that the lower the paternal attachment the higher the score for the three categories of insecure attachment prototypes viz, preoccupied, fearful and dismissing. The most significant finding was the moderate negative relationship found between paternal attachment and the fearful adult attachment prototype, confirming the expectation that insecure paternal attachment would be associated with negative paternal attachment.

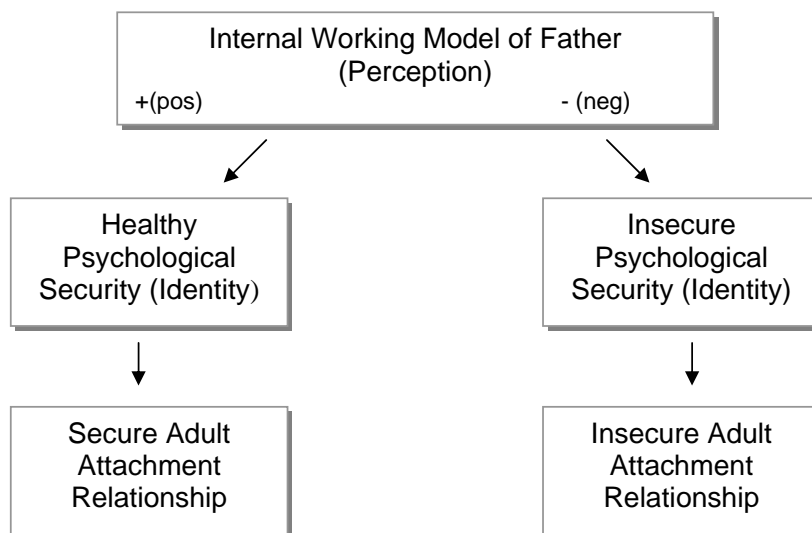
Bowlby (1969) viewed attachment relationships as a significant factor influencing an adult's emotional life. According to Bowlby (1969), the

availability and sensitivity of a primary caregiver shapes an individual's internal representation of self and others from infancy. Beyond infancy, an internal working model of self, others, and attachment experiences serves as a framework for future emotions, thoughts, and behaviours (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Kobak & Cole, 1994). Since internal working models of attachment theoretically reflect personally experienced interaction patterns between the individuals and their caregiver, it follows that developing models of self and attachment figure(s) are complementary (Bretherton and Munholland, 1999).

Many practitioners in the physical and mental health facilities do not regard the quality of fathering and the individual's feelings about the father as significant factors affecting the well-being of that individual (Phares, 1997). This raises concern since the father-child relationship influences the entire life of individuals, influencing their dating and marriage relationship, degree of drivenness, identity, sexuality and work performance (Schaller, 1995). The internal working model of paternal attachment can influence an individual's behaviour from "the cradle to the grave" (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). It acts as the filter through which all other close relationships are screened. This highlights the need for health care practitioners to incorporate the implications of paternal attachment in their therapeutic interventions. With knowledge about an individual's internal working model of their paternal relationship, practitioners' therapeutic interventions could be more effective (Schaller, 1995). A choice of cognitive behavioural therapy would require an assessment of the schema or maladaptive schema while a systemic approach would look into relational patterns and meta messages. A narrative approach

would also seek for preferred as well as alternative stories about the paternal relationship, which would ultimately result in a sharing of the individual's perception of the relationship. Irrespective of the choice of intervention employed in therapy, this father–child relationship remains influential.

In summary, the attachment style in adult life, influencing the manner in which an adult forms close relationships, is always related to the quality of fathering experienced in the parent-child relationship which determines whether or not the child will have a psychologically secure identity. This is illustrated in Figure 5: Quality of Early Parent-Child Relationships.



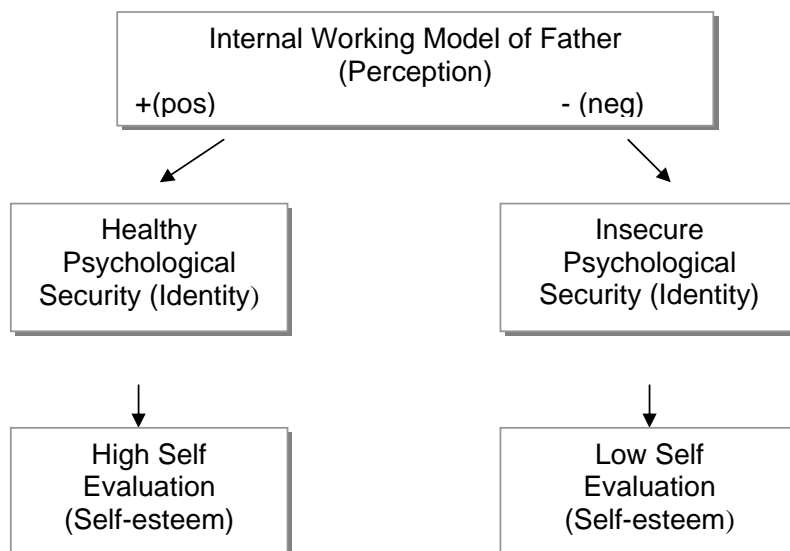
Research aim six was to describe and explore the relationship between past paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels. Positive low correlations, indicating definite but small correlations, were found across the majority of the variables for paternal attachment and current self-esteem levels in the present study. This trend is significant and indicative of the fact that the higher the paternal attachment the higher the self-esteem. This finding is consistent with

previous research by Taylor (1998), which states that knowledge of one's father gives one identity and influences self-esteem. Corneau (1991) confirms this when he states that the father helps the child establish an internal structure and psychological identity. In the present study, self-esteem is described as the evaluative component of identity,

Collins and Read (1990) found that global self-esteem was positively correlated with secure attachment and negatively correlated with insecure attachment. Feeney and Noller (1996) also underscored the link between secure attachment and high self-esteem.

Since the father bestows identity (Eldredge 2001; Levine, 1993; Corneau, 1991) and self-esteem is the measurable component of identity, the past paternal attachment thus becomes fundamental to the development of healthy adult self-esteem patterns.

Figure 6, titled: Relationship Between Paternal Attachment and Self-Esteem, illustrates the link between paternal attachment and self-esteem.

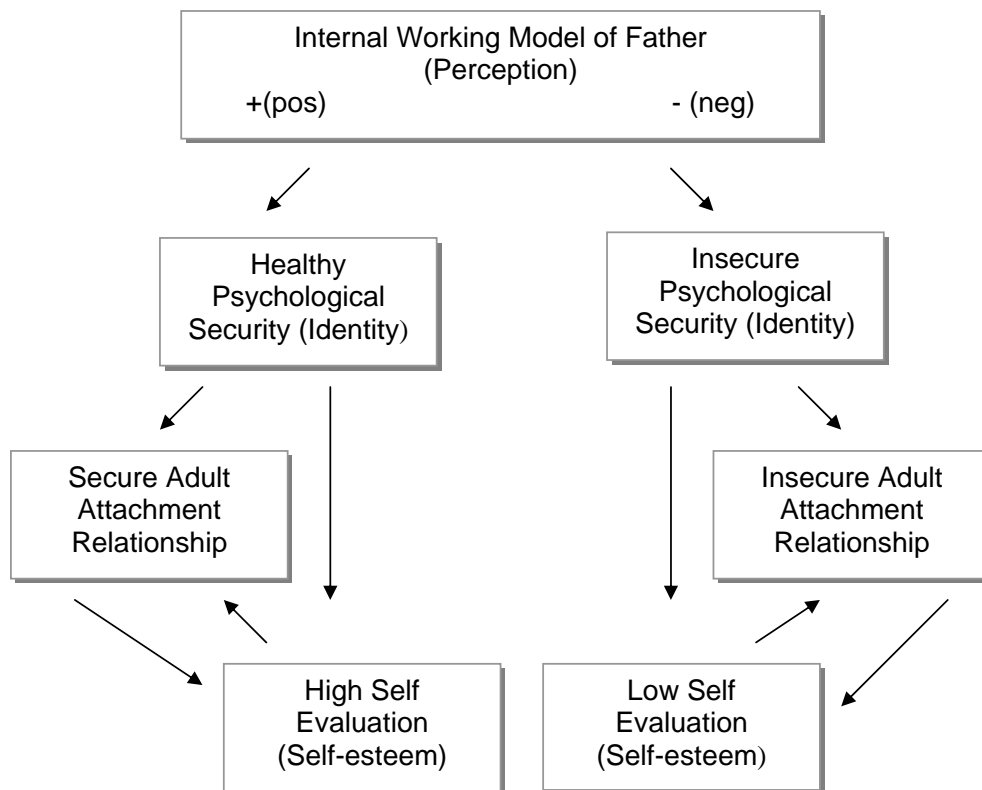


Since insecure past paternal attachment patterns are correlated with lower levels of self-esteem, the findings of the present aim has implications for therapy and should therefore not be ignored by mental health professionals. These implications are similar to those discussed in aim 5.

An interesting finding in this aim was the slight negative correlation between paternal attachment and male social self-esteem. This result suggests that the more a male is attached to his father, the lower the level of his social self-esteem. A possible explanation for this finding is that the present study assessed levels of attachment and social self-esteem and not the quality of the attachment. It is thus possible that a secure attachment characterised by paternal over protectiveness could result in lower social self-esteem.

## Summary and Conclusion

Figure 7: Illustrative Summary of the Relationship between Attachment and Self-Esteem.



Assessment of individuals' perceptions or internal working model of how well their father served as a source of psychological security allowed for exploration into the subjective world of the participants in this present study. Since internal working models of attachment theoretically reflect personally experienced interaction patterns between the individuals and their caregivers, it follows that developing models of self and an attachment figure(s) are complementary. Karen (1998) states that the quality of attachment is a lasting core issue for the personality as it encapsulates something vital about the nature of one's earliest relationships, which, in turn, relates directly to one's

feelings about oneself and one's expectations of others. Attachment combined with knowledge of internal working models affects how one approaches human connections in later life stages.

Figure 6 provides an illustration of the associations between father-child relationships, adult attachment and self-esteem. Since this study is exploratory, only correlational inferences are made and thus no causal relationship can be explained.

The present findings conclude that all self-descriptors stem from (or are derived from) an individual's history. This history has an objective and subjective component since an adult cannot make pure objective evaluations of his or her world as a result of their internal working model. Kierkegaard ([http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Soren\\_Kierkegaard/](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Soren_Kierkegaard/)) wrote, "Once you label me you negate me." The same precept is applicable to self-perceptions as individuals can negate themselves. Huitt (2004) writes that success is limited by expectations and self-esteem, since the definition of attachment is described as the model of self and model of others an individual possesses. An individual's successful well-being would thus depend on his or her attachment internal working model (perception).

By corollary, the model of self (self-esteem = evaluation of self) and the model of others (originating in early childhood expectation of caregivers) is thus based on perception. "Your perception of yourself is who you are" (Redlinghuis, 2005).

The IPPA assessed the individuals' perception of their psychological security, which is bestowed by the father. Battle's Culture Free Self-esteem



assessed the perception of self (which originates from the internal working model either as an individual worthy of care or not).

The present sample achieved a slightly above average level of paternal attachment and an average level of self-esteem. Their adult attachment styles was predominantly preoccupied (negative view of self and positive view of others). This negative view of self is partially reflected in their average scores on global self-esteem. Their high social self-esteem scores reflect their positive view of others. A possible explanation could be their social circumstances, which acts as a buffer or compensation to their insecure early paternal attachment relationship.

Upon reflection of this summary, *perception* appears to be the common theme. Sadock and Sadock (2003) define perception as the process of transferring physical stimulation into psychological information.

Perception is thus a dynamic interplay between the internal working model of past events and the model of self and other('s) expectations in present relationships. In order to address insecure attachment patterns, a therapeutic approach should hinge on challenging thought content. While the school of cognitive behavioural therapy appears to be suited to this, all social constructionist models would be appropriate as social constructionists share an interest in the generation of new meaning (perception) in the lives of the people and families they serve.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study emphasize the need for psychotherapists to enter and challenge the internal working model of an individual in order to gain an understanding of the influence of paternal attachment upon relationships.

Chapter 7 provides the conclusion of the findings, the limitations of the study as well as the recommendations for further studies.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Discovery consists in seeing what everyone else has seen, and thinking what no one else has thought.* (Albert Szent-Gvorgi)

Three issues are addressed in this chapter, viz. the conclusions based on the research findings; the limitations of the study; and the recommendations for further research.

#### *Conclusions of the study*

The present study provides a good baseline upon which to structure a more extensive analysis of paternal attachment, adult attachment relationships and self-esteem. Secondly, it contributes to a relatively new and growing body of research examining the relationship between one's perception of paternal attachment and adult attachment style. The findings of this study suggest that subjective evaluations of paternal relationships are critical determinants of one's ability to form secure attachments to others. This is a key to developing the most optimal therapeutic approach with individuals who have developed insecure attachment patterns.

Practitioners often overlook the salience of the father in mental health family intervention programs. Very often when services identify their target population as "families" or "children" it is accepted that mothers will be involved. "Fathers" however have faded into the background and may even be regarded as irrelevant. Consequently, since the internal working model of the father-child relationship is elemental to healthy psychological identity formation, the field of psychology, sociology and disciplines related to the

social sciences have much to contribute to the issues surrounding fathers' role and children's identity.

### *Limitations*

The following limitations of the current study are noted. Firstly, this study cannot be generalised to the entire population as it was drawn from a small, non-random sample, which lacked diversity in terms of race and religion. Secondly, due to the quantitative nature of the research, the full relative importance of actual versus perceived events could not be assessed. The quantitative measures utilised in the present study could not extract the essential meaning of attachment and self-esteem for each individual as it only provide levels of measurement.

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### *Recommendations*

Future researchers may want to assess paternal attachment from a qualitative perspective that allows for in-depth knowledge of the individual's story. This lends itself to the narrative therapeutic approach but can also be utilized by therapists embracing eclectic approaches.

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This quantitative study purposefully only takes the respondents' perspective into account. Future research could consider assessing relationships with the father from various perspectives, including that of their spouse and family members. This could be achieved by employing multiple measurement devices. In addition, a multi-method approach to the same study incorporating the use of the in-depth Adult Attachment Interview method

may provide a more accurate assessment of the relative importance of the paternal relationship.

Gender was included in the first three aims where it served a descriptive purpose. It revealed non-significant differences between the father-child attachments thus suggesting that either gender could benefit from the same themes and foci in therapy. The literature is ambivalent regarding the influence of gender, hence the researcher's suggestion that future research incorporate it as an independent variable.

The incorporation of feedback workshops for respondents is strongly encouraged in future research as the researcher found that the respondents of this present study benefited significantly. The content of the study lends itself to individual and group work.

The father-child relationship establishes the individual's psychological identity. As a result lacking a father is equated to lacking a backbone.

In conclusion of the present study, it is essential to note that the actual relationship with the father does not have as significant an impact on the child as the interpretation of those events associated to the father-child relationship.

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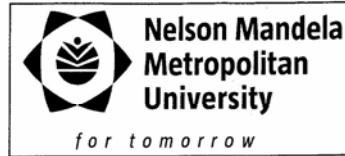
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APPENDIX A:

Letter to Word of Faith Christian Centre Requesting Permission



P O Box 77000  
 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University  
 Port Elizabeth  
 6031  
 South Africa

Dear Pastor J. Crompton

CC: leadership of Word of Faith Christian Centre

I am currently completing a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. As part of my degree I am required to complete a research dissertation.

The proposed study aims to explore and describe the impact the internal working model of early paternal attachment has on adult attachment styles and self esteem.

It would be of immense help to me if you could assist me in obtaining a sample of participants within your church as I am aware of the work your congregation has been doing regarding the importance of "fathering."

The inclusion requirements for the participants are:

- Adults (male and female) who are older than 21 years
- Adults who have had father figures in their life up to the age of 21 years
- Adults who are proficient in the English language

The identity of those who participate in this research will be protected and information disclosed by participants will be treated confidentially. Participation in the research is voluntary and there will be no financial reward for participation.

Feedback will be provided to participants as a group on completion of this research.

Your assistance in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

**CLARE WILLIAMS**  
 (Researcher)

**PROF J G HOWCROFT**  
 (Supervisor)

APPENDIX B:

Response Letter from Word of Faith Christian Centre





## WORD OF FAITH CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Reg. No. 021 231-NPO

August 22, 2005

Dear Miss Williams

Thank you for considering our church as part of your research. We will gladly assist you.

Yours faithfully

Pastor J R Crompton  
**SENIOR PASTOR**

Cc Prof J G Howcroft

## APPENDIX C:

AN EXPLORATION OF FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS, CURRENT  
ATTACHMENT STYLES AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONGST ADULTSConsent Form

**Researcher: Clare Williams**  
**Supervisor: Prof J G Howcroft**  
**Co-Supervisor: Mrs R E Connelly**

P O BOX 1600  
 Psychology Department  
 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University  
 PORT ELIZABETH  
 6000  
 Tel: 041 - 504 1110 / 041 - 504 2511

<b>DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT</b>	
<p>I, the undersigned _____ (name)            (I.D. No: _____), the member of _____            _____ (church).</p> <p><b>A: HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I was invited to participate in the above mentioned research project which is being undertaken by Clare Williams of the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.</li> <li>2. This research project aims to explore and describe the relationship between early paternal attachment, current adult attachment styles and level of self-esteem. The information will be used as part of the requirements for a MA Counselling Psychology degree. The results of this study will be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications, participants' identity remains anonymous.</li> <li>3. I understand that I will be asked to complete five questionnaires as well as this consent form. If I am unable to participate in the study, I will return all questionnaires and letters to the researcher (Clare Williams).</li> <li>4. There are no risks in participating in this study.</li> <li>5. Confidentiality: My identity will not be revealed in any</li> </ol>	<p><u>Please</u>  <u>initial</u>  <u>against</u>  <u>each</u>  <u>paragraph</u></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

<p>discussion, description or scientific publications by the researcher.</p> <p>6. My Participation is voluntary.</p> <p>7. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalization.</p> <p>8. Participation in this study will not result in financial cost to me.</p> <p>9. Feedback will be given as a group and if I require individual feedback I will contact Clare Williams @ 082 782 5085 to arrange an individual feedback session.</p> <p><b>B: I HEREBY VOLUNTARILY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PROJECT.</b></p> <p>I grant this as a voluntary contribution in the interest of training and knowledge.</p> <p>Signed at _____ on _____ (2005)</p> <p>Signature of Participant_____.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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## APPENDIX D:

**BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

*Please complete the following bearing in mind that all information is completely anonymous.*

1. Are you: Male / Female (tick appropriate one)
2. Your age in completed years: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you currently: Married / Divorced / Remarried / Single / Widowed / Living Together/ Dating / Engaged.
4. Your Home language \_\_\_\_\_
5. During your childhood did you? (Please tick all that applies)
  - Live with both your parents
  - Live with one parent
  - Live with one parent and a guardian (e.g. step-mother or step-father)
  - Live with one guardian (e.g., uncle or aunt)
  - Live with both guardians (e.g. uncle or aunt)
  - Live with Grandparents
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Was the male person you consider to be your father your actual biological father?  
Yes / No
7. If No describe your relationship to the person above (tick appropriate one)
  - uncle
  - grandfather
  - step father
  - mothers boyfriend
  - neighbour
  - brother
  - other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is this person currently in your life?  
Yes / No
9. If not please explain? Why

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