St. Stephen's College

CONCEPTUALIZING THE PROCESS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN PEOPLE WITH INSECURE ATTACHMENT

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to generate a theory regarding the development of identity in people with insecure attachment. In semistructured interviews, the researcher asked five co-researchers, three women and two men, about areas of identity. The questions covered career development, emotional experience, grief and loss, religious or spiritual beliefs, and the co-researcher's name. The methodological framework for this study was constructivist grounded theory. The process of data analysis involved coding, developing categories, and memo-writing. Theory emerged from the data by the constant comparative method. Awareness of researcher reflexivity was sustained during the design, interviewing, data analysis, and writing stages of the study. Fundamental to attachment theory was John Bowlby's (as cited in Rothbard & Shaver, 1994) assertion that the child develops "internal working models" (p. 33) of the attachment figure and of the self in interaction with the attachment figure. These templates are based on the repeated interactions between infants and their primary caregivers during the first year of life and become the model for the child's conceptions of self and self in relationships (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 36). The present study proposes a Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment. The co-researchers', or participants', working model was composed of mistrust, isolation, independent thought, and hiding self. As a consequence of failure in the attachment system, the Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment, and the resulting emotional and social delays, the participants experienced a *lost self*. All of the participants experienced mental health crises in early to middle adulthood. The three female participants "found themselves" by a journey of reconnection with their emotional and spiritual self.

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Chapter 1: Background

Bowlby (1977, 1988), Ainsworth (as cited in Batgos & Leadbeater, 1995), and other researchers studied patterns of attachment behaviour in infants. Mary Ainsworth (as cited in Rothbard & Shaver, 1994) conducted “strange situation” (p. 34) experiments in which children were separated and then reunited with their caregiver. Three types of attachment behaviour were noted. Based on these experiments, Ainsworth (as cited in Batgos & Leadbeater, 1994) classified attachment as either secure, anxious-avoidant, or anxious-resistant (p. 161). Ainsworth observed that the securely attached child immediately approached the caregiver to seek comfort, and the caregiver was skilled at calming the child (as cited in Riley, San Juan, Klinkner, & Ramminger, 2008, p. 114). Anxious-avoidant children were unable to be reassured by their caregiver and were preoccupied with their caregiver’s availability (Ainsworth, as cited in Rothbard & Shaver, 1994, p. 344). She categorized anxious-resistant children as those who exhibited little distress upon separation and did not seek contact upon reunion (Ainsworth, as cited in Rothbard & Shaver, 1994, p. 34).

Bowlby (as cited in West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994) proposed a “working model” (p. 36) that the child developed based on his or her early attachment experiences; his model symbolized the child’s earliest conceptions of identity. He identified that “early attachment experiences are the ‘data’ an individual uses to construct a working model of self in relation to others” (Bowlby, as cited in West & Sheldon-Keller p. 36). Bowlby stressed attachment relationships as a basis for the structure of identity.

Bowlby (as cited in West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994) found that insecure attachment in childhood affected adult relationships (p. 67); he reported enmeshed or compulsively

self-reliant behaviour in this population. Other attachment theorists provided research about the many effects of insecure attachment. Research showed connections between insecure attachment and abusive relationships (Bifulco & Moran, 1998), depressive disorders (Parker, 1994), personality disorders (West & Keller, 1994), and suicide (Bifulco & Moran, 1998). Subjective accounts from people with insecure attachment were missing from the literature. My study aimed to provide theoretical conceptualizations based on subjective participant accounts using grounded theory.

Research Question

Bowlby (as cited in West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, pp. 73–74) examined the effects of insecure attachment on adult relationships. I chose to explore the effects of insecure attachment on the development of identity. My aim was to examine the *self* as a separate, self-actualizing being. My research question asked the following: How did insecure attachment affect the experience and expression of identity?

Definition of Identity

The concept of identity requires some definition. In this study, I use the words *self* and *identity* interchangeably. Identity includes the uniqueness of a person formed by the synthesis of experience and inner resources. Identity is built over a lifetime of conscious and unconscious choices. The identity that I explored was a separate self. Other researchers may debate that self cannot be separated from the self in relationships. But as an insider to the population being studied, I would argue that the self is an exceptionally separate experience.

The self is made up of parts, some of which are the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual sides to identity. Erikson (1980) described identity as “one’s

selfsameness and continuity in time" (p. 22). Although this study found that some qualities of the self persisted over time, identity was also noticed to be constantly evolving.

In some studies, the words *emotion* and *feeling* have different meanings. In my study, the words are used interchangeably.

Methodology

As a research methodology, grounded theory appealed to me because of its mathematical structure. Separating the participants' words and phrases into codes, grouping codes according to meaning, and discovering relationships between categories appeared to produce objective results. Paradoxically, I realized that the process of generating concepts always involved a subjective, or interpretive, construction of ideas. To combine both objective and subjective conceptualizations, I chose constructivist grounded theory. This methodology incorporated both the objectivity of the process of grounded theory and the accountability of documenting the researcher's subjective interpretations.

Charmaz (2006) wrote that every stage of research is affected by the researcher. The interview questions, my position as researcher, data analysis, theory generation, and the writing of the report were all constructed through my lens as researcher. The challenge of the constructivist researcher is to be reflexive throughout.

I was an "insider researcher" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 56) in this study. This denotes that I have had the same experiences as the population studied. This position has both advantages and disadvantages. I was more likely to notice categories of meaning

because I recognized the experiences. The effects of insecure attachment, however, may have hindered my abilities in certain research areas.

In order to observe the development of identity over the lifespan, I selected participants between the ages of 45 and 70 years. The interview questions inquired into topics from career development to experience with grief and loss. I chose the questions because they covered a wide range of identity experiences. I asked open-ended questions to allow the participants the freedom to choose their responses. As an insider researcher, I chose some of the questions because I believed that the topic may have been difficult for the participant. Two examples are the questions about emotional expression and grief and loss (see Appendix 1).

This study was facilitated by the depth of the participants' responses. All of the members were verbally accomplished and forthcoming. The participants provided insight into their childhood, early adulthood, and present-day experience. Insights from the participants' journeys of self-awareness contributed immensely to this study.

Personal Interest in the Topic

Over many years, I observed personal qualities that I thought were odd. I didn't commit to any relationship. I could turn my back on someone that I had known for years without a second thought. And I didn't feel sorrow. My mind would chirp helpfully, "I've got better things to do than put up with their !!!??!" Or after a death, I would think, "They really are in a better place. I don't know why people grieve if they believe that." I had some qualities and thoughts that seemed distinctive.

I had been singled out as the bad one in my family of origin. I did not believe that I was bad. I thought that I was misunderstood. After experiencing some ridicule and

shunning by my family, I moved to another city. Then the characterizations became truly damning.

My experience as a member of my family group has always been painful. I believe that I experienced the effects of insecure attachment. Both of my parents were emotionally distant, and I did not bond with either of them. I remember my attachment needs being met with dismissal. I developed an anxious-resistant attachment style. After a difficult marriage and divorce, I became extremely self-reliant. Strangely, I noticed the patterns of my experience echoed in the lives of friends, intimate partners, and coworkers. I appeared to attract relationships with other people who were insecurely attached.

So now the reader knows that I was sliding in the muck of insecure attachment while conducting this research. The reader has the right to know that all the interpretations made in this study were affected by my position as an insider of this population. Some areas of the research might be underdeveloped because of my shortcomings. Those areas would benefit from further study. With the information about my insider position, the reader can make informed decisions about the credibility of the emergent theory.

I chose to research the effects of insecure attachment on identity because I wondered if my experiences were common in this population. Would a theory emerge that could be useful to counsellors, educators, and other researchers? I hoped that a relevant theory would help other people with insecure attachment.

I was asked by both of my thesis supervisors why I did not include the effects of insecure attachment on relationships. The main reason was that I was interested in how a

separate, unique identity was affected by insecure attachment. Secondly, Bowlby and others had studied how relationships were affected, and I did not want to duplicate their studies. This question, however, provoked some frustration. Having experienced caregivers who projected an unmerited identity upon me, I was wary about the same action by supervisors. I inferred that the “self in relationships” had value whereas a separate identity had little worth. For a person who had lost her self and regained it through decades of searching, the self was a very valuable commodity indeed.

Theological Themes

As the reader will discover, the concepts of identity held by these insecurely attached participants did not join with the structure of organized religion. Nevertheless, three of the participants described a personal spiritual belief system as life-saving and tremendously important. In an existential process, these participants, or co-researchers, left social convention and wove together a set of beliefs that was unique and personally authentic.

Theological concepts wove their way through the stories of the participants. One of these concepts was suffering. This study revealed the hurt and grief experienced by the participants from their first abandonment through a childhood of ridicule and judgement. The participants suffered with the image of themselves as bad and unworthy. They struggled to rid themselves of unwanted and untrue perceptions of self. A process of separation from God and then reconnection through a personal spiritual belief system emerged in this study.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Traditionally, two main approaches are used to generate empirical knowledge in Western epistemological traditions. Quantitative research standardizes methods to isolate causes and effects. Populations for study are selected randomly. The variables and conditions under which the variables arise are strictly controlled, measurements are taken on the frequency and distribution of observed phenomena, and the findings are formulated into general laws. The researcher's views are excluded and the studies are considered to be objective (Flick, 2009, p. 13). Qualitative research, on the other hand, examines a subjective, cultural type of knowledge unique to individuals based on their experience, perceptions, and interpretations. The study participants are seen as the experts.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory entered the field of research at a time when the popularity of qualitative methods were losing ground (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). The founders of grounded theory, sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (as cited in Charmaz, 2006), provided a structure of data analysis that moved descriptive accounts to "explanatory theoretical frameworks" (p. 6). Later, Strauss collaborated with Juliet Corbin; their work emphasized relationships among concepts (Charmaz, 2006, p. 127). Glaser continued to define his original method, which became known as classical grounded theory (CGT). Kathy Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory acknowledged the interpretive stance of both the co-researchers and the researchers (p. 130).

Grounded theory researchers collect detailed descriptions from participants. Researchers focus on how these subjective descriptions can be abstracted into theoretical

statements about causal relations. Grounded theory uses concepts and procedures that are unique to its design. Research proceeds according to a specific plan. According to Flick (2009), “The researcher moves continuously back and forth between inductive thinking (developing concepts, categories, and relations from the text) and deductive thinking (testing the concepts, categories, and relations against the text)” (p. 428). Theory is grounded in the data.

Theoretical sampling. The researcher analyzes each interview once it is concluded. In this way, new questions can be formulated and asked in subsequent interviews. Glaser and Strauss (1967) wrote,

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. (p. 45)

The research study is fluid and open to emergent data. The researcher needs to be theoretically sensitive to patterns as they emerge and flexible enough to allow the analysis to change directions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 46). As a methodological concept, theoretical sampling aligns with principles of qualitative studies. Theoretical sampling encourages studies that are based on the experience of the participants and not on the researcher’s preformulated ideas.

Theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is another term used in grounded theory. Theoretical saturation is the criteria for when to stop sampling. The researcher stops sampling from new participants and stops comparing codes and categories when no new relationships can be found (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61).

Codes, categories, and a core concept. Data analysis begins by dissecting words or phrases from the transcripts. These words, called codes, are grouped together according to concept phenomenon. *In vivo* names for categories are preferred as they may contain "implicit meanings and actions" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). The researcher uses the constant comparative method at all stages of the analysis; codes are compared with codes, codes with categories, and categories with categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher finds relationships between the categories and a core concept emerges from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Later, researchers added techniques to the foundation of grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998) introduced axial coding: "The purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding" (p. 124). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that categories be named according to the property, dimension, cause, condition, or consequence of phenomenon. Barney Glaser (1992) criticized Strauss and Corbin's axial coding paradigm as forcing the data instead of discovering emergent properties. Glaser (as cited in Flick, 2009) developed theoretical coding, which he said allows theory to emerge (p. 313). Glaser's (1978) theoretical coding is made of 10 coding families; each family has five or more concepts in it.

Memos. Another basic component in grounded theory is writing memos. Grounded theorists track the conditions under which codes arise, comparisons with specific data, methodological decisions, and personal reflections. Once sorted, these memos form the outline for the written report.

Emergence is one of the key properties in grounded theory. Emergence occurs at all stages of the data analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated, "As categories and

properties emerge, develop in abstraction, and become related, their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework—the core of the emerging theory" (p. 40).

Substantive and formal theory. The resulting theory is either a substantive or formal theory. Substantive theories are theoretical explanations of a problem in a particular area (Charmaz, 2006, p. 189). Examples might be school bullying or drug use among middle-aged women. Formal theory is more generalizable and abstract than substantive theory. Formal theory helps us understand behaviour across diverse substantive areas (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). Examples are judgment in health care settings and secrecy in law enforcement.

Literature review. In grounded theory, the literature review is conducted after the data analysis is complete. Glaser (1992) wrote,

> There is a need not to review any of the literature in the substantive area under study. . . . This position with regard to the literature search is brought about by the concern to not contaminate, be constrained by, inhibit, stifle or otherwise impede the researcher's effort to generate an emergent grounded theory. (p. 31)

Christiansen (2011) stated,

> The different research approach of CGT methodology also means that the outcomes of it conceptually may be very different from what is almost all-pervading in the literature . . . A later literature review avoids "a priori" and favours the 'a posteriori,' especially regarding concept fit and the avoidance of delivering research that is grounded in the agendas of the established professional research communities rather than in the agenda of those being studied. (p. 21)

As a reflexive researcher, I noticed that establishing results outside of the established research communities appeals to a rebellious, unconventional side of my identity! More explanations for this “outsider” position will become evident in Chapter 4. Christiansen (2011) went on to say,

> The place and purpose of the literature review in a classic (Glaserian) grounded theory (CGT) study is to situate the research outcome within the body of previous knowledge, and thus to assess its position and place within the main body of relevant literature. The literature comparison is conceptual, i.e., the focus is on the comparison of concepts . . . Usually, literature reviews of CGT studies are much shorter than literature reviews of more traditional studies. (Christiansen, 2011)

Constructivist grounded theory. Kathy Charmaz amended classical grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theory assumed that the research process and the studied world were affected by the researcher, the research context, prior knowledge, existing literature, historical and social conditions, power dynamics, and so on (Charmaz, 2006). Researchers take responsibility for their preconceptions, role as interviewer, assumptions, and blind spots during the data analysis stage. Reflexivity is reflection on the subjective stance of the researcher. Researcher reflexivity becomes an integral part of the written documentation of the research project (Charmaz, 2006). Including the researcher’s subjective position offers readers an opportunity to assess the results.

Some debate has centred on whether a researcher can be both an insider (a member of the group being studied), and an outsider (a researcher capable of translating subjective meanings into scientific knowledge (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The insider researcher understands, has empathy, does not just look for the down side, and has

credibility and belonging with the group being researched. Other benefits of the insider position are acceptance, trust, and openness from the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Negative drawbacks are that the researcher's experiences might cloud his or her vision, and he or she might miss the unique experiences of the participant. Role confusion can also occur (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Evaluation of a grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasized two main criteria for judging the credibility of an emergent grounded theory—that it fits the situation and that it works, thereby helping the people involved in the situation to make sense of their experiences and manage the situation better. Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Cooney, 2011) stated, "A mechanism to enhance the credibility of the study is built into the grounded theory method—the result of concurrent data collection, data analysis and 'checking' of emerging categories against the data" (p. 19).

Methodological rigour was achieved with "care in applying the grounded theory methodology correctly is the single most important factor" (Cooney, 2011, p. 17). Cooney (2011) added, "Interpretative rigour is achieved when attention is paid to the analytical process, how researchers draw their conclusions and the extent to which these are grounded in the data" (p. 18). Beck (as cited in Cooney, 2011) said, "Fittingness . . . is concerned with demonstrating that the findings have meaning to others in similar situations" (p. 21).

Overview of Constructivist Grounded Theory

Constructivist grounded theory moved the field from modernist conventions into the postmodernist paradigm (Flick, 2009). Modernism emphasized concrete beliefs. Modernism declared that all is knowable and objective truth can be scientifically proven

(Payne, 2006). Charmaz (2006) called this stance in grounded theory "objectivist grounded theory" (p. 188). Postmodernism states that all knowledge is provisional, socially and politically influenced, and linked with social power (Payne, 2006).

Constructivist grounded theory dismissed the idea that there was an external reality that the unbiased researcher discovered (Flick, 2009, p. 70). Constructivism recognized that the research participants and the researcher interpret their world (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Meaning is constructed through contexts, previous knowledge, societal belief systems, and so on (Flick, 2009, p. 77). The participants' accounts are understood to be subjective realities. The researcher's choice of questions in the interview guide, codes selected, categories formed, and the theories generated are all interpretations.

Constructivist grounded theory retained all of the basic procedures of CGT. Codes are identified in the data. Codes are gathered into categories that express similar phenomena. A constant comparative method identified relationships between codes and categories. Core concepts and theory emerged from the data. Writing memos kept track of researcher decisions and the ideas generated from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) suggested credibility, originality, resonance (do the categories portray the fullness of the studied experience), and usefulness as criteria for evaluating research (p. 182).

Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory included both Glaser's and Strauss and Corbin's coding variations. Axial coding and theoretical coding were acceptable forms of finding relationships and process in the data (Charmaz, 2006). The unique element in Charmaz's (2006) formulation of grounded theory is that every participant, the researcher, and the decisions made during the data analysis were seen, not as value-free

and objective, but as a subjective interpretation of reality. The researcher's reflexivity about his or her role was included in the written report (Charmaz, 2006).

Research Ethics

Research can delve into unexplored avenues and recollections of painful memories. As a researcher who belongs to the group I am studying, I know that there are risks for this population. The fragility of self-organization was my greatest concern for the participants living with insecure attachment.

The Ethics Committee at St. Stephen's College asked for a counsellor to be available during the interviews should the co-researcher need immediate psychological assistance. I was thankful that this precaution had been taken. Three of the five participants talked about feeling suicidal or acting out suicidal behaviour at some point in their lives. When the subject of suicide arose in the interviews, I asked if they were currently feeling suicidal? The co-researchers said that they were not feeling suicidal at the time of the interviews. All of the co-researchers were given the opportunity to talk to the counsellor after the interview session. All five of the co-researchers declined the offer of immediate counselling.

To inform the participants about the study and their rights, I took the following measures. I read the consent letter aloud and asked for questions. I explained that the interviews would be audio-taped and that these would be destroyed within 6 months of publishing the written report. The transcripts would be kept until further uses, such as articles or presentations, could be determined. I explained that I would return the results of the study to the participants so that they could check for anonymity and provide feedback on whether the results reflected their personal experiences. I asked each

participant to write the name and phone number of a counsellor, minister, or other helping professional on the consent letter form. This was to be a person that they could contact if they needed counselling in the weeks following the interview. The consent letter was freely signed by each participant (see Appendix 2).

I explained to the co-researchers that they had the right to confidentiality. I would not share the identity of the research participants or the details of the interviews outside of the research context. I brought up that there was an exception to confidentiality when the participant is deemed to be a danger to themselves or others. Anonymity was provided by using pseudonyms and altering identifying details in the final report.

The participants had the right to withdraw at any time. No incentives, threats, or manipulation were used to attract the participant to join the study (see Appendix 2).

This study was designed as a social justice model of research. This research was intended to benefit research participants, other individuals, and society as a whole. Beneficence—do good for others, trust, justice, fairness, equality, nondiscrimination, fidelity (I made realistic commitments and kept promises to the participants), veracity (my explanations about the study's uses were truthful), and accountability—was a guiding principle that I brought to all parts of the research study.

Position of the Researcher

I have an insider–outsider position in this project. I understand the challenges of living life with insecure attachment. I have empathy for the "dark places" that the participants fell into along their journeys. And I have compassion for the huge efforts that some participants put in to make themselves more whole and for the work they have yet to do that may or may not make up for the lacks in early childhood.

As an outsider, my role was to select participants, arrange interviews, explain the consent letter, record the interviews, and so on. When I interacted with the participants, I saw my role as facilitator of the study. The participants and I collaborated on this research (Bagnolia & Clark, 2010). I set up the infrastructure of the research study so that the "experts," the co-researchers, could make their contributions.

My role as insider in the substantial area of inquiry informed my role as outsider, or researcher. I developed interview questions in areas that I knew could be challenging to this population. During the data analysis process, I recognized categories and relationships between categories when they arose in the data.

My intention was to create an egalitarian atmosphere during the interviews. I was aware that the college building where the interviews were held and that my educational level could create an uneven power dynamic. The common perception is that the researcher holds the power in an interview, but my past experience included having my self negated by others. I recognized that it would be a challenge for me to maintain an egalitarian relationship with the participants. To counter some of the disparity, I used clear language to inform the participants about the study. I brought Carl Rogers' (as cited in Corey, 2009) core conditions of congruence (genuineness), unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding to my role as researcher (pp. 181–182). I also maintained the attitudes of nonjudgment and respect to convey equality and a valuing of the participants and their stories. I did not sense any power differential during the interviews. But, had I recognized this dynamic, I would have stated it openly so that it could become part of the studied effects.

Two of the participants were men and three were women. A gender dynamic was possible in the male subject–female interviewer or female subject–female interviewer positions during the interviews. I was alert to the possibility that gender dynamics could be triggered due to past experiences and expectations of myself and the participants.

Another of my goals was to encourage open communication. The results of the study would depend upon the level of sharing by the participants. I hoped to encourage the participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. In order to honour and encourage the voices of the participants, I reflected meaning and feelings. I used open-ended questions to allow the participants to choose their responses.

Position of the Participant

The participants were co-researchers in the study. They shared power by suggesting areas for study. They were offered the opportunity to evaluate the credibility of the study. The participants were positioned as the holders of their stories. They were the voice of people who have experienced the effects of insecure attachment on their developmental, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences of identity.

The participants shared stories about their past, present, and possible future selves. Most of the participants had examined how they think, how they feel, and what they believe. These participants were positioned as evolving, self-aware individuals.

Field Participants

Three women and two men agreed to participate in this study. They were between the ages of 45 and 70 years. All the names and other identifying details have been changed to protect the participants' identities.

Michael spent the first 2 years of his life in hospital due a medical condition. He spent the ages from two until 16 living with his two parents and two siblings. Michael has no religious affiliation. He is Caucasian, single, 52 years old, lives in an urban-rural community, and works as a cabinet maker at the time of the study.

Theresa was given up for adoption at birth. She spent her first 2 years in hospital due to medical conditions. She lived with her adoptive family between 2 and 14 years of age. From 14 to 40 years, Theresa moved from place to place. She described herself as Christian with no affiliation. She is Caucasian, in a lesbian relationship, 45 years of age, lives in a western Canadian city, and drives a bus for people with special needs.

Edna was raised in a family of two parents and 12 siblings. She described her family as very dysfunctional. She left home at 18 years. Her religious affiliation is Catholic. Edna is Aboriginal, in a heterosexual relationship, 52 years old, and lives and teaches school on a First Nations Reserve near a large city in Western Canada.

Larry was initially raised by a nanny in the United Kingdom. When he was 9 years old, his family moved to Canada, and he began to get to know his parents. He grew up in a family of two parents and three siblings. Larry's religious affiliation is Christian. He is Caucasian, single, 67 years of age, and worked in a large city as a historian.

Grace grew up as an only child living with two parents. Her father worked away from home. She does not have a religious affiliation. Grace is Caucasian, single, 49 years of age, and works in a large city.

Chapter 3: Method

The study of identity in adults with insecure attachment was undertaken as a qualitative research project. I decided to use grounded theory as the methodology. In alignment with grounded theory concepts, I avoided an in-depth literature review of the substantive area before conducting the study (Glaser, 1992), but I did examine the literature in two areas. I read Bowlby's (1988) work on attachment in children and followed his studies as he identified relationship dysfunction among adults who were insecurely attached. Ainsworth's (as cited in Batgos & Leadbeater, 1994) groundbreaking experiments using "the strange situation" (p. 161) provided three types of insecure attachment. I was able to use this work to choose participants with insecure attachment.

I, also, focused preresearch study on the concepts and strategies of grounded theory. I read about grounded theory from a variety of perspectives (Charmaz, 2006; Christiansen, 2011; Flick, 2009; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The first step in this study was to identify a cohort of adult research participants. Qualitative research samples serve an investigative purpose rather than are statistically representative of a population (Carter & Little, 2007). The participants of this study needed to be insecurely attached to their caregiver(s) in childhood so that I could study the effects on the development of their identity. I wanted to have a number of perspectives but not so much data that analysis would be overwhelming. I aimed at a sample size of five participants. A local counselling agency agreed to post a synopsis of my research study to attract self-referred participants. This yielded no results. By telling acquaintances and colleagues about the study, I was able to find participants.

To select co-researchers with insecure attachment, I screened the individuals using Feeney, Noller, and Hanrahan's (1994) Attachment Style Questionnaire (see Appendix 3). Before each interview, the prospective participants filled out this self-rating questionnaire. This self-rating scale and the participants' descriptions of their early attachment history determined their appropriateness for this study. Five people were identified with the necessary prerequisite of insecure attachment as a child.

Before data collection began, I explained my position as a master's student undertaking a research thesis. I explained that I was interested in the participant's past and present experiences in the topic area. I read the consent letter and explained each item (see Appendix 2). The consent letter explained confidentiality, the length of time that I would keep the audiotapes and transcripts, and the method of securing these. The participants signed the letter and wrote down the name and phone number of a counsellor, faith professional, or other support person. These names were provided as proof of support should the participant need counselling in the weeks following their interview.

The main method of data collection consisted of interviews. Audiotapes of each interview provided a clear, decipherable text. I decided on one-to-one interviews rather than focus groups. I thought that the participants would share their experiences more openly in this context. I included a few observations in the written report.

All of the interviews, but one, were audiotaped at a college building. The fifth participant lived at a distance from the college, so I rented a counsellor's office near his home to conduct the interview. The interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours.

A semistructured interview format offered structure with flexibility. I designed an interview guide of six questions (see Appendix 1). The first five questions asked the participants about their career, feelings, endings, religious, or spiritual belief system and the fittingness of their name. I prepared secondary questions in each topic area. Each of the questions was framed as an open question. For example, “Tell me about the process of finding your career,” and “Describe the experience of endings in your life.” Open questions allowed participants to choose their responses. As they talked about their experiences, I used the reflection technique to show the participants that I had heard them. I found that a mixture of open and closed questions directed the participant through their experience.

A sixth question asked the participants to identify other areas that they felt had been affected by insecure attachment. The participants became collaborative partners in the design of the study by introducing new areas of research.

After the first interview, I became aware of key areas which needed further sampling. Theoretical sampling, a fundamental part of grounded theory, allows the researcher to modify the direction of the study; the researcher “decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). I inserted Question 6 in the subsequent four interviews to specifically collect data in these areas (see Appendix 1).

Once each interview was complete, I began the process of data analysis. I transcribed the audiotaped interviews onto my laptop computer. Using open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I separated words and phrases out of the transcriptions and copied and pasted these codes onto another document. I organized the codes into groups

with a similar meaning. I gave each category an *in vivo* or another name. By using the names of the categories in the constant comparison method, I left the words and phrases of the participants and moved to a theoretical understanding of the data.

Strauss's axial coding labelled each category as a property, dimension, cause, consequence, condition, or a process of experience. I made sure that I was not forcing the data into one of the six distinctions, but if I noted that the category was a cause, for example, I labelled it as such. I found axial coding to be a simpler method to use than Glaser's theoretical coding. It helped to make sense of the huge amounts of data. Strauss's six functions illuminated the relationships between categories and subcategories.

During the data analysis process, I jotted down memos. The memos reflected my conceptualizations on the data analysis, research process, and personal reflections. I sorted the memos and used them in the writing process.

An especially enlightening procedure was making diagrams of the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) linked memos and diagrams: "Diagrams are visual rather than written memos . . . devices that depict the relationships between concepts" (pp. 217–218). Diagrams in a vertical direction showed the categories arranged into stages of process. Horizontally, the diagrams allowed a comparison of the five participants' experiences and expressions. Diagrams offered a two-dimensional visual conceptualization of the data.

In some ways, the codes and categories were specific to the area in question. For instance, codes emerged that showed a late start to careers. Other codes from specific areas integrated into categories that were pervasive throughout the data. For example, Hiding Self emerged in all areas from career to emotional identity.

One question failed to elicit significant data. The participants’ responses regarding their names did not yield codes that could be compared with any other codes or categories in the study. I did not incorporate any data from the question about names into the study.

I examined categories for their potential to encapsulate the story of data. One core category emerged that contained all of the subcategories. A substantive theory resulted from this study. Further research is needed to extend the results from this study into other areas.

Reflexivity about my decisions, interpretations, and reactions was an integral process at every stage of the research project. I was reflexive about why I chose to ask certain questions. I became cognizant about the areas of similarity and difference between my experience and the participants’ experiences. I remained open and alert for participants’ experiences that did not fit with my predetermined ideas. All parts of this study were constructed through my lens as a member of the group being researched.

The final step in the method was writing the report. Sorted memos guided my writing and added to the conceptualizations. As a constructivist grounded theorist, I wrote my perspective and understandings into the report.

Charmaz’s (2006) criteria for evaluating research, credibility, originality, resonance (do the categories portray the fullness of the studied experience), and usefulness guided my work (p. 182). I gave the participants an opportunity to read the results of the study. Their feedback was included under Theoretical Results.

Other grounded theory researchers have suggested that credibility is built into the grounded theory method of constant comparisons (Cutcliffe, 2000; Carvalho Dantas et

al., as cited in Cooney, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a). I applied the constant comparison method throughout the data analysis. One of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) criteria for evaluating a grounded theory was that the new knowledge helps the people involved in the situation to make sense of their experiences and manage the situation better. The usefulness and fittingness, or transferability to other areas (Beck, 1993), of this theory will be shown as counsellors and other researchers determine its applicability.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Results—Findings and Discussion

In order to select co-researchers with insecure attachment, I asked each prospective participant to fill out the Attachment Style Questionnaire. The authors reported "high levels of internal consistency and acceptable test-retest reliability" (Feeney, Noller, & Hanhrahan, 1994, p. 136) in the use of this questionnaire. The following table details the results from the application of this questionnaire.

Table 1

Results from the Attachment Style Questionnaire

	Michael	**Theresa**	**Edna**	**Larry**	**Grace**
Confidence	29	28	28	16	21
Discomfort with Closeness	41	42	51	49	45
Relationships as Secondary	29	18	11	33	20
Need for Approval	14	27	21	35	28
Preoccupation with Relationships	16	23	26	38	21

Note. Adapted from "Attachment Style Questionnaire," by J. Feeney, P. Noller, and M. Hanhrahan. In M. B. Sperling & W. H. Berman (Eds.), Attachment in Adults: Clinical and Developmental Perspectives (pp. 125–152), 1994. Copyright Guilford Press.

The questions in this self-rating Attachment Style Questionnaire probed five areas affected by insecure attachment: Confidence, Discomfort with Closeness, Relationships as Secondary, Need for Approval, and Preoccupation with Relationships. The questions in each area examined a range of possible positions. For instance, the questions about Confidence examined confidence both as a separate individual and in relationships. Relationships as Secondary looked at both the participants' beliefs in the importance of achievement and their ethics about how to treat others.

The questions about Discomfort with Closeness asked participants whether they felt that they can trust and depend on people. The questions under Preoccupation with

Relationships asked whether relationships were important and whether the person spent a lot of time thinking about their relationships. There was a continuum of possible responses from people with insecure attachment. A person may have become disenchanted with relationships and no longer attempted relationships. Or, on the other end of the scale, an insecurely attached person may believe that relationships are central and focus his or her attention on gaining or maintaining one. Both ends of this scale predicted insecure attachment.

The co-researcher's scores in Table 1 indicates insecure attachment. Because of the range of stances and beliefs identified by the questionnaire, however, I decided to combine these results with information about the early attachment history of each participant. The results of the questionnaire plus the participants' early histories determined who had developed insecure attachment as children.

This study endeavoured to discover the effects on the experience and expression of identity in people with insecure attachment. An early category to emerge from the data was Reconnecting with Self. This category illuminated three stages of the participant's experience. Experience and Expression of Identity Precrisis, The Process of Reconnecting with Self, and Present Day Experience and Expression of Identity became subcategories in the experience and expression of identity. The main concern of the participants was a *lost self*. The core concept, which resolved the main concern, was Reconnecting with Self.

Stage I: Experience and Expression of Identity Precrisis

The participants shared stories and observations from their childhood onwards. To understand the origins of the behaviour, however, we must go back in the child's life

before conscious memories. As children, the participants were insecurely attached due to abandonment; medical confinement to hospital; emotional unavailability of caregivers; and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse by family members. These children were unable to rely on their caregivers. They missed the safety net that belonging provided. The children missed core belonging needs, such as love, affection, validation, and approval. Their emotional self was not nurtured. This interpersonal loss is conceptualized as unmet belonging needs.

In the participants of this study, the unmet belonging needs had severe consequences on the development of their identities. The child felt isolated and became an outsider in relation to their family and other groups. Behavioural adaptations included early independence, mistrust, and hiding the self.

Even with parents and siblings in the home, the child felt isolated. This was experienced as ostracism from the family group. The participants went on to feel isolated at church and work. Four out of five participants were living an isolated life at the time of the study. Isolation emerged as a positional stance that was a pervasive and persistent quality of identity.

Closely connected to isolation was the category of Independence. As a separate entity, the child learned to think for him or herself. As early as preschool age, the participants developed independent thoughts about their environment. Hypocrisy, in their family and church, was particularly evident to these children.

Mistrust also originated in early childhood. It began with the factors causing insecure attachment, such as inadequate caregiving, abuse, and abandonment. Later

observations of hypocrisy in authority figures maintained a state of mistrust in the participants.

Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment. The three behavioural adaptations to unmet belonging needs—mistrust, hiding the self, and independence—interrelated with the positional stance as an outsider. Each of these adaptations strengthened and supported the others. The outsider position forced the child to think of themselves as a separate person. Hiding the self was possible because of the lack of connections. Mistrust of others led to a preference for isolation. Isolation, mistrust, and independence persisted over the lifetime. Hiding the self also persisted unless it was deconstructed by a process of reconnection.

The strength of the Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment lies in its self-perpetuating circularity. The participants examined each new situation for qualities of this Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment." For example, they tested to see if they felt ostracized or if hypocrisy was at play. When examples were found, the accuracy of the model was confirmed and perpetuated.

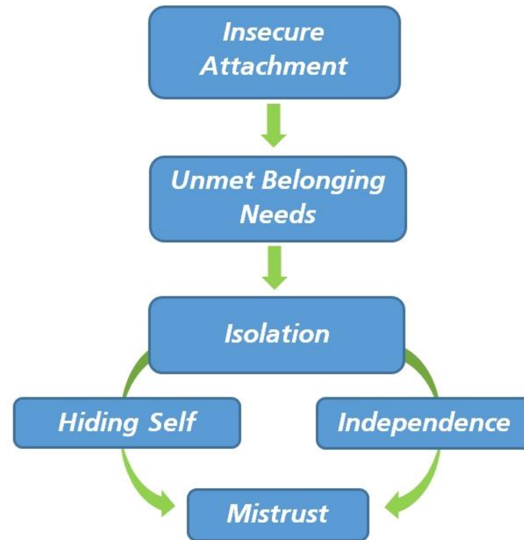

Figure 1. Porter’s working model of self in people with insecure attachment.

Hiding self. Disconnection with Self originated in infancy. A category named Hiding Self pointed to three ways in which the estrangement was perpetuated. The three subcategories that emerged from the data were Hiding Self from Others, Hiding Self from Self, and Hiding Self in Intimate Relationships. Hiding Self permeated all areas of identity, from career development to emotional expression.

As insecurely-attached infants, the participants were not seen or accurately known by their caregivers. The self began life as a hidden and unexpressed quantity. This unknown stance became consolidated over time. The participants developed a hidden life.

As adults, the participants hid themselves from family and coworkers. Fear of negative consequences emerged as the main reason that participants hid themselves. Judgement, criticism, standing out, and being picked on were some of the reasons for keeping one’s self hidden. They did not want to cause disharmony, upset anybody, or lose whatever affection and stability they had. They believed that their racial and sexual

identities would not be valued. Protecting themselves and the stability of their environment were reasons that participants maintained a habit of secrecy.

The category Hiding Self could have been conceptualized as a delay in the development of identity due to inadequate nurturing; however, the subcategory Hiding Self from Others pointed to a purposeful hiding. A perceived lack of acceptance and fear of negative consequences confirmed a purposeful hiding of one’s identity.

Another way of viewing the construct, hiding the self from others, was that the participants held an implicit belief that their inner selves were not valuable. Again, this perceived lack of worthiness would originate from the factors causing insecure attachment.

Hiding Self was an area in which I became more self-aware during this study. I had been dimly aware that I hesitated to tell people who I was and what I believed in. As a result of this study, I became conscious of hiding myself.

Three types of relational behaviour estranged the participant from his or her inner experience. Intellectualizing, People-Pleasing, and Projection hid the self from the self. Larry said he had an “intellectual filter,” which protected him from uncomfortable feelings. Edna and Larry became people-pleasers who focused on making others happy. Theresa said, “I felt acutely aware of being judged”; however, when she reconnected to her feelings, she noticed that she was judging herself. Intellectualizing covered up feelings; people-pleasing focused the participant outside of their experience; and projection denied responsibility for what one was feeling. These behaviours allowed the participant to relate to others while ensuring that the self remained unknown. The result was that the participants’ identity was lost to themselves.

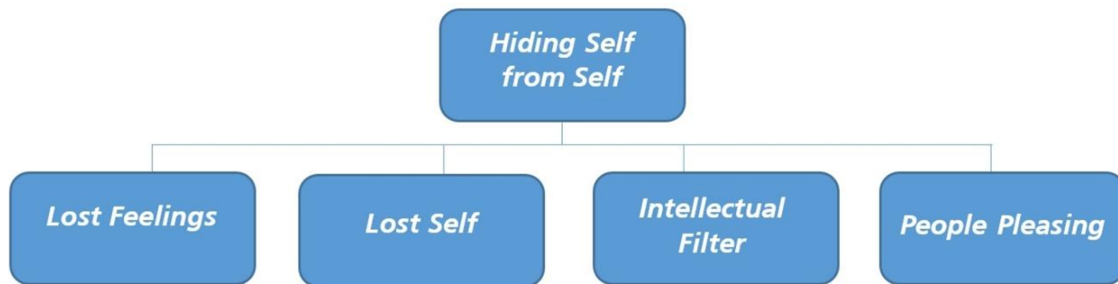

Figure 2. Porter’s hiding self from self.

The third subcategory, Hiding Self in Intimate Relationships, extended previously learned behaviours into adulthood. Keeping their inner experience hidden remained a habit. Intellectualizing, people-pleasing, and projection continued to be ways of thinking and behaving that estranged the participant from his or her inner experience. Intellectualizing and projection caused Larry difficulty in his marriage. He said that he viewed problems as “their problem” and did not deal with how he felt or his part of the problem. People-pleasing became codependence for at least one participant. Schaef (1986) explained, “Co-dependency is a pattern of learned behaviors, feelings and beliefs that make life painful . . . the co-dependent is ‘human-relationship-dependent’ and focuses her/his life around an addictive agent” (p. 14). Once again, the focus was outside of the self and so the feelings and self of the codependent were neglected. As a result of early interpersonal deficits, dysfunctional behaviours learned in childhood, and a habit of secrecy, the participants were unable to behave genuinely in an intimate relationship.

Figure 3. Porter's hiding self in intimate relationships.

The category Hiding Self was of prime importance in explaining the development of a *lost self*. The three other categories—Mistrust, Isolation, and Independence—in Figure 1, Porter's Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment, also originated in infancy and interrelated to form an absent and unknown identity.

Emotional experience and expression. Most of the participants experienced minimal emotional experience and expression. For those participants who did experience feelings, there was a predominance of "dark" emotions. Envy, spite, and disappointment were more prevalent than joy, happiness, and peace. The dark emotions were felt intensely. Feelings were raw and immature. Codes such as "feeling numb," "intellectual filter," and "blocked childhood memories," as identified by participants, suggested a general lack of emotional awareness. The development of emotional experience and expression was severely delayed by the interpersonal loss and the participants' working model of self. The lost self was not connected to its emotional experience.

I analyzed all of the other interview responses before I coded the area of emotional experience. I delayed analysis of the emotional area of participants' experience because I thought that my ability to understand emotional experiences was poor and I may not observe properties as they emerged. When I finally coded the co-researcher's emotional experience, I realized that this was the most significant area of data. Delays in

emotional development were considerable and pointed to the lost self as the main concern in this population.

Boundary issues. Three subcategories of results related to inadequate boundaries in the co-researchers. Boundaries are "'force fields' that have three purposes: (1) to keep people from coming into our space and abusing us, (2) to keep us from going into the space of others and abusing them, and (3) to give each of us a way to embody our sense of 'who we are'" (Mellody, 1989, p. 11).

A subcategory named Fragility of Self encapsulated examples in which the participants' identity fragmented under stress. Larry said that he was afraid his self might collapse if people disagreed with him. Theresa was "crushed" by the loss of a loved one. Judgment, criticism, family arguments, relationship loss, and examining the self could fragment the sense of self. The easily broken self suggested an incomplete and unfortified rendering of the self.

The category Diffuse Emotional Boundaries illuminated experiences in which the participants confused their feelings with the feelings of others. They experienced another person's strong emotion and they projected feelings onto others. Codes, as identified by participants, included "whose feelings are these," "heart-wrenching empathy," "living in your world," "being what you expect me to be like," and "projecting onto others what I want them to feel." Feelings were not "rooted" within the self, contained by a protective boundary and recognized as a personal expression of identity.

The state of diffuse emotional boundaries is appropriate for the earliest stages of childhood. The infant "tries out" the feeling of the caregiver and stores that feeling away for use in similar experiences. The infant learns to distinguish between the experiences of

the caregiver and their experiences. For the participants in this study, the sense of self, other, and the boundaries between the two did not mature.

Participants also experienced difficulty in protecting their self. The category called Abuse contained examples in which the participants were physically, emotionally, and sexually abused. Codes included childhood abuse by family members, controlling friends, being taken advantage of by employers, and abusive marriages. There were no reports of the participants abusing others. Fragility of Self, Diffuse Emotional Boundaries, and Abuse emerged as subcategories in a category called Boundary Issues.

This data pointed to boundaries being a function of the self rather than an envelope-like structure surrounding the self. The boundaries were absent, hidden, and underdeveloped like the emotional identity of the participant. Personal boundaries of the lost self were revealed as diffuse, fragile, and unable to defend the integrity of self.

Disconnection from organized religion. The participants transposed their position as outsider and other early behavioural adaptations onto their relation with the church. They did not feel that they belonged to the church. They drew independent conclusions about their experiences at church. Hypocrisy was particularly evident to this population. The children mistrusted the church institution and its members. All of the participants severed their connection to the Christian churches of their childhood. For a thorough analysis of the theological data in this study, see the chapter entitled Theological Results.

Grief and loss. One of the interview questions probed into the participants' experiences with endings. It was in this area that the participants' disconnection from their feelings, undeveloped emotional expression, and difficulty separating their

experience from the experience of others were particularly evident. Reactions to grief ranged from an absence of grief to complicated grief. The codes included the inability to experience grief, feeling what others were feeling, delayed grief, and severe grief. Edna felt the loss of her sister was “a devastating loss in my life, the worse ending of any relationship, it took me many years.” The only grief that Grace had felt was over the loss of her cat. Being hidden and unaware, the lost self was unable to resolve grief. Instead, the sense of isolation was exacerbated when losses occurred. Mental health issues, such as depression, resulted. I labelled this category Incongruent Responses to Loss.

This incongruent response suggested a significant inability to cope with grief and loss. I suggest that these children had lived with an irreconcilable sense of loss since the beginning of their lives. They lost what was one of the most basic human social needs—the need to belong to a family or clan. As this first huge loss had never been resolved, the children were baffled about how to respond to new losses.

Incongruent grief responses had been part of my underdeveloped emotional repertoire. I, also, had only felt grief when animals died. I empathized with Grace and accepted that response to loss. I continued to observe the data for the many others ways that participants experienced grief and loss.

Career development. The results of this study showed that careers were started between the ages of 35 and 49. This was a delay of two decades when compared with Erikson’s (as cited in Bentley, 2007) psychosocial developmental stage, identity versus confusion (p. 9). Erikson proposed that meeting the challenges of one developmental stage was dependent on resolving the challenges of earlier stages (as cited in Bentley, 2007, p. 10). These participants had developed mistrust in Erikson’s (as cited in Bentley,

2007) first stage, trust versus mistrust (p. 9). I hypothesize that the career development of these participants was delayed, in part due the development of mistrust in their first psychosocial stage and a struggle to accomplish the challenges of each subsequent developmental stage.

The participants reported many positive identity experiences during their work history. A wide range of experience, self-reliance, and pride at doing a job well produced satisfaction. Participants developed self-knowledge, positivity, and well-being through their work. They discovered passions and ways to give back to others. Some built a more positive, fulfilled sense of self.

Negative experiences were encountered in the career area, as well. Participants had difficulty maintaining boundaries and, at times, felt taken advantage of by employers. A lack of parenting in childhood contributed to Larry being unable to accomplish his work. His identity suffered disappointment in himself. Theresa experienced high levels of anxiety in her career. Mental health issues, such as depression, stress, anxiety, and burn-out were experienced because of pressures at work.

Mental health and addiction issues. Mental health issues were experienced at home and at work. Depression, alcohol addiction, anxiety, burn-out, and suicidal thoughts and behaviour were reported. A sense of self based on isolation, individuality, mistrust, and hiding oneself was not a good basis for an intimate relationship or joining the work force. Mental health issues were experienced as the participants confronted the gap between their working model of self and adult roles.

Each of the participants experienced a crisis. These included suicide ideation or attempts, alcoholism, depression, and career and marriage breakdowns. The episodes

appeared between late youth and middle age. Most participants made lifestyle changes as a result. Three people divorced and some changed jobs. One participant upgraded her education towards a vocation that she had known was right for her since childhood. Another participant developed a belief system that resolved his crisis. One participant was helped by professional and social organizations.

The following diagram illustrates the data that emerged in Stage I of the participants' Experience and Expression of Identity.

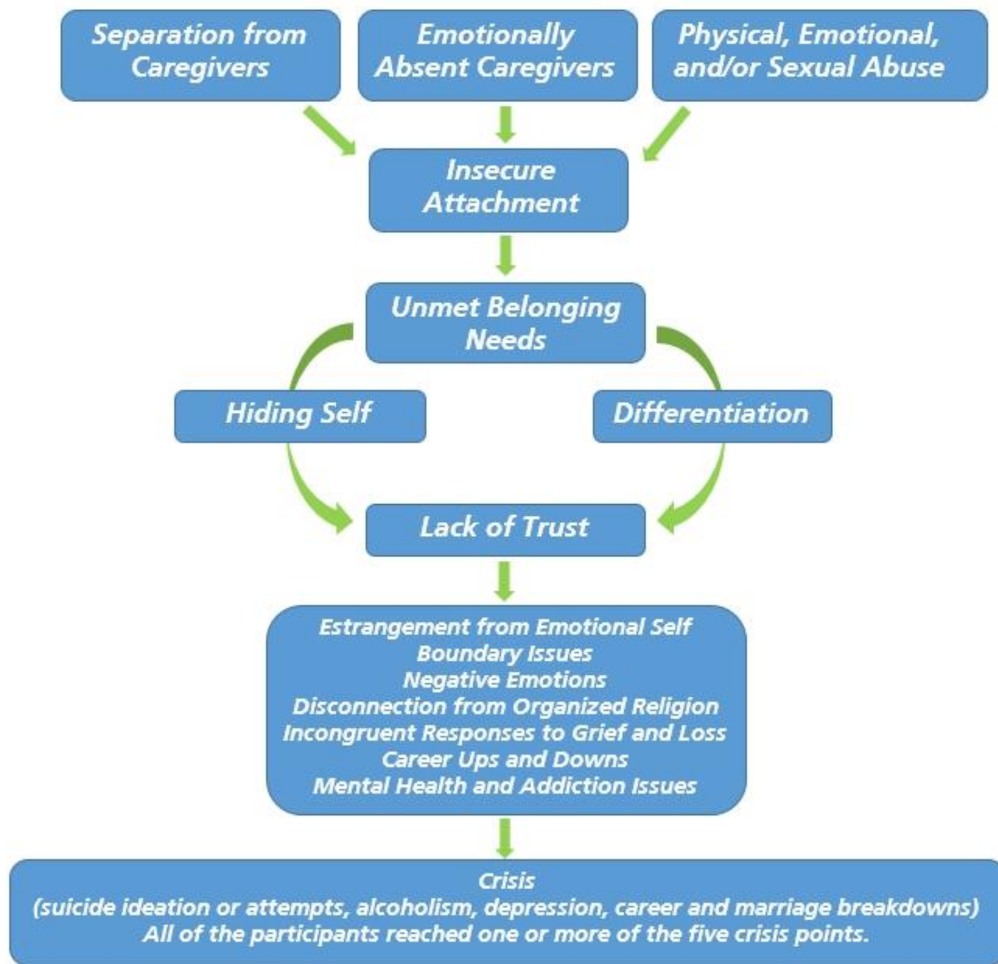

Figure 4: Stage I: Porter's experience and expression of identity precrisis.

Stage II: The Process of Reconnecting With Self

The mental health crises were a "wake-up call." The three women in the study began a process of reconnection with their emotional and spiritual identities. These participants looked inward on a journey of "self-searching." They discovered feelings and examined thoughts and beliefs. They encountered doubt, dislike, and judgements about the self. They made choices and changes with the goal of building a genuine and holistic self. Reconnection with the lost self was a fulfilling process for these women.

The two male participants also faced mental health crises. One man considered suicide until he decided that he must change his thinking or he wouldn't survive. He developed an ethical philosophy on which to base his decisions and behaviour. The cognitive changes that he made resolved the crisis he faced. But he did not get to know the feeling and spiritual parts of himself. The second man experienced burnout because of work and relationship issues. He underwent a divorce, a move, and a career change, but he did not look behind his intellectual filter to pursue the long journey of self-revelation.

Reconnecting to the feelings and the lost self in adulthood was a huge task. It required a willingness to do a lot of personal growth. The three women co-researchers separated their feelings from the feelings of others. They identified and named their feelings. Participants examined their behaviours. If they did not like some part of themselves they worked towards improvement. At the beginning of her journey of reconnection, Theresa said, "I felt numb—emotionally, spiritually, and physically bankrupt." After decades of working at reconnecting, Edna said, "I found myself." The benefits of this reconnection process were in knowing the self, experiencing and expressing feelings, and becoming a more genuine person.

Participants grew in their ability to resolve grief. The work participants accomplished in connecting to their feelings allowed them to experience and express grief. Spiritual growth provided beliefs which aided healing. One such belief was that people enter our lives for a reason, sometimes for a short time and sometimes for longer. Participants reported a progressive ability to deal with endings.

Grace recognized the pattern of emotional abuse. She was able to end two marriages and a friendship that were emotionally abusive. Edna, who had experienced sexual abuse in childhood, tried to understand the abuser and heal herself as part of her emotional journey.

Emotional boundaries formed as participants separated others' feelings from their own. Edna described her quest during the process of reconnection. "I'm trying to discern whether I'm feeling sad or if someone else is feeling sad, whether I'm feeling angry or somebody else is angry, or confused. OK, is this me, and what brought this on? Or is it theirs?" Physical boundaries were enacted, such as reduced contact with emotionally abusing family members.

During this reconnection phase, each woman developed a spiritual belief system. Spirituality was unique for each person but some of the characteristics were being able to talk to God, being guided, experiencing the Higher Power and a one-to-one connection with God. This connection with the Higher Source was described as "life-saving." The men did not construct a personal spirituality or join a religious organization.

There were more similarities than differences in the data collected from the men and women of this study. All made the behavioural adaptations to unmet belonging needs described in Porter's Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment. All

considered themselves an outsider in their family and community. Both men and women started their careers in mid-life and had difficulty resolving loss. Gender differences arose in the data when the women began the process of reconnection with their inner experience. The women formed a personal relationship with a Higher Power. The men did not undertake either of these processes. A discussion of gender differences follows in the literature review.

This inner work was a gradual process and took many years to accomplish. Reconnection with the lost self was not an achievement, but it was a "work-in-progress." To reveal the "true self," be emotionally responsive, grieve, and erect functional boundaries remained a life-long challenge.

Figure 5 shows three processes undertaken by the co-researchers. The three women journeyed on a search for their *lost self*. The figure shows that the fourth co-researcher changed his thinking and behaviour but did not attempt to pursue his emotional or spiritual self and that the fifth co-researcher remained in Stage 1 of the development of identity.

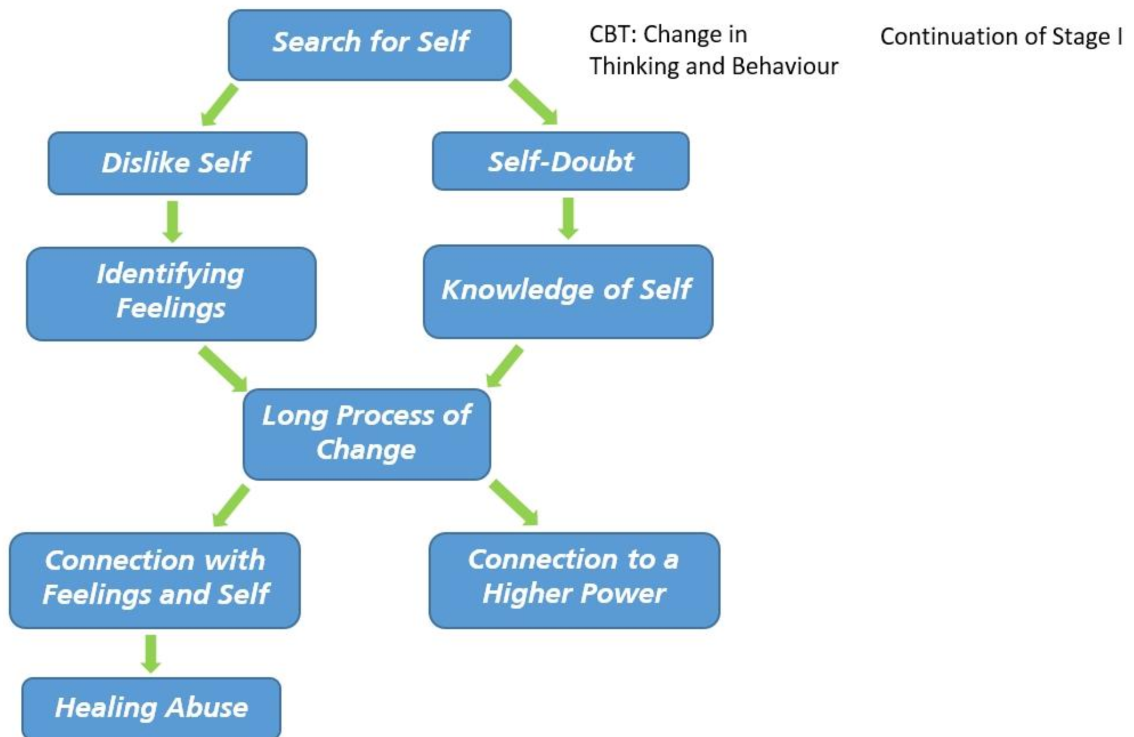

Figure 5. Stage II: Porter's process of reconnecting with self.

Stage III: Present Day Experience and Expression of Identity

The first step in the theoretical analysis of Stage III was to analyze the present day functioning of the three women who were on a journey of reconnection with their lost self. Next, I compared the present day functioning of the women with that of the men who did not reconnect with their emotional and spiritual selves.

Stage III data analysis showed healthy outcomes and stagnant areas in the present day functioning of the women. A category labelled Healthy Outcomes showed growth and behaviour change. Stagnant areas itemized ways in which the participants' model of self persisted.

Healthy outcomes. Survival skills, adaptability, self-motivation, and self-reliance were some traits described by the women as positive outcomes of their experiences. Feeling a wide range of emotions, feeling more positive than negative emotions,

developing a few close bonds, and finding themselves were positive emotional experiences. Two of the participants reported giving back to others. The three women enjoyed tremendous growth in their sense of self. Development of a spiritual belief system was described as essential.

Work was done to solidify personal boundaries. This was an area in which the healing was incomplete. Achieving a stable sense of self in the presence of others remained a challenge.

Edna described her personal growth as “a work in progress.” She had goals for future change. For example, Edna noticed her need for both perfection and chaos in her life. She was trying to accept both in order to find balance. Grace continually refined her experience of the Higher Power. The three participants were in a perpetual process of reconnection and growth.

Stagnant areas. The three women continued to feel that they did not belong in their families and the greater community. As an example, Edna’s mother had ostracized her as a child. Now, Edna felt that she did not belong because she was Aboriginal and a woman. Grace said that earthly connections were transitory and will be lost anyway. She accepted that she did not belong. Theresa did not feel that she belonged to her birth or adoptive family. She did have a long-term friendship of 43 years.

The participants continued to mistrust others. When asked whether they could depend upon others, stories of hate, disappointment, resentment, and discomfort arose. Some participants thought that they were trustworthy, and others felt untrustworthy. They all expressed a lack of trust in organized religion.

Two of the women felt isolated with respect to family and community. Their social circles were limited to two or three friends. Edna had many people around her but could not shake a feeling of loneliness.

Early independence in childhood had become extreme independence for two of the three women. Grace and Theresa believed that they were almost totally independent and that independence was an important quality. Edna's areas of independence included decision making, earning her education, and working on her mental and emotional well-being. Edna thought that she was dependent on others for her relationship needs. Extreme independence enabled two of the women to remain isolated.

Comparison of Present Day Experiences of Identity. As Figure 6 shows, the five participants separated into three flow patterns during the Process of Reconnecting to Self stage. The women undertook a process of reconnection with their lost self. The men did not attempt to find themselves. Michael made a cognitive-behavioural change but did not connect with his emotional or spiritual self. Larry continued to survive in Stage I. I compared data from the participants who embarked on the process of reconnection with those who did not. For brevity in the writing, I identify the two groups as "the women" and "the men." My aim was to examine reconnection with the lost self as a means of healing.

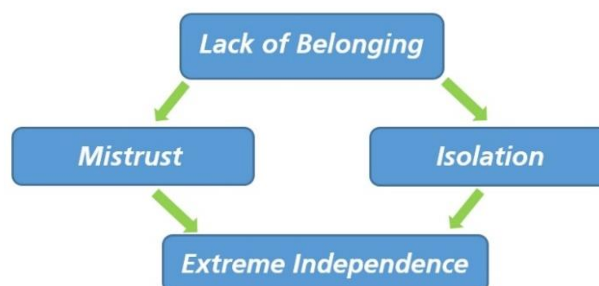

Figure 6. Porter's stagnant areas of growth.

The two men developed skills that were similar to those developed by the women. A variety of experiences, adaptability, and survival skills were noted in their career path. The men and women had made a few close bonds. The men had not developed a range of feelings or undergone the process of self-reflection and growth that the three women undertook. Awareness of their feelings, finding their self, coping with grief, and connecting with a Higher Power was not part of their experience. Areas of precrisis behaviour, such as Hiding Self and Boundary Issues, persisted in the men's experience.

Three parts of the Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment, persisted as areas of stagnant growth in both groups. Independence, mistrust, and isolation were persistent in the lives of both the men and women. All participants maintained feelings of mistrust in other people. Trust in God was the exception for those who developed a personal spirituality. Four of the participants turned the early independence of childhood into extreme independence in adulthood. The fifth participant acknowledged her dependence on relationships. Isolation persisted as a life-style choice for four of the five participants and contributed to a sense of not belonging. Both groups were unable to heal the working model of self developed in early childhood.

One reason that the four co-researchers chose isolation may have been because of their diffuse emotional boundaries. A confident sense of self was difficult to maintain with inadequate boundaries. Too much closeness meant enmeshment and a loss of selfhood. Too much distance meant barriers and a lack of closeness. Emotional boundaries that allowed a satisfying amount of closeness and secure protection for one's integrity remained a challenge for these participants.

The working model of self persisted throughout the lifetime with one exception. The participants who reconnected with their emotional and spiritual identity reduced their inclination to hide themselves. These participants expressed themselves more genuinely.

Finding the lost self produced great satisfaction for those who went looking. The participants had started their lives neglected and unseen. The value in the jewel of self was not appraised by others but was accomplished as the self painstakingly uncovered its precious lost self.

All of the co-researchers were given the opportunity to read the results of this study and report on whether the results matched their experience. I received input from three of the co-researchers. Two participants' responses were very brief. Michael said that he found no information that compromised his confidentiality. Grace said that she became defensive when I reported that emotional development was stunted in this group and that extreme independence was part of stagnant growth. She also said that she was surprised that I reported her experiences so thoroughly in the Theological Results.

Larry responded very thoroughly. He said that the research findings were "extremely useful to me" and that the results "answered so many questions in my life." Some of the results that provided explanations for Larry were Hiding Self from Others and Self, the inability to feel his feelings, and intellectualization. He particularly identified with "poor handling of grief and loss . . . fragile boundaries . . . being a people pleaser . . . holding on to abusive situations for fear of upsetting or losing the fragile belongingness I craved."

I experienced Michael's response as a diligent reply to his responsibility as a co-researcher. He did not address any categories of results or the main concern, lost self.

Grace's response noted her negative reactions to some of my conclusions. Larry's responses provided credibility to the results of this study. My social justice aspiration to bring new understanding to people with insecure attachment was achieved in his case. Larry is in the process of applying his new insights through counselling and self-awareness.

Chapter 5: Theological Results: Findings and Discussion

The results of this grounded theory revealed a process of disconnection and, for some participants, reconnection with a unique spiritual identity. Two main theological themes emerged in this study. The first theme is that Christianity, as an organized religion, did not meet the religious or spiritual needs of the population studied. The second theme was the development of a meaningful spiritual belief system by three of the participants. This chapter also examined theological concepts as they appeared in the stories of participants. The results are compared with viewpoints from theological literature. I include my voice as part of the conversation.

Relationship with Organized Religion

The five participants attended a variety of Christian denominations as children. Their parents brought them to church. When Michael was a teenager, he studied a number of religious traditions by reading texts and having conversations with religious leaders.

As insecurely attached children, the participants lived with unmet belonging needs. While reflecting on the participants' experiences, the question arose, "Why did these children not revel in the experience of being loved by God?" The opportunity to belong to God and a church family was present in all of their lives.

Stosny (1994) wrote, "Self-organization is a term used by many researchers to describe how the inner experience of the self forms coherent streams of meaning" (p. 22). Isolation, Independence, Mistrust, and Hiding Self were the behavioural accommodations made by these children in response to their unmet belonging needs (see Chapter 4). Porter's Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment describes the child's

first experience of identity. Later learning and development was based upon this foundation.

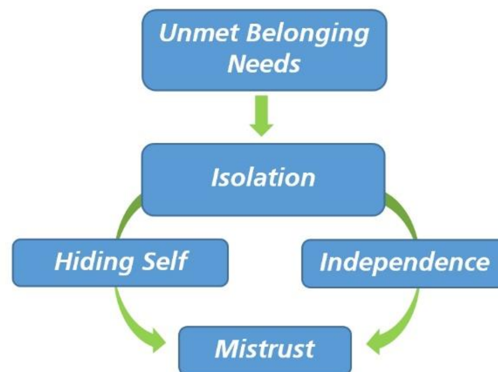

Figure 7. Porter's working model of self in people with insecure attachment.

The insecurely attached children lacked the experience of belonging in their early environment. They did not experience love, sharing, caring, and being a part of a group. The participants felt separate—an outsider in their families and community. The children transferred this outsider position to their relationship with the church.

Christianity was built on the foundation of a personal relationship with Jesus. However, personal relationships had disappointed these children. They had learned not to trust their caregivers. They mistrusted a relationship with a person known only through stories.

From an early age, the participants critiqued church practices. They developed independent views about church tenets. Grace thought that church doctrine limited what God could be. She said, "I've disagreed with this notion that God is a man. It's way, way, way beyond our understanding. It's probably unknowable in our tiny little minds."

The participants observed hypocrisy in church member's behaviour. Theresa mentioned singing, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and

yellow, black and white" in Sunday school. She said that the actions of the people who she grew up with did not imply that they loved people of all races.

All of the participants chose to leave organized religion. They left Christianity as teenagers or young adults. The reasons for leaving included a feeling that they didn't belong, not trusting the doctrine, and mistrusting church members. None of the participants formed connections with other organized religions.

The participants expressed that they felt comfortable with their disconnected stance. Michael said he was unwilling to compromise his personal values. Grace said she accepted her lack of belonging. Larry said that he had no connection to self and others, and therefore, he had no connection to spirit.

Larry's comment related to the disconnection that the participants experienced from their emotional and spiritual selves. Their inner emotional experience was hidden or lost from their awareness. The participants also lacked a connection with God.

Development of a Personal Spiritual Belief System

The second main theme to emerge in the theological area of this study was the development of a personal spiritual belief system by the female participants. Questions that arose at this stage of the data analysis were "How do organized religions and a spiritual belief system compare?" and "What made a personal spirituality more acceptable to these participants?" VanKatwyk (2003) compared the concepts of religion and spirituality by stating, "Presently, the two concepts of religion and spirituality are sharply distinguished from each other. Religion is commonly depicted in terms of organized or institutionalized expressions of faith in shared experiences of commitment and devotion" (p. 1). Pargament (1997) said, "Spirituality is generally described as a

highly individualized search for the sense of connectedness with a transcendent force" (p. 38).

Shared experiences were not a part of the fabric of life for these participants. Instead, they said that they felt separate—isolated from groups. VanKatwyk's (2003) phrase, "institutionalized expressions of faith" (p. 1), expressed the way a group thinks alike and worships together. The co-researchers in this study had moved towards individualized thoughts at an early age. The structure of organized religion as a group identity which believed in the same doctrine did not match with these children's stance as separate and independent people.

Pargament's (1997) definition of spirituality as an "individualized search" (p. 38) fit with the participants' working model of self. As separate individuals who were accustomed to thinking independently, the three women constructed a personal spiritual belief system. Development of a personal spirituality coincided with Stage II: The Process of Reconnecting With Self.

VanKatwyk (2003) added, "The profoundly personal quest for enlightenment and meaning" (p. 1) to the definition of spirituality. Each woman formulated a spirituality that was unique. During an "a-ha moment," Theresa discovered that she could make a one-to-one connection with the Higher Power. She realized, "It's not that you have to conform, to look like the others, to talk like the others, and to act like the others." Theresa transformed the pain from personal experiences into an understanding that God was nonjudgmental, uncritical, and always loving. She talked to God in nature, smudged, and included the Golden Rule and The 10 Commandments in her spiritual belief system.

Grace’s personal spirituality focused on the importance of experiencing God. Rather than accept doctrine on faith, she wanted to directly interact with God. To this end, Grace had been practicing meditation, lucid dreaming, and astral projection. Grace said, “I’ve outgrown religion,” but she wanted to make it clear that she did not feel better than people in organized religions.

Edna talked to God and received guidance. She said, “I’ve always known” about the presence of a Higher Power. Her personal spiritual path originated in childhood. She professed a strong belief. Each woman compiled a unique experience and expression of God.

These participants experienced God as an active force in their lives. Grace said, “I’ve felt very guided, when I needed help I got just what I needed, my little miracles, little pushes, and nudges in directions.” Edna witnessed God’s presence “through all the good times and the bad times.”

At one point Theresa had a spiritual experience in which a vivid scene from the past entered her consciousness. She called this a vision. Grace also had experiences that she called connections to a higher level of consciousness.

Spirituality provided meaning in the participants’ lives. The freedom to choose one’s spiritual beliefs assured that these elements were meaningful to the participants. All three women described having a connection with the Higher Source as “imperative,” “saved my life,” and “it’s incredibly important.” A connection with God provided guidance, nudges, a listening ear, assistance, serenity, and healing. Finding their “spiritual self” provided unconditional love and a sense of belonging with God. Spiritual

understandings and a connection with something "higher" made meaning out of the considerable suffering that these participants experienced.

Observing God's presence in their lives, following "the little nudges," and evolving their understanding of God was a life-long journey. "Finding the spiritual self" produced a unique belief system in each of the three women. The process was described by all three women as "tremendous growth." Losing the trappings of a religious organization and coalescing a personal belief system was experienced as a "spiritual evolution."

Neither of the men constructed a spiritual belief system. Larry had attended an Anglican church as a child but left as a teenager. He changed his religious affiliation twice in his adult years for marriage and career goals. Larry expressed little or no experience of God and said, "I don't believe in connectedness to spirit . . . I haven't taken it as seriously as the topic deserves." Larry remained disconnected from his spiritual self.

Michael attended a Christian denomination as a child. As a teenager, he studied a range of Eastern and Western philosophies. He said, "I find most organized religions to be flawed . . . I really didn't find anything that worked for me." Michael developed a personal belief system that emphasized "taking responsibility for self" and "right action." He said, "I've got my own system that I pride myself on. I take responsibility for my own actions, for my life. I'm not going to step on somebody else." Michael's philosophies created moral guidelines but did not include a connection with a Higher Source. I labelled Michael's beliefs as an ethical and philosophical system.

Michael experienced a tremendous loss when his wife died in her 40s. He acknowledged that all circumstances were not controllable by taking personal responsibility. He did not reflect on any spiritual meaning to his wife's passing.

Neither Larry nor Michael labelled their lack of connection to God as atheism. Webster's dictionary defines atheism as a disbelief in the existence of God (Kauffman & Nichols, 1994). Michael said, "There are a lot of things out there that we don't understand." Larry preferred spirituality to organized religion. He said, "A religious [person] is someone who carries the placard; spirituality is a more personal, philosophical sense, a relationship with God, just me and you." He said that he "may learn more about spirituality as it evolves in [his] life."

All of the participants had rejected organized religion. For a period of time, they were all "lost souls," separated from an experience of God's presence in their lives. Then the women developed a spiritual belief system, but the men did not. The gender difference observed in the theological analysis of this study was similar to the gender difference noted in the theoretical analysis.

Both of the men used intellectualization as a behaviour strategy. Intellectualization was discussed in the Theoretical Results chapter as a method of hiding from the self. Intellectualization provided salient perspectives, but it separated the thinker from his inner experience. The men could debate the tenets of a religious or spiritual belief system, but they did not sense their spiritual selves.

The women reconnected with their lost self. Their newly found emotions and inner identity allowed them to sense the spiritual realm. The women had a-ha moments, visions, and experiences of a higher level of consciousness that convinced them of the

presence of a Higher Source. Other conditions effecting gender differences were explored in the literature review.

Those who developed a personal spirituality believed the connection to be very important. Edna said that her belief in a Higher Power was “what’s carried me through these years. It holds a lot of significance. If I didn’t have a belief in something higher than myself, I would be a lost, totally lost soul.” Theresa affirmed similar sentiments when she said, “My Higher Power has saved my life; it is imperative that I have a connection with my Higher Power.” Grace said her personal spirituality is “more important than anything else; it’s incredibly important.” She felt strongly pushed to have a spiritual connection “because of a lack of connection with my parents and with my spouses, my lack of success with having relationship.”

On the other hand, Michael did not believe spirituality to be important. His life direction was on the earthly plane and firmly in his hands. He said, “I’ll change what I do and how I do it.” Larry agreed that spirituality was not very important.

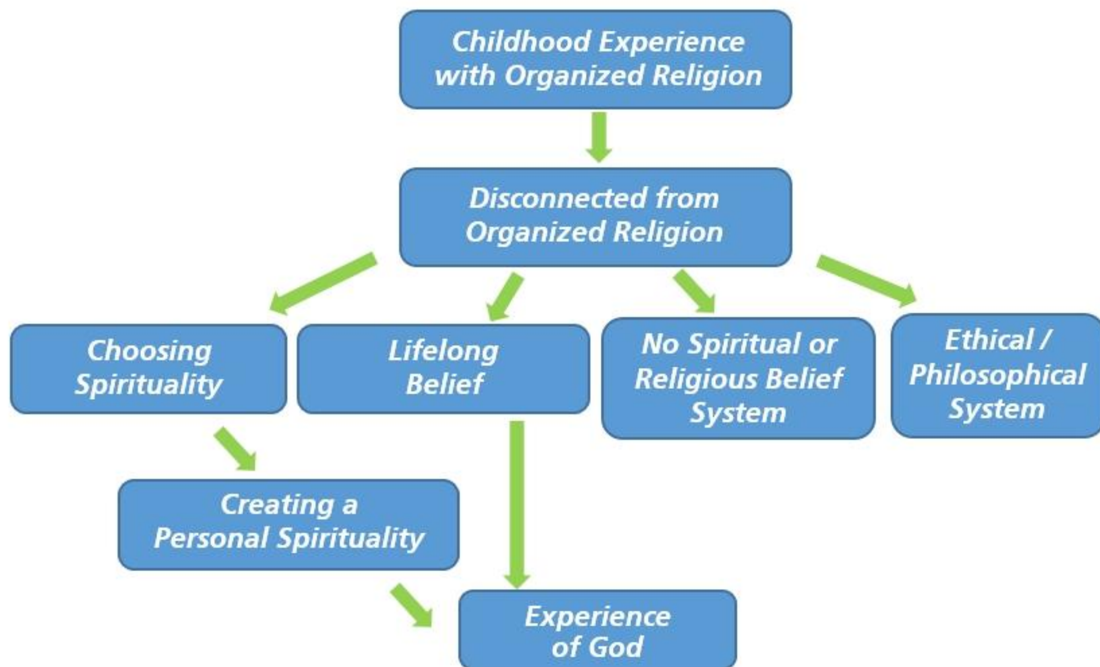

Figure 8. Porter's religious and spiritual identity experiences.

Theological Concepts

The participants in this study were not consciously grappling with theological constructs in their lives. Nevertheless, themes of sin, suffering, salvation, grace, and hope threaded their way through the stories of the participants.

Orthodox theology presents sin as disobedience (Solle, 1990, p. 56). As a young adult, Theresa believed that she was "becoming everything that they (fundamentalist church members) abhorred. I was scared of God. I was waiting for lightning bolts to zap me." Theresa's fear indicated that she believed she was sinning against an authoritarian God.

Sin was also presented by orthodox theology as "when human beings elevate themselves to the divine level" (Solle, 1990, p. 56). Co-researchers in this study

empowered themselves by making choices about their spiritual belief system. Liberation theology allowed for liberating oneself in collaboration with God (Solle, 1990, p. 18).

Liberal theology offered a definition of sin as "a lack of love . . . we do not love one another" (Solle, 1990, p. 59). The participants had experienced abandonment, neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse from family members. Abusive relationships continued to effect their adult lives. A lack of love was present and persistent throughout their lives. The results, however, showed that the participants chose to give love, affection, protection, and other qualities that they had not received in relationships.

A Nicaraguan pastor (as cited in Lartey, 2003) explained Liberation Theology's perspective that sin is the greed of people who want to possess something (p. 60). None of the participants expressed a sense of entitled capitalism or possessiveness in relationships. Instead, their experiences were the opposite. They had lived with emptiness and lack. They experienced the absence of a basic human need—to belong. Larry's voice "called from the wilderness" and asked "Who is there to belong to?"

A definition of sin that spoke to me was alienation from God. This kind of separation comes from not recognizing or appreciating God's role in your life. There had been a period of time, after they left the Christian churches, in which all of the co-researchers were alienated from God. Nevertheless, reconnection was achieved for the three women after they discovered a one-to-one relationship with the Higher Source.

Emotional suffering was endured by the participants. As outsiders, the participants missed out on the love and acceptance of belonging. They lived with the dark emotions, such as resentment and jealousy. The participants who were scapegoated and

abused said that they felt hurt, blamed, and misunderstood. Church members and others did not understand or accept their isolated behaviour and independent thoughts. Judgment, unresolved grief, loneliness, and emotional and sexual abuse were part of the emotional suffering experienced by the participants.

The participants had surprisingly little to say about their suffering. As an insider researcher, I know that the suffering is immense, pervasive, and persistent over the lifetime. The fact that emotional awareness was flattened, as a result of insecure attachment, partly explains the absence of complaints. The participants used intellectualization, people-pleasing, and projection to separate themselves from their feelings. The mental health crises, such as suicide attempts, and addiction issues in this group pointed to the hurt and pain with which the participants were living.

David Deeks (as cited in Lartey, 1997) suggested, "Pastoral Theology begins with the search we all make for meaning in life . . . to understand ourselves, our culture . . . the first aim of pastoral care is to encourage people to make their own sense of their experience" (p. 61). Through suffering, four of the five participants were inspired to develop insight, new philosophies, and live healthier lives. The women realized a sense of empowerment through their creation of a spiritual belief system. Michael built an ethical and philosophical belief system. These participants turned suffering into meaning and fulfillment.

VanKatwyk (2003) presented the human need to "merge with someone or something larger than the self to comfort as well as to inspire and guide" (p. 92). Edna attributed personal salvation to the Higher Power in her life. She said that her spiritual belief system "holds a lot of significance. If I didn't have a belief in something higher

than myself, I would be a lost, totally lost soul." Grace mentioned her "little nudges, my little miracles" that helped and guided her. She noticed the grace of God in her life.

Hope and a lack of hope arose in the stories of participants. The three women embodied hope during the long process of reconnection with the lost self. Edna, however, did not think she would achieve the amount of personal development and healing that she wanted in this lifetime. Michael's lack of hope arose when he said that he was disappointed in life.

For the three participants who developed a spiritual belief system, their lives took on meaning; suffering lessened, and they developed a sense of belonging with God. Combining the philosophies of Murray Bowen and Paul Tillich, VanKatwyk (2003) produced the concept of self-differentiation: "The goal of human development and spiritual maturity is to become a balanced or self-differentiated human being, to be an I while connected to others" (p. 13) Expressing themselves as self-differentiated people while in the company of others remained a challenge for these participants. Nevertheless, the three study members who chose to develop a spiritual belief system were able to achieve a holistic sense of self while closely connected to the Higher Source.

Existentialism. Existentialist thought can be traced back to Socrates. His method of conversation was aimed to rid others of their illusion of knowledge. According to Diem (1966),

> Socrates starts from the assumption that he himself does not know anything. . . . Socrates presses the attack until it becomes clear that the other man also does not know anything. The conversation ends with the apparently negative result that both admit, "I know that I do not know anything." But this negative result, in

> which false knowledge is destroyed, conceals a positive gain: the partner in the conversation has now been set free to know himself and to seek the fullness of truth within himself. (p. 19)

Existentialist thinkers emphasized the importance of the development of individuality. Martin Heidegger (as cited in Warnock, 1970) wrote,

> Authentic existence can begin only when we have realized and thoroughly understood what we are . . . instead of being a mere concern to do as people in general do . . . can become authentic concern, to fulfil our real potentiality in the world. (p. 55)

Nietzsche (as cited in Warnock, 1970) argued that we have a choice about what view of the world to adopt (p. 13). Soren Kierkegaard (as cited in Watkin, 1997), a 19th century Danish philosopher, recommended abandoning the inauthentic self—the one who complied with social pressures and maintained a life of the senses (p. 57).

The behavioural adaptations of the Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment accounted for the co-researchers' propensity to question group beliefs. An outsider stance and independent thought produced viewpoints that were not aligned with the social environment. Four of the five co-researchers in this study lived out the freedom and choice of an existential philosophy. These four people defined their self by a unique belief system.

Heidegger's (as cited in Warnock, 1970) philosophy proposed that, "When he [sic] sees the truth about himself, he sees that people in general cannot really be the source of significance for his life. He is alone, and can attach what value he chooses to

things" (p. 57). Since their earliest days, the co-researchers had experienced an existential aloneness.

Kierkegaard's writings recommended that his society change from examining church doctrine objectively to living as Christians. This Christian life was to be accomplished by looking inward. Watkin (1997) wrote,

> It is through the development of self-awareness and consciousness that the individual develops his or her spiritual or eternal nature, "transparent" in the sense of having come to know the self and reaching beyond the self to and in the God-relationship. (p. 28)

Three of the co-researchers of this study reported discovering an important relationship with the Higher Source during their Reconnecting with Self stage. A fourth co-researchers lived a moral and ethical life based on principles that he chose.

Kierkegaard (as cited in Watkin, 1997) envisioned a way to develop one's individual spiritual self and remain within the structure of the church. The co-researchers in this study did not perceive a way of reconciling their differences with organized religion. In part, the co-researchers experienced a step-by-step process in their spiritual development. First, they rejected what they saw as hypocrisy within the church and its members. Then three participants reconnected with the Higher Power on a one-to-one basis.

Kierkegaard (as cited in Watkin, 1997) described, "The one with a more God-centered life, however, is defined as 'turned inward in self-annihilation before God', or dies to the world" (p. 79). This self-annihilation sounds similar to the lost self of co-researchers in this study. Nevertheless, the results of this study showed that the lost self

was a result of the environment and not chosen by the participants. Instead of choosing "self-annihilation before God," three of the participants moved in the opposite direction towards reconnection with their self. Another participant chose to formulate an ethical–philosophical belief system that did not include a deity. The fifth co-researcher remained in the state of lost self but disconnected from a relationship with God.

Above all, existentialists aimed to show people that they were free (Warnock, 1970, p. 1). The majority of co-researchers in this study accepted the challenge of existential freedom. They embarked on a process of realizing their earthly and spiritual potential.

A biblical proverb. Jesus is quoted in the Bible as saying, "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:35; cf. Matt 16:25; Luke 9:24, as cited in Beardsley, 1991, p. 25). To explain this saying, Beardslee pursued a number of avenues. A Roman military leader, Xenophon, cheered his troops by claiming that those who fear death are the very ones who lose life; face death nobly, he said, and one is more likely to be spared (Beardslee, 1991, p. 30). Another explanation that Beardslee (1991) gave for this saying was that of earning eternal life by losing one's life for the Kingdom of God (p. 31).

Beardslee (1991) also presented Paul Ricoeur's "reorientation by disorientation" (p. 27) as a strategy for this saying. This strategy was similar to Socrates's conversational discourse and the existentialist's quest to mature beyond the inauthentic self. The listener was encouraged to give up social convention and live life by the teachings of Jesus.

History has provided many examples of philosophers—from Socrates circa 400 B.C., Jesus in 30 A.D., and Kierkegaard in the mid-nineteenth century—who have

proposed losing the present-day self in order to move forward with a new set of values. An individual history of insecure attachment also provides the necessary background for moving beyond the group norms and, for some, into self-awareness and a connection with the transcendent.

John Cobb's process theology. John Cobb produced many dissertations addressing ethical theory. The direction of his early work was to "try to demonstrate that the ground of ethics was independent of theological and cosmological considerations" (Bube, 1988, p. 33). One of the co-researchers in this study provided an example of this separation. The participant developed and lived by a personal ethical–philosophical belief system that did not include relation to a Higher Power.

According to Bube (1988), Cobb viewed human beings as "uniquely moral animals" (p. 59) who applied a sense of moral obligation to their choices (p. 35). Cobb's early writings (as cited in Bube, 1988) addressed questions such as the "nature of obligation and value" (p. 33), whereas later, he addressed more "substantive or normative issues, such as ecology, feminism, and economics" (p. 33).

Cobb's outlook included a multiplicity of belief systems. As Bube (1988) explained, "Ogden and Tracy are assuming, like Hartshorne, that one cosmology can be demonstrated as more valid than all others on philosophical grounds; whereas, Cobb believed that we must accept the given plurality of valid cosmologies" (p. 13). Bube stated, "Although christology had a role in Cobb's theology, it would not be accurate to term it a 'christocentric' theology" (p. 28). Bube added, "Cobb noted that beliefs about Jesus Christ might nurture the human existence, but do not appear to be necessary for initiating a spiritual existence in a contemporary person" (p. 28).

Co-researchers in this study developed personal spiritual belief systems. One participant included elements from her Christian upbringing, such as the Golden Rule, in her individual spirituality. Other facets of their belief systems included a one-to-one connection with a Higher Power, awareness of the active presence of God in their lives, and attainment of higher levels of consciousness. The participants of this study did not pursue organized religions for their spiritual existence.

Seemingly contrary to his willingness to accept multiple theologies, Cobb (as cited in Bube, 1988) presented a theological method to resolve "the problem of understanding and nurturing the grounds of Christian faith so as to keep faith from being undermined by new knowledge and experience" (p. 2). The disillusionment of faith by science appeared to be a greater concern for Cobb than a variety of faith institutions. The co-researchers of this study left the Christian church because of a variety of concerns. For some, the inability of church leaders to answer questions about the disparity between Biblical parables and science brought about disbelief.

A problem cited more often by the co-researchers as their reason for leaving the church was the disparity between Christian teachings and the behaviour of congregation members. According to Bube (1988), Cobb suggested that "perfection of one's inner self and motivation" (p. 67) was the most important moral quest. Cultivating "an ideal of love for others" (Bube, 1988, p. 67) was the essence of Christian life. The co-researchers in this study demonstrated personal and spiritual growth by developing self-awareness, living by their beliefs and values, and expressing love.

Chapter 6: Literature Review

Literature reviews when using grounded theory differ from other methodologies. As Christiansen (2011) wrote,

> The place and purpose of the literature review in a Classic (Glaserian) Grounded Theory (CGT) study is to situate the research outcome within the body of previous knowledge, and thus to assess its position and place within the main body of relevant literature. The literature comparison is conceptual, i.e., the focus is on the comparison of concepts. The literature comparison is not contextual, i.e., it is not based on the origin of the data. It is obvious that relevant literature for conceptual comparison cannot be identified before stable behavioral patterns have emerged. Therefore, it is obvious that these literature comparisons have to be carried out at later stages of the research process, and especially towards the end. (p. 21)

As recommended by Glaser (1992) and Christiansen (2011), this literature review was carried out after the results were analyzed. In the following exploration, I examined the literature for theories regarding the development of identity.

Two Models for the Development of Identity

John Bowlby, the father of attachment theory, understood relationships to be at the centre of the establishment of identity. Bowlby (as cited in Scarf, 1997) stated, “Each new human individual . . . comes into this world as an active self, biologically prepared to become emotionally connected to the other” (p. 172). Bowlby (as cited in Rothbard & Shaver, 1994) suggested that infants develop “internal working models” (p. 33). He explained these models as representational structures that defined one’s perception of self

and others and were the basis for one's experience of the world (Bowlby, as cited in Rothbard & Shaver, 1994).

Erikson (1980) also conceptualized the development of identity as a two-part process: the need to establish an individualized self and a place in the social community. He proposed that the development of identity evolved out of the infant's quest for social interaction (Erikson, 1980). He wrote,

> Identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development . . . Its roots go back all the way to the first self-recognition: in the baby's earliest exchange of smiles there is something of a self-realization coupled with a mutual recognition. (Erikson, 1980, p. 122)

Object-relations family therapy took this two-part conceptualization of identity into the counselling field. Scarf (1997) defined object-relations family therapy as follows:

> [Object-relations family therapy] is based upon two fundamental assumptions: first, that we humans come into the world ready to love, to link, and to connect; and second, that we also enter life with an innate longing for growth and differentiation, a need to develop our own authentic personhood. (p. xxxvi)

Theorists emphasized the interlocking spiral nature of the development of a distinct self within a network of relationships.

Another model for the structure of identity was Lewis and Ferrari's (2001) emotional interpretations (EIs). In this theory, cognitive and emotional interpretations synthesized to form an experience of an event (Lewis & Ferrari, 2001). Three levels of EIs produced short- and long-term emotional states:

1. Microdevelopment – an emergent EI rapidly dissipates when goals are achieved through actions.
2. Mesodevelopment of moods – when actions cannot achieve goals, then the goal state can persevere, and the organization of interpretation and emotion may persist.
3. Personality development – the coupling of elements alters the elements, their connections with each other, and their relations with other levels of organization . . . such that similar patterns of coupling are facilitated in the future. (Lewis & Ferrari. 2001, p. 187)

Lewis and Ferrari (2001) explained, "EIs [emotional interpretations] grow out of system orderliness maintained in moods by an inability to achieve goals in the present, and moods grow out of the orderliness maintained in personality by an inability to achieve goals in the past" (p. 189). Lewis and Ferrari explained a cognitive emotional structure of identity developed through a history of attained and unachieved goals. Their findings showed,

> Cognition-emotion couplings are the source of personality structure . . . any converging EI will increase the likelihood of its own recurrence, contributing to personality development through the repetitive incidence of similar interpretations and the ongoing accretion of emotional patterning . . . EIs [emotional interpretations] that recur frequently in mood states will have a particularly strong impact on personality development. (Lewis & Ferrari, 2001, p. 188)

Lewis and Ferrari's (2001) EI theory provided a cognitive-emotional structure for the development of identity. Their theory explained that when the participants of this

study were unable to achieve their belonging goals, EIs were the result (Lewis & Ferrari, 2001). When the inability to achieve belonging goals persisted over time, the participant's personality structure was configured into stable patterns (Lewis & Ferrari, 2001). Some of the patterns noticed in Lewis and Ferrari's study were negative mood states, unresolved grief, an isolated position relative to others, and mistrust.

Attachment and its Effects on Identity

Beginning in infancy, attachment and self-organization develop synchronistically. Scarf (1997) presented the origins of identity when she wrote, "It is in the beloved and needed primary caregiver's eyes that one first sees oneself, and it is from that reflection that a sense of who one is to some large degree is derived" (p. 195). Bowlby (as cited in West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994) stated, "Early attachment experiences are the 'data' an individual uses to construct a working model of self in relation to others" (p. 36).

Mary Ainsworth (as cited in Batgos & Leadbeater, 1994) conducted "strange situation" (p. 161) experiments in which infants were separated from their mothers and then reunited. Riley, San Juan, Klinkner, and Ramminger (2008) explained,

> In securely attached pairs, the child immediately goes to the caregiver, seeking and obtaining comfort. The caregiver is skilled at calming the child . . . [while] some infants or toddlers may look away from or even ignore the caregiver when they reunify (likely due to anxious-avoidant attachment). Others may go to the caregiver and reach up. But once picked up they refuse to be comforted, pushing the caregiver away (likely due to anxious-resistant attachment). (p. 11)

Ainsworth (as cited in Batgos & Leadbeater, 1994) catalogued the three types of attachment. She labelled one type secure attachment; the other two

types—anxious/avoidant and anxious/resistant—described insecure attachment (Ainsworth, as cited in Batgos & Leadbeater, 1994, p. 161).

Newer conceptualizations of attachment behaviours have resulted in a wider range of conceptualizations on two continuums. Avoidance and anxiety are seen as interacting in a two-by-two matrix. This new configuration suggests,

> A “secure attachment style” is associated with the region in which both anxiety and avoidance are low. What was called the “anxious attachment style” refers to a region where the fear of separation and abandonment (attachment anxiety) is high and avoidance is low. What was called the “avoidant attachment style” was divided into two subcategories: dismissing avoidance, which describes the region in which attachment avoidance is high and attachment anxiety is low and fearful avoidance, which describes the region defined by high attachment avoidance as well as by high attachment anxiety. (Berant & Wald, 2009, p. 366)

These researchers suggested that a multiregion definition may provide more clarity for counsellors working with children and families (Berant & Wald, 2009).

Mary Ainsworth’s experiments correlated sensitive maternal behaviours with secure attachment in the infant. Ainsworth and her colleagues (as cited in Fogel, 1982) observed that “maternal sensitivity in the first 6 months, a variable that has been demonstrated to correlate strongly with the 1 year old’s security of attachment” (p. 36).

Secure attachment provided many benefits for the child. Riley et al. (2008) indicated that “having a secure attachment to at least one adult in the earliest years predicts better social relationships and better intellectual development in the years ahead” (p. 13). Erikson (as cited in Bentley, 2007) identified the first psychosocial

developmental stage to be “trust versus mistrust” (p. 9). Erikson (1980) wrote, “We have learned to regard basic trust as the cornerstone of a healthy personality” (p. 58). Trust in the environment, and enhanced social, emotional, and intellectual development, were benefits of a secure attachment.

Researchers have observed the development of secure attachment. Malatesta (1982) reported, “Infants can and do copy what they see and hear . . . they accommodate their responses over time to match a model . . . they are capable of adopting the emotional postures of others” (p. 4). Attunement resulted from the caregiver’s behaviour: “reading the infant’s signals . . . providing optimal stimulation . . . arousal modulation . . . modeling of behaviors” (Field, 1994, p. 209). The sensitive interplay between caregiver and child turned emotional “conversations” into learning. Fogel (1982) observed, “Mother’s activity and the infant’s attentiveness [are] an optimal-stimulation model of affect and interaction” (p. 34). The emotional connections, which form the basis of attachment, were developed by the mutual interaction of infant and caregiver.

The Development of Insecure Attachment

Insecure attachment was the result of disruptions in the interaction between caregiver and child. Disruptions to the bonding process could be caused by factors such as physical separations, post-partum depression, and projective identification (also known as “scapegoating”). The infant’s model of self and self in relationships was impaired by these experiences.

> In one experiment designed to test the results of maternal depression on infants, Mothers were instructed to flatten or depress their affect during face-to-face interchange with their infants . . . eliminate all smiles or bright faces, limit their to

> and fro movements, and restrict their touching of the infant . . . we see that while oriented towards their mothers infants in the normal condition . . . (infants) spent 12% of their time in monitor and 23% in play . . . 6% of their time is spent in protest, only 7% in wary . . . Depressed-condition infants spend a scant 2% of their time in play and 6% in monitor . . . The vast majority of their time is spent in three states—look away (34%), wary (28%), and protest (22%) . . . The depressed interaction proved extremely stressful for the infants. (Tronick, Ricks, & Cohn, 1982, p. 90)

Scarf (1997) defined projective identification as the following:

> Projecting into an intimately connected other . . . certain stoutly denied, repudiated aspect of the projector's own inner being . . . The person who is doing the projecting then begins to interact with the other individual as if he or she were the very embodiment of the thoughts, feelings, and ideas that the projector is so steadfastly disavowing and disinheriting. (p. 76)

A synonym for projective identification used repeatedly by the participants of this study was scapegoating.

As the caregiver projected strongly disliked qualities onto the infant, the child used its growing skills of expression recognition to interpret meaning (Scarf, 1997). Scarf (1997) went on to say,

> We seek relatedness, and at the same time we seek to make sense of the relatedness we experience . . . as Inge Bretherton points out, if an attachment figure frequently rejects or ridicules the child . . . the child may come to develop

> not only an internal working model of the parent as rejecting but also one of himself or herself as not worthy of comfort. (p. 195)

Abandonment, projective identification, and emotional unavailability were experiences that the participants in the present study had as children. The literature pointed to maternal behaviour that can cause the child to become wary, less playful, and stressed (Tronick et al., 1982, p. 90). These behaviours correlate with a category discovered in my study. Hiding the self was a part of the participants' working model of self. A protectiveness towards a tender and unformed identity was a reason for hiding the self. Guarding against hurt became an essential but self-limiting shield.

Bowlby (as cited in West & Keller, 1994) theorized that insecure attachment in childhood persisted into the adult years (p. 65). Bowlby (as cited in West & Keller, 1994) observed that adults with anxious-avoidant attachment attempted to remain close and enmeshed with others. Bowlby also noted that people with anxious-resistant attachment were distant and detached. These people were compulsively self-reliant and tried to live without emotional sustenance (Bowlby, as cited in West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 73). Both anxious-resistant and anxious-avoidant adults were represented in my study.

Emotional Identity

The literature explained the attuned caregiver's role in the emotional development of the infant. According to Bonovitz (2006),

> The important capacity to use affect as a signal is not present at birth. Rather, it is a developmental achievement arising out of ongoing mutual exchanges with an emotionally sensitive caregiver who can mirror, contain, and give words to what the infant might be feeling. (p. 6)

Malatesta (1982) agreed and reported that "infants can and do copy what they see and hear . . . they accommodate their responses over time to match a model . . . they are capable of adopting the emotional postures of others" (p. 4).

Babies shared in the development of "rules of engagement." The baby's earliest efforts at emotional regulation appeared when they had had enough stimulation. Scarf (1997) noted, "By averting his head and breaking eye contact, the baby has called a halt . . . in order to soothe themselves and restore their own equilibrium" (p. 180). Some caregivers, who are not as sensitive,

> cannot cede control in this fashion . . . instead of waiting for baby to return to the exchange voluntarily, she escalates the intensity of her own behavior . . . pursue(s) him by moving around and putting herself in the very place to which his gaze has turned. (Scarf, 1997, p. 181)

The baby was not allowed the time to regulate himself, so that the "somewhat less than sensitive behavior on the part of mothers and was experienced as overstimulating by the children . . . [who] seemed to respond . . . as though they experienced this level as aversive" (Malatesta-Magai, 1991, p. 58).

Bonovitz (2006) theorized, "Children deprived of empathic parents who contain and metabolize painful feelings grow up avoidant of the contents of their inner lives" (p. 6). The data analysis of this study showed significantly underdeveloped emotional expression in the participants. Insensitive caregiving behaviour had a role in the emotional delays of children.

Predominance of Negative Emotions

Participants in this study who did experience feelings described them as predominantly negative. Researchers have made connections between insecure attachment and a persistent experience of fear. Bonovitz (2006) wrote,

> Neuroscientist, Joseph LeDoux, (1996) has compellingly documented . . . fear is a primordial emotion designed to signal danger . . . prolonged separation from, or frightening behavior of, attachment figures triggers the fear system . . . children subjected to repeated separation, abuse or neglect at the hands of needed attachment figures remain in a state of painful hyperarousal. (p. 5)

A predominance of negative emotions originated in the attachment system, and this state of hyperarousal precluded other learning. Bonovitz (2006) went on to say,

> Fear-inducing assaults on the child's physical and/or, emotional self lacerate the cocoon of safety essential for the development of affect regulation and of positive internal representations of self and other, and of self-with-other . . . They are more sensitized to and likely to experience affects in the negative or defensive spectrum including anger, shame, disgust, distaste and their derivative feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, envy, and contempt. (p. 5)

Development of emotional regulation, knowledge of self, and group relations were pre-empted by a sense that there is an ever present need to protect the self. The individual lived in a state of fear and other painful emotions.

Unresolved grief, sadness, and depression were experienced by the participants in this study. Field's (1994) research indicated,

> If . . . the mother is physically unavailable (during early separations) or emotionally unavailable (e.g., during a period of depression), the infant experiences behavioral and physiological disorganization . . . mother's depression is correlated with infant depression as early as 3 months of age (1984a) and, if the mother remains depressed at 6 months, it is related to growth and developmental delays shown at age 1 year. (p. 220)

Field's results correlate with the persistent sadness or depression that emerged in the results of this study.

Lewis and Ferrari's (2001) emotional interpretations theory provided an explanation for the high percentage of negative feelings in the participants of this study. Negative emotions predominated in this population due to fear in the attachment system, negative representations of self and others in the working model, and persistent blocked action towards goals (Lewis & Ferrari, 2001). Lewis and Ferrari observed that "prolonged affect in mood states is very often negative—a consequence of blocked action and unresolved intentions" (p. 188).

Rigidity of the Working Model of Self

There is some debate in the literature about the pervasiveness or rigidity of the working model of self. The traditional view of a working model of self states the following:

> Early attachment experiences create an internalized model, containing expectations about behaviors and affects associated with attachment relationships. This internalized model has historical continuity and is used by the individual to guide behaviors and affects in new attachment-relevant situations . . . In the

> “new” view of working models proposed here, behaviors and affects that were once associated with attachment form the basis for the perception of potential recategorization of experiences to include both old and new attachment-relevant information. There is no discrete model maintained in the memory, but rather a potential to reclassify or recategorize past experiences in the light of current experiences. (Rothbard & Shaver, 1994, p. 64)

Although Rothbard and Shaver’s (1994) work proposed that new attachment experiences altered the understanding of self and self in relationship, my study found that the working models developed by the participants were, for the most part, rigid (Rothbard & Shaver, 1994). This finding replicated earlier research. Other studies reported that rigidity is a basic quality in the organizational patterns of insecure attachment (Bowlby, 1977; West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994).

Grief in the Context of Identity

In my study, the expression of grief was found to be incongruent with the experience of loss. Participants did not feel any grief during losses, or they felt grief years after the event. One explanation for the incongruence of grief reactions was emotional developmental delays due to insecure attachment.

The unmet belonging needs may have also created a long standing grief reaction. Walter and McCoyd (2009) acknowledged,

> Loss of the infant’s or toddler’s caregivers because of depression, removal from parental care, or early hospitalizations are losses that we do not view as normal maturational developmental losses . . . are often not recognized as losses that may benefit from remediation. (pp. 77–78)

Toddlers do not have the resources to resolve grief. Susan Anderson (as cited in Walter & McCoyd, 2009) empathized: “How such a young child can absorb such a shock, loss, and abandonment . . . [she] speaks of withdrawal as the second stage of the abandonment process” (p. 85). Anderson’s conception of withdrawal mirrored the outsider position that these participants took as children.

Earlier discussion of EIs explained how an unachieved goal resulted in a persistent mood state. The child’s inability to achieve belonging to his or her family likely resulted in a persistent state of grief. I suggest that constant sadness or depression pervaded the lives of these individuals. And, when future losses occurred, the individual felt as helpless as an infant to resolve that grief.

Another theory helped to explain the incongruent responses noted in this study. Rubin, Malkinson, and Witztum (as cited in Irvine, 1999) observed that the primary impact of loss was loss of parts of the self (p. 44). A need for identity reorganization results as “loss operates with the potential to change various aspects of an individual’s view of things and him- or herself . . . changes to the integration and organization of self . . . challenged the individual to reappraise, reorganize, and make new meanings” (Rubin, Malkinson, & Witztum, as cited in Irvine, 1999, p. 78).

The participants were disconnected from their inner experience in Stage I of their Experience and Expression of Identity. They were unable to feel their emotions and their self was hidden even from themselves. This disconnection from self made the reorganization of self, which Rubin et al. (as cited in Irvine, 1999) suggested, impossible. In Stage II, the Reconnecting to Self stage, the participants connected with their feelings and discovered their identity. In Stage II, the participants were more capable of coping

with grief. The participants could re-organize their new found identity and resolve their grief.

Family Systems: Group Identity

Family systems theory offered a chance to examine the participant's role as a member of his or her family group. The Bowen school of family systems defined self-differentiation as "the ability to establish a self while emotionally connected with and actively participating in the family" (VanKatwyk, 2003, p. 96). The development of interpersonal boundaries contributed to self-differentiation (Broderick, 1993). As Broderick (1993) explained,

> This process of regulation involves the ever-shifting balancing of two opposing forces: the centripetal forces that link each member to every other member, which we shall call bonding processes; and the centrifugal forces that separate each member from other members, and which we shall call buffering processes. (p. 90)

The present study noted that when personal boundaries were underdeveloped, a fragile identity was the result. Bonovitz (2006) connected what I have called the Fragility of Self with spousal abuse, also noted in my study. She wrote,

> They have a greater vulnerability to painful/terrifying ruptures in the integrity of the self under stress and are prone to violate the psychological boundaries of others in attempts to restabilize, or, to attract others who will be unconsciously drawn to violate them. (Bonovitz, 2006, p. 5)

Patterns of family relationships facilitate or inhibit self-differentiation. These patterns ranged on a continuum from enmeshment to disengagement. Theorists noted that "at the extremes of the engagement-disengagement continuum—where family members

are intrusively overinvolved (enmeshment) or oddly indifferent and detached (disengagement)—that areas of possible pathology begin to emerge" (Scarf, 1997, p. 51).

Extremes of enmeshment meant "as a condition of membership, that everyone banish his or her 'bad' feelings (which certainly include the wish to be a separate, different person), even if this involves losing touch with one's own inner reality" (Scarf, 1997, p. 54). And "many therapists hold this lack of sufficient differentiation to be the chief source of family and individual dysfunction" (Broderick, 1993, p. 192). Disengagement, on the other hand, means family members "experience a total lack of the affectional glue . . . fueled by intense feelings of rage and disappointment . . . the primary lesson . . . keep one's guard up; vulnerability and weakness are bad, unacceptable, and dangerous" (Scarf, 1997, p. 56).

Oddly, one participant's story in my study would contain elements of both enmeshment and disengagement. A participant described "living in another person's world and being what that person wanted them to be." This blurred boundary was a marker for enmeshment. But the same participant described himself as an outsider, with no one with whom to belong. A participant could be enmeshed when relating with others and still feel disengaged from family or other social systems.

Two other dysfunctional ways of relating were present in the family systems of participants. One pattern was a "triangular involvement between two parents and their child" (Broderick, 1993, p. 111). Triangulation occurred when the child was identified as the source of all family problems (Broderick, 1993). Vogel and Bell (as cited in Broderick, 1993) wrote, "The child as scapegoat . . . the marital pair seeks to preserve its

conflicted relationship by deflecting tension to the parent-child bond" (p. 112). A number of participants in this study experienced their role in the family as a scapegoat.

A second unhealthy family configuration was described by Broderick (1993): "The child [becomes a] mediator . . . the marital relationship also is stressed . . . similar to that of the 'parentified' child, who, in effect, inverts the parent-child relationship, taking responsibility for guiding and counselling the parents and monitoring their irresponsible behavior" (p. 112). Mediating was a role that one co-researcher adopted.

Codependence and Identity

Codependency was defined in the literature in a number of ways. Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse (as cited in Schaef, 1986) stated that codependency was a mental or emotional state that results from being in a relationship with a person addicted to alcohol. Wegscheider-Cruse (as cited in Schaef, 1986) also included a state of emotional repression in her definition of codependency. She defined codependents as "all persons who (1) are in a love or marriage relationship with an alcoholic, (2) have one or more alcoholic parents or grandparents, or (3) grew up in an emotionally repressive family" (as cited in Schaef, 1986, p. 14). Sondra Smalley (as cited in Schaef, 1986) helped to provide an understanding of the codependent's mental or emotional state; she said, "Co-dependency is a pattern of learned behaviors, feelings and beliefs that make life painful . . . the co-dependent is 'human-relationship-dependent' and focuses her/his life around an addictive agent" (pp. 14–15). Subby (as cited in Schaef, 1986) did not refer to an addictive agent but believed that codependency was a result of the inner self being shut down by repressive rules. Subby (as cited in Schaef, 1986) defined codependency as follows:

> An emotional, psychological, and behavioral condition that develops as a result of an individual's prolonged exposure to, and practice of, a set of oppressive rules—rules which prevent the open expression of feeling as well as the direct discussion of personal and interpersonal problems. (p. 15)

Irvine (1999) conducted a grounded theory study on codependence. He attended Codependents Anonymous (CoDa) for his research. He stated, "CoDA is a psychospiritual, self-help program that attracts people who have experienced a divorce or the breakup of a committed relationship. . . . What dedicated members claim to gain from the group is a sense of self" (p. 1).

Two findings in my study replicated Irvine's research. First, the participants in this study and Irvine's had lost touch with their inner experience. Second, in both studies, it was a reconnection with self and, also, with the Higher Source that brought healing to the participants. Interestingly, the relationship to religion and spirituality by the participants of this study and those people in CoDA were similar. Irvine reported, "Few members maintained any association with organized religion, but spirituality was something they valued and cultivated" (p. 77).

Irvine noted that CoDA worked to resolve the rupturing of self that occurred when a codependent person experienced the dissolution of a relationship. My study suggests that the disruption to self originated in the attachment system. According to the results of this study, behavioural adaptations to unmet belonging needs resulted in a *lost self.*

Mellody (1989), a self-confessed codependent, suggested that the child shuts down feeling because of discomfort with negative experiences and added, "Experiencing

little or no emotion is a position of apparent safety . . . the feelings elicited in a child during abuse are so overwhelming and miserable that the child shuts down or 'freezes' the feelings in order to survive" (p. 39). Hiding their feelings was a way that participants of this study protected their self. An examination of the literature, however, uncovered other reasons that emotions became inhibited. Insecure attachment resulted in delays in self-organization and emotional regulation. Persistent, negative mood states inhibited a full range of feelings.

The concept of codependence had many similarities to the experience of participants in this study. The absence of self and the inability to experience emotions was one similarity. Another similarity was the healing that resulted when the individual connected with the self and the Higher Power. Alcohol could have been a factor in the families of this study, but it was only mentioned in regards to participant use. From my review of the literature, I suggest that the experience of the lost self in the participants of this study had to do more with early attachment experiences and the resulting social and emotional delays than with family systems structured around an addictive substance and repressive rules.

Gender Differences Affecting Reconnection with Identity

In this study, the three women undertook a healing journey of reconnection with their lost self and feelings. Neither of the two men attempted reconnection with self or their emotions. The literature explained that the reasons for this gender difference began in childhood.

According to research on parental interactions with children, caregivers downplay some emotions and highlight others depending on the gender of the child. Brody (2000)

explained, “In accordance with display rules, parents of both preschoolers and young school aged children differentially emphasize the expression of sadness and fear to their daughters but not to their sons, and anger to their sons but not to their daughters” (p. 27). As Siegel and Alloy (as cited in Brody, 2000) noted, “The expression of sadness, depression, fear, and dysphoric self-conscious emotions such as shame and embarrassment are viewed as ‘unmanly,’ and men who display such emotions are . . . evaluated more negatively than females” (p. 25). This research suggested that from childhood boys were taught to stifle fear, sadness, and vulnerability in order to fit in with societal norms of behaviour.

For boys and men, the result was called “restrictive emotionality” (Jansz, 2000, p. 166). Levant (as cited in Jansz, 2000) found,

> Many men were genuinely unaware of their feelings . . . they tended to rely on their knowledge-base and tried to deduce logically how they should feel in particular circumstances. Levant borrows the term alexithymia . . . a condition in which patients are unable to identify and describe their feelings . . . In its radical form it is only observed among patients who are severely disturbed, but in a mild form alexithymia is widespread among adult men. (p. 170)

Childhood conditioning and reinforcement by society explained the repressed feelings of the men in my study. A subsequent quest for reconnection with their feelings and inner experience would not have been valued by society and, I suspect, by the men themselves.

The men did not attempt to discover their spiritual self either. Reconnection with spirit required an awareness of their inner experience. These men were prevented from

connecting with the Higher Source because they were unaware of their spiritual aspects of self.

Chapter 7: Summary

This study explored the following question: How does insecure attachment affect the experience and expression of identity? The data analysis revealed a process of disconnection and, in some participants, reconnection with the self. During the disconnection stage, the participants hid their identity from themselves and others. They experienced a lost self.

In Stage I of the Experience of Identity, the participants' belonging needs were unmet. One consequence of the unmet belonging needs was a persistent unresolved grief reaction. Lewis and Ferrari (2001) explained that grief and other negative emotions become part of the personality. Lewis and Ferrari's EIs theory stated that the inability to meet goals resulted in mood states. Personality structure was formed when the inability to meet goals persisted over time. Lewis and Ferrari observed that mood states are "very often negative—a consequence of blocked action and unresolved intentions" (p. 188).

Bowlby's working model of self provided another structure for identity based on the interdependent development of the self and the self in relationships. Porter's Working Model of Self for People with Insecurely Attachment was developed in this study. Mistrust, Isolation, Independence, and Hiding Self were four structures that the participants used as a foundation for their identity.

Particularly significant was the category called Hiding Self. As a result of abandonment, medical confinement to hospital, lack of parental emotional availability, neglect, and abuse, the participants were not nurtured in their early attachment relationships. They were not seen nor recognized. The self began life as a hidden and unexpressed entity. Emotional and social development was delayed. The participants

chose ways of relating to others, such as intellectualizing, people-pleasing, and projecting that maintained the estrangement from their inner experience. Hiding the self resulted in a lost self. The identity was undeveloped, unexpressed, and unknown even to the participant.

The lost self did not develop emotionally or socially. Most of the participants experienced a minimal level of emotional experience and expression. Emotional deficits were especially prevalent in the area of grief and loss. Some reactions to grief were a total lack of grief, feeling other people's feelings, and endless unresolved grief. Emotional developmental delays and unresolved loss of the initial attachment relationship were two explanations for the participants' incongruent responses to loss. Irvine (1999) reported that experiences with loss created a need to reorganize the self. In Stage I of their experience of identity, the participants' disconnection from their inner experience prevented the necessary adjustments. In Stage II, The Process of Reconnecting with Self, some participants discovered their feelings and identity. These participants were progressively able to adjust to loss.

Three types of boundary issues emerged from the data analysis. Firstly, the participants experienced a Fragility of Self. The self fragmented under extreme stress, when confronted, and during the experience of loss. Secondly, participants had Diffuse Emotional Boundaries. They had difficulty distinguishing between the self and "other." They confused their feelings with the feelings of others. Their feelings were not rooted within the self, not contained by a protective boundary, nor recognized as a personal expression of identity. And thirdly, the participants had difficulty protecting themselves

against control by others. Participants experienced “abuse” of power by employers, friends, and marriage partners.

The participants said that they felt like outsiders in relation to the Christian community of their childhood. They found examples of hypocrisy that confirmed their mistrust. All of the participants chose to leave the Christian religious institutions of their childhood. I noted similarities between the participants’ working model of self and the participants’ interpretations of their religious experiences.

The participants began their careers two decades later than the norm. An explanation for this late accomplishment can be found in Erikson’s (1980) theory of psychosocial developmental stages. As a result of insecure attachment, the participants formed mistrust in the earliest stage: “Trust versus mistrust” (Bentley, 2007, p. 9). Meeting the challenges of one developmental stage was dependent on resolving the challenges of earlier stages (Bentley, 2007). The insecurely attached participants progressed slowly through the psychosocial developmental stages, affecting the establishment of their careers.

Careers held both positive and negative experiences of identity. Emotional deficits and unclear boundaries caused difficulties at work. Some participants had experiences with employers who took advantage of them. Participants felt isolated at work. Positive experiences included building a wide range of experience, self-reliance, and pride in doing a job well. Participants developed self-knowledge, positivity, and well-being through their work. They discovered passions and ways to give back to others.

Mental health and addiction issues arose at work and at home. These issues included depression, alcohol addiction, anxiety, burn-out, suicidal thoughts, and

behaviour. This researcher noted that mental health issues were experienced as the participants confronted the gap between their working model of self and adult roles. Each of the participants experienced a crisis. These included suicide ideation, suicide attempts, alcoholism, depression, and career and marriage breakdowns. These crises triggered change in four of the participants.

Stage II in the experience and expression of identity described The Process of Reconnecting with Self made by the three women participants. One of the male participants made changes in his cognitive and ethical philosophy. Neither of the men attempted a reconnection with their emotional or spiritual self.

The women reported a willingness to undertake a process of self-awareness. They connected with their feelings and qualities of the self. They expressed themselves more genuinely than in Stage I. They experienced tremendous growth and found satisfaction in "finding themselves." The process of reconnection was described as long and hard work.

The participants closed some of the holes in their personal boundaries. They separated their feelings from the feelings of others. They recognized and left abusive relationships. These participants raised emotional and physical boundaries between themselves and controlling others.

The three women participants developed a spiritual belief system. During Stage II, The Process of Reconnecting to Self, these participants experienced a one-to-one connection with a Higher Source. Each of the women formed a unique belief system. Some facets of their belief systems included a God that was nonjudgmental and always loving, direct communication with God, and experiencing a higher level of

consciousness. These participants experienced their spiritual connection as an active force in their lives, providing guidance, presence, and meaning.

For these co-researchers, the ability to develop a personal spiritual belief system may have resulted from the experience of the Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment. The participants did not feel a connection with social norms and pressures. Their ability to form independent thoughts allowed the co-researchers the freedom to select values and beliefs that fit with their authentic selves. Existential aloneness was understood by these co-researchers from an early age.

These three women experienced tremendous growth in their spiritual understanding. One participant moved from a sense that she was a sinner for expressing her true identity to realizing a loving connection with God. Suffering was present from the beginning of the participants' lives. Their unmet needs to belong and the ridicule and scapegoating that they received produced grief and suffering. Nevertheless, these participants realized personal empowerment as they developed insights, new spiritual philosophies, and lived healthier lives. These participants believed their spiritual belief system to be tremendously important, even lifesaving. The process of finding the lost self was a struggle, but the rewards were great. The true identity was lovable by God and themselves.

A gender difference emerged in Stage II, The Process of Reconnecting to Self. The men did not enter a process of reconnection with their feelings, self, or spiritual identity. The reasons for this gender difference may have originated in childhood. Research has shown that parents inhibit the expression of fear, vulnerability, and other "unmanly" emotions in their boys (Brody, 2000, p. 27). This flattening of feelings

resulted in a mild alexithymia in adult men. Alexithymia is a condition in which people are unable to identify and describe their feelings (Jansz, 2000, p. 170). One participant had developed an intellectual filter that covered his feelings. Like all of the insecurely attached participants, emotional experience was minimal in the men. Nevertheless, social pressure and the acceptance of society's rules by the men devalued a reconnection with their feelings. The spiritual nature of the men's identity was also prevented by the disconnection from their inner experience.

The data analysis for Stage III, Present Day Experience and Expression of Identity, revealed some positive identity experiences reported by all of the participants. Survival skills, adaptability, and self-reliance were positive outcomes. Nevertheless, healing was incomplete even in the three women who were engaged in reconnecting with the lost self. The women acknowledged that reconnection was a "work-in-progress." Personal boundaries had increased but achieving a stable sense of self in the presence of others remained a challenge. Three qualities of Porter's Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment—mistrust, independence, and isolation—persisted. Only Hiding Self was deconstructed and a genuine sense of self reconstructed.

This study supports the theory that early adaptations made by insecurely attached infants in response to unmet belonging needs persisted throughout their lifetime. Considerable fulfillment was achieved by the adults who undertook a process of reconnection to their lost self. Nevertheless, the losses encountered due to insecure attachment were significant and disabling and presented a considerable challenge to the individual.

Further Research

In the present study, participants with both anxious-avoidant and anxious-resistant attachment developed the same four characteristics of the Working Model of Self in People with Insecure Attachment. Further research could compare participants' beliefs about mistrust, independence, hiding the self, and isolation relative to their type of insecure attachment. For instance, how does mistrust arise in the relationships of the anxious-avoidant adult? How does this compare with the conceptualizations of mistrust for the anxious-resistant person? The isolated, or outsider position, could be analyzed from the two attachment perspectives. One of the participants in this study provided some insight when she explained that she felt dependent in her relationships (anxious-avoidant) but "couldn't shake a feeling of loneliness." She was enmeshed in a relationship, but she maintained an outsider position emotionally.

Another area for further research is the intergenerational effects of insecure attachment. Minimal emotional expression and boundary issues in parents could have serious effects on bonding. Insecure attachment and its serious effects could impact several generations in a family.

Further research could inquire into the effects of insecure attachment on the participants' relationships with authority. This research discovered that the insecurely attached person views themselves as separate from others. The person makes independent decisions. How does this affect the participants' relationships with school and work authority figures? How does the insecurely attached person regard the authority of the law?

More research could provide insight into how adults reconnect with the self. Does the process of reconnection follow Erikson's psychosocial stages? Does this process focus mainly on discovering feelings? A step-by-step procedure describing the process of reconnection would assist counsellors in working towards change.

Finally, the concept of a hidden self arose frequently within this study. Parents did not see the true self of the newborn. The participants purposefully hid themselves from others and their identity became lost or hidden from both self and others. More research could be undertaken to explore aspects of the hidden self.

Areas of Potential Application

This study theorizes that insecure attachment results in a lifetime of disabling consequences in the area of identity. The literature described an awareness of self originating in the first attachment relationship (Erikson, 1980). The establishment of a healthy bond is crucial for the development of the emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of the individual.

The importance of secure attachment could be integrated into nursing, early childhood, and counsellor training programs. Nurses need to teach new parents attunement skills at the same time that they teach the physical care of newborns. Tot and parent programs can include fun ways to bond with the baby while they teach rhymes and read stories. Failing early intervention, child and family counsellors need to be aware of the effects of insecure attachment. Developing awareness of feelings and boundary skills are two areas in which counsellors can intervene.

Theory about the negative effects of insecure attachment can be applied to other areas in which children are emotionally or physically separated from their caregivers. The

foster care system needs to protect the attachment relationships of children in their care. The residential school system ruptured the attachment system of generations of Aboriginal Peoples. The severe consequences of a lost self in Indigenous Peoples is a problem that now requires remediation.

People who immigrate may experience a lost self upon settling in Canada. The separation from their extended families may cause a retreat to an outsider stance. Personal adjustment is possible for many people, but others may need assistance to feel included.

A Personal Statement

The choice to employ constructivist grounded theory as the methodology for this study proved to be both satisfying and difficult. I remained aware of my interpretations and choices throughout the study. I hesitated to include my reflections while writing the report, however. I thought that they disturbed the flow of the text. Perhaps, my habit of hiding myself inhibited my expression of self. Like the participants of this study, I imagined negative consequences to sharing myself in this report.

I experienced grounded theory methodology as a way to produce a clear and detailed process of the data. I was encouraged to find that the participants' words, or codes, grouped easily into categories with common meaning. Relationships between these categories told a story. I had to leave my comfort zone in order to discover theory, however. Constructivism merged with grounded theory as I discovered relationships within the data. I tried to retain some of the rich flavour of the participants' expressions while writing the report.

One concern that I have with grounded theory is that doing the literature review after the study is conducted opens the possibility for redundancy. A number of times I felt "scooped" when I discovered my theoretical concepts in much earlier research. An earlier literature review could have narrowed my inquiry into specific areas untouched by other research.

During the process of interviews and data analysis for this study, I realized that the expression of self is difficult for people with insecure attachment. Hearing about the participants' painful feelings and experiences awoke waves of compassion within me. I realized that there must be many, many people affected by the debilitating effects of insecure attachment.

Like the female participants of this study, I developed a spiritual belief system. When I was researching grounded theory, I read Barney Glaser's (as cited in Flick, 2009) criticism of Strauss and Corbin's axial coding paradigm. Glaser thought that axial coding forced the data instead of discovering what emerged (p. 313). I related forcing the data to the ego's need for control. While working on the data analysis, I endeavoured to rise above the ego and allow theoretical constructs to emerge through connection to Higher Wisdom.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1) Tell me about the process of finding your career.

    - Have you been or are you underemployed?
    - Have you had authority issues at work?
    - How do you feel when someone gives you feedback about your work performance?
    - Do you accomplish life tasks earlier, at the normal time or later than other people? eg. finding work, relationships, education…

2) Emotional Experiences.
    a. Do you feel your feelings?
    b. Can you tell which are your feelings and which are someone else's feelings?
    c. Are you sensitive to the feelings of others?
    d. Have you felt respected in your relationships? Have you respected your significant other?

3) Describe yourself in the following areas:
    a. Independent, dependent, trusting, mistrustful, chaotic and a perfectionist.

4) Describe your experience to endings in your life.
    a. short-term endings – going on vacation, going home after a social engagement
    b. long-term endings – death of a loved one, divorce

5) How do you feel about your name?
    a. Have you changed your name?

6) Do you have a religious or spiritual belief system?
    a. Do you have a sense of being connected to a God or Higher Power?
    b. How important is this connection in your life?

7) What are some other important areas of your identity that I should know about for this study?

Appendix 2: Consent Letter

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to develop theory about the experience and expression of identity in adults with insecure attachment.

The research study is being conducted as part of a master's degree program at St. Stephen's College. There is no other reason for this study.

Method Used in the Study

Participants will be self-referred and referred from counselling agencies. To provide feelings of comfort, privacy and safety for the participant, I will use a room at a counselling agency for the interviews. Times for the interviews will coincide with times when counsellors are available at the office. The interviews will be carried out between Nov. 24, 2014 and Jan. 31, 2015.

A detailed description of the participants experience will be gathered by audio-taping interviews. One or two interviews will be necessary with each participant. The interviews may be from one hour to 1 ½ hours long. Each participant will be asked a number of questions. The participant will be invited to contribute other areas of significance in their experience of identity.

The results will be returned to the participants for two reasons. Each participant will be asked to read the material to look for confidential information which might reveal their identity. The participant will, also, be encouraged to give feedback on whether the results reflect their personal experiences.

Rights of the Participants

Each participant has the right to confidentiality of personal information. Confidentiality means that the researcher will not talk about the identity of the research subjects and will not share details of the subject's disclosures outside of the research context. The only exception to confidentiality will be when the participant is deemed to be a danger to themselves or others. Anonymity will be provided by using pseudonyms and altering identifying details in the final report.

All audio-tapes and transcripts of the interviews will be kept in a secure place. The audio-tapes will be destroyed within six months of the publication of the written report. Transcripts will be held in my locked office until future uses, such as, articles, presentations and subsequent research projects can be determined. After such uses have expired, the transcripts will be destroyed.

Subjects have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time.

The participants have a right to a copy of the final report.

Informed Consent

Please, be aware that participating in the study may trigger unpleasant and painful memories. At the bottom of this consent letter, please, identify a counsellor or minister who will be available to help you resolve distressful feelings.

Contacts :

Paul Wishart, PhD, MA

Ara Parker, MA, CCC, BCATR, RCAT [telephone number](780) 439-7311

Secondary Uses of the Data

The results of this study may be written into articles or presentations. The data may be extended into further research studies. These studies may examine the effects of insecure attachment on the experience of aging. All confidentiality and rights will be extended to these uses.

Signatures:

-- -----------------------------

Participant Date

-- -----------------------------

Researcher Date

-- -----------------------------

Name of Counsellor or Minister Phone Number

Appendix 3: Attachment Style Questionnaire

Show how much you agree with each of the following items by rating them on this scale: 1 = totally disagree; 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = slightly agree; 5 = strongly agree; or 6 = totally agree.

_____ 1. Overall, I am a worthwhile person.

_____ 2. I am easier to get to know than most people.

_____ 3. I feel confident that other people will be there for me when I need them.

_____ 4. I prefer to depend on myself rather than other people.

_____ 5. I prefer to keep to myself.

_____ 6. To ask for help is to admit that you're a failure.

_____ 7. People's worth should be judged by what they achieve.

_____ 8. Achieving things is more important than building relationships.

_____ 9. Doing your best is more important than getting on with others.

_____ 10. If you've got a job to do, you should do it no matter who gets hurt.

_____ 11. It's important to me that others like me.

_____ 12. It's important to me to avoid doing things that others won't like.

_____ 13. I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think.

_____ 14. My relationships with others are generally superficial.

_____ 15. Sometimes I think I am no good at all.

_____ 16. I find it hard to trust other people.

_____ 17. I find it difficult to depend on others.

_____ 18. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.

_____ 19. I find it relatively easy to get close to other people.

_____ 20. I find it easy to trust others. (R)

_____ 21. I feel comfortable depending on other people. (R)

_____ 22. I worry that others won't care about me as much as I care about them.

_____ 23. I worry about people getting too close.

_____ 24. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.

_____ 25. I have mixed feelings about being close to others.

_____ 26. While I want to get close to others, I feel uneasy about it.

_____ 27. I wonder why people would want to be involved with me.

_____ 28. It's very important to me to have a close relationship.

_____ 29. I worry a lot about my relationships.

_____ 30. I wonder how I would cope without someone to love me.

_____ 31. I feel confident about relating to others.

_____ 32. I often feel left out or alone.

_____ 33. I often worry that I do not really fit in with other people. (R)

_____ 34. Other people have their own problems, so I don't bother them with mine.

_____ 35. When I talk over my problems with others, I generally feel ashamed or foolish.

_____ 36. I am too busy with other activities to put much time into relationships.

_____ 37. If something is bothering me, others are generally aware and concerned.

_____ 38. I am confident that other people will like and respect me.

_____ 39. I get frustrated when others are not available when I need them.

_____ 40. Other people often disappoint me.

Adapted from "Attachment Style Questionnaire," by J. Feeney, P. Noller, and M. Hanhrahan. In M. B. Sperling & W. H. Berman (Eds.), *Attachment in Adults: Clinical and developmental perspectives* (pp. 125–152), 1994. Copyright Guilford Press.