

3-2016

Seeking Self-Certainty in an Uncertain Time: Attachment Style and Self-Esteem in Emerging Adulthood

Holly M. Rosen

Clark University, ddhrosen@clarku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.clarku.edu/studentworks>

 Part of the [Developmental Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rosen, Holly M., "Seeking Self-Certainty in an Uncertain Time: Attachment Style and Self-Esteem in Emerging Adulthood" (2016).
Student Works. 10.

<https://commons.clarku.edu/studentworks/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly Collections & Academic Work at Clark Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Works by an authorized administrator of Clark Digital Commons. For more information, please contact mkrikonis@clarku.edu, jodolan@clarku.edu.

Introduction

“No form of behavior is accompanied by stronger feeling than is attachment behavior” (Bowlby, 1971). John Bowlby put forward the concept that humans have a genetic and evolutionary need to be close to a select few for survival. This innate need for proximity to a select few, our attachment figures, is vital for any individual “from the cradle to the grave.” Moreover, Bowlby’s theory of attachment is based on the ideology that the nature of our relationships with our early caregivers can predetermine the patterns of our adult relationships (Levine & Heller, 2010).

How comfortable are we with closeness? How often should we engage in intimate acts with our partners? What are our strategies when we come across conflict? How do we communicate our wants and needs? What exactly do we expect from our partner? These are all questions that can help determine an individual’s patterns in relationships, or his or her “attachment style.” The three primary attachment styles include the secure type, the insecure ambivalent, insecure resistant, insecure anxious or insecure preoccupied type, and the insecure avoidant or insecure dismissive type. Our attachment styles are consistent with the level of support and responsiveness that our parents or caregivers provided us with in early childhood (Levine & Heller, 2010).

These attachment styles are established within the first few years of a child’s life. If an individual had parents or caregivers who generally responded consistently and reassuringly to his needs as an infant during this time, it is probable that the individual developed a secure attachment style. Securely attached individuals account for just over 50% of the American population. They feel comfortable with intimacy, are typically

warm and loving, communicate relationship issues well, can reach compromises during conflict, are not afraid of commitment or dependency, and don't "play games." They usually introduce family and friends to a partner early on, and naturally express their feelings to him or her (Levine & Heller, 2010).

If an individual had caregivers who provided inconsistent support and responsiveness, and who were both harsh and disciplinary and gentle and benevolent, it is probable that the individual developed an ambivalent, resistant, preoccupied, or insecure anxious style (Park et al., 2004). Insecure anxious individuals account for about 21% of the population. They often want to immerse themselves in closeness, require repeated affirmation and reassurance, have a hard time making themselves clear in a relationship, and are preoccupied with the relationship. They also often play games to keep a partner's attention or interest, are sensitive to small fluctuations in a partner's mood, or are suspicious that their partners might be unfaithful (Levine & Heller, 2010).

Lastly, if an individual had caregivers who were often punitive, unreliable, and unresponsive, it is probable that the child will become dismissing or insecure avoidant (Park et al., 2004). Insecure avoidants make up about 25% of the population. They often equate intimacy with a loss of independence and constantly try to minimize closeness, send mixed signals, devalue their partners or label them as too sensitive or needy, and have rigid relationship views. They can also be mistrustful, not make their intentions clear, and tend to emphasize relationship boundaries. They may feel the need to "get away" or leave the room during disagreements, and typically have trouble discussing relationship issues (Levine & Heller, 2010).

By and large, the idea is that securely attached individuals learned through their own

early experiences that others can be depended upon and will usually respond positively to them. In contrast, the insecurely attached learned that others are not so dependable and cannot be fully trusted, as they have a tendency to let you down. Incidentally, Bowlby makes it clear in his theory that attachment styles are not rigid and set for life, but rather “can change dramatically” throughout life. This can occur as a result of different emotional experiences in new relationships (Brisch, 2002).

The emerging adulthood stage in life refers to a period in the life span that all young adults undergo within the ages of 18 and 29 years old. Jeffrey Arnett, the pioneer of the emerging adult stage, put forward that individuals in this stage have a chance to grow and change regardless of past circumstances. Emerging adults from troubled families have an opportunity to “straighten the parts of themselves that they feel are twisted,” and establish new relationships. Those that were raised in happier and healthier families have an opportunity to escape their parents’ images of themselves. They can finally decide who they themselves want to be (Arnett, 2004).

This time period is characterized by a feeling of being “in-between;” individuals are cognizant that they are well beyond adolescence, but not yet fully independent adults. Throughout this stage, emerging adults aim to achieve specific things which Arnett coined the “criteria for adulthood.” Arnett found this criterion by releasing a survey and gathering the consensus. He gathered that Americans thought that adulthood required accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2004).

The emerging adulthood stage is described as exciting, as it typically encompasses high hopes and dreams as young adults strive to fill their own blank slates. It is also a

period of anxiety and uncertainty, because young adults' current lives may be unsettled, and their future lives unpredictable. In pursuing stability, individuals explore various possibilities in love, work, and moving towards enduring choices. They frequently make decisions that they know are subject to change as a natural consequence to their explorations. For instance, they may accept a job and soon learn that the field is indeed not for them. They may move in with a partner and find that they are incompatible in lifestyle habits. They may end a relationship with a friend who they feel is serving as a negative rather than positive influence (Arnett, 2004).

But how does self-esteem play into attachment in emerging adulthood? Self-esteem is a measure of an individual's overall evaluation of his or her personal self-worth; how "good enough" he or she feels (Marsh & O'Mara, 2008; Rosenberg, 1965). Do individuals with specific upbringings have higher beliefs in themselves during this stage than others? Are they more likely to use the time to invest in experimentation and possibilities, or do they experience more inhibition because of feelings of negativity and instability (Reifman et al., 2007)? The present study seeks to 1) understand the relationship between one's attachment style and self-esteem in emerging adulthood, 2) investigate the bi-directional influence of developmental categories on attachment style and self-esteem, and 3) explore if and how one's presence in a romantic partnership, and whether that partnership be stable or unstable, mediates these relationships.

Review of the Literature

There is a fairly limited body of research pertaining to the influence of attachment

style and self-esteem within one's experience in the emerging adulthood stage of life. Research has particularly not assessed the role of parental attachments among young people beyond college age (Arnett, 2000a).

There have, however, been previous studies analyzing the effects of attachment on self-esteem or self-worth among all ages, and in adolescence. Alan Sroufe investigated attachment and development in a 30-year longitudinal study, evaluating participants from birth to adulthood (2005). Results indicated that based on teacher and counselor ratings for children aged 10, those with secure attachment histories were consistently rated as more self-confident, higher on self-esteem, and more "ego-resilient" than those with either a history of resistant or avoidant attachment. In addition, individuals with secure histories were significantly higher on specific features, such as "flexible, able to bounce back after stress or difficulty" and "curious and exploring," and lower on items such as "falls to pieces under stress," "inhibited and constricted," and "becomes anxious when the environment is unpredictable" (Sroufe, 2005).

Several researchers have confirmed that those with a positive mental model of self (e.g., secure individuals) have relatively higher self-esteem than those with a negative mental model of self (e.g., anxious ambivalent individuals) (Bylsma, Cozzarelli, & Sumer, 1997; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Mikulincer, 1995). In addition, securely attached people hold positive views of themselves and others (Bartholomew, 1990; Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998a). By and large, securely attached individuals report positive notions of their upbringings and early family relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990). In adolescence, securely attached individuals experience better adjustment than their insecure counterparts (Cooper, Shaver,

& Collins, 1998). Moreover, their internal security is related to the confidence and assertiveness they demonstrate in social situations (Collins & Read, 1990) (Park et al., 2004).

Conversely, anxiously attached individuals have received inconsistent support from their caregivers. They internalize a negative mental model of self, and a positive model of others (Levy et al., 1998). They experience a negative model of self as uncertainty and anxiety regarding acceptance in relationships, and have experienced rejection in their relationships. They seek personal validation through acquiring others' approval (Bartholomew, 1990). Dismissing individuals, however, are less likely to rely on others for validation or support, due to a negative mental model of others, stemming from their early childhood experiences. They received stringent parenting, and were often rejected from their caregivers (Levy et al., 1998), and have learned that interaction with significant others is painful (Shaver & Hazan, 1988). Thus, they teach themselves that others are distrustful (Feeney & Noller, 1990), and maintain emotional distance and independence (Bowlby, 1982; Brennan & Bosson, 1998; Mikulincer, 1998a; Shaver & Hazan, 1988). They rely on themselves often and possess a positive mental model of self (Park et al., 2004).

Additional studies have found secure attachment to have a positive impact on self-esteem and development. Judith Salzman discovered that female college-aged adolescents who are securely attached are also likely to have healthy self-esteem and higher overall well-being compared to those who are insecurely attached (1996). In addition, in the study, anxious or ambivalently attached students were found to be significantly more depressed than those who were securely attached. They also reported lower levels of self-

esteem than the secure group. Ambivalently attached students, as children, identified with their mothers in an exceedingly strong, negative way and engaged in push-pull behavior, clinging for love yet pushing the mother away for fear of rejection. They therefore seem particularly vulnerable to encountering difficulties in meeting the adolescent challenges of individuation and identity formation. Avoidantly attached students were found to be in between the results of the secures and ambivalents on measures of depression and self-esteem. Salzman's study is limited exclusively to females in adolescence. It is still not completely clear how individuals in the emerging adulthood stage would fare on measures of self-esteem given their attachment styles and early attachment experiences (Salzman, 1996).

Allgood, Beckert, and Peterson examined father involvement in the lives of adolescent and emerging adult daughters and the effects on self-esteem and psychological well-being. They found that positive father involvement and nurturant fathering - often translated as the father acting as a secure base for his child - are associated with greater self-esteem in daughters (2012). Moreover, daughters who reported positive retrospective perceptions of their fathers and indicated memories of nurturant fathering and expressive types of father involvement, including such things as companionship, father-daughter activities, and emotional involvement, had higher self-esteem than daughters who did not express retrospective perceptions of positive father involvement (Allgood et al., 2012). Incidentally, various researchers suggest that father involvement is significantly and inversely related to the psychological distress of child, adolescent, emerging adult, and adult daughters - when father involvement is high, their daughters' psychological distress is low (Amato, 1994; Barnett et al., 1991; Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998; Liu,

2008; Shek, 1993; Van Wel et al., 2000; Videon, 2005). This trend of findings, although limited to a sample of women, might have predictive implications for the present study. It is possible that positive father or parent involvement, often leading to secure attachment in a child, is linked to greater self-esteem among emerging adults during the transitional stage.

Adolescents' attachment representations have also been examined. Scharf and Kivenson-Baron conducted a longitudinal study employing a sample of 88 Israeli male adolescents involved in military service (2004). Many individuals were just beginning emerging adulthood at the time of the first assessment and were 17 and 18 years old. Their attachment styles were assessed using the Adult Attachment Interview during their high-school senior year. A year later, they and their friends reported on the adolescents' adjustment to mandatory military service. Three years later, participants and their parents reported on the adolescents' capacity for intimacy using an in-depth interview on their individuation. This study found that an "autonomous state of mind" or secure attachment style was associated with better coping with basic training and with a higher capacity for mature intimacy. These results emphasize a securely attached individual's adaptable developmental trajectory as he moves through emerging adulthood having served in the military. However, the researchers also found that autonomous and dismissing participants did not differ in their perceptions regarding self-esteem and personal control (Scarf & Kivenson-Baron, 2004).

Although the relationship between attachment and self-esteem in emerging adulthood has not been independently explored, parental support and one's sense of mastery in adolescence into early adulthood has been meticulously studied. Pudrovska, Schieman,

Pearlin, & Nguyen define a high sense of mastery as the belief that one is able to influence his environment to achieve desired outcomes, and a low sense of mastery as the belief that external forces control one's life (2005). In a 16-year longitudinal study consisting of a sample of 559 adolescents, Surjadi, Lorenz, Wickrama, and Conger found that parental support was associated with higher levels of mastery and with greater extra-familial support during the transition to adulthood, but only until age 18 (2011). Over time, results indicated a decline in the influence of parental support on changes in one's sense of mastery (Surjadi et al., 2011).

There are a multitude of findings that report physical, emotional, social, and psychological outcomes as a result of insecure and secure attachment. Individuals with secure working models experience low stress in relationships with parents, peers, and romantic partners and deal with relationship stressors more actively by using their social network during adolescence and at the age of 21 years (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). Strong family and peer relationships are also associated with higher levels of positive development in emerging adulthood, as well as with better adjustment to school, higher family socioeconomic status, and better emotional control (O'Connor et al., 2011).

In addition, Johnson, Gans, Kerr, and La Valle examined the way emerging adults perceived their families as they begin the transition to college and how these perceptions affect their overall well-being and adjustment (2010). They reported that when emerging adults perceived their families to be less cohesive, the emerging adults also experienced less academic adjustment, more dissatisfaction with their social adjustment, and more psychological distress after making the college transition. These findings add to the research trend that the way in which one views his family environment during emerging

adulthood is indeed linked to adjustment during normative transition periods (Johnson et al., 2010). These findings by Seiffge-Krenke, O'Connor et al., and Johnson et al., are all consistent with Bowlby's theory (Bowlby, 1971) stating that young people's positive relationships with their parents and peers - and demonstration of secure attachment - enables these individuals to better explore their environment and adapt well to change (Sroufe et al., 1999). The present study might explain if this poor adjustment and lack of satisfaction among insecurely attached individuals translates to low self-esteem in emerging adulthood.

With regard to insecurely attached individuals, individuals with preoccupied working models experience high relationship stress, particularly in relationships with parents, and employ less adaptive coping styles over time (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). Emotional neglect in childhood, involving rejection, criticism, and negative interaction with parents as attachment figures is linked to the development of anxiety disorders in adolescence and adulthood. Age is not related to the presence of anxiety disorders and an adolescent is just as likely as an adult to acquire a disorder as a result of early inadequate support (Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015). These results also support Bowlby's assertion that adult anxiety is rooted in childhood experiences. These early experiences leave a child uncertain of the availability of a protective figure during times of need (Bowlby, 1973; Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015).

In general, and independent of other variables like attachment, self-esteem has been proven to gradually increase across the young adulthood transition. During this time, men typically report higher self-esteem levels than women. In addition, there are various personality characteristics and life circumstances that relate to higher self-esteem in

young adulthood and across time. Personality characteristics that were found to have a positive effect on self-esteem include low neuroticism, high extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. A stable romantic relationship also was positively associated with self-esteem in young adulthood, with a considerable positive effect around the ages of 23 and 25 years old (Wagner et al., 2013).

Hypotheses

Out of the three attachment styles, I expect that secure attachment will reveal the most positive significant relationship with self-esteem in emerging adulthood. This prediction is primarily based off of previous data that reports the association between secure attachment and a positive mental model of self, in addition to better adjustment in adolescence than insecure anxious and insecure avoidant individuals. Securely attached individuals are shown at a young age that they are worthy of love, attention, and that their requests are tended to. Securely attached emerging adults will also likely benefit from their feelings of support from others in this stage that is normally associated with a high degree of uncertainty (H1) (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983; Arnett, 2004). On the contrary, insecure attachment has been shown to be related to profound feelings of loneliness (Page & Cole, 1991) and a perceived lack of social support from family and friends (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005). Insecurely attached emerging adults may struggle to feel good about themselves and their circumstances in this stage without a sufficient foundation of support.

Further, I would expect insecure avoidant individuals to also have a significant

positive relationship with self-esteem in emerging adulthood, because they also possess a positive mental model of self. I would expect this positive association to be less significant than that of secure attachment. However, due to a lack of support and responsiveness from their caregivers in early life, they grow to have a negative mental model of others (H2). I expect that insecure anxious attachment will be negatively and significantly associated with self-esteem. I believe this low opinion of self stems from an insecure anxious individual's inconsistent early caregiving experiences (H3) (Bartholomew, 1990; Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998a; Collins & Read, 1990; Park et al., 2004).

In addition, according to Bowlby, secure attachment relationships are the foundation for the "growth of self-reliance" (1973). Infants who were able to depend on their caregivers for support who can serve as a secure base "would later be more independent" (Bowlby, 1973; Sroufe, 2005). Further, I expect that the securely attached will be most comfortable and approving of themselves during this transitional stage.

I expect that insecure anxious individuals who find that they have lower scores on the self-esteem scale will also find that they receive "negativity/instability" and "self-focused" scores on the inventory of emerging adulthood (H4). Insecure anxious individuals are characterized by strong feelings of attachment to their attachment figures and act persistent to stay close to their attachment figures (Levine & Heller, 2010). Researchers who examined the attachment and developmental stage of a sample of adopted emerging adults found that those who reported feeling the most unstable about emerging adulthood had self-reported attachment (to both parents) and adoption affect scores which were categorized as low stable or medium stable across the period from

adolescence to emerging adulthood. Likewise, individuals who reported feeling the least unstable about emerging adulthood had high stable attachment and adoption affect scores (Musante, 2010). Similarly, I expect that individuals with high attachment feelings in this study - those who are insecure anxious - will have unstable and/self-focused sentiments in emerging adulthood, and more than those of their secure and dismissing counterparts. Otherwise, I predict that the attachment styles and developmental categories in emerging adulthood will reveal minor or no significant correlation.

Finally, there is presently research supporting the claim that romantic partners replace early caregivers as an individual's key attachment figures as he or she develops in adolescence (Rosenthal & Kobak, 2010), and the claim that self-esteem in young adulthood is positively associated with having a stable romantic relationship (Wagner et al., 2013). Other studies have found that romantic partners replace friends as primary supportive networks for emerging adults and that romantic attachment is the strongest unique predictor of life satisfaction during this stage of life (Guarnieri et al., 2015). Further, several studies uphold that establishing and maintaining an enduring bond with a romantic partner who has demonstrated commitment and availability represents an important aspect of successful adult adaptation (Crowell & Waters, 1994; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Weiss, 1991).

Consequently, I expect that individuals who indicate that they are in a stable romantic relationship will report superior levels of self-esteem in their attachment style group. However, insecurely attached emerging adults will not surpass securely attached emerging adults on measures of self-esteem, whether they are in a stable romantic relationship or not (H5). In addition, I expect gender to have a mildly significant effect on

self-esteem in participants' attachment groups, and for men to have slightly higher self-esteem scores than women in their group, consistent with past research (H6) (Wagner et al., 2013). I do not expect ethnicity to have any significant effect on self-esteem for emerging adults (H7).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The sample of participants in this study included 199 emerging adults within the ages of 18 and 29 (mean age = 21.5, SD = 2.41) who reside within the United States and speak English. 43 out of the total sample were males, and 156 were females. Males were represented on SPSS as 1, and females were represented as 0. The dependent variable, self-esteem, had a mean score of 16.7 and a SD of 1.92 and 166 of the 199 total participants completed the questionnaire. This mean score, according to Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale scoring criteria, is within the normal range (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem scores ranged from 11 to 22 points.

To construct the variable of attachment, each one of the three attachment categories was a binary category. For the secure attachment category, 1 = secure, 0 = otherwise; for the anxious category, 1 = anxious, 0 = otherwise; for the avoidant category, 1 = avoidant, 0 = otherwise. 65% were characterized as secure, 28% anxious, and 6.5% avoidant. This is fairly consistent with previous literature on attachment, with a slightly smaller avoidant category than is typically noticed in attachment research (Levine & Heller, 2010). 1 also equated to being in a romantic relationship, and 0 equated to not being in a romantic

relationship; in addition, 1 = stable (or somewhat stable) relationship, 0 = unstable relationship. 61% of participants reported being in a romantic relationship. Out of all the participants who reported being in a romantic relationship, almost 59% said that they would describe their relationship as stable. For the emerging adulthood categories, the categories were also structured in a binary fashion; for example, 1 = identity, 0 = otherwise. For the ethnicities of the participants, 1 = White, Caucasian, or European American, 2 = Latino, or Hispanic American, 3 = Black, or African American, 4 = Native American or American Indian, 5 = Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6 = Other. About 80% of all participants were White, 5.5% were Latino, 2.5% were Asian, and 1.5% were Black. These statistics can be found in the Descriptive Statistics table at the end of the Method section (Table 1).

Participants were electronically recruited through the social media network, Facebook. Individuals were directed to an online survey on the Qualtrics survey software. This survey is completely anonymous and participants are ensured of this anonymity beforehand in the recruiting script and consent form, as well as instructed to not include any identifying information about themselves. They are made aware of their right to not answer any questions to which they do not want to answer, as well as their right to terminate their own participation at any time. They will choose either the “I consent” or “I do not consent to participate in the study” option in the electronic consent form in the survey. The participants are also made aware that the researcher cannot trace the participant’s identity from these choices or from any of their responses on the survey. This survey encompassed three sets of questions designed to measure participants’ attachment style, level of self-esteem, and the developmental category to which they

belong in emerging adulthood. The first questions prior to the survey consist of the participant consent form, and a few basic questions designed to acquire basic information from the participant to ensure that they fit the criteria for the study and for data information (e.g. being within the ages of 18 and 29, speaking English, living in the United States, indicating their gender, indicating their ethnicity, indicating whether or not they are in a romantic relationship, and indicating whether or not they perceive this relationship to be stable). The survey is listed in this paper as “Appendix A.”

Attachment Style

Attachment style was assessed using the questionnaire provided in psychiatrist and neuroscientist Amir Levine and co-author Rachel Heller’s 2010 work, *Attached*. This questionnaire is based on the Experience in Close Relationship (ECR) questionnaire. The ECR was first published in 1998 by Kelly Brennan, Catherine Clark, and Phillip Shaver. The ECR allowed for specific short questions that targeted particular aspects of adult attachment based on two main categories - anxiety in the relationship and avoidance. Later, Chris Fraley from the University of Illinois, together with Niels Waller and Kelly Brennan, revised the questionnaire to create the ECR-R. Levine and Heller developed a modified version that they believe works best in everyday life (Levine & Heller 2010). With regard to scoring, a predominant “A” selection in the multiple choice set of questions indicates an anxious attachment style, a predominant “B” selection indicates a secure attachment style, and a predominant “C” selection indicates the avoidant attachment style (Levine & Heller 2010).

However, for the purposes of this study, the letter options were translated to “True” and “False” response items. Selecting predominantly True” options for a given attachment style, or more true options for those questions than other questions directed towards other styles, would result in a score of that particular style. For example, if a participant selected 4 true responses for the questions directed at the anxious style, 11 true responses for the questions directed at the secure style, and 5 true responses for the questions directed at the avoidant style, he or she would be classified in the “secure” group. The remaining 22 questions indicate a “false” response; any false responses do not add points or influence any of the three attachment style categories.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg General Self-Esteem Scale. This prevalently employed measure is perhaps the most widely used instrument to assess self-esteem and how positively or negatively individuals feel towards themselves (Donnellan et al., 2011; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Schmitt & Allik, 2005). The scale was also found to be relatively stable across observers and cultures, robustly representative of individuals regardless of differences (Alessandri et al., 2015). The RSES consists of ten items to examine an individual’s self-reported self-worth. Items consist of statements such as “I take a positive attitude toward myself” or “At times I think I am no good at all.” The measure exists with a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scoring scale ranges from 0-30. For items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7, “Strongly Agree” items are given 3 points, “Agree” items are given 2 points, “Disagree”

items are given 1 point, and “Strongly Disagree” items are given 0 points. For items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10, “Strongly Agree” items are given 0 points, “Agree” items are given 1 point, “Disagree” items are given 2 points, and “Strongly Disagree” items are given 3 points. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Developmental Category

Participants’ developmental categories within emerging adulthood will be identified using the Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood (IDEA). This inventory consists of a 31-item “views of life survey,” designed to pinpoint where an emerging adult stands within this transitional stage (Reifman et al., 2007). Participants will be asked to think about the present time of their lives, in addition to the preceding few years and the next few years to come as they anticipate them. Each item to which the participants can either strongly agree, strongly disagree, somewhat agree, or somewhat disagree, begins with the question “Is this period of your life a...” (e.g. time of many possibilities, time of instability, time of optimism). The items to which the participant most finds somewhat or strong agreement with will determine his or her place within emerging adulthood. For example, questions 29, 30, and 31 refer to the “feeling in-between” category, so a participant who either somewhat or strongly agrees with at least two out of these three items (a majority of the items or more than fifty percent) can define themselves as “feeling in-between” during emerging adulthood (Reifman et al., 2007). A participant can find themselves in as many developmental categories as applies to him or

her.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-esteem	166	11.00	22.00	16.7470	1.91545
Secure	199	.00	1.00	.6533	.47713
Anxious	199	.00	1.00	.2814	.45082
Avoidant	199	.00	1.00	.0653	.24772
Age	192	18	29	21.59	2.413
Gender	199	0	1	.22	.413
Romantic_Relat	198	0	1	.61	.490
Identity	199	.00	1.00	.8241	.38168
Experimentation	199	.00	1.00	.8191	.38591
Negativity	199	.00	1.00	.7236	.44834
Other_Focused	199	.00	1.00	.4573	.49943
Self_Focused	199	.00	1.00	.8191	.38591
Inbetween	199	.00	1.00	.8141	.39003
Stable_RR	199	.00	1.00	.5879	.49345
White	199	.00	1.00	.7990	.40176
Black	199	.00	1.00	.0151	.12216
Latino	199	.00	1.00	.0553	.22910
Asian	199	.00	1.00	.0251	.15690

Results

Attachment style and self-esteem

To determine the relationship between attachment style and self-esteem within the years of emerging adulthood (ages 18-29), a linear regression analysis was carried out, with the log of self-esteem as the dependent variable, and the categories of attachment styles, namely secure, anxious, and avoidant, as the independent variables. The baseline category refers to the secure type which is represented in the table as the “intercept.”

Table 2.1 displays the results of the regression analysis.

The linear regression revealed a highly significant main effect between secure attachment and self-esteem in the positive direction ($p=.000$). In addition, there was a significant main effect between anxious attachment and self-esteem but in the negative direction ($p=.012$). Being anxiously attached reduced self-esteem by 5.8 percentage points compared to being securely attached.

H1, predicting that secure attachment and self-esteem would be positively and significantly correlated, was supported by the results. H3, stating that insecure anxious attachment and self-esteem would be negative correlated, is also supported by the results and as predicted, reveals the only negative correlation out of the three styles of attachment. H2, predicting that avoidant attachment would be positively correlated with self-esteem was not supported by the data as there was no significant relationship revealed in either direction ($p=.0807$).

According to the analysis, age is insignificantly related to self-esteem. This may suggest that for each age group, there is a varying level of self-esteem. In addition, contrary to H6 hypothesizing a significant association between gender and self-esteem, the results indicate no significant differences for males and females.

Moreover, the analysis reveals that being in a romantic relationship is negatively and significantly associated with self-esteem ($p=.084$). This is contrary to the general perception that an individual involved in a romantic relationship may be more likely to have high or healthy self-esteem. However, from this fact alone we are unaware of the quality of the relationship; it may be the case that the quality of the romantic relationship is unhealthy which might have resulted in low self-esteem. In order to confirm this, we looked at the association between one being in a stable romantic relationship and his or her self-esteem. We found that there is a positive association.

Contrary to H7 which predicted no significant association between any specific ethnicity and self-esteem, the results reveal that whites (represented by the “intercept”) display a positive and significant association with self-esteem. Also, the results show that being of Latino origin demonstrated a significant negative relationship with self-esteem ($p=.064$). Quantitatively, being Latino reduced self-esteem by 7.4 percentage points compared to whites.

Table 2.1. Linear Regression A

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Intercept	3.130	23.299	.000
Anxious	-.058	-2.556	.012
Avoidant	.011	.244	.807
Age	-.002	-.578	.564
Gender	.021	.823	.412

In_Romantic_Rel	-.148	-1.740	.084
Stable_Relationship	.152	1.778	.077
Latino	-.074	-1.866	.064
Black	-.009	-.132	.895
Asian	-.043	1.453	.148
Other	-.027	-.468	.640

Dependent Variable: log of self-esteem

Significance: $p < 0.10$

Attachment style, stability in romantic relationship, and self-esteem

Table 2.1 showed the results for the association between attachment style and self-esteem for the overall sample, irrespective of them being in a romantic relationship. Next, we intend to examine the heterogeneity of this association with regard to relationship stability. Subsequently, Table 2.2 communicates the results of the association between attachment style and self-esteem of the participants who self-reported being in a stable romantic relationship. Table 2.3 reports the same association for the participants who self-reported being in an unstable romantic relationship.

The regression in Table 2.2 revealed a highly significant positive correlation between secure attachment and self-esteem for participants who report being in a stable romantic relationship ($p=.000$). Given that an individual is in a stable romantic relationship, being securely attached increased self-esteem by 313 percentage points. It also revealed a significant negative correlation between anxious attachment and self-

esteem ($p=.106$). Given that an individual is in a stable romantic relationship, being anxiously attached decreased self-esteem by 5.1 percentage points. Like Table 2.1, there was no significant relationship between avoidant attachment and self-esteem, regardless of one's involvement in a stable romantic relationship ($p=.934$).

Table 2.3 also reveals a highly significant positive correlation between secure attachment and self-esteem for participants in an unstable romantic relationship. Given that an individual is in an unstable relationship, being securely attached increases self-esteem by 290.3 percentage points. However, for secure individuals in a stable romantic relationship, the coefficient with regard to self-esteem is higher (Table 2.2, $B=31.33$, Table 2.3, $B=2.903$). Additionally, Table 2.3 communicates a significant negative correlation between anxious attachment and self-esteem for participants in an unstable romantic relationship ($p=.033$). Incidentally, the coefficient for this negative association is greater for anxious individuals in an unstable relationship than it is for anxious individuals in a stable relationship (Table 2.2, $B= -.051$, Table 2.3, $B= -.076$). There is still no significant correlation between avoidant attachment and self-esteem in participants involved in an unstable relationship, but the coefficient for avoidants in a stable relationship is higher than for those in an unstable relationship (Table 2.2, $B=.112$, Table 2.3, $B=.004$).

H5, stating that individuals who indicate that they are in a stable romantic relationship will report superior levels of self-esteem in their attachment group, is partly supported by the data. The results demonstrated that individuals who are securely attached in a stable relationship have higher self-esteem than those who are securely attached in an unstable relationship. For the anxious attached group, there was no

significant effect for the participants in a stable romantic relationship; however, for the participants in an unstable relationship, being anxious attached reduces self-esteem. This may mean that the negative association between anxious attachment and self-esteem in the overall sample (Table 2.1) is driven by the participants' involvement in an unstable relationship.

Table 2.2. Linear Regression B

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Constant (secure)	3.133	21.775	.000
Anxious	-.051	-1.633	.106
Avoidant	.112	.935	.352

Dependent Variable: log of self-esteem

Selecting only cases for which Stable_RR = 1.00

Significance: $p < .10$

Table 2.3. Linear Regression C

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Constant (secure)	2.903	17.590	.000
Anxious	-.076	-2.193	.033
Avoidant	.004	.083	.934

Dependent Variable: log of self-esteem

Selecting only cases for which Stable_RR = .00

Significance: $p < .10$

Secure attachment and developmental category

Table 3.1 reveals the results of the linear regression between the independent variable, developmental category in emerging adulthood, and the dependent variable, secure attachment. The analysis indicated a significant positive association between secure attachment and being self-focused during this period ($p=.034$). Specifically, being self-focused increases secure attachment by 159.1 percentage points. In addition, the results reported a significant positive association between being in the “in-between” category and secure attachment ($p=.089$). Being in the “in-between” category increases secure attachment by 140.9 percentage points. Also, there was a positive association between gender and secure attachment ($p=.048$), such that being male increases secure attachment by 86.8 percentage points.

The analysis displayed that being in a romantic relationship was significantly and negatively associated with secure attachment ($p=.034$). The analysis revealed that one’s presence in a romantic relationship decreased secure attachment by 263.3 percentage points. Moreover, the results showed a significant positive association between being in a stable romantic relationship and secure attachment ($p=.000$). Namely, being in a stable romantic relationship increased secure attachment by 465.3 percentage points.

Consequently, we can potentially infer that the former negative association is a result of participants being involved an unstable or unhealthy romantic relationship, and if they

were involved in a relationship which they perceived as more stable or healthy, their level of secure attachment may be higher. Table 3.2 communicates the variables that are significantly associated with relationship stability more thoroughly.

Table 3.1. Linear Regression D

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Intercept	6.371	2.252	.026
Identity	.457	.499	.618
Experimentation	.507	.654	.514
Negativity	-.618	-1.221	.224
Other_Focused	.209	.559	.577
Self_Focused	1.591	2.131	.034
Inbetween	1.409	1.710	.089
Age	-.097	-1.324	.187
Romantic_Relat	-2.633	-2.133	.034
Stable_RR	4.653	3.739	.000

Dependent Variable: Secure

Significance: $p < 0.10$

Developmental Category and romantic relationship stability

Table 3.2 reports a linear regression analysis between the independent variable, developmental category, and the dependent variable, romantic relationship stability. The

results display a significant positive association between the experimentation phase and being in a stable romantic relationship ($p=.019$). Quantitatively, being in the experimentation category increases one's likelihood of a stable romantic relationship by 33.5 percentage points. This finding is consistent with previous literature. Couples who undergo frequent variety, or experimentation by means of new and different experiences in their relationship, are more likely to experience positive events and emotions. They are also less likely to experience hedonic adaptation, which is defined by a "gain or loss in happiness after the experience of a valenced stimulus or event, followed by a gradual return to baseline" (Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2013). Moreover, "boredom" was found to predict lowered relationship satisfaction (Tsapelas, Aron, & Orbuch, 2009).

Results also indicated a significant positive association between being other-focused and having a stable romantic relationship ($p=.002$). This could be due to the finding that appreciating one's partner and the time you spend with him slows the hedonic adaptation process, potentially increasing relationship satisfaction (Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2013). Specifically, being other-focused increases one's relationship stability by 20.6 percentage points. In contrast, being self-focused was found to be significantly and negatively associated with relationship stability ($p=.092$); being self-focused decreased relationship stability by 23.4 percentage points. All other emerging adulthood categories revealed an insignificant association with relationship stability. Age was found to be significantly and positively associated with relationship stability during emerging adulthood ($p=.023$); increasing age also increased relationship stability by 3 percentage points.

Avoidant attachment was negatively and significantly associated with relationship

stability ($p=.051$). Specifically, avoidant attachment decreased the likelihood for a stable relationship by 280 percentage points. Conversely, secure attachment demonstrated a highly positive and significant relationship with relationship stability ($p=.000$); secure attachment increased relationship stability by 36.1 percentage points. This finding is consistent with the existing literature reporting secure attachment as serving a prominent function in healthy relationships, and insecure attachment serving as an impediment (Dunham & Woolley, 2011; Zurbriggen et al., 2012).

Table 3.2. Linear Regression E

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Intercept	-2.10	-.404	.687
Identity	-.075	-.447	.656
Experimentation	.335	2.370	.019
Negativity	-.021	-.229	.819
Other_Focused	.206	3.095	.002
Self_Focused	-.234	-1.695	.092
Inbetween	.031	.206	.837
Age	.030	2.297	.023
Avoidant	-2.80	-1.962	.051
Secure	.361	4.953	.000

Dependent Variable: Stable_RR

Significance: $p < 0.10$

Developmental Categories, attachment, and self-esteem

Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, located in Appendix B refer to three different linear regressions for the three categories of attachment, anxious, secure, and avoidant. Table 4.1 addresses an analysis of the anxiously attached portion of participants, in which developmental category is the independent variable, and the log of self-esteem is the dependent variable. In contrast to H4 which anticipated a significant relationship between this style and the “negativity/instability” and “self-focused” emerging adulthood categories, our findings in this analysis reveal no significant associations. Table 4.2 addresses the results of the securely attached portion of participants, and reveals a negative and significant association between being self-focused and self-esteem ($p=.055$), such that for this secure group, being self-focused decreases self-esteem by 12.1 percentage points. This finding is particularly consistent with the literature reporting insecure people’s self-focused nature, perhaps based on their desire for acceptance and approval (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Table 4.3 reports an analysis of the avoidant group, and also reveals no significant associations.

Discussion*Summary*

The present study had three main objectives. The first objective was to understand attachment and self-esteem within the context of the emerging adulthood years. Further, the present study demonstrated that securely attached individuals are indeed the most

likely out of the three styles to possess healthy self-esteem in emerging adulthood. Anxious attachment, conversely, was negatively associated with self-esteem, and demonstrated lower measures than the other two attachment styles. Incidentally, these findings are consistent with the direct relationship previously reported between secure attachment and self-esteem among other ages outside of the 18-29 emerging adulthood bracket (Bylsma, Cozzarelli, & Sumer, 1997; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Mikulincer, 1995; Bartholomew, 1990; Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998a). Avoidant attachment was not significantly related to self-esteem in any way. This finding was somewhat surprising due to researchers' knowledge of avoidantly attached individuals' positive mental models of self (Park et al., 2004). It was also a bit surprising that this group was only 6.5 percent of all participants, when this figure is typically about 20% (Levine & Heller, 2010).

The second objective of the study was to understand the relationship between the developmental categories one finds himself in within emerging adulthood, and one's attachment style. Secure attachment was found to be linked to the "self-focused" category, in addition to the "in-between" category. Although being self-focused was directly related to secure attachment, this factor was also found to be related to a reduction in secure individuals' self-esteem. There were no significant results found between developmental categories in emerging adulthood in both the anxious and avoidant group.

A third objective of the study was to explore if and how one's presence in a romantic partnership, whether that partnership be stable or unstable, mediates these relationships. This combination of variables produced various noteworthy results. First,

being in a stable romantic relationship was found to positively linked to self-esteem with regard to securely attached individuals. Moreover, securely attached individuals are already prone to healthy self-esteem, and being in a stable relationship increases this likelihood even more. For securely attached individuals who find themselves in an unstable relationship, their attachment style is likely to increase their self-esteem. Anxiously attached individuals are more susceptible to low self-esteem, but their presence in a stable romantic relationship increases the likelihood for a slight enhancement of their self-esteem. However, this effect is not enough to reverse the inverse relationship of anxious attachment and self-esteem. Although we did find a positive impact of one's presence in a stable relationship and self-esteem for those who were avoidantly attached, this was also not enough of an impact to be considered significant. Additionally, being avoidantly attached was linked to being in an unstable romantic relationship.

Interestingly, we initially found that being in a romantic relationship in general was linked to low-self-esteem. However, when we analyzed the relationship between a stable romantic relationship and self-esteem alone, we found that being in a stable relationship does in fact increase one's self-esteem. Thus, we were able to infer that the former inverse relationship can be attributed to the participants being involved in an unhealthy or unstable romantic relationship.

With regard to one's presence in a stable romantic relationship, and one's developmental category in emerging adulthood, there were a few significant findings. We found that involvement in the "experimentation" phase or the "other-focused" phase was related to being in a stable romantic relationship. Being "self-focused" was related to

being in an unstable relationship. Increased age within the emerging adulthood stage also turned out to be positively related to relationship stability.

Limitations

This study is accompanied by some limitations. Our sample included a slightly disproportionate amount of white females. In addition, one eligibility requirement for the study included residing in the United States. Moreover, the study's results are more generalizable for these populations than for other ethnicities and geographic locations; external validity is somewhat limited.

Additionally, the present study involved all quantitative methods of data and self-report scales. Participants could have engaged in self-presentation and impression-management in responding to some of the inquiries. For instance, participants who are knowingly involved in an unhealthy relationship could report that their relationship is stable, or somewhat stable, simply because they do not want to be perceived in a negative light to the researcher, or to themselves.

We could have employed other, or additional means of operationalization for the constructs in this study. Self-esteem could have been tested by more than one scale for reliability. The Rosenberg scale may also be seen as outdated since its release in 1965, and a more modern self-esteem measure may have provided for more reliability in this study. In addition, the questions that directly targeted participants' presence in a romantic relationship, and presence in a stable or unstable relationship, could have been generated in a subtler way, so as to potentially result in more reliable findings. One's relational

stability could also have been assessed using the Davis and Todd Relationship Rating Form (Levy & Davis, 1988). The Inventory of Emerging Adulthood scale also makes it more likely to end up in one category than another (i.e. there are more questions targeted at the identity exploration phase over than other-focused phase). Finally, the attachment questionnaire, while getting at an individual's attachment style, focuses largely on the person's patterns in intimate relationships. A qualitative interview, or more inclusive assessment on an individual's attachment orientation in infancy and childhood may have resulted in increased reliability for the attachment construct.

Implications

The present study offers implications which provide psychological researchers with valuable insights concerning individual functioning and well-being in emerging adulthood. Primarily, we are provided with ongoing reassurance that secure attachment is beneficial for individuals and their self-esteem; this is perhaps particularly important during emerging adulthood when uncertainties are high in school, work, and love (Arnett, 2004). If individuals find that they are not inherently securely attached, they might take steps to increase their level of secure attachment, or demonstrate the "secure buffering effect." They may do this through involvement of a relationship with a secure partner, awareness of insecure tendencies, or through engaging in "priming" or identifying and role-modeling securely attached friends or loved ones (Levine & Heller, 2010). In addition, secure attachment is useful for individuals' self-esteem when they are in an unstable relationship that may otherwise damage their self-worth.

Future research might benefit from an expanded awareness of how else to become more secure, especially in circumstances involving a dysfunctional upbringing and a more difficult attachment combination (i.e. anxious and avoidant). In addition, this study provides general support for the importance of one's upbringing, and the mate he or she ends up with. Perhaps increased intervention efforts would provide useful for individuals who find themselves trapped in insecure orientations, whether through familial relations, or adult love.

We also are presented with the significance of being involved in a romantic relationship that we perceive to be stable. Stable romantic relationships result in being somewhat beneficial for any individual's self-esteem, particularly for secures. Mere involvement in a romantic relationship is not enough to result in positive self-esteem, and actually has the opposite effect on self-esteem is the individual perceives the relationship as unhealthy. In addition, being "other-focused" and open to "experimentation" is linked to relationship stability. Being "self-focused" rather is related to relationship instability. Such findings put forward the question that requires further assessment of what characteristics of other-focusedness and experimentation prove beneficial to romantic relationships, beyond the scope of what has been earlier speculated in this study.

Because the results of this study provided few significant results between the emerging adulthood developmental categories, and attachment styles, we may be able to infer that all of these categories are more-or-less ubiquitous for individuals regardless of a secure, anxious, or avoidant orientation. It might be interesting, however, for future research to conduct replication studies to confirm these results. Future researchers could also consider conducting replication studies with perhaps different methods of

operationalization for the construct of attachment, as there are several. In addition, future research would benefit from a replication study involving a more heterogeneous sample of males, females, ethnicities other than predominantly Caucasian, and other countries outside the United States. Finally, because this study was entirely quantitative in nature, more qualitative methods like interviewing could reveal a great deal about the details about individual's attachment histories and current styles, self-worth, the developmental categories they are in within emerging adulthood, and the varying levels of stability within their romantic relationships.

Emerging adulthood, the life stage of 18-29 year olds, is characterized by high levels of excitement and uncertainty as young adults explore their identities (Arnett, 2004). This stage still warrants a great deal of research, particularly with regard to the influence of attachment orientation or early upbringing on young adult cognitions and life choices. In addition, the particular six categories, experimentation, identity, negativity/instability, other-focused, self-focused, and in-between that an emerging adult can experience requires future assessment in general and in the context of attachment theory. It should be investigated, for example, why the securely attached group is so inclined to be in the in-between category, when this is a classification defined to be a marked experience for all emerging adults; not just one singular population.

The present study provided a valuable foundation for future research, namely demonstrating that secure attached individuals are most inclined for healthy self-esteem during this stage, and are even more so inclined when involved in a stable romantic relationship. However, it is still uncertain the influence of alternate attachment

orientations on self-esteem in emerging adulthood, outside the primary three styles explored in this study. Future studies may benefit from conducting this research.

In addition, attachment theory posits that one's attachment style is flexible. Moreover, insecurely attached individuals can move towards a more secure style not just by becoming intimately involved with a secure partner, but by being cognizant of their respective mindsets. Insecure anxious individuals can try to be proactively aware of their negative mental models of self and positive mental models of others; they can do this by noticing the tendency to underestimate themselves, while putting partners or loved ones on a pedestal. Similarly, insecure avoidant individuals can try to be aware of their positive mental models of self, and negative mental models of others, or notice the tendency to put their independence above their relationships, or judge partners negatively because of their own underlying fears of intimacy. Above all, individual and/or group organization efforts to foster secure attachment in insecurely-attached individuals can perhaps help to equip a greater amount of people with healthy levels of self-esteem in emerging adulthood and beyond.

References

- Alessandri, G., Vecchione, M., Eisenberg, N., & Laguna, M. (2015). On the factor structure of the Rosenberg (1965) General Self-Esteem Scale. *Psychological Assessment, 27*(2), 621-635. doi:10.1037/pas0000073
- Allgood, S. M., Beckert, T. E., & Peterson, C. (2012). The role of father involvement in the perceived psychological well-being of young adult daughters: A retrospective study. *North American Journal of Psychology, 14*(1), 95-110.
- Amato, P. R. (1994). Father-child relations, mother-child relations, and off-spring psychological well-being in early adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56*, 1031-1042.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000a). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist, 55*, 469–480.
- Arnett, J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood the winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bao, K. J., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). Making it last: Combating hedonic adaptation in romantic relationships. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 8*(3), 196-206. doi:10.1080/17439760.2013.777765
- Barnett, R. C., Kibria, N., Baruch, G. K., & Pleck, J. H. (1991). Adult daughter-parent

- relationships and their associations with daughters' psychological distress. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 29-43.
- Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 7, 147-178.
- Blascovich, J., & Tomaka, J. (1991). Measures of self-esteem. In J. P. Robinson, P. R. Shaver, & L. S. Wrightsman (Eds.), *Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes* (Vol. 1, pp. 115–160). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-590241-0.50008-3>
- Bowlby, J. (1969/1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1: Attachment*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1971). *Attachment and loss: Attachment (Vol. 1)*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss. Vol. 2: Separation: Anxiety and anger*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss, Vol. I. Attachment* (2nd ed.). New York: Basic Books. (Original work published 1969)
- Brennan, K. A., & Bosson, J. K. (1998). Attachment-style differences in attitudes toward and reactions to feedback from romantic partners: An exploration of the relational bases of self-esteem. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 699-714.
- Brisch, K. (2002). *Treating attachment disorders: From theory to therapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Bylsma, W. H., Cozzarelli, C., & Sumer, N. (1997). Relation between adult attachment styles and global self-esteem. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 19, 1-16.

- Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 644–663.
- Collins, N. L. (1996). Working models of attachment: Implications for explanation, emotion, and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 571*, 810–832.
- Cooper, M., Shaver, P., & Collins, N. (1998). Attachment styles, emotion regulation, and adjustment in adolescence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*, 1380–1397.
- Crowell, J. A., & Waters, E. (1994). Bowlby's theory grown up: The role of attachment in adult love relationships. *Psychological Inquiry, 5*, 31–34.
- Donnellan, M. B., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Robins, R. W. (2011). Self-esteem: Enduring issues and controversies. In T. Chamorro-Premuzic, S. von Stumm, & A. Furnham (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of individual differences* (pp. 718–746). New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Dunham, S. M., & Woolley, S. R. (2011). Creating secure attachment: A model for creating healthy relationships. In S. M. Dunham, S. B. Dermer, J. Carlson, S. M. Dunham, S. B. Dermer, J. Carlson (Eds.). *Poisonous parenting: Toxic relationships between parents and their adult children* (pp. 81–98). New York, NY, US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Feeney, J. A., & Noller, P. (1990). Attachment style as a predictor of adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 281–291.
- Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. Review of

- General Psychology Special Issue: *Adult Attachment*, 4, 132–154.
- Griffin, D. W., & Bartholomew, K. (1994). The metaphysics of measurement: The case of adult attachment. In K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships*. Vol. 5: Attachment processes in adulthood (pp. 17-52). London: Kingsley.
- Guarnieri, S., Smorti, M., & Tani, F. (2015). Attachment relationships and life satisfaction during emerging adulthood. *Social Indicators Research*, 121(3), 833-847. doi:10.1007/s11205-014-0655-1.
- Harris, K. M., Furstenberg, F. F., & Marmer, J. K. (1998). Paternal involvement with adolescents in intact families: The influence of fathers over the life course. *Demography*, 35, 201-216.
- Johnson, V. K., Gans, S. E., Kerr, S., & LaValle, W. (2010). Managing the transition to college: Family functioning, emotion coping, and adjustment in emerging adulthood. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(6), 607-621. doi:10.1353/csd.2010.0022
- Levine, A., & Heller, R. (2010). *Attached: The new science of adult attachment and how it can help you find- and keep -love*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Levy, K. N., Blatt, S. J., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Attachment styles and parental representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 407-419.
- Levy, M. B., & Davis, K. E. (1988). Lovestyles and attachment styles compared: Their relations to each other and to various relationship characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5(4), 439-471. doi:10.1177/0265407588054004
- Liu, Y. L. (2008). An examination of three models of the relationships between parental

- attachments and adolescents' social functioning and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(4), 941-952.
- Mallinckrodt, B., & Wei, M. (2005). Attachment, social competence, social support, and psychological distress. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 358–367.
- Marsh, H. W., & O'Mara, A. (2008). Reciprocal effects between academic self-concept, self-esteem, achievement, and attainment over seven adolescent years: Unidimensional and multidimensional perspectives of self-concept. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34, 542–552.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167207312313>
- Mikulincer, M. (1995). Attachment style and the mental representation of the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 1203-1215.
- Mikulincer, M. (1998a). Adult attachment style and affect regulation: Strategic variations in self-appraisals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 420-435.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Musante, D. (2010). Family predictors of negative instability in adopted emerging adults. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- O'Connor, M., Sanson, A., Hawkins, M. T., Letcher, P., Toumbourou, J. W., Smart, D., & Olsson, C. A. (2011). Predictors of positive development in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(7), 860-874. doi:10.1007/s10964-010-9593-7
- Page, R.M., & Cole, G.E. (1991). Loneliness and alcoholism risk in late adolescence: A comparative study of adults and adolescents. *Adolescence*, 26, 925–930.
- Park, L. E., Crocker, J., & Mickelson, K. D. (2004). Attachment Styles and Contingencies

of Self-Worth. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(10), 1243-1254.

doi:10.1177/0146167204264000

Pudrovska, T., Schieman, S., Pearlin, L. I., & Nguyen, K. (2005). The Sense of Mastery as a Mediator and Moderator in the Association Between Economic Hardship and Health in Late Life. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 17(5), 634-660.

doi:10.1177/0898264305279874

Reifman, A., Arnett, J. J., & Colwell, M. J. (2007, Summer). Emerging adulthood: Theory, assessment, and application. *Journal of Youth Development*, 2(1).

Reis, S., Curtis, J., & Reid, A. (2012). Attachment styles and alcohol problems in emerging adulthood: A pilot test of an integrative model. *Mental Health and Substance Use*, 5(2), 115-131. doi:10.1080/17523281.2011.619503.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: University Press.

Rosenthal, N. L., & Kobak, R. (2010). Assessing adolescents' attachment hierarchies: Differences across developmental periods and associations with individual adaptation. *Journal of Research On Adolescence*, 20(3), 678-706.

doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00655.x

Salzman, J. P. (1996). Primary attachment in female adolescents: Association with depression, self-esteem, and maternal identification. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal And Biological Processes*, 59(1), 20-33.

Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B., & Sarason, B.R. (1983). Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 127-139.

- Scharf, M., Mayseless, O., & Kivenson-Baron, I. (2004). Adolescents' Attachment Representations and Developmental Tasks in Emerging Adulthood. *Developmental Psychology, 40*(3), 430-444. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.40.3.430
- Schmitt, D. P., & Allik, J. (2005). Simultaneous administration of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 53 nations: Exploring the universal and culture-specific features of global self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*, 623–642.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.4.623>.
- Seiffge-Krenke, I. (2006). Coping with Relationship Stressors: The Impact of Different Working Models of Attachment and Links to Adaptation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35*(1), 25-39. doi:10.1007/s10964-005-9015-4
- Shaver, P. R., & Hazan, C. (1988). A biased overview of the study of love. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5*, 473-501.
- Shek, D. T. (1993). Perceptions of parental treatment styles and psychological well-being of Chinese college students. *Psychologia, 36*, 159-166.
- Sroufe, L. A. (2005). Attachment and development: A prospective, longitudinal study from birth to adulthood. *Attachment & Human Development, 7*(4), 349-367.
doi:10.1080/14616730500365928
- Sroufe, L., Carlson, E., Levy, A., & Egeland, B. (1999). Implications of attachment theory for developmental psychopathology. *Development and Psychopathology, 11*, 1–13.
- Surjadi, F. F., Lorenz, F. O., Wickrama, K. S., & Conger, R. D. (2011). Parental support, partner support, and the trajectories of mastery from adolescence to early

- adulthood. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(4), 619-628.
doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.10.001
- Tsapelas, I., Aron, A., & Orbuch, T. (2009). Marital boredom now, predicts less satisfaction nine years later. *Psychological Science*.
- Van Wel, F., Linssen, H., & Abma, R. (2000). The parental bond and the well-being of adolescents and young adults. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(3), 307-318.
- Videon, T. M. (2005). Parent-child relations and children's psychological well-being. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26(1), 55-78.
- Wagner, J., Lüdtkke, O., Jonkmann, K., & Trautwein, U. (2013). Cherish yourself: Longitudinal patterns and conditions of self-esteem change in the transition to young adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(1), 148-163. doi:10.1037/a0029680
- Weiss, R. S. (1991). The attachment bond in childhood and adulthood. In C. M. Parks, J. Stevenson-Hinde, & P. Marris (Eds.), *Attachment across the life cycle* (pp. 66-76). New York, NY: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Zurbriggen, E. L., Gobin, R. L., & Kaehler, L. A. (2012). Trauma, attachment, and intimate relationships. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 13(2), 127-133.
doi:10.1080/15299732.2012.642762

Appendix A.

Accepting the terms of this form constitutes consent to participate in the relationship patterns and life situation study, targeting individuals ages 18-29. The study is being conducted by Holly Rosen who is an undergraduate psychology student working under the supervision of Professor Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. The purpose of this study is to understand how one's patterns in relationships influence his or her current life situation. I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

Participant consent forms and all other electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer, accessible only to myself or my advisor. Electronic data will involve coding in the place of participants' real names. The information you provide will be kept confidential by assigning a code number to the data. The survey information will be used purely for research purposes, and will only be accessed by the researcher, Dr. Arnett and their research assistants, if any. The survey information will be kept for research purposes for an indefinite period of time.

It will take up to 30 minutes to complete the entire study.

I am aware that I am free to terminate my participation in this research at any time, or to refuse to answer any questions to which I don't want to respond. If you have questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Holly Rosen at (631) 617-1363 or HRosen@clarku.edu, or Jeffrey Arnett at JArnett@clarku.edu. By agreeing to consent below, I verify that I have read this consent form and agree to participate in this survey. This study has been approved by the Clark Committee for the Rights of Human Participants in Research and Training Programs (IRB). Any questions about human rights issues should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. James P. Elliott (508) 793-7152.

Yes, I consent to participate in the study.

No, I do not consent to participate in the study.

What is your age? _____

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other

Do you live in the United States?

Yes

No

Do you speak English?

Yes

No

What is your ethnicity?

White, Caucasian, or European American

Latino or Hispanic American

Black or African American

Native American or American Indian

Asian or Pacific Islander

Other

Are you currently in a romantic relationship?

Yes

No

Would you describe this relationship as stable?

Yes

No

Somewhat

I am not in a romantic relationship

Attachment Styles Questionnaire; from Levine and Heller's work, Attached and originally

adapted from Fraley, Waller, and Brennan's (2000) ECR-R Questionnaire

Instructions: Please indicate if each statement is more true or false for you. If you find that the statement is not at all applicable to your life (e.g. you do not/have never had a partner or spouse), please respond how you think you otherwise would if it was applicable.

I often worry that my partner will stop loving me.

True

False

I find it easy to be affectionate with my partner.

True

False

I fear that once someone gets to know the real me, s/he won't like who I am.

True

False

I find that I bounce back quickly after a breakup. It's weird how I can just put someone out of my mind.

True

False

When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and incomplete.

True

False

I find it difficult to emotionally support my partner when s/he is feeling down.

True

False

When my partner is away, I'm afraid that s/he might become interested in someone else.

True

False

I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.

True

False

My independence is more important to me than my relationships.

True

False

I prefer not to share my innermost feelings with my partner.

True

False

When I show my partner how I feel, I'm afraid s/he will not feel the same about me.

True

False

I am generally satisfied with my romantic relationships.

True

False

I don't feel the need to act out much in my romantic relationships.

True

False

I think about my relationships a lot.

True

False

I find it difficult to depend on romantic partners.

True

False

I tend to get very quickly attached to a romantic partner.

True

False

I have little difficulty expressing my needs and wants to my partner.

True

False

I sometimes feel angry or annoyed with my partner without knowing why.

True

False

I am very sensitive to my partner's moods.

True

False

I believe most people are essentially honest and dependable.

True

False

I prefer casual sex with uncommitted partners to intimate sex with one person.

True

False

I'm comfortable sharing my personal thoughts and feelings with my partner.

True

False

I worry that if my partner leaves me I might never find someone else.

True

False

It makes me nervous when my partner gets too close.

True

False

During a conflict, I tend to impulsively do or say things I later regret, rather than be able to reason about things.

True

False

An argument with my partner doesn't usually cause me to question our entire relationship.

True

False

My partners often want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

True

False

I worry that I'm not attractive enough.

True

False

Sometimes people see me as boring because I create little drama in relationships.

True

False

I miss my partner when we're apart, but then when we're together I feel the need to escape.

True

False

When I disagree with someone, I feel comfortable expressing my opinions.

True

False

I hate feeling that other people depend on me.

True

False

If I notice that someone I'm interested in is checking out other people, I don't let it faze me. I might feel a pang of jealousy, but it's fleeting.

True

False

If I notice that someone I'm interested in is checking out other people, I feel relieved—it means s/he's not looking to make things exclusive.

True

False

If I notice that someone I'm interested in is checking out other people, it makes me feel depressed.

True

False

If someone I've been dating begins to act cold and distant, I may wonder what's happened, but I'll know it's probably not about me.

True

False

If someone I've been dating begins to act cold and distant, I'll probably be indifferent; I might even be relieved.

True

False

If someone I've been dating begins to act cold and distant, I'll worry that I've done something wrong.

True

False

If my partner was to break up with me, I'd try my best to show her/him what s/he is missing (a little jealousy can't hurt).

True

False

If someone I've been dating for several months tells me s/he wants to stop seeing me, I'd feel hurt at first, but I'd get over it.

True

False

Sometimes when I get what I want in a relationship, I'm not sure what I want anymore.

True

False

I won't have much of a problem staying in touch with my ex (strictly platonic)—after all,

we have a lot in common.

True

False

Emerging Adulthood Inventory (IDEA); Dr. Jeffrey Arnett

Instructions: First, please think about this time in your life. By “time in your life,” we are referring to the present time, plus the last few years that have gone by, and the next few years to come, as you see them. In short, you should think about a roughly five-year period, with the present time right in the middle.

- For each phrase shown below, please place a check mark in one of the columns to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree that the phrase describes this time in your life. For example, if you “Somewhat Agree” that this is a “time of exploration,” then on the same line as the phrase, you would put a check mark in the column headed by “Somewhat Agree.”
- Be sure to put only one check mark per line.

Is this period of your life a...

Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree,

Strongly Agree

1. time of many possibilities?
2. time of exploration?
3. time of confusion?

4. time of experimentation?
5. time of personal freedom?
6. time of feeling restricted?
7. time of responsibility for yourself?
8. time of feeling stressed out?
9. time of instability?
10. time of optimism?
11. time of high pressure?
12. time of finding out who you are?
13. time of settling down?
14. time of responsibility for others?
15. time of independence?
16. time of open choices?
17. time of unpredictability?
18. time of commitments to others?
19. time of self-sufficiency?
20. time of many worries?
21. time of trying out new things?
22. time of focusing on yourself?
23. time of separating from parents?
24. time of defining yourself?
25. time of planning for the future?

26. time of seeking a sense of meaning?
27. time of deciding on your own beliefs and values?
28. time of learning to think for yourself?
29. time of feeling adult in some ways but not others?
30. time of gradually becoming an adult?
31. time of being not sure whether you have reached full adulthood?

Scoring Instructions

Identity Exploration 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

Experimentation/Possibilities 1, 2, 4, 16, 21

Negativity/Instability 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 17, 20

Other-Focused 13, 14, 18

Self-Focused 5, 7, 10, 15, 19, 22

Feeling "In-Between" 29, 30, 31

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES); Dr. Morris Rosenberg

Instructions: These next questions contain a list of statements dealing with your general

feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Scoring:

Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. Give “Strongly Disagree” 1 point, “Disagree” 2 points,

“Agree” 3 points, and “Strongly Agree” 4 points. The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

Appendix B.**Table 4.1. Linear Regression F**

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Intercept	2.954	10.400	.000
Experimentation	-.132	-.993	.328
Negativity	.047	.578	.567
Other_Focused	-.002	-.058	.954
Self_Focused	-.049	-.765	.450
Inbetween	.056	.514	.610
Age	-.005	-.687	.497
Gender	-.204	-1.887	.068

Dependent Variable: log of self-esteem

Selecting only cases for which Anxious = 1.00

Significance: $p < .010$

Table 4.2. Linear Regression G

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Intercept	3.187	17.853	.000
Identity	-.035	-.664	.509
Experimentation	.081	1.502	.136
Negativity	-.019	-.679	.499
Other_Focused	.001	.036	.972
Self_Focused	-.121	-1.939	.055
Inbetween	.030	.575	.567
Age	-.002	-.313	.755
Gender	.033	1.227	.223

Dependent Variable: log of self-esteem

Selecting only cases for which Secure = 1.00

Significance: $p < .010$

Table 4.3 Linear Regression H

	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
Intercept	1.658	3.091	.091
Other_Focused	.240	2.162	.163

Self_Focused	.203	1.265	.333
Inbetween	.125	.667	.573
Age	.035	1.703	.231
Gender	-.039	-.506	.663

Dependent Variable: log of self-esteem

Selecting only cases for which Avoidant = 1.00

Significance: $p < .01$