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Conflict in Human Relationships and Seeking Out Pets as a Safe Haven

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Abstract

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MSW, New York University, 1997

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Research has revealed the positive physical and the psychological aspects of pet ownership, suggesting that an individual's attachment style can impact the kind of relationship they have with their pet. Two theories guided this qualitative study; the first was Bowlby's attachment theory, which suggests that if a child feels that the attachment figure is attentive and accessible, the child will feel loved and secure. Another theory was Ainsworth's attachment theory in which attachment figures are described as possessing four features: proximity maintenance, separation distress, secure base, and safe haven. This study consisted of 212 participants at least 18 years old owning a pet, either a cat or a dog, who were or had been in least one romantic relationship. Self-report measures were used to capture each research variable, which included the Relationship Structures Questionnaire, the Conflict Tactic Scale, and the Owner-Pet Relationship Scale. Each research question was tested with an analysis of variance to examine the relationship between attachment style and each outcome. The results revealed that participants with a dismissing-fearful avoidant attachment were closer to their pet when they had to negotiate better with their partner. Men with a secure attachment style that have high psychological aggression and women with a preoccupied attachment style that have high psychological aggression with family members were all likely to use their pet as a safe haven. This study may provide psychologists with insight regarding how pets can be a source of support during times of relationship stress leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to all those individuals who love and care for their pets. Moreover, this paper is dedicated to individuals who find comfort in their pets as their pets play a special role as in their lives.

I truly and sincerely dedicate this paper to Dr. Mary Barnas, my dissertation committee chairperson. Dr. Barnas has been very helpful in providing me sound advice as she guided me through the dissertation process. She is extremely kind and understanding. I also want to thank Dr. Craig Marker who also has been very helpful and motivating.

I dedicate this paper to my family who have been truly supportive. I dedicate this paper to my wheaten terrier Brinkley who I lost to cancer. I miss him every day. I also dedicate this paper to my wheaten terrier Paddington who is a source of comfort and love. My dogs inspire me to want to write about the importance of pets in our lives.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the United States more individuals own pets than before, and pet owners often financially invest a lot in their pets including spending on pet supplies, pet grooming and dog walking services (Cavanaugh et al., 2008). As such, pets play an important role in many lives (Cavanaugh et al., 2008). Pets are often seen as members of the family and provide pet owners with unconditional love as well as a safe haven, which is a kind of support that provides a person with comfort, reassurance, and protection in times of distress (Kurdek, 2009). An individual's attachment style will impact the likeliness of seeking this type of support (Kurdek, 2009). For example, anxious pet owners tend to worry that something bad will happen to their pet and have a desire for close proximity to their pet (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). They are also more likely to feel frustrated when the relationship with their pet is not as close as they want and may even feel anger if their pet prefers the proximity of others. On the other hand, avoidant pet owners tend to feel uncomfortable with a physical and emotional closeness to their pet and will strive to maintain physical and emotional distance from their pet. Avoidant pet owners often experience difficulty depending on their pet and turning to their pet when feeling distress.

Though researchers have looked at attachment to pets and safe haven behavior during daily life (Kurdek, 2009; Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011), there is a gap in the literature concerning whether pets serve as attachment figures when individuals experience relationship distress. Thus, my study focused on how conflict in important core human relationships influences the role of pets being a safe haven. A pet owner's attachment style may be a factor in the likeliness of seeking out one's pet as a safe haven when

experiencing conflict with romantic partners, family members and friends. The positive social change implication of my study is that it may heighten awareness of the important role that pets play in many individuals' lives. My study will provide further evidence regarding the importance of pets in the lives of pet owners in times of distress in daily life. In addition, my study will provide evidence how the presence of a pet may help individuals experiencing conflict in close human relationships.

The next major sections of Chapter 1 will explore the research literature related to this topic as well as the gap in the literature. In addition, the theories of origin and concepts will be explored. The research questions and hypotheses will be clearly defined. The design of this study and the methodology will be described. Then significance of this study will be explored.

Background

The domestication of animals has helped to create attachment relationships with human beings (Konok et al., 2015). For instance, dogs have shown how they often seek out their owner as a secure base in which they reach out to their owner for reassurance when exploring their environment (Konok et al., 2015). Dogs have also been shown to seek their owners as a safe haven when feeling threatened. Additionally, pet owners form attachments to their pets and may seek out their pet as a safe haven more than other people (Konok et al., 2015). This study focused on the role that pets play as safe haven when pet owners are experiencing conflict with their romantic partners and family members. For example, Kurdek (2009) found that college students living full time with their pets who were highly attached to their pets reported being as close to their pet as

they were to their mothers, fathers, siblings, best friends, and significant others. The results revealed that pets were able to provide their owners with all four features of an attachment figure (Kurdek, 2009).

Pets can also play an important role in therapy. Both children and adults may find it less threatening to communicate their feelings to a therapist with a pet present (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). A therapy pet can thus help formulate a secure attachment with the pet and with the therapist. Although avoidant individuals tend to use distancing strategies as proximity seeking is viewed as dangerous, they may feel in control with a pet. Therefore, a therapy pet can provide avoidantly-attached individuals with a corrective emotional relationship with a pet as part of the therapy. Furthermore, anxiously attached individuals tend to use hyperactivating strategies when attachment figure are perceived as unreliable, yet they may feel more in control with a pet. Anxiously attached individuals can form a corrective emotional relationship with a therapy pet. Thus, pets have taken on an important role in society. In fact, many individuals perceive their pets as family members (Konok et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of how an individual's attachment style can impact how they perceive their pets and whether they use their pets as a safe haven.

Problem Statement

Many pet owners may turn to their pet as a safe haven or an attachment figure being sought to alleviate distress (Kurdek, 2009). For example, individuals have turned to their pet dogs when feeling emotional distress more than turning to their parents, siblings, children, and best friends (Kurdek, 2009). However, research has not examined the

relationship between a pet owner's attachment style and using a pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic partners and family members. This study addressed how a pet can be a source of comfort when feeling distress especially when experiencing conflict with important human relationships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to examine the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style and the likeliness of seeking proximity to their pet to play the role of a safe haven when experiencing conflict with their romantic partners and family members. There is a gap in the research on the relationship between these variables. Individuals who cannot find attachment security in their interpersonal relationships can form attachment relationships with their pet to compensate for unmet attachment needs (Zilcha-Mano, 2009). Therefore, pet owners may obtain a decrease of distress and experience comfort from their pets that they may not receive from their human relationships. This study explored how a pet owner's attachment style may influence the role their pet plays as a safe haven. In the first research question, the independent variables are attachment style and experiencing conflict with romantic partners. In the second research question, the independent variables are attachment style and experiencing conflict with family members. The dependent variable is safe haven.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) as measured by the Relationship Structures Questionnaire and the likelihood of seeking their pet to play the

role of a safe haven as measured by the Owner-Pet Relationship Scale when experiencing conflict with romantic partners (boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife) as measured by the Conflict Tactic Scale?

$H_0$1: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will have a higher degree of using their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with romantic partners.

H_a1: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will not have a higher degree of having their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with romantic partners.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) as measured by the Relationship Structures Questionnaire and the likeliness of seeking their pet to play the role of a safe haven as measured by the Owner-Pet Relationship Scale when experiencing conflict with family members (mother, father, siblings, children) as measured by the Conflict Tactic Scale?

$H_0$2: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will have a higher degree of having their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with family members.

H_a2: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will not have a higher degree of having their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with family members.

An analysis of differences between men and women with these research questions was an additional variable. These variables were measured utilizing various scales. To capture the variable of attachment style, the Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) Questionnaire was used (Fraley et al., 2006) To capture the variable of experiencing conflict in romantic relationships and among family members the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) was used (Strauss et al., 1996). Finally, the Owner-Pet Relationship Scale (OPRS; Winefield et al., 2008) measured the variable safe haven.

Theoretical Foundation

One theory that applied to this study is Bowlby's attachment theory that suggested children experience grief when the attachment behaviors are activated but the attachment figure is not available (Bretherton, 2015). Bowlby observed that infants would experience distress when separated from their primary caregiver and would attempt to reestablish proximity to the caregiver (Fraley, 2010). In addition, he believed the attachment behavioral system developed by natural selection to regulate proximity to an attachment figure (Fraley, 2010). Furthermore, Bowlby observed that if a child feels that the attachment figure is close, attentive, and accessible, the child will feel loved and secure; however, if the child does not feel secure, the child may feel despair (Fraley, 2010).

Additionally, this study was guided by Ainsworth's theory. According to Ainsworth and Wittig (1969, as cited in Duschinsky, 2015), infants who were classified as secure when they used the caregiver as a safe base from which to explore. These infants would protest at their departure but then would seek out the caregiver when returning. In their study, they termed a pattern of infant behavior as avoidant as these infants avoided showing their distress to their attachment figure. In addition, these infants had experienced distress in the past and learned that they should not communicate their feelings as it would lead to rejection. The third pattern was termed ambivalent/resistant in which these infants displayed distress even before being separated from their caregivers. These infants were often frustrated and were difficult to comfort upon the caregiver's return. These infants appeared to distrust their caregivers even when they were present. In addition, Ainsworth (1984) described attachment figures as possessing four features including their physical closeness is enjoyable (proximity maintenance), they are missed when absent (separation distress), they are sources of comfort (secure base), and they are sought out to alleviate distress (safe haven). These features help to develop caregiving bonds and attachment bonds (Kurdek, 2009). Caregiving bonds focus on an individual's feelings of closeness to the attachment figure that relate to proximity maintenance and separation distress (Kurdek, 2009). Attachment bonds focus on utilizing the attachment figure to cope with threats to security that relate to secure base and safe haven (Kurdek, 2009).

Using Bowlby's attachment theory and Ainsworth's attachment theory, conflict among important core human relationships including immediate family members and

romantic partners was examined in this study. Research has shown that there is a relationship between experiencing family conflict and having difficulty in adjustment among children, adolescents, and young adults; however, if conflicts within families are resolved, children may not develop adjustment issues (Roskos et al., 2010). Unfortunately, family conflict is not always resolved, leading to unresolved issues throughout an individual's adult life (Pickering et al., 2015). Additionally, romantic partners often experience conflict. For instance, often one or both partners experience stress at work and in everyday living and share these events, which negatively impacts the other partner (Timmons et al., 2016). This "spill over" in married couples tends to be worse when the marriage is high in aggression and if the spouse's family of origin was aggressive (Timmons et al., 2016).

Despite the conflict people experience, studies have found that individual's attachment to their pets was more secure than their relationships with their significant others (Smolkovic et al., 2012), and a pet owner's attachment style may affect both physical and psychological benefits they may experience by having a pet (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2012). Research has shown that the human-pet relationship can be more simple and safe (Smolkovic et al., 2012). For instance, humans often do not feel judged by their pets providing them with a sense of safety (Smolkovic et al., 2012). As such, pet owners can have an attachment to their pets with minimal risk as a pet can be accepting, affectionate, loyal, honest, and consistent fulfilling the owner's basic need to feel loved (Smolkovic et al., 2012). For example, people have turned to their pet dogs when feeling emotional distress more than turning to their parents, siblings, children, and best friends (Kurdek,

2009). Pets thus act as a safe haven for pet owners and can lead to positive physical effects including lowering blood pressure among pet owners (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2012). But individual's attachment style can affect the likeliness of seeking support from others (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2012). Individuals with attachment avoidance toward their pet may be less likely to use their pet as a safe haven and do not achieve an increase in confidence by having proximity to their pet, whereas those with high anxious attachment with their pets benefit more both physically and psychologically with their pet as a safe haven (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2012). Further, an attachment bond with a pet can begin in a person's early life, revealing the importance that pets play in many lives (Hall et al., 2016). It has been found that children that develop a strong attachment to a pet are more likely to be more empathic to others (Daly & Morton, 2006, as cited in Hall et al., 2016).

Nature of the Study

I conducted a quantitative nonexperimental study designed to demonstrate the relationship between an individual's type of attachment style and having their pet play the role as a safe haven when experiencing conflict in important human relationships. For the first research question, the independent variables are attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) and conflict with romantic partners, and the dependent variable is safe haven (a source of comfort when feeling distress). The second research question has the independent variables as attachment style and conflict with family members and the dependent variable as safe haven. The participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Each participant was required to own at least one pet either a dog or a cat. Demographic questions were given to each

participant to obtain descriptive data regarding the sample to determine gender, age, income, level of education, and pet ownership status.

Each participant will complete multiple measures. For the first research question, the participants were asked to answer the questions based on their current romantic relationship or their last romantic relationship. To capture the variable of attachment style, the ECR-RS Questionnaire was utilized, which contains nine items to assess attachment styles with respect to important people in their lives (Fraley et al., 2006). Some of the questions include "It helps to turn to this person in times of need," "I usually discuss my problems and concerns with this person," and "I'm afraid that this person may abandon me" (Fraley et al., 2006). Utilizing this measure can compare how a participant uses important human relationships as a safe haven versus using a pet as a safe haven. The ECR-RS is an interval measure, and the internal consistency reliability tends to be .90 or higher (Fraley et al., 2006). In addition, all standardized path coefficients in the two-factor solution were statistically significant (Sibley et al., 2004). For items assessing avoidance ranged from 0.37 to 0.62 and 0.41 to 0.58 for items assessing anxiety (Sibley et al., 2004). Furthermore, both the anxiety and avoidance sub-scales revealed acceptable internal reliabilities during two measurements (Sibley et al., 2004).

To capture the variable of experiencing conflict in romantic relationships the CTS was used, which measures the conflict tactic behaviors of both individuals in a conflict (Strauss et al., 1992). This measure has four scales including the parent-child, partner-child, parent-partner, and partner-parent. In addition, the five subscales include verbal discussion, verbal aggression, hostile-indirect withdrawal, physical aggression, and

spanking. However, the parent-partner scale and the partner-parent scale do not include the spanking subscale. The reliability for this scale is strong with a = .86. The construct validity is strong. Therefore, the CTS was the best instrument to measure family conflict.

To capture the variable of safe haven with their pets the OPRS was used. This scale contains items from the attachment theory focusing on the pet owner's desire to maintain proximity to their pets. In addition, this scale contains items that focus on pet owners' perception of their pets as being emotionally supportive and mutual (Smolkovic et al., 2012). The OPRS was developed by Winefield et al. (2008) and includes 15 items that are rated on a scale from 1 to 4. Some of the questions include "My pet helps me get through rough times" and "My pet knows when I am upset and tries to comfort me." A participant that owns more than one pet is asked to choose answers regarding the pet the individual feels closes to. This measure is an interval measure. The internal reliability is high with a = .92

In regard to the data analysis plan, each research question involved an analysis of variance (ANOVA). In addition, an ANOVA was utilized to examine the relationship between attachment style and each outcome. The influence of conflict was analyzed as an independent variable in this analysis.

Definitions

The operational definitions of the variables that were used in this study include attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant), conflict in important human relationships (romantic partners and family members), and safe haven (turning to pet in times of distress).

Attachment styles: An individual's attachment style is either secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant (Paetzold et al., 2015). An infant who develops a secure attachment figure has experienced caretakers who consistently responded to their needs when feeling distressed. However, an infant who experienced being consistently rejected when seeking comfort when feeling distressed will develop a dismissing-avoidant or fearful-avoidant attachment to them. An infant who has experienced caretakers that are inconsistent in which they are sometimes responsive and other times not responsive to their infant's needs will develop a preoccupied attachment to them.

Conflict: The dictionary definition of conflict is a "serious disagreement or argument; typically a protracted one" ("Conflict," n.d.). It can also be defined as a state produced by placing two or more individuals in a situation where each has the same goal but only one can obtain it ("Conflict," n.d.). Pet owners' conflict was utilized in demonstrating the relationship between experiencing conflicts with important human relationships and using a pet as a safe haven as a result.

Safe haven: Attachment figures possess four features including their physical closeness as being enjoyable (proximity maintenance), are missed when absent (separation distress), are sources of comfort (secure base), and are sought out to alleviate distress (safe haven; (Ainsworth, 1984). Therefore, these features help to develop caregiving bonds and attachment bonds (Kurdek, 2009). The focus of this study was a safe haven. Safe haven is defined as a kind of support that meets a person's need for comfort, reassurance, assistance, and protection in times of danger and distress (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2012).

Assumptions

There are basic assumptions for this study. It was assumed that the participants would respond honestly to my surveys and to the best of their abilities. To ensure honesty, anonymity and confidentiality were preserved, and the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no ramifications. In addition, it was assumed that this sample is representative of the population that I wish to make inferences to.

Scope and Delimitations

In regard to sampling, all the participants were volunteers. Some of the participants were recruited from Walden University; therefore, many of the volunteers will be students. Other participants were recruited from online social media sites including Facebook. As such, it is unknown the extent that their views and responses will be representative of those choose not to participate in the study. In regard to inclusion and exclusion, data were only be from individuals at least 18 years old who are pet owners.

Limitations

In my study, it is possible to find a few potential limitations. One potential limitation is the type of measurements utilized for my study. The only methods that were utilized are questionnaires for gathering data. Another limitation in my study is that it is likely to be overrepresented by pet lovers.

Significance of this Study

This study may help to better understand the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style and the degree of their pet being a safe haven when experiencing

conflict with important human relationships. An attachment bond with a pet can begin in a person's early life. It has been found that children that develop a strong attachment to a pet are more likely to be more empathic to others (Hall et al., 2016). My study may demonstrate how pets can be used to help children who may be aggressive to encourage more empathy to others, meaning therapists can use pets when treating children to help them to develop empathy. Moreover, my study may help more individuals who need animal assisted therapy to be better matched to a pet that reflects their attachment style (Turcsan et al., 2012). Since animal assisted therapy is imperative to helping these individuals, a better-matched pet may help facilitate a stronger bond.

This study is also significant because pets can be used therapeutically to help those with insecure attachments. My study demonstrates the importance of pets in the lives of pet owners in times of distress since pets can provide comfort and unconditional love. Moreover, therapists can use pets during couple and family therapy sessions when conflict is an issue to help alleviate stress and comfort the patients. Patients can bring their pets to therapy sessions so their clinician can observe their patient's interactions with their pets to gain an understanding of their attachment style (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014). Both children and adults may find it less threatening to communicate their feelings to a therapist with a pet present (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Therefore, a therapy pet can help formulate a secure attachment with the pet and with the therapist (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015).

Summary

The focus of this quantitative study was the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style and the likeliness of turning to their pets as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic partners and family members. More information about this topic has the potential to help mental health professionals be more aware of the importance of the human–animal bond. For example, mental health professionals may be more likely to question their patients about who they tend to seek for a safe haven by asking their patients about their relationship with their pets, and they can observe attachment style when patients bring pets to therapy sessions (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014).

Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth review of the literature on pet attachment and the role of safe haven. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used to explore the research questions and hypotheses proposed for this study. Chapters 4 and 5 will report and discuss the results of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Pets often provide individuals with companionship and unconditional love that they may not receive from other people (Blouin, 2012). This study explored how a pet owner's attachment style may influence the likeliness of seeking their pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic partners and family members, which addresses a gap in the literature. The following sections of Chapter 2 will describe the theoretical foundation and how the research articles were found. A thorough literature review will describe the studies related to the constructs. The summary will provide a concise conclusion of the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

This review of the literature will discuss theories and research on attachment style and pet ownership. Strategies for this review included databases through Walden University's online library and Google Scholar. Researching evidence-based articles, the search terms used included *attachment style*, *conflict in close human relationships*, *safe haven*, and *pet ownership*. The search included scholarly articles and books with a time limit of the past 10 years. The references list of some articles also provided additional resources. These search methods provided in an extensive review of the professional literature on attachment style and pet ownership.

Theoretical Foundation

Adult Attachment Theory

Research on adult attachment is rooted in the notion that the motivational system that provokes the close emotional bond between a parent and their child is also

responsible for the bond that arises between adults in emotionally intimate relationships (Fraley, 2010). This section will provide an overview of the history of adult attachment research and the important theoretical concepts that define this theory.

John Bowlby

John Bowlby, a British psychoanalyst, was the father of attachment theory (Fraley, 2010). Bowlby's interest in attachment resulted from his own childhood as well as observations of the mother-child bond among animals (Van der Horst, 2007, as cited in Maroda, 2012). Further, Bowlby's interest in attachment was sparked by his curiosity about the intense distress that infants experience when separated from their parents and their attempts to prevent separation including crying, clinging, or searching for their parents (Fraley, 2010). During this period, other researchers argued that these infants were displaying immature defense mechanisms, but Bowlby believed that these behaviors had an evolutionary role, as maintaining proximity to their parents meant they were more likely to survive (Fraley, 2010). Therefore, he argued that a motivational system that he labeled as the attachment behavioral system was developed by natural selection to regulate proximity to attachment figures (Fraley, 2010). Furthermore, his attachment system suggests that if an infant feels that their parent is accessible and attentive, they will feel loved, confident, and secure, leading to the child to be more likely to explore the environment; however, the child may experience anxiety or distress if they do not feel that their parent is accessible and attentive (Fraley, 2010). Moreover, Bowlby believed that the infant's early attachment experiences would continue throughout their lifetime, influencing later relationships (Fraley, 2010).

Bowlby also created the concept of the internal working model, which includes expectations and beliefs for how to behave and think that the child holds regarding relationships based on their caregiver experiences (Fraley, 2010). The internal working model is the key mechanism responsible for the long-term implications of early attachment. For instance, a secure child is more likely to believe that individuals will be available based on previous experiences and is likely to seek out relationships that are consistent with their expectations. As such, secure children are more likely as adults to be secure in their romantic relationships. However, it is possible that an individual's attachment pattern can change if their relationship experiences are not consistent with their expectations. Thus, Bowlby indicated the significance of a child's early attachment relationships and how it impacts a child's relationships during the child's life course.

As Bowlby continued his research, he sought to understand and distinguish between what was biologically motivated and what was socially motivated in attachment (Maroda, 2012). In particular, Bowlby was interested in the studies of attachment in rhesus monkeys that were being conducted by Harry Harlow at the University of Wisconsin (Maroda, 2012). Bowlby perceived Harlow's study as validating his own theory about the biological component of attachment for survival other than just food. For instance, Harlow's monkeys sought the cloth mother monkey who did not provide food rather than the wire monkey who only provided food (Maroda, 2012). Therefore, Harlow's study confirmed Bowlby's theory of how animals experience basic attachment needs from their attachment figure in order to survive. This study revealed how

attachment serves the primary function of the baby achieving felt security not but meeting biological needs such as food.

Bowlby was also interested in the field of cognition particularly Jean Piaget's work on child development (Pallini & Barcaccia, 2014). Bowlby believed that Piaget's discovery about infants' cognitive processes shared new insight into a child's affective relationship with the attachment figure. Piaget's work in a child's explorative behaviors complemented Bowlby's theory of secure attachment in which a secure child will feel comfortable exploring the environment. Both theorists agreed on the importance of the parental figure in supporting the child to explore their environment and how object permanence widens the range of stimuli for the child to explore the environment. Piaget also developed the concept of person permanence, in which the child is capable of understanding where the absent persons are; therefore, the child will search for the parental figure when close by and then search for the caretaker when absent. Bowlby used this concept of parental permanence to better understand how children experience the process of separation from the caretaker in a more cognitive perspective. In other words, Piaget's formation of knowledge through assimilation and accommodation and the Bowlbian concept of the internal working models complemented each other. Therefore, Piaget's and Bowlby's works produced an analysis of human behavior utilizing the affective and the cognitive outlooks.

Mary Ainsworth

In 1929, at 16 years old, Mary Ainsworth began studying psychology at the University of Toronto with William Blatz as her mentor (Rosmalen et al., 2016). Blatz's

security theory argues that children begin their lives dependent upon their parents, which he referred to as immature dependent security. Then as children get older and feel their parents will be available for them, the dependence becomes secure. As such, these children will feel confident to explore their environment using their parents as a secure base, developing skills and independence while feeling secure. In addition, as an individual reaches adulthood, the individual may develop a combination of independent security and mature dependent security, in which the individual may somewhat depend on friends or a romantic partner. Blatz argued that adults can remain immaturely dependent and rely on defense mechanisms including sublimation, compensation or rationalization to cope with their feelings of insecurity. Furthermore, Blatz argued that security is imperative in the different aspects of an individual's life including the parent–child relationship, the interpersonal relationships outside of the family, the adjustment to school or work, the leisure time activities, and religion beliefs. Blatz's emphasis on security as an important in every aspect of his or her life had a strong influence on the development of attachment theory.

Ainsworth's research focused on the mother–child bond and how it is developed (Rosmalen et al., 2016). Like Blatz, Ainsworth argued that a secure child would display exploratory behavior in a strange environment when using their mother as a secure base (Rosmalen et al., 2016). She conducted a study of 26 families who recruited from their pediatricians before the infant was born and were visited until the infant was 1 year old (Rosmalen et al., 2016). Ainsworth would conduct home visits to observe how mothers behaved with their child in their natural environment, but the final observation occurred

with the infants were 12 months old in a laboratory to assess how the infants used their mothers as a secure base for exploration (Rosmalen et al., 2016). Most of the infants would cry and stand near the door when their mothers were gone and return to play after being comforted when their mothers returned (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969, as cited in Duschinsky, 2015). The infants were classified as secure when they used the caregiver as a safe base from which to explore, avoidant if they looked or way or refused to interact with their mothers when they returned, ambivalent if they would loudly protest when their mothers left and behave in an anger when the mothers returned, and ambivalent/resistant if they displayed distress even before being separated from their caregivers and were difficult to comfort upon the caregiver's return (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969, as cited in Duschinsky, 2015). In the home observation, Ainsworth found that mothers of secure infants behaved the most sensitively at home during their first three months of life, the mothers of the avoidant infants showed more rejection including a lack close bodily contact, and the mothers of the ambivalent infants had responded in an inconsistent manner by behaving in a sensitive manner at times or by acting in a rejecting manner at other times (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969, as cited in Duschinsky, 2015).

Based on this observation of families, Ainsworth (1984) described attachment behaviors as possessing four features including that their physical closeness is enjoyable (proximity maintenance), they are missed when absent (separation distress), they are sources of comfort (secure base), and they are sought out to alleviate distress (safe haven). These features help to develop caregiving bonds and attachment bonds (Kurdek, 2009). Caregiving bonds focus on an individual's feelings of closeness to the attachment

figure that relate to proximity maintenance and separation distress (Kurdek, 2009). Attachment bonds focus on utilizing the attachment figure to cope with threats to security that relate to secure base and safe haven behavior (Kurdek, 2009).

One important contribution by Ainsworth was the concept of maternal sensitivity. Ainsworth argued of the importance that a mother is sensitive to their child's signals to meet their child's needs (Rosmalen et al., 2016). As such, it is imperative that a caregiver is sensitive to their child's signals to help them to become an adjusted child.

How Early Attachment Experiences Influences Other Relationships

Researchers have examined how early childhood attachment experiences may influence later relationships (Maroda, 2012). For example, Waters et al. (2014) examined the how the quality of early caregiving experiences during childhood through adolescence organized the development of a script-like representation of attachment by using the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) and the Attachment Script Attachment. The AAI captures an individual's early childhood experiences, including memories about separation, loss, rejection and trauma (Waters et al., 2014). The Attachment Script Attachment is a narrative based measure of attachment that consists of mother and father versions (Steele et al., 2014). Their results suggested that early caregiving experiences were associated with differences in the secure base script developed in young adulthood (Steele et al., 2014). In addition, the participants' secure base script knowledge was observed with the AAI states of mind rather than with self-reported attachment styles (Steele et al., 2014). They also found that the participants' secure base script knowledge was equal regarding their associations with maternal and paternal sensitivity (Steele et al.,

2014). Therefore, their memories of sensitivity were determined through the interview. As such, this study demonstrated that fathers contribute equally to the development of attachment representations (Steele et al., 2014). This is an important finding as most attachment articles focus more on a mother's influence on attachment. Their findings also support the prediction that an individual's early experiences with parents create a script (Steele et al., 2014). In addition, an individual's experiences of secure base support and parental sensitivity during early childhood supports the development of close relationships outside the family including teachers, peers, and romantic partners (Steele et al., 2014). Therefore, this study supports Bowlby's theory that early childhood experiences with caretakers impacts the development of other important relationships.

Research has also shown that adult romantic relationships function in a similar fashion to the infant–caregiver relationships (Fraley, 2006). For instance, in a natural study examining adults separating from their significant others at an airport, participants demonstrated behaviors similar to attachment related protests and caregiving behaviors, and the regulation of these behaviors was associated with attachment style (Fraley, 2006). In this study, highly avoidant adults demonstrated less attachment behavior than less avoidant adults (Fraley, 2006). In addition, romantic relationships can be reflective of a person's early attachment experiences (Fraley, 2006). For instance, adults who are secure in their romantic relationships are more likely as children to have parents who were affectionate, caring, and accepting (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, as cited in Fraley, 2006). As such, there is a connection between an individual's early child–parent experiences and attachment style in romantic relationships.

Modern Perception of Attachment Theory

During the early 90s, there was a shift of attachment theory toward the level of adult representation including internal working models, the focus of narratives, and attachment relations throughout the lifetime (De Bei & Dazzi, 2014). More recently, many psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians have borrowed from attachment theory. For instance, research has found that the patient-therapist attachment contributes to the quality of the clinical relationship. The patient will often seek closeness, comfort, and care from the therapist while the therapist plays a caregiver role by often soothing, protecting, and holding the patient. Therefore, it is important for clinicians to be aware of this attachment relationship and be aware of individual differences in attachment style.

Additionally, according to research, there are two fundamental dimensions to adult attachment patterns including attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance (Brennan et al., 1998). Individuals who score high on attachment-related anxiety tend to worry about if their significant partner is available, responsive, and attentive (Fraley, 2006). On the other hand, individuals who score high on attachment-related avoidance tend to feel less comfortable being intimate with others and prefer not to rely or open up to others (Fraley, 2006). This reflects the patterns of behavior among infants in the strange situation test that revealed anxiety and resistance in the child and the use of having the parent as a safe haven for support (Fraley, 2006). This similarity in the behavior of infants and adults suggests that patterns of attachment style are similar at different points in a person's life (Fraley, 2006).

Research has also evaluated the nature of attachment as being singular or multiple (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Infants tend to have a consistent preference to one caregiver as Bowlby referred to as monotropy; however, multiple attachments tend to be arranged in a hierarchy manner and for infants and children the head of the hierarchy often is their mothers (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). As adults, the romantic partner takes the place as the highest individual in the hierarchy, but individuals often look toward other social relationships to meet their needs as the primary attachment figure may net even provide the need for security (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). As such, an individual may have one primary attachment figure but may have multiple attachment figures lower on the attachment hierarchy. Furthermore, an individual's primary attachment representative that developed as a child may be carried into new relationships influencing feelings, behaviors and perceptions (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). However, children begin to form new social networks outside the family providing an opportunity to create an environment that can influence attachment development (Hazen & Shaver, 1994). Moreover, attachment style formed in infancy may not 100% predict adult attachment style because disconfirming experiences in adult relationships can produce change (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Thus, attachment style developed in infancy can be influenced in new relationships so attachment style may not be always stable.

Recent research has relied on self-report measures of experiences of security in an individual's intimate relationships to understand the nature of attachment working models in adulthood (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, as cited in Lopez et al., 2015). Research has commonly used the instrument Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (Brennan et al.,

1998, as cited in Lopez et al., 2015). This scale has supported the existence of two independent dimensions including anxiety and avoidance. Attachment anxiety involves fears of rejection and abandonment by significant others, while attachment avoidance involves discomfort with closeness and dependency in relationships (Lopez et al., 2015). When taking this test, individuals respond to statements about how they feel emotionally in intimate relationships (Lopez et al., 2015). Individuals who score low on both dimensions display a secure attachment orientation, while individuals with insecure attachment orientations show increased scores on one or on both dimensions (Lopez et al., 2015). In addition, the dimensional scores can predict an individual's relationship quality even more than their personality traits (Lopez et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies have shown that a person's attachment style is associated to how they construct meaning to their life. Therefore, secure attached individuals reveal less pessimistic and more hopeful goal-directed thinking (Lopez et al., 2015). Furthermore, they found that anxious individuals fearful of partner rejection or abandonment have inauthentic self-experiences and have an unfavorable perception of life meaning (Lopez et al., 2015). This study demonstrates how an individual's attachment style can shape their worldview.

Two contemporary attachment theorists, Shore and Shore (2010) theorize that attachment experiences that begin in infancy are processed and stored in the right hemisphere of the brain that later influence affect regulation. Shore and Shore (2010) describe that attachment communications are crucial to the development of right brain neurobiological systems that are involved in the processing of emotion and self-regulation including coping with stress. The Shores argue that encoded experiences

include implicit nonverbal communications that become an active part of working models throughout a person's lifespan (Shore & Shore, 2010). For instance, in Ainsworth's Strange Situation Procedure, the one-year olds who do not have speech display developing working models by responding to their mothers open arms to be picked up (Shore & Shore, 2010). As such, the focus is on the role of the unconscious interactive regulation in developing attachment relationships and the long-term impact it has on the establishment of the implicit self (Schore & Schore, 2008). Furthermore, it is possible that attachment is representative of the evolutionary mechanism that individuals are sociophysiologically connected to others (Schore & Schore, 2008). This is relevant to how individuals respond to their pets that are speechless but develop strong feelings for without a verbalized experience (Lopez et al., 2015). A difficulty in relating with others can be corrected in psychotherapy by the therapeutic relationship (Schore & Schore, 2008). Therefore, this is an attachment concept with an insight from neurobiology.

Different measures are utilized to capture an individual's attachment style. One measure is the ECR-RS Questionnaire. This measure was developed by Fraley et al. (2006) and contains 9 items to assess attachment styles with respect to important people in their lives (Fraley et al., 2006). The participant can either choose one important person in their life when answering each question or they can answer each question to how it relates to their mother, father, romantic partner, and best friend. Some of the questions include: "It helps to turn to this person in times of need", "I usually discuss my problems and concerns with this person" and "I'm afraid that this person may abandon me" (Fraley et al., 2006). Utilizing this measure can compare how a participant uses important

relationships as a safe haven. Another popular measure is the AAI created by Dr. Mary Main consisting of 20 questions that touches upon the basic premises of John Bowlby's attachment theory (Steele & Steele, 2015). The questions are designed to help obtain information about an individual's attachment related childhood experiences The responses to the questions reflect upon that individual's childhood experiences regarding loss, separation, traumatic experiences or rejection (Steele & Steele, 2015). The AAI is a helpful tool in a clinical environment for the therapist to gain a better understanding of their patient's attachment style and obtain information about their childhood experiences (Steele & Steele, 2015).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Conflict in Relationships

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study will examine how conflict in important human relationships may affect the role of a pet as a safe haven for pet owners. Conflict with others begins young as children experience conflict with their peers (Keener et al., 2012). According to Keener et al. (2012), gender differences among children in how they deal with conflict with same sex peers as girls have a communal orientation (focusing on meeting the needs of others) while boys have an agentic orientation (focusing on meeting the needs of the self). Therefore, girls tend to be more cooperative when facing conflict with friends while boys are often more assertive with their peers (Keener et al., 2012). As women, conflict with same sex friends is often deal with utilizing a communal orientation while men deal with conflict using an agentic orientation (Keener et al., 2012). Friendships between girls and women tend to be more intimate, close and cooperative

which may account for dealing with conflict with a more communal orientation (Keener et al. 2012). Friendships between boys and men are often hierarchical and competitive accounting for dealing with conflict with a more agentic orientation (Keener et al., 2012). This study clearly demonstrates how gender can play a role in how conflict is expressed.

Parents may experience conflict with their children, which often is the result of the parent's insecure attachment style (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Research has shown that parents who demonstrate behaviors linked with attachment insecurity were often raised by parents with attachment insecurity (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). These behaviors include clinging, parentification, and dismissal requests for comfort (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Two mechanisms, hyperactivation and deactivation are behind the behaviors that are involved in the parent-child conflict (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Hyperactivation strategies involves a preoccupation with a person having their attachment needs met leading to behaviors including proximity seeking, angry demands for attention, a strong desire for comfort from others, and a need for reassurance that he or she will not be abandoned (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Deactivation strategies are related to a desire to punish individuals viewed as threatening abandonment, distancing oneself from others in fear of rejection, and rage toward those who have threatened abandonment (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). In need of help, some families seek help from a therapist to deal with the conflicts they are facing. A therapist should apply attachment theory when treating the parent-child conflict and should focus on the parent's working model (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). The therapist should focus on the parent's working model because changes in the parent's

behavior will directly effect changes in the child or adolescent's working models of self and others (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). A parent may need to explore how their own childhood experiences have influenced his or her own parenting style (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). An important objective of attachment-based counseling is to assist the parent to not conceptualize their child based upon the child's behaviors such as acting lazy (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Rather, the parent should be guided to understanding their child's internal experiences that cause their child's emotional dysregulation (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Therefore, the parent is learning how to meet the attachment needs of their child, which will reduce conflict (Kindsvatter & Desmond, 2013). Their study demonstrates how attachment therapy is beneficial in helping parents experiencing conflict with their children.

Sibling relationships are important as they serve an important role throughout an individual's life span. Research has shown that in childhood siblings form an attachment to each other, while also experiencing conflicts and rivalry (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2011). As adults, they may be affectionate and supportive toward each other as they get married, have children, develop careers and care for aging parents (Finzi-Dottan & Cohen, 2011). While experiencing feelings of warmth toward each other, siblings may also experience conflict or rivalry toward their siblings and often are concerned about parental attention (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). Furthermore, it is imperative for each sibling to experience identification and differentiation with their siblings in order to develop identity formation (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). Gender is also a key factor in the influence of the relationship between adult siblings as women are often described as

being closer to their siblings (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). Research has shown that mixed gender siblings have less conflict and siblings have more conflicted relationships with sisters than with brothers (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). In addition, a sibling that perceives the other sibling is favored by their parents may have poor self-worth and personality disorder features that may affect their sibling relationship (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). Perceiving another sibling as being favored by a parent can lead to feelings of anger, rivalry and mistrust creating conflict (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011).

Finzi-Dorran and Cohen (2011) examined the relationship between parental unequal treatment and narcissism and how it relates to adult sibling relationships. They hypothesized that experiencing favoritism or rejection can both lead to narcissistic features (FInzi-Dooran & Cohen (2011). A favored child may experience a sense of grandiosity and entitlement, while an unflavored child can develop a narcissistic vulnerability often seeking reassurance from others (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). The results of their study found that perceiving another sibling as being favored is linked to higher levels of conflict and lower levels of warmth between siblings (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). In addition, each sibling showing low levels of narcissism predicted high levels of warmth between siblings, while high levels of narcissism predicted high conflict between siblings (FInzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). Furthermore, they found that conflict was higher with sisters than with brothers while conflict is higher with a younger sibling than with an older sibling (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 20 11). They also found that when a sibling perceives another sibling as being favored by both parents, conflict with the sibling was higher (Finzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). Their results also revealed that

paternal favoritism led to an increase in narcissistic traits in siblings that intensified conflict between siblings. In addition, they found that extreme similarity and extreme dissimilarity among siblings contributed to conflict between siblings (FInzi-Dorran & Cohen, 2011). As such, this study demonstrates how favoritism by parents can lead to narcissism among siblings leading to increased conflict.

Women and men demonstrate a different conflict management when in heterosexual romantic relationships (Keener et al., 2012). Since men learn that agentic techniques are ineffective with their wives, they often use communal techniques or withdraw from their wives when conflict arises (Keener et al., 2012). Due to their husbands' withdrawal, wives will use agentic techniques in order to engage their husbands or will use communal techniques when effective (Keener et al., 2012). Clearly, Keener et al. (2012) study demonstrates how gender plays a role adults deal with conflict with same sex peers. This study is interesting in that it demonstrates how conflict is dealt with differently in romantic relationships.

Research has demonstrated that behaviors in how to manage conflict are learned in the family of origin (Baptist et al., 2012). Baptist et al. (2012) conducted a study in which they examined the role of attachment on the intergenerational transferal of the effects of family emotional processes including enmeshment and disengagement and conflict management. However, an adult that has developed a secure attachment style despite family dysfunction can buffer negative family effects. A result of their study showed that participants high in anxiety and avoidant attachment were more likely to perceive their families of origin as being more disengaged and enmeshed. As such, these

participants were more likely to use hostile and avoiding conflict styles and were also less validating (Baptist et al., 2012). Perhaps disengaged families do not deal with issues so when they are discussed it becomes negative and intense (Baptist et al., 2012). They also found that the men in their study were more avoidant in their attachment. In addition, their study found that the relationship between family disengagement and conflict style was influenced by the participant's level of attachment.

A study by Mackinnon et al. (2012) examined the relationship between romantic partners experiencing dyadic conflict (a series of hostile and critical interactions) and having perfectionistic concerns (expecting partner to be perfect). Their study found that since attaining perfection is not realistic, a partner may become disappointed and lash out in anger at their partner causing dyadic conflict (Mackinnon et al., 2012). Experiencing high conflict may lead to a partner (s) to become depressed (Mackinnon et al., 2012).

Mackinnon et al. (2012) suggest that perfectionistic concerns should be explored in couple therapy when dyadic conflict and depressive symptoms are observed. Clearly, this study demonstrates how possessing perfectionistic concerns for a romantic partner can lead to extreme conflict and depression.

Research has shown that secure attached individuals view disagreements with romantic partners as being less negative than anxiously attached or avoidant attached individuals (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). Secure attached individuals are more likely to view arguments as being beneficial as they perceive conflict as helping to resolve their differences. Anxiously attached individuals often feel less in control of their emotions when experiencing conflict and feel dissatisfied by conflict (Ricco & Sierra, 2017).

Avoidant attached individuals view disagreements as threatening and rather avoid conflict or may attempt to dominate his or her partner (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). In addition, avoidant attached individuals feel less confident about preventing a conflict from escalating (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). Ricco & Sierra (2017) conducted a study to explore the importance of romantic relationship partner's beliefs about arguments. Their study found that avoidant or dismissive attached individuals had more direct effects on the choice of conflict management tactics; as well as more indirect effects through beliefs about disagreements (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). In addition, they found that their two types of belief about arguments (threatening and nonbeneficial) mediate the effects of avoidant attachment on conflict tactic choice (Ricco and Sierra, 2017). Moreover, they found that threatening is the one type of belief that mediates the effects of anxiously attached individuals (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). However, their findings also suggest that anxiously attached participants found disagreements to also be beneficial by providing opportunities to voice relationship concerns (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). Therefore, their study found that avoidant attachment may be more problematic regarding managing conflict in romantic relationships. Their findings suggest that security enhancement by therapists may promote changes in beliefs about arguments and conflict when treating couples. Therapists can help partners to learn how to provide security enhancement for his or her partner (Ricco & Sierra, 2017).

The Human-Pet Attachment

The basic ideas of attachment theory can be applied to the relationships with pets. Pets can be an attachment figure by providing Ainsworth's four features including

proximity maintenance (physical nearness); separation distress (missed when absent); secure base (source of comfort); and safe haven (sought to alleviate distress) (Kurdek, 2009). As such, pets can play an important role as an attachment figure for pet owners.

Recent research has found that individuals may seek security from non-human entities including religious rituals, landmarks (home) fictional characters (from movies and television) and pets (Keefer et al., 2014). Research has shown that the human-animal bond has similar qualities as human-human interpersonal relationships (Smolkovic et all, 2012). In addition, many individuals may feel unconditional love from their pets that they may not experience from their human relationships (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Therefore, pet owners can receive a basic need to feel loved (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Moreover, many researchers have argued that pets serve a role as attachment figures often assumed to be only human beings (Reevy & Delgado, 2015). In fact, pets often provide attachment functions to their owners including being their secure base (Reevy & Delgado, 2015). The owner can often play the role as parent to their pet (Reevy & Delgado, 2015).

The human-pet relationship often meets the four requirements for an attachment relationship including proximity seeking, safe haven, secure base, and separation distress (Kurdek, 2008). Furthermore, pets can play the role of a secure base in which owners can feel more confident taking risks by exploring their environment (Kurdek, 2008). Pets can play the role as safe haven by providing their owners with support, affection, comfort and relief in times of distress (Kurdek, 2008). Kurdek's study in 2008 used college students as their participants. They found that the students were as close to their dogs as their important human figures including mothers, fathers, siblings, best friends and significant

others. Kurdek's study (2009) included students and found that their participants were more likely to turn to their pet dogs when feeling emotional distress than they were to turn to their mothers, fathers, siblings, best friends and children. Only romantic partners were rated more likely to turn to when feeling distress than their pet dogs (Kurdek, 2009). As such, pets can be an object of attachment as they are active, available and affectionate (Kurdek, 2008). Furthermore, pets provide their owners with a sense of constancy in a world that is constantly changing (Sable, 2011). Pets often are sensitive to their owner's moods and can respond by being a source of comfort helping their owner to feel better (Sable, 2011). It is evident that pets can serve as attachment figures to their owners. Clearly, pets can play the role as safe haven to their owners.

Attachment Style of Pet Owners

A study by Reevy and Delgado (2015) examined the role of a pet owner's attachment style and their personality traits and how affectionate they are with their pets. They found that individuals that identify as a pet person have certain personality traits and type of attachment style (Reevy & Delgado, 2015). Their results found that conscientious people score high on affection toward their pets and low on avoidant attachment (Reevy & Delgado, 2015). Therefore, it appears that pets benefit from living with conscientious pet owners. Furthermore, they found that pet owners with high levels of neuroticism with an anxious attachment style were more affectionate with their pets. This study demonstrates how a pet owner's attachment style and personality traits can impact their relationship with their pets.

A study by Gosling et al. (2010) found that there are significant differences on all Big Five personality dimensions between dog people and cat people. They found that dog people were more extraverted, less neurotic than cat people. Furthermore, dog people were higher on Conscientiousness and Agreeableness and lower on Openness than were cat people (Gosling et al., 2010). It appears that there are differences in personality traits between dog people and cat people. Pets can become a person's best friend. However, in the human-pet relationship there are individual differences the relationship with their pets including closeness, warmth, commitment, conflict and emotional involvement (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Zilcha-Mano et al. (2011) proposed that pet owners differ in their attachments to pets due to attachment style differences. They also proposed that individual differences among pet owners is a reflection of their internal working models of relationships with pets that are connected to pet-related expectations (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). The participants were Israeli pet owners or past pet owners. They found that cat owners reported more avoidant attachments than dog owners as cats (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). This finding is consistent with differences between cats and dogs, as cats tend to be more emotionally distant from their owners (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Therefore, their findings demonstrate how pet owners with an avoidant attachment style toward pets may be more likely to own a cat as it fits into their need for autonomy (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Furthermore, a cat's independent style may influence an avoidant attachment to it (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). In addition, the results of their study revealed that a participant's internal working model manifests in both human-human relationships and human-pet relationships (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Anxiety and avoidance in human

relationships is related to anxiety and avoidance in pet relationships (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Clearly, this result reflects how attachment style can be reflected in the human-pet relationship. Moreover, this study found that the participants with high avoidance and anxiety styles had higher negative expectations for their pets' behavior (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Furthermore, Zilcha-Mano et al. (2011) exposed the participants to both positive words and negative words about pets. They found that pet avoidant attachment behavior was significantly connected with slower reaction times for positive behavior words regarding pets, while pet attachment anxiety behavior was significantly associated with faster reaction times for negative behavior words (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). This result is reflective of a participant's subconscious working models of a pet as having negative traits such as being unsupportive (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Furthermore, they found that anxious pet owners struggled more with the loss of a pet than avoidant pet owners (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). In addition, this study found that anxious pet owners tend to worry that something bad will happen to their pet, a desire for close proximity for their pet, feeling frustrated when the relationship with their pet is not as close as they want, and may even feel anger if their pet prefers the proximity of others (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). On the other hand, avoidant pet owners tend to feel uncomfortable with a physical and emotional closeness to their pet, will strive to maintain physical and emotional distance from their pet, and experience difficulty depending on their pet and turning to their pet when feeling distress (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011).

A study by Trigg et al. (2016) examined how the degree of pet attachment influences how a pet owner responds to environmental hazards that can harm themselves

and their pets. As such, a pet owner that is more strongly attached to their pet, it is more likely that the pet owner will evacuate a present danger with their pet (Trigg et al., 2016). A pet owner that is very attached and committed to his or her pet may even risk his or her life to save a pet which can be dangerous for the pet owner (Trigg et al., 2016). On the other hand, a pet owner that has a weaker attachment to their pet, is more likely to leave their pet behind when evacuating (Trigg et al., 2016). Refusing to leave a pet in a dangerous situation can lead to harm for the pet owner (Trigg et al., 2016). In addition, securely attached pet owners are more likely to respond to threats with more optimism and will use proximity seeking as a way to cope with distressing events (Trigg et al., 2016). Consequently, these securely attached pet owners may have a higher risk of harm due to their optimism (Trigg et al., 2016).

Pets being left behind during evacuations has often become an important animal social welfare issue. In addition, pet owners that are strongly attached to their pet will be more likely to seek out their pet as a source of safe haven when experiencing danger causing an evacuation (Trigg et al., 2016). As such, having a pet play the role of safe haven may cause a pet owner to refuse to separate from his or her pet. Yet, a pet owner that is less attached to his or her pet will less likely seek his or her pet as a safe haven increasing the risk of abandoning his or her pet (Trigg et al., 2016). Therefore, it appears that the level of attachment to a pet has an impact on how it effects how a pet is treated when a pet owner faces danger. A benefit among families that own pets during a crisis and evacuation is that the mere presence of a pet helps obtain adaptability and cohesion among family members (Trigg et al., 2016). As such, this article demonstrates how pet

attachment impacts how pets are treated during times of danger and the benefits of having a pet present to help cope with stressful evacuations.

The research shows significant differences between how anxious pet owners versus avoidant pet owners vastly differ in the relationship they develop with their pets. Specifically related to safe haven, this study shows how anxious pet owners are more likely to turn to their pets when feeling distress. In addition, they found that pet attachment anxiety is connected to poorer mental health due to unique worries and anxiety regarding the pet (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011).

A study by Konok et al. (2015) examined how a pet owner's attachment style can influence the development of separation related disorders in their dogs. Konok et al. (2015) argued that dogs have been domesticated as a result of dogs living among humans for tens of thousands of years. Due to domestication, dogs and humans have developed the potential of forming attachment bonds to each other (Konok et al., 2015). As a result, dogs seek out the proximity of their owner and use their owner as a secure base to explore their environment (Konok et al., 2015). Dogs may also use their owner as a safe haven in threatening situations (Konok et al., 2015). Konok et al. (2015) examined the relationship between a pet owner's personality and attachment style and the occurrence of separation anxiety in their pet dogs. The measures utilized were the Adult Attachment Scale, the Big Five Inventory, The Dog Big Five Inventory that was adapted for dogs using the human Five Factor Model, and the Separation Behavior Questionnaire that included questions regarding symptoms of separation anxiety in dogs (Konok et al., 2015). The authors found that the owner's neuroticism correlated with their dog's

neuroticism (Konok et al., 2015). Moreover, the neurotic dogs were more likely to have separation anxiety disorder (Konok et al., 2015). The dogs with separation anxiety would often engage in destructive behavior, excessive barking and inappropriate elimination when the owner was not home (Konok et al., 2015). In addition, the authors found that pet owners with an avoidant attachment style were more likely to have dogs with separation related disorders. The authors conclude that perhaps an avoidantly attached pet owner would be less responsive to their pet's needs (Konok et al., 2015). Therefore, this study demonstrated that a pet owner's attachment style could influence their caregiving behavior toward their pets. Consequently, pets that do not get their needs met and feel uncertain about the availability of their owner may be more likely to develop a separation related disorder.

Many individuals experience emotional and physiological benefits by merely touching a pet (Sable, 2011). In fact, individuals may have a desire to touch an animal even if it's not their pet (Sable, 2011). This demonstrates how a person can experience positive feelings just by the touch of an animal. As infants, much of the communication with the parent is through touch and is stored as implicit memories (Sable, 2011). As an adult, this can be experienced by being comforted by the touch of a pet in times of stress (Sable, 2011). Research has shown that human beings can be beneficial for pets, in which human touch can lower a pet's blood pressure and increase their oxytocin levels (Sable, 2011).

Many pet owners demonstrate a deep love for their pets even viewing them as their friends or as their children. Many pet owners display anthropomorphic tendencies

toward their pet, in which they interact and communicate with their pet as they would with other humans (Daly & Morton, 2009). Anthropomorphic tendencies can increase the likeliness of a pet owner viewing their pet as a family member. As such, a strong bond can be established between human beings and animals. In many cases, pet owners love their pets because their pets make them feel loved (Herzog, 2010). In addition, adults who love and own pets were more likely to have owned a pet as a child and had parents that had positive attitudes toward pets (Blouin, 2012). However, not everyone has a love for animals and pets. Unfortunately, some individuals abuse their pets or abandon their pets. Furthermore, some individuals own dogs solely as a source of protection and may not show as much affection toward them as a result (Blouin, 2012). Often individuals from a lower socio-economic class may view their pet as more as a protector than as a member of their family (Blouin, 2012).

Women tend to have a more empathic attitude toward their pets and are more likely to view their pets as their children, while men tend to view their pets as their friends (Blouin, 2012). Moreover, men are more likely to abuse animals than women (Blouin, 2012). In addition, individuals without children are more likely to have a higher attachment to their pets, as their pets become their children (Blouin, 2012). This issue of what constitutes loving behavior toward pets is complicated as it can be viewed very differently depending on the person. For instance, some pet owners who allow their pets to sleep in the beds and dress them in costumes are sometimes viewed as treating their pets too much like a human (Blouin, 2012). Yet, pet owners who do not allow their pets to sleep on their beds and display more strict rules with their pets may be viewed as being

too cold toward their pets (Blouin, 2012). As such, the way in which a pet owner displays love toward their pets varies.

Summary

In the United States, two thirds of households have pets (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014). Clearly, many individuals have a desire to have a pet in their life. Many pet owners view their pet as a family member. As such, there is strong bond that can be established between human beings and their pets.

In regard to attachment theory, Bowlby argued that seeking security and safety from an attachment figure is an innate psychological tendency (Keefer et al., 2014). Individuals seek proximity to attachment figures and may feel distress in the absence of the attachment figure (Keefer et al., 20140. Individuals seek security and safety when needing support in times of distress (Keefer et al., 2014). Pet owners often display similar behaviors toward their pets as they do with other attachment figures including family members. One behavior is using their pet as a safe haven in times of distress. Kurdek's study (2009) was critical in demonstrating the crucial role that pet dogs can play in being a safe haven for their owners in times of emotional distress. What was critical in their study was demonstrating how dog owners will often turn to their dogs in times of emotional distress rather than turning to their parents, siblings, children, and best friends (Kurdek, 2009). This role can be reciprocal as dogs may also use their owner as a safe haven in threatening situations (Konok et al., 2015).

This study will examine the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style and the role that their pet plays as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic

partners and family members. The examination of these variables demonstrates a gap in the literature, which has not specifically looked at pet owners seeking their pets as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with core human relationships.

Individuals who lack attachment security in their human relationships can form attachment relationships with their pet to compensate for unmet attachment needs (Zilcha-Mano, 2009). As such, pet owners may seek comfort from their pets when feeling distress that they may not receive from their human relationships. Clearly, pets can provide an important role for their owners. Yet, perhaps some pet owners' attachment style may not lead them to use their pet as a safe haven. Therefore, this study will explore how a pet owner's attachment style may influence the role their pet plays as a safe haven.

This study may lead to insight for psychologists regarding their patient's attachment security level. Pets can be used to help children who may be aggressive to encourage more empathy to others. As such, therapists can use pets when treating children. In addition, perhaps more individuals who need animal assisted therapy can be better matched to a pet that reflects their attachment style (Turcsan et al., 2012). Mental health professionals can gain insight into their patient's support system and who they tend to seek for a safe haven by asking their patients about their relationship with their pets (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014). Although avoidant individuals tend to use distancing strategies as proximity seeking is viewed as dangerous, they may feel in control with a pet (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). Therefore, a therapy pet can provide avoidantly-attached individuals with a corrective emotional relationship with a pet as part of the therapy (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). Furthermore, anxious attached individuals tend

to use hyperactivating strategies when attachment figure are perceived as unreliable (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). Yet, anxious attached individuals may feel more in control with a pet so will feel more secure in seeking comfort from a pet (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). Anxiously attached individuals can form a corrective emotional relationship with a therapy pet (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). Clearly, avoidant and anxious attached individuals can develop a relationship with a pet that differs from their relationships with other humans.

Research has shown that individuals living with pets often develop a strong emotional attachment to them. This helps to explain how pets have become important members of a family system that provide psychological, physical, and social benefits (Sable, 2011). Even the sheer presence of a pet is often uncomplicated and comforting for the pet parent (Sable, 2011). Chapter 3 will detail the methods for the current study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

A pet owner's attachment style may be a factor in the likeliness of seeking out one's pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic partners and family members (Kurdek, 2009; Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). But there is a gap in the literature concerning whether pets serve as attachment figures when individuals experience relationship distress The current study specifically observed how conflict in important core human relationships influences the role of pets being a safe haven. The study may heighten awareness of the important role that pets play in many individuals' lives. My study will provide further evidence regarding the importance of pets in the lives of pet owners in times of distress. In addition, my study will provide evidence how the presence of a pet may help individuals experiencing conflict in close human relationships.

In the following chapter, a detailed overview of the sample under analysis will be provided. Furthermore, a description of the procedures for sampling, recruitment of participants, and data collection is discussed. The data analysis overview is provided that demonstrates the operating procedure that is employed in this study. Moreover, there is a discussion regarding threats to external, internal, and construct validity. Potential ethical concerns are provided as well.

Research Design and Rationale

This was a nonexperimental study designed to demonstrate the relationship between an individual's type of attachment style and having their pet play the role as a safe haven when experiencing conflict in close human relationships. The current study's design choice is consistent with research designs in this discipline. For instance, Kurdek's

(2009) and Zilcha-Mano et al.'s (2012) studies are both quantitative nonexperimental. Furthermore, the independent variables could not be manipulated, which makes a nonexperimental design appropriate. There are measures available to quantify each variable. In the first research question, the independent variables are attachment style and the extent of conflict with romantic partners, and the dependent variable is safe haven. In the second research question, the independent variables are attachment style and experiencing conflict with family members and the dependent variable is safe haven.

Methodology

Population

The target population was at least 18 years of age. Each participant must have a pet either a cat or a dog or both. A power analysis was conducted to determine how many participants were needed, which was at least 212 participants with 53 participants in each attachment style subtype. The sample size was computed using GPower assuming an alpha of .05 and with a power of .80 to detect a medium or larger effect size comparing the four attachment groups (http://www.gpower.hhu.de).

In regard to the characteristics of the population of Americans who are pet owners, there are many individuals who are now adopting shelter animals (Weiss et al., 2012). Most individuals choose either a cat or a dog; however, dogs tend to be adopted more over cats. A person is more likely to adopt an animal that is friendly and greets the individual creating a warm interaction; therefore, it seems that the personality of an animal is often important to an individual seeking out a pet. Individuals also tend to want

to adopt younger animals and want information regarding the animal's health and behavior from a volunteer or staff member.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The target population in my study was individuals at least 18 years old who owned either a cat or a dog or both. Participants were recruited from Amazon MTurk, which is a service for researchers to draw respondents to conduct experiments. As such, it is an effective and low-cost way to engage a diverse group of participants. To use Amazon MTurk, a researcher must first create an account, and then the researcher can recruit those interested in participating in their study. These participants will then complete the researcher's online questionnaires (https://www.mturk.com).

As mentioned, the sample size was 212 participants with 53 participants in each attachment style subtype. This is considered to be an adequate sample size according to common guidelines that suggest that *N* be 10 times the number of variables (Nunnally, 1978). As such, the present study sample size exceeded the number of participants needed to assume a medium effect size for the dependent variables.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants were recruited from an online survey site Amazon MTurk (https://www.mturk.com). These participants then completed the online questionnaires. As such, anonymous individuals could use the online survey, read the informed consent form, and then choose whether they want to proceed. If they chose to proceed, this implied informed consent. This then took them to the first page of the survey. If they did not choose to proceed, they would be sent to a thank you page.

Demographic and descriptive information were collected from each participant including age, gender, marital status, student status, living environment, type of pet owned and how long they have owned the pet. A participant who did not meet the criteria for inclusion he or she will be removed from the study. Participants who did not meet the criteria for inclusion were informed of their removal by the online survey through a displayed thank you page. A participant was also able to leave my study at any time.

Each participant who met the criteria for inclusion completed the following measures: the ECR-RS Questionnaire, the CTS, and the OPRS. I used Qualtrics as a tool to post the measures, which allowed the participants to complete confidentiality. Qualtrics is a software that provides privacy protection for the participants by allowing the researcher to create a password for the survey, which also prevents participants from taking the survey more than once (http://www.qualtrics.com). In addition, Qualtrics provided me with the ability to integrate graphics and statistical tools and download data into Excel and SPSS with full syntax (http://www.qualtrics.com). After completing the measures, the participants received a form denoting their completion of the study. The collected data will remain confidential and will not be distributed to anyone. Participants could communicate with me regarding any questions by e-mail or by the online survey site. However, I did not initiate any follow up communication with the participants.

Instrumentation and Materials

The Relationship Structures Questionnaire

The ECR-RS Questionnaire was utilized as a measure for the independent variable attachment style. This measure was developed by Fraley et al. (2006) and

contains nine items to assess attachment styles with respect to important relationships including mothers, fathers, romantic partners, and best friends. The participants chose one close family member and a romantic relationship to complete the questionnaire. The items include

- It helps to turn to this person in times of need,
- I usually discuss my problems and concerns with this person,
- I talk things over with this person,
- I find it easy to depend on this person,
- I don't feel comfortable opening up to this person,
- I prefer not to show this person how I feel deep down,
- I often worry that this person doesn't really care for me,
- I'm afraid that this person may abandon me, and
- I worry that this person won't care about me as much as I care about him or her.

When answering each question, the participants responded with a number corresponding to a Likert-type scale with *strongly disagrees* = 1 and *strongly agrees* = 7. Each relationship is assessed by a scale that comprises two factors: anxious and avoidant attachment.

In regard to scoring, there is a relationship-specific attachment score and a general global attachment score. According to Fraley et al. (2006), the global scores are calculated for anxiety and avoidance. In regard to determining attachment avoidance, the average of Items 1 through 6 is taken as well as reverse scoring Items 1 through 4. Items

are then reverse scored by subtracting the reported score from 8. In addition, attachment anxiety is scored by the average of Items 7 through 9. In regard to global score, the measures of avoidance and anxiety are measured. The participants who were low in avoidance and anxiety were categorized as being secure. The participants who were low in avoidance and high in anxiety were categorized as being preoccupied. Participants who were high in avoidance and low in anxiety were categorized as being dismissing-avoidant, and those who were high in avoidance and anxiety were categorized as being fearful-avoidant. An average anxiety score of greater than 4 showed high anxiety, whereas an average anxiety score less than 4 showed low anxiety. Similarly, an average avoidance score greater than 4 showed high avoidance, whereas an average avoidance score of less than 4 showed low avoidance.

Utilizing this measure can compare how a participant uses important human relationships as a safe haven versus using a pet as a safe haven. Safe haven is an indicator of attachment based on an individual's attachment style. Therefore, the theory of safe haven was key to this study.

The ECR-RS is an interval measure. The internal consistency reliability tends to be .90 or higher (Fraley et al., 2006). Test-retest reliability is .65 for romantic relationships and .80 for parental relationships. In addition, all standardized path coefficients in the two-factor solution were statistically significant (Sibley et al., 2004). For items assessing avoidance, reliability ranged from 0.37 to 0.62 and 0.41 to 0.58 for items assessing anxiety (Sibley et al., 2004). Furthermore, both the anxiety and avoidance subscales revealed acceptable internal reliabilities during two measurements (Sibley et

al., 2004). Researchers like Smolkovic et al. (2012) used the ECR-RS to investigate the connection between interpersonal attachment characteristics of pet owners and the level of social support and loneliness experienced with the ECR-RS and found that women were more attached to their pets and pet owners who owned their pets more than 3 years were more attached to their pets.

The Conflict Tactic Scale

The CTS was created by Murray Strauss in 1979 and is widely used for measuring family violence (Strauss et al., 1992). This scale was be used to measure the independent variable of conflict. This scale focuses on conflict tactics behavior, which is a method a person uses to advance their own interest in a conflict by measuring the conflict tactic behaviors of both individuals in a conflict. The CTS is appropriate as this study examined the relationship between experiencing conflict in close human relationships and using a pet as a safe haven and secure base. This measure has four scales including the parent-child, partner-child, parent-partner, and partner-parent. In addition, the five subscales include verbal discussion, verbal aggression, hostile-indirect withdrawal, physical aggression, and spanking. However, the parent-partner scale and the partner-parent scale do not include the spanking subscale. The CTS is scored by adding the midpoints for the response categories chosen by the participant. The midpoints are the same as the response category numbers for Categories 0, 1, and 2. For Category 3 (3-5 times) the midpoint is 4, for Category 4 (6-10 times) it is 8, for Category 5 (11-20 times) it is 15, and for Category 6 (more than 20 times in the past year), it is x. An important component of the CTS is its ability to record severity of violence. The CTS2 uses separate subscales for measuring the

severity level within intimate relationships. Physical assault, psychological aggression, and injury all measure the severity of the violence in terms of no violence, minor, and severe violence.

The severity level of conflict is classified into three categories: none, minor or severe (Strauss, 1987), which the participants were categorized as. The severe violence scales are computed by summing items N though R in Form N and N though S in Form R. If the items are first recoded from the 0 to 6 format to the midpoints of the approximate frequency designated by each response category 0, 1, 2, 4, 8, 15, and 25. The resulting scale scores are a measure of the number of assaults that occurred. N = slapped, 0 = hit or tried to hit, P = beat, R = threatened with knife or gun, and S = used a knife or fired a gun. The minor violence acts are items are K, L, and M in which K = threw something at you; L = pushed, grabbed, or shoved; and M = slapped you. The Overall Violence Index, the Severe Violence Index, and the Minor Violence Index reflect differences in how often any acts of violence, severe acts of violence or acts of minor violence occurred (Strauss, 1987).

The reliability for this scale is strong with a = .86, and the construct validity is strong (Strauss et al., 1992). Therefore, the CTS appears to be the best instrument to measure family conflict. For example, Pauldine et al. (2015) utilized the Conflict Tactic Scale as a measure as they investigated the relationship between experiencing family conflict as an adolescent and its impact on young adult interpersonal relationships with siblings. They found that family conflict experienced in adolescence did predict the quality of the relationship between siblings as young adults regardless of gender.

Additionally, Haden and Hojjat (2006) examined young adults' aggressive reactions to hypothetical and actual episodes of betrayal in romantic relationships compared to friendships. Their study utilized the CTS. They found that in both the hypothetical episodes of betrayal, participants reported more verbal aggression in romantic relationships than in friendships (Haden & Hojjat, 2006). In actual relationship betrayals, less verbal aggression was expressed (Hades & Hojjat, 2006). Being less aggressive in actual relationships may be due social implications that may result (Haden & Hojjat, 2006). In hypothetical situations, participants are reporting what they really want to do that they restrain themselves from doing in actual situations (Haden & Hojjat, 2006). Yet, in both the hypothetical and actual episodes of betrayal, participants believed that betrayal is more serious in a romantic relationship when compared to a friendship (Haden & Hojjat, 2006). They also found that men and women did not differ in their use of the type of aggression and how they reacted to betrayal in romantic relationships (Haden & Hojjat, 2006). This study reflects construct validity for scores on the CTS as it demonstrates the underlying construct of conflict.

Owner-Pet Relationship Scale

The OPRS was developed by Winefield et al. (2008). This is the measure for the dependent variable safe haven. The OPRS contains items from the attachment theory focusing on the pet owner's desire to maintain proximity to their pets. In addition, this scale contains items that focus on pet owners perception of their pets as being emotionally supportive and mutual (Smolkovic et al., 2012). The OPRS includes 15 items that are rated on a scale from 1 to 4. Some of the questions include: "My pet helps me get

through rough times" and "My pet knows when I am upset and tries to comfort me." A participant that owns more than one pet is asked to choose answers regarding the pet the individual feels closes to (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Response alternatives are scored 1–4 in the direction of greater attachment, except Q3 where true=4, not true=1. Total score range =15–60. Owners with more than one companion animal in the household are asked to respond with regard to the one you feel closest to (Smolkovic et al., 2012).

The OPRS measure is an interval measure. The internal reliability is high with a=.92. An article by Smolkovic et al. (2012) examined the relationship between pet attachment and interpersonal relationships.

Smolkovic et al. (2012) utilized the OPRS as a measure. They found that the coefficient for internal consistency was .85 (Skolkovic et al., 2012). In addition, they found that pet owners who had their pet for more than three years have higher OPRS mean values compared to those with a pet for less than three years (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Participants living in a town have lower scores compared to pet owners living in the countryside (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Furthermore, they found that dog owners are more attached to their pets than cat owners in regard to the OPRS results (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Therefore, their study revealed that pet owners may differ in the level of pet attachment based upon a pet owner's demographic characteristics and the length of ownership of a pet (Smolkovic et al., 2012).

Administration of Instruments

Each participant will be provided directions for each instrument by e-mail and will be ensured to have a complete understanding of the process. The participants will take the surveys via Qualtrics and Amazon MTurk. The participants will be provided with my contact information so they can contact me with any questions about the measures by e-mail. At the end of the testing process, each participant will be given the opportunity to ask any additional questions about and to debrief about the experience.

Data Analysis Plan

SPSS Statistics Standard version 21.0 (IBM, 2013) will be used to perform the statistical analysis conducted in the current study. One screening procedure is to verify that each participant is a pet owner of either a dog or a cat.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) as measured by the Relationship Structures Questionnaire and the likelihood of seeking their pet to play the role of a safe haven as measured by the Owner-Pet Relationship Scale when experiencing conflict with romantic partners (boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife) as measured by the Conflict Tactic Scale?

$H_0$1: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will have a higher degree of using their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with romantic partners.

H_a1: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will not have a higher degree of having their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with romantic partners.

Research Question 2: What is the Relationship Between a pet owner's attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) as measured by the Relationship Structures Questionnaire and the likeliness of seeking their pet to play the role of a safe haven as measured by the Owner-Pet Relationship Scale when experiencing conflict with family members (mother, father, siblings, children) as measured by the Conflict Tactic Scale?

$H_0 2$: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will have a higher degree of having their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with family members.

$H_a 2$: Pet owners with a secure attachment style and a preoccupied attachment style will not have a higher degree of having their pet play the role as a safe haven than pet owners with a dismissing avoidant style or a fearful avoidant style when experiencing conflict with family members.

Analysis Plan

Each research question will utilize an ANOVA. A Factorial ANOVA will be utilized to examine the relationship between attachment style and each outcome. An ANOVA will be utilized with two predictor variables including attachment type (secure,

preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) and severity of conflict (none, minor or severe conflict). Attachment style and conflict are the independent variables while safe haven is the dependent variable. The sample's mean differences will be computed to summarize the samples relationships for each variable. Furthermore, the differences in scores will be compared between conditions relative to the error variance within conditions. According to Hair et al., (1998) "The researcher, if anticipating the effects to be small, must design the study with much larger sample sizes and/or less restrictive alpha (0.5-.10)". This study will utilize the standard assumption when considering the interrelationship of sample size, effect size, and alpha level.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

According to Cicourel (2007), external validity is difficult to achieve in research because it is challenging to control for confounding factors. In the current study there could be a potential influence of the location that the participants are completing the surveys such as a distractive environment. Another threat to validity is the appeal of the study to which the volunteers have an interest in the subject matter. For instance, this study may only get people who are real pet lovers to participate, which limits the generalizability. In addition, another limitation to the sampling method is that the participants need to have access and know how to use computers in order to complete the online surveys.

In the current study, there will be sociodemographic variation to preserve the degree of representativeness and to have the ability to generalize the findings to the

general population. Yet, the researcher may have outcome expectancies that could result in bias.

Internal Validity

According to Grimes and Schulz (2002), a study must measure what it intends to measure. It is imperative to examine the possibility of potential threats to internal validity in the current study. For instance, a threat to internal validity in this study is whether the measures are really measuring what it is supposed to measure. Another threat to internal validity in this study is if participants do not complete the measures accurately. In addition, the quality of the communication between the researcher with the participants is another possible external effect. For example, the researcher needs to ensure that the participants understand that they need to ask the researcher questions if they encounter any issues.

Construct Validity

In the current study, I attempted to avoid any potential threats to construct validity. For instance, I provided peer reviewed operational definitions of the constructs to decrease interpretative error. According to Cook and Campbell (1979), operational definitions that are too vague can result in a failure to explain the meaning of the constructs that can lead to interpretative error. Moreover, some participants may feel anxiety about the topic of the study. Therefore, the researcher will ensure participants that they can drop out of the study at any time. Yet, it may be difficult to avoid certain threats to construct validity. For instance, participants in therapy could impact how they answer certain questions on surveys. In addition, participants may be concerned about their

ability to answer questions can impact research results. Furthermore, biopsychosocial factors can affect if participants answer survey questions in an honest and critical thinking manner. Moreover, the instruments are measuring what they are intended to measure. Therefore, the researcher is utilizing well-established measures that are reliable and valid in accessing variables such as safe haven that the researcher wants to measure.

Ethical Procedures

This study will strongly adhere to the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for ethical protections in the treatment of the participants. According to Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility, "Psychologists establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. They are aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to society and to the specific communities in which they work" (APA, 2010). As such, it is imperative that the current study creates trust with the participants as it is a professional responsibility.

My study will be approved by, and follow the ethical guidelines developed by the Walden IRB. Regarding the informed consent process, I will inform the participants that they can of withdraw from this study at any time. Moreover, I will reinforce to the participants that there will not be any negative repercussions for withdrawing from the study. In addition, if a participant withdraws from the study due to a psychological reaction, I will inform the IRB research partner to ensure the participant is safe.

According to Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity, "Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination" (APA, 2010). Therefore, this study will

adhere to this guideline to respecting the participant's rights including privacy and confidentiality. In an attempt to provide anonymity among the participants, the weblink option in this study will not register IP addresses. Furthermore, to have the participants remain anonymous the researcher will create identifiers such as usernames and passwords. The participants will provide only a code number so that identification will only be revealed to the researcher helping to maintain confidentiality. In addition, the participants will complete the measures through the software Qualtrics, which will maintain their confidentiality.

According to 6.01 Documentation of Professional and Scientific Work and Maintenance of Records**, "**Psychologists create, and to the extent the records are under their control, maintain, disseminate, store, retain and dispose of records and data relating to their professional and scientific work in order to (1) facilitate provision of services later by them or by other professionals, (2) allow for replication of research design and analyses, (3) meet institutional requirements, (4) ensure accuracy of billing and payments, and (5) ensure compliance with law" (APA, 2010). In regard to the statistical data, it will be stored on an external hard drive which will be password protected. Most importantly, the data will be secure for the next five years under the discretion of Walden University. As such, the current study will adhere to the APA (2010) guideline of the maintenance of records.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the design of the current study was discussed. The current study is a quantitative non-experimental study designed to demonstrate the relationship between an

individual's type of attachment style and having their pet play the role as a safe haven when experiencing conflict in close human relationships. SPSS Statistics Standard version 21.0 (IBM, 2013) will be used to perform the statistical analysis conducted in the current study. Each research question will utilize an ANOVA. An ANOVA will be utilized to examine the relationship between attachment style, conflict, and using pets as a safe haven. An ANOVA will also be conducted to see if there are gender differences. Ethical protections are imperative for the current study. As such, a comprehensive informed consent process will be enforced. Participants will be encouraged to communicate any concerns regarding completing the surveys to the researcher. In Chapter 4, the details for the current study regarding sample size, recruitment of participants, and data collection will be summarized.

Chapter 4: Results

Many pet owners turn to their pet dogs when feeling emotional distress to receive comfort and unconditional love (Kurdek, 2009). The purpose of my quantitative, nonexperimental study was to examine the relationship between a pet owner's attachment style and the likeliness of seeking proximity to their pet to play the role of a safe haven when experiencing conflict with their romantic partners and family members, which the research questions addressed. The following chapter includes the results.

Data Collection

Time Frame for Data Collection and Recruitment Procedures

The target population in my study were individuals at least 18 years old who own a pet either a cat or a dog or both. Participants were recruited from Amazon MTurk. As such, anonymous individuals used the online survey, read the informed consent form, and then chose whether they wanted to proceed. If they chose to proceed, this implied informed consent, and they were presented with the first page of the survey, and if they did not they were sent to a thank you page. The time taken by individual participants who chose to respond to the surveys ranged from 3 minutes to 90 minutes, with a mean average survey time of 17.9 minutes and an interquartile range of 11.2 to 22.2 minutes. There were no discrepancies in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3.

Since the participants are random and diverse, it is a good representation of the population. For instance, the age of participants ranged from the youngest at 18 years old to the oldest at 64 years old, with participants in every age range in their 20s, 30s, 40s

and 50s. In addition, the participants' education level is diverse as it ranged from having no high school degree to having a doctorate degree.

Baseline for Descriptive Demographic Data

The sample size was 288 participants. Most of the participants were male 61.5% (*n* = 177), with 38.2% (*n* = 110) female participants and one respondent who selected "other" for their gender. The mean age was 36.8 and the range is 46. The median total family income reported was $50,000 and with the middle 50% of data ranging from $40,000 to $81,750. The mean family income of $90,380 is heavily influenced by an outlier at $5,000,000. In regard to the type of pet owned, 68.8% (*n* = 198) of the participants reported owning only a dog, and 14.9% (*n* = 43) own only a cat, and 16.3% (*n* = 47) of the participants own both a dog and a cat. (Survey respondents who owned neither a dog nor a cat were not included in the study.) In regard to relationship status, 96.2% of the participants are currently in a relationship (*n* = 277), and 3.8% (*n* = 11) of the participants have had a past relationship but are not currently in a relationship. Survey respondents who have never had a relationship were not included in the study. In regard to highest education level, 5.2% (*n* = 15) have a high school diploma, 8.3% (*n* = 24) have some college experience, 59.4% (*n* = 171) have a bachelor's degree, 25.7% (*n* = 74) have a master's degree, and 1.4% (*n* = 4)have a doctorate degree.

External Validity

External validity indicates the ability to generalize or transfer the findings of a research study from a sample population to the larger population (cite). This research established external validity because it was limited to individuals who are least 18 years

of age who own a dog or a cat or both. Therefore, researchers and psychologists cannot generalize about all pet owners; however, they can transfer the similarity of the current study's demographics and the findings.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Twelve participants could not be included because they were never in a romantic relationship. In addition, I could not include five participants who did not answer the question about whether they have a photo in their purse or wallet or display a photo in their office or home in the OPRS. Therefore, I had 288 valid participants. In regard to the ECR-RS, Table 1 shows the means and the standard deviations for the family and partner relationships.

Table 1

ECR-RS for Family and Partner Relationships

ECR-RS	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Mother Avoidance	276	3.1184	1.12792
Mother Anxiety	286	3.7121	1.84757
Father Avoidance	282	3.3517	1.1655
Father Anxiety	280	3.892	1.86364
Partner Avoidance	288	2.853	1.15436
Partner Anxiety	288	3.9306	1.91773
Child Avoidance	267	3.4657	0.85006
Child Anxiety	272	4.0527	1.74093
Sibling Avoidance	277	3.3851	1.12884
Sibling Anxiety	274	3.9976	1.79085
Global Avoidance	288	3.3212	0.83508
Global Anxiety	288	3.8624	1.68703
Total	235	43.94	7.41

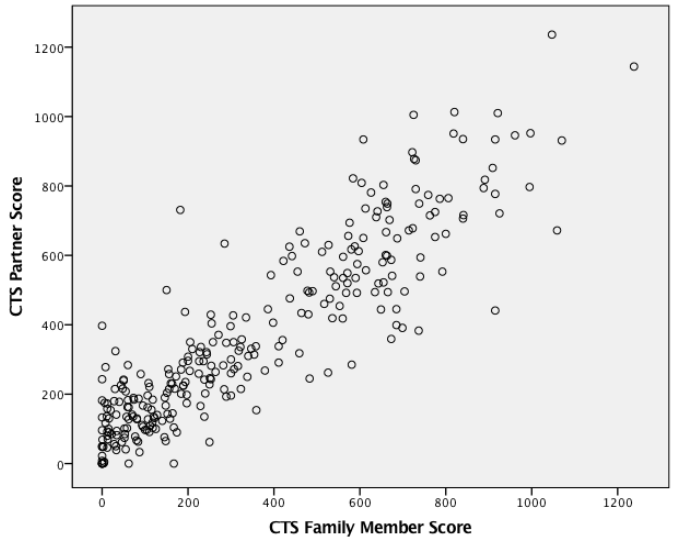
The mean overall OPRS score in this sample is 43.94 and the standard deviation is 7.407. In regard to the question in the OPRS about whether the participant has a photo

in his or her purse or wallet or displays a photo in their office or home, 71% (n = 209) answered "true" to this question, and 27.0% (n = 79) answered "false" to this question.

The participants completed the CTS twice: once in regard to their romantic relationships and once in regard to their family members. Each section included 16 scale questions in which the four sections include questions on negotiation, psychological aggression, sexual coercion, and injury. The section sexual coercion was not included for family members. Each question, which asks a participant how many times per year a certain behavior occurs, was coded numerically to the midpoint of the range of answers. For example, if a participant said that an event occurred 3 to 5 times in the past year, the answer was coded as "4." The maximum answer ("happens 20 or more times in a year") was coded as a 25. The answers of "never" and "it has happened, but not in the past year" were both coded as "0." For negotiation there are 12 items for a 300 maximum, for psychological aggression there are 16 items for a 400 maximum, for sexual coercion there are 14 items for a 350 maximum, and for injury there are 12 items for a 300 maximum. The CTS partner score has a mean of 368.34 and a *SD* of 264.870. The CTS family score has a mean of 347.18 and a *SD* of 290.310. See Figure 1 for scatterplot of these data.

Figure 1

Relationship Between Mean CTS Family Member and Partner Scores



Statistical Analysis

The OPRS score results differed based on the participant's attachment style. In regard to attachment style, 102 participants were secure, 138 participants were preoccupied, 37 participants were dismissing-avoidant, and 11 participants were fearful-avoidant (see Table 2).

Table 2

ECR-RS Attachment Style

ECR-RS Personality	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Secure	102	44.75	7.619
Preoccupied	138	44.28	6.569
Dismissing-Avoidant	37	42.38	8.697
Fearful-Avoidant	11	37.64	8.003
Total	288	43.94	7.407

A linear regression was conducted to find a relationship between an OPRS score and a CTS score for romantic partners. The results were significant for the dismissing - avoidant participants in which the significance is $p < .001$. The sections of the CTS that changed the OPRS score are negotiation, physical aggression, and sexual coercion. For every 1-point change in the negotiation score, the OPRS score went up by 0.055. For every 1-point change in the physical aggression score, the OPRS score went down by 0.108. For every 1-point change in the sexual coercion score, the OPRS score went down by 0.119. A one-way ANOVA showed with significance $p < .001$ that the dismissing-avoiding participants who spend more time negotiating with their partners have higher OPRS scores. Therefore, the dismissing-avoidant participants were closer with their pet when they experience less conflict their partners.

In addition, there were significant findings regarding the relationship between OPRS scores and the CTS scores for the participants' family members. Men with a secure attachment style showed a significant relationship between psychological aggression with family members and the OPRS score in the positive direction, as the coefficient number was .164. The significance was .028, showing that these men were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven because they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. Moreover, women with a preoccupied attachment style had a significant relationship between psychological aggression with family members and the OPRS score in the positive direction, as the coefficient number was .091. The significance was .046, showing that these women were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven because they felt closer to

their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. All the fearful-avoidant participants owned a dog. The results also showed that cat owners were less attached to their cats by 4 points. In addition, secure participants who owned a dog were more attached than cat owners. However, regardless of owning a cat or a dog, the OPRS was more likely to go down with partners with an anxious attachment style, and participants who avoided their partner were less attached to their pets.

Exploratory Analysis

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to analyze the relationship between the participants' attachment style and their relationship with their pets without considering conflict with their partner or family members. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean OPRS scores (see Table 3). Therefore, the fearful-avoidant participants had the lowest OPRS scores ($N = 11$, mean = 37.64), which demonstrated that they have less attachment to their pets.

Table 3

ANOVA of Relationship Between Attachment Style and Relationship with Pets Without Considering Conflict

OPRS Score	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Secure	102	44.75	7.619
Preoccupied	138	44.28	6.569
Dismissing-Avoidant	37	42.38	8.697
Fearful-Avoidant	11	37.64	8.003
Total	288	43.94	7.407

Table 4

ANOVA of Relationship Between Attachment Style and Relationship with Pets Without Considering Conflict

Source	df	F	Sig
Between	3	3.808*	0.011
Within	284	(53.303)**	

Note. * Significant at the 0.05 level
**Numbers in parentheses represent MS Error

A Bonferroni post-hoc test was conducted to further analyze the relationship between the participant's attachment style and their relationship with their pets without considering conflict with their partner or family members. The secure participants showed a significant difference with the fearful-avoidant participants with a significance of .014. The preoccupied participants showed a significant difference with the fearful-avoidant participants with a significance of .024. The dismissing-avoidant attachment group did not reveal any significance between the other attachment groups. Therefore, these results demonstrate that the fearful-avoidant participants and the dismissing-avoidant participants have the least attachment to their pets. The following table demonstrates the results of the Bonferroni post-hoc test.

Table 5

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test on Relationship Between Attachment Style and Relationship with Pets Without Considering Conflict

(I) ECR-RS Personality	(J) ECR-RS Personality	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secure	Preoccupied	0.47	1	-2.06	3
	Diss-Av	2.367	0.554	-1.36	6.09

	Fearful-Av	7.109*	0.014	0.95	13.26
Preoccupied	Diss-Av	1.897	0.969	-1.69	5.49
	Fearful-Av	6.639*	0.024	0.56	12.72
Diss-Av	Fearful-Av	4.742	0.358	-1.92	11.4

Note. * Significant at the 0.05 level

Two ANOVAS were conducted to analyze the relationship between attachment style and conflict style among the participants. The results showed significance in all the conflict sections except for negotiation with family members. Therefore, there was significance among all attachment styles in negotiation with partners, psychological aggression with family members and partners, physical aggression with family members and partners, and sexual coercion with partners. The secure participants have the highest score for partner negotiation with a mean score of 124,6961 (N=102) which demonstrated that they were better able to negotiate with their partners. The preoccupied participants had a mean score of 79,4710 (N=138); the dismissing-avoidant participants had a mean score of 110,4324 (N=37) and the fearful-avoidant participants had a mean score of 96,0909 (N=11). There was a significant difference between the mean scores of the attachment styles for psychological aggression for partners. The secure participants had a mean score of 22, 7353 (N=102); the preoccupied participants had a mean score of 94,8623 (N=138); the dismissing-avoidant participants had a mean score of 85,2432 (N=37) and the fearful-avoidant participants had a mean score of 68,3056 (N=11). Therefore, this revealed how the secure participants had the least amount of experience with psychological aggression with their partners. In addition, there was a significant

difference between the mean scores of the attachment styles for physical aggression for family members. The secure participants had a mean score of 24,333 (N=102); the preoccupied participants had a mean score of 140,8333 (N=139); the dismissing-avoidant participants had a mean score of 108,1892 (N=37) and the fearful-avoidant participants had a mean score of 141,1818 (N=11). This demonstrated how the secure participants had the least amount of experience with physical aggression with family members. The two ANOVAS are in the following tables (Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

ANOVA for Attachment and Conflict Styles of Participants

Variable	Group	*N*	Mean	*SD*
CTS_P_Negotiation	Secure	102	124.6961	79.65865
	Preoccupied	138	79.471	46.68518
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	110.4324	64.9254
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	96.0909	30.01484
	Total	288	100.1007	65.32705
CTS_P_Psychological_Aggression	Secure	102	22.7353	37.43534
	Preoccupied	138	94.8623	58.08013
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	85.2432	77.74581
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	100.7273	70.82244
	Total	288	68.3056	64.73648
CTS_P_Physical_Aggression	Secure	102	22.4608	51.98985
	Preoccupied	138	136.9855	90.14408
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	113.4324	113.1463
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	144.7273	119.41364
	Total	288	93.6944	98.93135
CTS_P_Sexual_Coercion	Secure	102	25.7941	38.65033
	Preoccupied	138	81.7681	50.82118
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	63.6757	57.08525
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	72.5455	57.36264
	Total	288	59.2674	54.15658
CTS_P_Injury	Secure	102	9.951	27.5675
	Preoccupied	138	68.6957	46.7982
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	61.2973	64.0728
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	69.4545	56.7422
	Total	288	46.9688	51.9601
CTS_F_Negotation	Secure	102	81.0098	80.6234
	Preoccupied	138	76.058	42.9783
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	81.7838	55.2068
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	81.3636	37.2378
	Total	288	78.75	60.055
CTS_F_Psychological_Aggression	Secure	102	23.3137	40.471

	Preoccupied	138	95.6594	60.5035
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	80.027	78.2192
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	102.909	74.9819
	Total	288	68.3056	66.5582
CTS_F_Physical_Aggression	Secure	102	24.3333	59.9996
	Preoccupied	138	140.833	89.0478
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	108.189	107.845
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	141.182	108.615
	Total	288	95.3924	99.0499
CTS_F_Injury	Secure	102	12.8725	34.5823
	Preoccupied	138	70.7681	49.6755
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	62.027	65.0498
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	78.0909	64.1381
	Total	288	49.4201	54.9433
	Secure	102	9.951	27.5675

Table 7

ANOVA Comparing Attachment and Conflict Styles of Participants

Variable	Source	df	F	Sig.
CTS_P_Negotiation	Between Groups	3	10.72*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(3874.1)	
CTS_P_Psychological_Aggression	Between Groups	3	35.99*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(3068.5)	
CTS_P_Physical_Aggression	Between Groups	3	38.98*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(7006.1)	
CTS_P_Sexual_Coercion	Between Groups	3	27*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(2306.1)	
CTS_P_Injury	Between Groups	3	37.08*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(1960.5)	
CTS_F_Negotiation	Between Groups	3	0.177	0.912
	Within Groups	284	(3637.9)	
CTS_F_Psychological_Aggression	Between Groups	3	32.91*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(3321.9)	
CTS_F_Physical_Aggression	Between Groups	3	39.51*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(6995.1)	
CTS_F_Injury	Between Groups	3	31.06*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	284	(2296.9)	

Note. * Significant at the 0.05 level
** Numbers in parentheses represent MS Error

A Bonferroni post-hoc test was conducted to further analyze the relationship between the participant's attachment style and conflict style. In regard to negotiation

with partners, there was significant difference between the secure participants and the preoccupied participants with a significance of .000. The preoccupied participants showed a significant difference with the secure participants (.000) as well as with the dismissing-avoidant participants with a significance of .046. This demonstrates that the preoccupied participants were better at negotiating with their partners compared with the dismissing-avoidant participants. There was no significant difference between the fearful-avoidant participants with the other attachment groups. Therefore, the secure participants were better able to negotiate with their partners than the other attachment style groups. In regard to psychological aggression with partners, there was a significant difference between the secure participants and the preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant and the fearful-avoidant participants with a significance of .000. This demonstrates that the secure participants had less psychological aggression with their partners compared to the other attachment style groups. In regard to physical aggression with partners there was a significant difference between the secure participants and the other attachment style participants with a significance of .000. This demonstrates that the secure participants had less physical aggression with their partners compared to the other attachment style groups. In regard to sexual coercion there was a significant difference between the secure participants and the preoccupied and dismissing-avoidant participants with a significance of .000. The secure participants had a significant difference with the fearful-avoidant participants with a significance of .014. This demonstrates that the secure participants experienced less sexual coercion comparted to the other attachment style groups. In regard to injury with partners there was a significant difference between the secure

participants and the other attachment style groups with a significance of .000. This reveals that the secure participants have less injury with their partners compared to the other attachment style groups. In regard to negotiation with family members there was no significant difference between the attachment style groups. In regard to psychological aggression with family members there was a significant difference between the secure participants and the other attachment style groups with a significance of .000. This reveals that the secure participants experience less psychological aggression with their family members compared to the other attachment style groups. In regard to physical aggression with family members. In regard to physical aggression with family members there was a significant difference between the secure participants and the other attachment style groups with a significance of .000. This demonstrates that the secure participants experience less physical aggression with their family members than the other attachment style groups. In regard to injury with family members there was a significant difference between the secure participants and the other attachment style groups with a significance of .000. This reveals that the secure participants experience less injury with family members than the other attachment style groups. The following tables demonstrate the results of the Bonferroni post-hoc test.

Table 8

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test for Attachment and Conflict Styles of Participants

Variable	Group	*N*	Mean	*SD*
CTS_P_Negotiation	Preoccupied	138	79.471	46.68518
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	110.4324	64.9254
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	96.0909	30.01484
	Total	186	86.6129	51.37946
CTS_P_Psychological_Aggression	Preoccupied	138	94.8623	58.08013
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	85.2432	77.74581
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	100.7273	70.82244
	Total	186	93.2957	62.95622
CTS_P_Physical_Aggression	Preoccupied	138	136.9855	90.14408
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	113.4324	113.1463
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	144.7273	119.41364
	Total	186	132.7581	96.83053
CTS_P_Sexual_Coercion	Preoccupied	138	81.7681	50.82118
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	63.6757	57.08525
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	72.5455	57.36264
	Total	186	77.6237	52.7059
CTS_P_Injury	Preoccupied	138	68.6957	46.79815
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	61.2973	64.07282
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	69.4545	56.74216
	Total	186	67.2688	51.02625
CTS_F_Negotiation	Preoccupied	138	76.058	42.97831
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	81.7838	55.20675
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	81.3636	37.23781
	Total	186	77.5108	45.18876
CTS_F_Psychological_Aggression	Preoccupied	138	95.6594	60.50354
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	80.027	78.21924
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	102.9091	74.98194
	Total	186	92.9785	65.1931
CTS_F_Physical_Aggression	Preoccupied	138	140.8333	89.04781
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	108.1892	107.84501
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	141.1818	108.61475
	Total	186	134.3602	94.57303
CTS_F_Injury	Preoccupied	138	70.7681	49.67549
	Dismissing-Avoidant	37	62.027	65.04976
	Fearful-Avoidant	11	78.0909	64.13806
	Total	186	69.4624	53.75813

Table 9

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Comparing Attachment and Conflict Styles of Participants

Variable	Source	df	F	Sig.
CTS_P_Negotiation	Between Groups	2	5.781*	< 0.001
	Within Groups	183	(2510.122)	
CTS_P_Psychological_Aggression	Between Groups	2	0.419	0.66
	Within Groups	183	(3988.521)	
CTS_P_Physical_Aggression	Between Groups	2	0.952	0.39
	Within Groups	183	(9381.023)	
CTS_P_Sexual_Coercion	Between Groups	2	1.788	0.17
	Within Groups	183	(2754.434)	
CTS_P_Injury	Between Groups	2	0.315	0.73
	Within Groups	183	(2623.102)	
CTS_F_Negotiation	Between Groups	2	0.275	0.76
	Within Groups	183	(2058.166)	
CTS_F_Psychological_Aggression	Between Groups	2	0.974	0.38
	Within Groups	183	(4251.327)	
CTS_F_Physical_Aggression	Between Groups	2	1.784	0.17
	Within Groups	183	(8868.932)	
CTS_F_Injury	Between Groups	2	0.534	0.59
	Within Groups	183	(2904.582)	

Note. * Significant at the 0.05 level
** Numbers in parentheses represent MS Error

Table 10

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Comparing Attachment and Conflict Styles of Participants

Variable	(I) ECR-RS Personality	(J) ECR-RS Personality	Sig.
CTS P	NegSecure	Preoccupied	< 0.001
	Secure	Dismiss-Av	1
	Secure	Fearful-Av	0.892
	Preoccupied	Secure	< 0.001
	Preoccupied	Dismiss-Av	0.046
	Preoccupied	Fearful-Av	1
	Dismiss-Av	Secure	1
	Dismiss-Av	Preoccupied	0.046
	Dismiss-Av	Fearful-Av	1
	Fearful-Av	Secure	0.892
	Fearful-Av	Preoccupied	1
	Fearful-Av	Dismiss-Av	1
CTS P Psy A	Secure	Preoccupied	< 0.001
	Secure	Dismiss-Av	< 0.001
	Secure	Fearful-Av	< 0.001
	Preoccupied	Secure	< 0.001
	Preoccupied	Dismiss-Av	1
	Preoccupied	Fearful-Av	1
	Dismiss-Av	Secure	< 0.001
	Dismiss-Av	Preoccupied	1
	Dismiss-Av	Fearful-Av	1
	Fearful-Av	Secure	< 0.001
	Fearful-Av	Preoccupied1	1
	Fearful-Av	Dismiss-Av	1
CTS P Phy A Secure	Secure	Preoccupied	< 0.001
	Secure	Dismiss-Av0	< 0.001
	Secure	Fearful-Av	< 0.001
	Preoccupied	Secure	< 0.001
	Preoccupied	Dismiss-Av	0.778
	Preoccupied	Fearful-Av	1
	Dismiss-Av	Secure	< 0.001
	Dismiss-Av	Preoccupied	0.778
	Dismiss-Av	Fearful-Av	1
	Fearful-Av	Secure	< 0.001
	Fearful-Av	Preoccupied	1
	Fearful-Av	Dismiss-Av	1
CTS P Sex C	Secure	Preoccupied	< 0.001
	Secure	Dismiss-Av	< 0.001
	Secure	Fearful-Av	0.014
	Preoccupied	Secure	< 0.001
	Preoccupied	Dismiss-Av	0.257
	Preoccupied	Fearful-Av	1
	Dismiss-Av	Secure	< 0.001
	Dismiss-Av	Preoccupied	0.257
	Dismiss-Av	Fearful-Av	1
	Fearful-Av	Secure	0.014
	Fearful-Av	Preoccupied	1
	Fearful-Av	Dismiss-Av	1

Summary

In regard to the hypotheses that emerged from the analysis, in research question one, I reject the hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis. Therefore, the secure and preoccupied participants did not use their pet as a safe haven more when experiencing conflict with their romantic partners. The results revealed that participants with a dismissing-fearful avoidant attachment were closer to their pet when they had to negotiate better with their partner.

In regard to research question two, I accept the hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. As such, the secure and preoccupied participants did use their pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with their family members. Men with a secure attachment style that have high psychological aggression with family members have a higher degree of using their pet as a safe haven. Women with a preoccupied attachment style that have high psychological aggression with family members have a higher degree of using their pet as a safe haven.

In Chapter 5, I will further summarize the finding of this research. In addition, I will explore more into the social change implications of this study as well as the applications for psychologists and educators. In addition, I will discuss the limitations of this study in further detail and describe the recommendations for further research relevant to the strengths revealed from the current study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

A pet owner's attachment style may be a factor in the likeliness of seeking out their pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic partners and family members. My study addressed how conflict in important core human relationships influences the role of pets being a safe haven when experiencing conflict with their romantic partners and family members. The first research question addressed attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, fearful-avoidant) and conflict with romantic partners, and the second research question addressed attachment style and conflict with family members. For the first research question, the participants were asked to answer the questions based on their current romantic relationship or their last romantic relationship. To measure attachment style, the ECR-RS Questionnaire was utilized. To capture the variable of experiencing conflict in romantic relationships, the CTS was utilized. To capture the variable of safe haven with their pets, the OPRS was used. This scale contains items from the attachment theory focusing on the pet owner's desire to maintain proximity to their pets. In addition, this scale contains items that focus on pet owners' perception of their pets as being emotionally supportive and mutual (Smolkovic et al., 2012).

Key Findings

For Research Question 1, I rejected the hypothesis and accepted the null hypothesis. The secure and preoccupied participants did not use their pet as a safe haven more when experiencing conflict with their romantic partners. The results revealed that participants with a dismissing-fearful avoidant attachment were closer to their pet when

they had to negotiate better with their partner based on a one-way ANOVA that showed the dismissing-avoiding participants who spent more time negotiating with their partners had higher OPRS scores. Therefore, the dismissing-avoidant participants were closer with their pet when they experience less conflict their partners.

For Research Question 2, I accepted the hypothesis and rejected the null hypothesis. There were significant findings regarding the relationship between OPRS scores and the CTS scores for the participants' family members. Men with a secure attachment style showed a significant relationship between psychological aggression with family members and the OPRS score in the positive direction as the coefficient number was .164. The significance was .028 showing that these men were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven as they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. Moreover, women with a preoccupied attachment style, revealed a significant relationship between psychological aggression with family members and the OPRS score in the positive direction as the coefficient number was .091. The significance was .046 showing that these women were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven as they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. Therefore, the secure and preoccupied participants did use their pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with their family members.

All the fearful-avoidant participants owned a dog. The results show that cat owners were less attached to their cats by 4 points. In addition, secure participants who own a dog were more attached than cat owners. Regardless of owning a cat or a dog, the

OPRS is more likely to go down with partners with an anxious attachment style. Participants who avoid their partner are less attached to their pets.

In regard to the exploratory analysis, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to analyze the relationship between the participants' attachment style and their relationship with their pets without considering conflict with their partner or family members. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean OPRS scores. The fearful-avoidant participants had the lowest OPRS scores, which demonstrated that they have less attachment to their pets. A Bonferroni post-hoc test was conducted to further analyze this relationship between the participants' attachment style and their relationship with their pets, which revealed that the secure participants showed a significant difference (0.14) with the fearful-avoidant participants. The preoccupied participants also showed a significant difference with the fearful-avoidant participants (0.24). The dismissing-avoidant attachment group did not reveal any significance between the other attachment groups. Therefore, these results demonstrate that the fearful-avoidant participants and the dismissing-avoidant participants have the least attachment to their pets.

Additionally, two ANOVAS were conducted to analyze the relationship between attachment style and conflict style among the participants. The results showed significance in all the conflict sections except for negotiation with family members. Therefore, there was significance among all attachment styles in negotiation with partners, psychological aggression with family members and partners, physical aggression with family members and partners, and sexual coercion with partners. The

secure participants had the highest score for partner negotiation with a mean score of 124,6961 ($N = 102$), which demonstrated that they were better able to negotiate with their partners. There was also a significant difference between the mean scores of the attachment styles for psychological aggression for partners. The secure participants had the least amount of experience with psychological aggression with their partners. In addition, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the attachment styles for physical aggression for family members. This demonstrated how the secure participants had the least amount of experience with physical aggression with family members.

Finally, a Bonferroni post-hoc test was conducted to further analyze the relationship between the participants' attachment style and conflict style. The preoccupied participants were better at negotiating with their partners compared with the dismissing-avoidant participants. There was no significant difference between the fearful-avoidant participants with the other attachment groups. Therefore, the secure participants were better able to negotiate with their partners than the other attachment style groups. The secure participants had less psychological aggression, physical aggression, sexual coercion, and injury with their romantic partners compared to the other attachment style groups. In regard to negotiation with family members, there was no significant difference between the attachment style groups. In addition, the secure participants experienced less psychological aggression, physical aggression, and injury with their family members compared to the other attachment style groups.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of my study confirm and extend the knowledge found in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. For example, Kurdek (2009) found that pet owners often turn to their pet as a safe haven more than family members but less than romantic partners and that an individual's attachment style will impact the likeliness of seeking this type of support. My study confirmed that individuals seek out their pet as a safe haven more than family and securely attached men and preoccupied women were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven when experiencing psychological aggression with family members. Therefore, the secure and preoccupied participants did use their pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with their family members, supporting Kurdek's findings. Moreover, my study extends the knowledge as it also addressed how experiencing conflict with family members and romantic partners impacted the individual's likeliness of using their pet as a safe haven. In addition, my study revealed that individuals with a dismissing-fearful avoidant attachment were closer to their pet when they had to negotiate better with their partner, which differed from Kurdek (2009).

My study also confirmed Zilcha-Mano et al.'s (2011) findings. Zilcha-Mano et al. found that owners high in anxiety may seek their pet as a safe haven for stress reduction. On the other hand, avoidant pet owners tend to feel uncomfortable with a physical and emotional closeness to their pet and will strive to maintain physical and emotional distance from their pet; they experience difficulty depending on their pet and turning to their pet when feeling distress (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). The results of my study showed that preoccupied attached women were more likely to use their pet as a safe

haven when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. My study also confirmed Zilcha-Mano et al.'s finding that cat owners reported more avoidant attachments than dog owners, as cats tend to be more emotionally distant from their owners; therefore, pet owners with an avoidant attachment style toward pets may be more likely to own a cat as it fits into their need for autonomy. My study found that cat owners were less attached to their cats by 4 points in their OPRS score. In addition, secure participants who owned a dog were more attached than cat owners. However, unlike Zilcha-Mano et al., my results did now show that individuals with a dismissing-fearful avoidant attachment were closer to their pet when they had to negotiate better with their partner. Therefore, by adding conflict as a variable, my study demonstrated how it impacted the emotional relationship dismissing-fearful attached individuals had with their pets. Further, my study differed from Kurdek (2009) and Zilcha-Mano et al., (2011) in that I specifically looked at conflict in important core human relationships and how it influences the role of pets being a safe haven. As such, my study demonstrated that a pet owner's attachment style is a factor in the likeliness of seeking out one's pet as a safe haven when experiencing conflict with romantic partners, family members, and friends.

In regard to conflict with romantic partners, my study confirmed what was described in the research in Chapter 2. The literature indicated that secure attached individuals often view disagreements with romantic partners as being less negative than anxiously attached or avoidant attached individuals. Secure attached individuals are also more likely to view arguments as being beneficial as they perceive conflict as helping to resolve their differences. Anxiously attached individuals often feel less in control of their

emotions when experiencing conflict and feel dissatisfied by conflict. Avoidant attached individuals also view disagreements as threatening and rather avoid conflict or may attempt to dominate his or her partner. In addition, avoidant attached individuals feel less confident about preventing a conflict from escalating (Ricco & Sierra, 2017). The results of my study showed that the secure participants had the highest score for partner negotiation, which demonstrated that they were better able to negotiate with their partners. The secure participants had the least amount of experience with psychological aggression, physical aggression, and injury with their partners.

In regard to conflict with family members, my study also confirmed what was described in the research in Chapter 2. Research has demonstrated that behaviors in how to manage conflict are learned in the family of origin (Baptist et al., 2012). For instance, individuals high in anxiety and avoidant attachment are more likely to perceive their families of origin as being more disengaged and enmeshed. As such, these individuals are more likely to use hostile and avoiding conflict styles and are also less validating. Disengaged families do not deal with issues so when they are discussed it becomes negative and intense (Baptist et al., 2012). My study confirmed that the secure participants had the least amount of experience with physical aggression, psychological aggression, and injury with family members. As such, my study confirms prior research that the preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant individuals had a higher degree of conflict with their family members than the secure individuals.

In regard to the foundation of attachment theory, my study confirmed what was described under the theoretical foundation in Chapter 2. Bowlby, the father of attachment

theory, observed that infants would experience distress when separated from their primary caregiver and would attempt to reestablish proximity to the caregiver (Fraley, 2010). Bowlby observed that if a child feels that the attachment figure is close, attentive and accessible, the child will feel loved and secure (Fraley, 2010). However, if the child does not feel secure, the child may feel despair (Fraley, 2010). Furthermore, his attachment system asks the question whether or not the child feels that the parent is accessible and attentive. If the infant feels that his or her parent is accessible and attentive, he or she will feel loved, confident and secure leading to the child to be more likely to explore the environment (Fraley, 2010). However, if the child does not feel that his or her parent is accessible and attentive, he or she may experience anxiety leading to searching for the parent that can lead to distress (Fraley, 2010). Moreover, Bowlby believed that the infant's early attachment experiences would continue throughout his or her lifetime influencing later relationships (Fraley, 2010). Bowlby created the concept of the internal working model, which are expectations and beliefs for how to behave and think that the child holds regarding relationships based upon his or her caregiver experiences (Fraley, 2010). The internal working model is the key mechanism responsible for the long-term implications of early attachment (Fraley, 2010). For instance, a secure child is more likely to believe that individuals will be available based upon previous experiences. Moreover, a child that has developed these expectations is likely to seek out relationships that are consistent with their expectations (Fraley, 2010). Therefore, Bowlby argued that this process will create continuity in attachment patterns in a child over his or her lifetime (Fraley, 2010). As such, secure children are more likely

as adults to be secure in their romantic relationships (Fraley, 2010). My study confirms Bowlby's theory by revealing that the secure participants had the highest score for partner negotiation which demonstrated that they were better able to negotiate with their partners. The secure participants had the least amount of experience with psychological aggression, physical aggression and injury with their partners. In addition, the secure participants had the least amount of experience with physical aggression, psychological aggression and injury with family members. As such, my study confirms Bowlby's theory as the preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant and fearful-avoidant individuals had a higher degree of conflict with their family members than the secure individuals. Furthermore, my study confirms Bowlby's theory that a person will continue a pattern of attachment as an adult I found that preoccupied attached women were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. Therefore, these preoccupied women are most likely continuing their pattern of attachment style with their families and are more likely to seek their pet as a source of comfort as a result.

Ainsworth (1984) is another founder of attachment theory who described in chapter two. According to Ainsworth and Wittig (1969), infants that were classified as Secure when they used the caregiver as a safe base from which to explore (as cited in Duschinsky, 2015). These infants would protest at their departure but then would seek out the caregiver when returning. In their study, they termed a pattern of infant behavior as Avoidant as these infants avoided showing their distress to their attachment figure. In addition, these infants had experienced distress in the past and learned that they should

not communicate their feelings as it would lead to rejection (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969 as cited in Duschinsky, 2015). The third pattern was termed Ambivalent/Resistant, in which these infants displayed distress even before being separated from their caregivers. These infants were often frustrated and were difficult to comfort upon the caregiver's return. These infants appeared to distrust their caregivers even when they were present (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969 as cited in Duschinsky, 2015). In addition, Ainsworth (1984), described attachment figures as possessing four features including their physical closeness is enjoyable (proximity maintenance); are missed when absent (separation distress); are sources of comfort (secure base); and are sought out to alleviate distress (safe haven). These features help to develop caregiving bonds and attachment bonds (as cited in Kurdek, 2009). Caregiving bonds focus on an individual's feelings of closeness to the attachment figure that relate to proximity maintenance and separation distress (Kurdek, 2009). Attachment bonds focus on utilizing the attachment figure to cope with threats to security that relate to secure base and safe haven (Kurdek, 2009). My study found that individuals with a dismissing-fearful attachment style used their pet more as a safe haven depending upon their level of negotiation with their romantic partner. I also found that securely attached men were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven as they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. In addition, my study found that preoccupied attached women were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven as they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. Furthermore, the fearful-avoidant participants have the lowest OPRS scores which demonstrated that they have the least

attachment to their pets. Therefore, my study confirms Ainsworth theory by showing that pet owners can display attachment bonds towards their pets as they may seek out their pets as a safe haven as a way to alleviate distress. My study also confirms Ainsworth theory by demonstrating that the individual's attachment style impacted how they attach to their pets.

Although gender differences were not predicted, my findings did find some differences between an individual's gender and how conflict impacted using their pet as a safe haven. Men with a secure attachment were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven as they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. Women with a preoccupied attachment style were more likely to use their pet as a safe haven as they felt closer to their pet when experiencing high psychological aggression with their family members. A study by Smolkovic et al. (2012) researched how a pet owner's attachment style impacted their attachment to their pets as well as the interpersonal attachment characteristics of dog owners and cat owners. They found that women reported higher attachment levels to their pet on the OPRS scale than men. Therefore, my study confirms Smolkovic et al.'s (2012) finding that a pet owner's gender can impact their attachment level to their pet.

Limitations of the Study

In my study, it is possible to find a few potential limitations. One limitation in my study is that it used Amazon Turk to obtain participants which resulted in a broad-based sample rather than targeting a population of pet lovers. Perhaps a more targeted sample of pet lovers might show more significant findings because they are more likely to be

attached to their pets. Furthermore, in regard to diversity, another limitation is that I did not ask my participants their ethnicity to determine whether the participants were diverse. Addressing ethnicity is important as different cultures perceive animals differently leading to pets being treated in a different manner. A study by Brown (2002) studied differences in pet attachment among Caucasian and African American veterinarian students. Brown (2002) found that Caucasian students were more attached to their pets, had significantly more pets, and were more likely to allow them to sleep on their bed than the African American students. Therefore, this study demonstrates how an attachment to a pet can be different depending on a pet owner's culture. Moreover, another limitation is that the Fearful Avoidant group of participants is small. This can lead to a homogeneity of variance issue.

Recommendations

For future research in this subject area, I recommend that a large sample be conducted targeting specifically pet lovers to observe how conflict with close human relationships impacts using their pets as a safe haven. Perhaps targeting pet lovers may provide different results because they are more likely to be attached to their pets. In addition, I suggest attempting to obtain an ethnically diverse sample of participants to ensure that the sample represents minority groups as well. Every culture has different attitudes toward how pets are perceived leading to pets being treated differently. Furthermore, I recommend attempting to obtain equal number of participants for all attachment style groups to prevent a homogeneity of variance issue. It may be interesting to study individuals who are involved in pet related activities including rescue work,

agility and dog or cat shows to explore how these individuals may differ in their attachment to their pets due to their work. Another interesting variable to look at is how loneliness may be a factor in an individual's attachment to their pet when experiencing conflict in their close human relationships.

Implications

I strongly believe that the results of my study have potential impact for positive social change. My study will heighten society's awareness of the important role that pets play in many individuals' lives. In addition, my study provides further theoretical evidence regarding the importance of pets in the lives of pet owners based upon their attachment style when experiencing conflict with family members and romantic partners. Furthermore, it will provide evidence how the presence of a pet may help individuals experiencing conflict in close human relationships. My study will show how the mere presence of a pet may help individuals experiencing conflict in close human relationships.

This study is significant because pets can be used therapeutically which can help those with insecure attachments. My study demonstrates the importance of pets in the lives of pet owners in times of distress since pets can provide comfort and unconditional love. Psychologists can gain insight into their patient's support system and who they tend to seek for a safe haven by asking their patients about their relationship with their pets (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014). Moreover, therapists can allow their clients to bring their pets during couple and family therapy sessions when conflict is an issue to help alleviate stress and comfort the patients. Patients can bring their pets to therapy sessions so their

clinician can observe their patient's interactions with their pets to gain an understanding of their attachment style (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014). Both children and adults may find it less threatening to communicate their feelings to a therapist with a pet present (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). Furthermore, psychologists can utilize therapy pets as a way to help formulate a secure attachment with the pet and with the therapist (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2015). Moreover, my study may help more individuals who need animal assisted therapy to be better matched to a pet that reflects their attachment style (Turcsan et al., 2012). Since animal assisted therapy is imperative to helping these individuals, a better-matched pet may help facilitate a stronger bond.

Conclusion

In the United States more individuals own pets than ever before (Cavanaugh et al., 2008). Pet owners often financially invest a lot in their pets including spending on pet supplies, pet grooming and dog walking services (Cavanaugh et al., 2008). As such, it is evident that pets play an important role in many lives (Cavanaugh et al., 2008). Many individuals view their pets as family members, as friends, or as their "fur babies" (Bouin, 2012). A quote by Michael Schaffer in his book One Nation Under Dog, eloquently expresses the intense relationships between pet owners and their pets:

> America's house pets have worked their way into a new place in the hearts, homes, and wallets of their owners. In a relatively short period of time, the United States has become a land of doggie yoga and kitty acupuncture and frequent-flier miles for traveling pets, a society where your inability to find a pet sitter has become an acceptable excuse to beg off a dinner invitation, a country where

> political candidates pander to pet owners and show dog champions are feted like Oscar winners (p. 21).

This quote captures the importance that pets now play in our society. Many individuals view their pets as family members, as friends, or as their "fur babies" (Bouin, 2012). Therefore, it is relevant to question how a pet owner's attachment style may play a role in how the individual perceives and interacts with his or her pet.

In regard to attachment theory, Bowlby argued that seeking security and safety from an attachment figure is an innate psychological tendency (Keefer et al., 2014). Individuals seek proximity to attachment figures and may feel distress in the absence of the attachment figure (Keefer et al., 2014). Individuals seek security and safety when needing support in times of distress (Keefer et al., 2014). Pet owners often display similar behaviors toward their pets as they do with other attachment figures including family members. One behavior is using their pet as a safe haven in times of distress. Kurdek's study (2009) was critical in demonstrating the crucial role that pet dogs can play in being a safe haven for their owners in times of emotional distress. Pets are often seen as members of the family and play a special role as they provide pet owners with unconditional love (Kurdek, 2009). Kurdek (2009) found that pet owners often turn to their pet as a safe haven more than family members and friends but less than romantic partners. An individual's attachment style will impact the likeliness of seeking this type of support (Kurdek, 2009). My study supports Kurdek's findings as my results found that men with a secure attachment style and women with a preoccupied attachment style that have high psychological aggression with family members have a higher degree of using

their pet as a safe haven. The results revealed that participants with a dismissing-fearful avoidant attachment were closer to their pet when they had to negotiate better with their partner. As such, these pet owners seek comfort from their pets when feeling distress that they may not receive from their human relationships. Therefore, my study demonstrates how vital pets can be for pet owners especially when they experience conflict with romantic partners and family members. Hopefully, my study can provide positive social change as it provided further evidence regarding the importance of pets in pet owner's lives.

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