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Attachment Styles of Women Who Are Attracted to Violent Incarcerated Men

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Walden University

College of Allied Health

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Carolina Felix

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Attachment Styles of Women Who Are Attracted to Violent Incarcerated Men

by

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M.S., Southern New Hampshire University, 2018

M.S., University of Cincinnati, 2015

B.S., University of Phoenix, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

August 2027

Abstract

In this qualitative study, attachment styles of women who are attracted to violent incarcerated men were investigated. Bowlby's attachment styles were used to develop an insight into the women who are attracted to violent incarcerated men. Steinberg's theory of love was used for a more intimate view into the women and their pursuit of relationships with incarcerated males. The findings revealed that the women identify as having anxious attachment styles and are insecure-ambivalent/resistant. Those with anxious attachment styles yearn to develop supportive relationships as their insecurities hinder them from developing trust, satisfaction, commitment, and interdependence. As for being insecure-ambivalent/resistant, it is described as those who are less emotionally developed babies, who are more prone to separation distress. Sternberg's theory of love revealed that women experience a fatuous love, which is described as intense passion without emotional intimacy, which is viewed as a more whirlwind romance. This study can be used to create positive social change as it provides a deeper, intimate view into the lives of these women and create more consistent support to families and loved ones of incarcerated males, such as through therapy and community outreach opportunities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children and husband. To my children, Anastasia, Sebastian, Joaquin, Tatiana, and Luciana, you all are and continue to be a large inspiration and motivator for me. Always remember, although life may take you down different and sometimes unexpected avenues, it is never too late to accomplish your dreams. To my husband, thank you for always supporting and encouraging me to continue. Once again, thank you for adjusting your retirement plans to allow me to accomplish my goals.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The age-old adage that good girls love bad boys has been used to describe some girls and women who continuously find themselves gravitating toward troublemakers, dropouts, and low-level offenders. However, some women develop romantic relationships with violent offenders. Johnson (2020) stated that women are drawn to violent offenders, including serial killers, as they are readily available due to being behind bars, which allows the women to develop a deeper connection to explore the human drive of death, pain, and predation. The women may have an inherent need to understand the violent offenders and killers (Johnson). In addition, violent offenders may even serve as a target for the women's projection of feelings of fascination, fear, disgust, and anger (Johnson, 2020).

The women, or prison groupies as they are referred to, a term credited to Clifford L. Linedecker, who wrote *Prison Groupies* in 1994. These relationships span all backgrounds and demographics, including educated, independent, intelligent, well-adjusted, hardworking, and sometimes religious women. There has been previous research that has studied women who seek relationships with offenders, and it seems that the more notoriety the offender has, the more women are attracted to them. The women will send correspondence, packages, and pictures, and advocate for new trials. The attachment styles of women can offer a possible explanation as to why they find themselves attracted to and become romantically involved with violent offenders.

Even though these men have committed such violent crimes as rape, aggravated assault, and murder, these women are choosing to see what good qualities lie underneath their hardened exterior and violent demeanors. Although there has been previous research that has used attachment theory and addressed a similar question as to why some women are attracted to violent men, the combination of both Bowlby's attachment theory and Steinberg's theory of love can potentially provide a deeper insight into these relationships.

Background

There are case studies that focus on the romantic relationships with violent incarcerated male offenders. Those studies tend to address the attraction and fascination that these women have with violent offenders, including serial killers. The term for this phenomenon is Hybristophilia, where an individual finds themselves sexually attracted to an offender who has committed a serious violent offense, including murder and rape (American Psychological Association, 2018). Sometimes, the individual finds themselves engaging in criminal activity alongside the offender; an example is Bonnie and Clyde (Pettigrew, 2019).

Women entering romantic relationships come from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. They are willing to make significant sacrifices to ensure the relationship's success. Vicary and Fraley (2010) note that high-profile murderers such as Scott Peterson and van der Sloot, who is the main suspect in the Natalee Holloway disappearance, have received countless calls and letters and even received marriage proposals. Furthermore, it seems the women must choose between their relationships and

their friends and family. They begin to form an attachment to an individual who can never fully fulfill their needs in the relationship.

Two current high-profile incarcerated men are Scott Peterson and Chris Watts. Scott Peterson's pregnant wife, Laci Peterson, went missing on December 24th, 2002, and their remains were eventually found on April 13th, 2003 (Bonavito, 2019). Scott Peterson was convicted on November 12th, 2004, of first-degree murder of his wife, Laci Peterson, and second-degree murder for his unborn son, and was sentenced to the death penalty (Bonavito, 2019). Whereas Chris Watts' pregnant wife, Shanann Watts, went missing along with their two young daughters on August 13th, 2008 (Kennedy, 2025). Their remains were found on August 16th, 2008. And on August 21st, 2008, he was charged with five counts of first-degree murder as well as two counts of first-degree murder for each of his daughters, as they were under 12 years old (Kennedy, 2025). In addition, he was charged with unlawful termination of a pregnancy as Shanann Watts was five weeks pregnant with their son. On November 6th, 2008, he was sentenced to five life sentences, without the possibility of parole, and an additional 48 years for the termination of pregnancy (Kennedy, 2025). Peterson and Watts were both having affairs at the time of the murders (Bonavito, 2019; Kennedy, 2025).

Despite these crimes, the two have amassed a huge following of supporters, with many women vying for their attention by sending letters in hopes of establishing a connection in addition to their online cult-like following (Johnson, 2020). The women may perceive the men to be charming, fun, charismatic, and simply misunderstood. The rise of true crime shows and how accessible the incarcerated men are is likely to become

a sadomasochistic fantasy for many women (Paul, 2018). The need to get closer to the man eventually turns into infatuation; the woman is willing to enter what they perceive as a relationship, even if it is one-sided. The women's infatuation may be related to romantic projections of fear, anger, and fascination but as well as an attempt to understand what cannot be understood in a rational way (Johnson, 2020).

Problem Statement

There has been little research into exploring the relationship between attachment styles and love theory when discussing how adult women seek intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men, including those who are serving life without parole (LWOP) sentences. There are currently 53,000 men who are serving LWOP, but the number does not include the estimated 44,000 men who are serving sentences of 50 years or more (Baker, 2022).

The literature regarding any previous research has focused on the Hybristophilia phenomenon or the already well-established relationships with incarcerated men, not necessarily violent. Shreeta et al. (2022) note that hybristophiles may have been victims of physical or sexual abuse, which has resulted in low self-esteem, predisposing them to criminal activities and other deviant behavior. The phenomenon of Hybristophilia is concerning as these women, and at times men, become so infatuated that, in certain incidences, they become criminally intertwined by actively participating in criminal acts.

Yet, there is little background or information on why some women seek violent incarcerated men. Although some researchers have investigated this issue to some extent, the topic has not been thoroughly explored in an attempt to understand the attachment

styles of women. This study is important as it can provide an understanding of how the attachment styles from the women's upbringings have influenced them when seeking intimate relationships with men, particularly with violent incarcerated men.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of the attachment styles of adult women who seek intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men. Due to incarceration, the intimate connection is experienced differently for the women as there is limited, if any, physical contact with the inmates. Women rely on communication and mail to establish an intimate connection, whether through pictures, drawings, letters, or postcards. The women must be mindful that there are restrictions such as no food, clothing, explicit material, nude photographs, or gang depictions (Missouri Dept. of Corrections, n.d.).

Despite the lack of physical intimacy or connection, the women are willing to forego it or make concessions in hopes of establishing a meaningful relationship. They are still drawn to them even though the men have been convicted of violent crimes: robbery, rape, murder, aggravated assault, and negligent manslaughter (Uniform Crime Reporting, 2023).

There have been previous studies to suggest that the styles established at a young age tend to carry over into interpersonal relationships, as seen in Benoit's (2004) study. According to Benoit (2004), if a child experiences disorganized attachment in infancy or early childhood, it is a high predictor of maladjustment and psychopathology. If the women grew up with a chaotic, abusive, neglectful caretaker, there is a high chance that

the women would develop an anxious and avoidant attachment style. They will exhibit a combination of characteristics, including fear of abandonment and rejection, low self-esteem, and a constant need for validation. Rees (2007) stated that a disturbed childhood is related to an individual's physical and psychological health, including some major causes of mortality. A key factor in intergenerational difficulties, which predisposes children to homelessness, criminality, promiscuity, substance abuse, anger problems, and early pregnancy (Rees, 2007).

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): What are the attachment styles of women seeking intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men?

The purpose of this question was to determine whether the attachment styles of women during childhood impacted their interpersonal relationships in adulthood. I used this question to explore if the women identify with more than one attachment style.

Research Question 2 (RQ 2): How do these adult women describe the meanings of these attachments?

The purpose of this question was to determine how these women who are involved with violent incarcerated men would describe their attachments. I explored whether the women identify with any of the meanings of attachments.

Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework for the Study

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory addresses the four styles that are developed during infancy and carry into adulthood interpersonal relationships. Bowlby stated that attachment theory is

not based on parenting but rather on evolution, as the act of attachment is the tendency of a child to seek comfort from their caregivers (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). The primary focus of attachment theory was to explain the importance of a secure base for the infant and how an emotional bond is created with their respective caregiver (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). The attachment classification is established through the infant's environment; so, if the infant is surrounded by instability, lack of affection, or chaos, the attachment suffers; and, if the infant experiences love, is soothed when crying, or is carried, the attachment is secure.

Bowlby identified four patterns of attachment in infants: secure, avoidant, resistant, and disorganized (Benoit, 2004). When discussing adult attachments, particularly in romantic relationships, a notable difference emerges. There are two dimensions: avoidance and anxiety; the individual is either independent and seeks control or constantly worries about being abandoned and has constant negative feelings about themselves (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). Anxious individuals tend to have poorly adjusted relationships, and women tend to score higher on the anxiety scale than men (Simpson & Rholes, 2017).

Sternberg's Theory of Love

The Triangular theory of love has three components: decision/commitment, intimacy, and passion. Intimacy is positioned at the top of the triangle, followed by passion on the left of the triangle and then decision/commitment on the right (Sternberg, 1986). Sternberg indicated that each portion of the triangle dictates the intensity of the relationship, which is dependent on whether the relationship will be short-term or long-

term. There is also a difference between the three components when discussing a loving relationship; the intensity of love will vary between parents, children, siblings, and significant others (Sternberg, 1986).

Within the triangle structure, there are two factors: the amount of love and the balance of that love (Sternberg, 1986). Sternberg indicated that the amount of love is present within the area of the triangle, whereas the balance of love is seen in the shape of the triangle. Sternberg also revealed that the shape of the triangle can determine the commitment level, the longevity of the relationship, and the intensity of the passion and attraction. In addition to the structure and shape of the triangle, there are four main types of triangles: real versus ideal, self-versus-other, self-perceived versus other-perceived, and interactions among the love triangles (Sternberg, 1986).

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of women's attachment styles and those who seek intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men. I used a case study design, which is defined as a research approach that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in terms of a real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011).

Although there are several ways that may be used to describe a case study, sometimes it is referred to as a naturalistic design because the phenomenon is explored in depth and in its natural state (Crowe et al., 2011).

A positivist case study was used, as this approach involves identifying the variables to be studied in advance and determining whether these variables align with the findings (Crowe et al., 2011). The use of the collective method was implemented as it

enabled the comparison of numerous previous cases to be compared (Crowe et al., 2011). The data was collected through interviews, as they provided an in-depth view of women's lives.

The Framework Method was implemented in five stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation (Crowe et al., 2011). The first stage, familiarization, allowed for the initial understanding of the transcripts or audio recordings to ensure they are interpreted correctly later (Gale et al., 2013). In this stage, key themes are noted. Second, identifying a thematic framework involved identifying abstract concepts, which were then grouped together or ranked in an order that would be more beneficial to the researcher (Goldsmith, 2021). Third, indexing was the process of combining or linking the data and framework components, which is accomplished through coding the data (Goldsmith, 2021). In addition, Goldsmith noted that charting is the fourth step, which involves organizing the data studied systematically and comprehensively as well as employing a matrix to help organize the analysis. The last step was mapping and interpretation, which involves combining all the information, patterns, and analysis to identify a particular phenomenon (Goldsmith, 2021).

Definitions

Anti-social personality disorder (ASPD): Classified as a cluster-B disorder, which also includes borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic disorders. ASPD is not diagnosable in childhood and is characterized as a dysfunctional thought process with a focus on delinquent, criminal, and exploitative behavior with no signs of remorse (Fisher & Hany, 2023).

Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM): The current edition, 5, features the most updated scientific literature regarding comprehensive critical resources for clinicians (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Hybristophilia: A sexual interest and attraction to those who commit crimes; usually, the crimes are violent in nature (American Psychological Association, 2018). Hybristophilia is sometimes referred to as Bonnie and Clyde syndrome. Hybristophilics, specifically passive hybristophilics, are sometimes referred to as prison groupies.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): May include flashbacks, trouble sleeping/nightmares, feeling worried/guilty/sad, having trouble concentrating, feeling alone or detached, loss of interest in activities, irritability, physical pain, vigilant, and startled easily (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023).

Prison groupies:

Psychotic disorders: Severe mental disorders that can cause abnormal thinking and perception. Individuals tend to lose a sense of reality due to delusions and hallucinations. Schizophrenia is a type of psychotic disorder as well as individuals with bipolar disorder can experience psychotic symptoms. (National Library of Medicine, 2015).

Psychosis: A collection of symptoms that have affected the mind, which results in often losing their sense of reality. During a psychotic episode, the individual's perception may become distorted, making it harder to understand what is real and what is not. Signs of psychosis may include suspicion, trouble sleeping, withdrawal, decline in self-care,

overly intense ideas, lack of motivation, anxiety, emotional disruption, and confused speech (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024).

Recidivism: This is measured by the criminal acts that have resulted in rearrest, a return to prison, or reconviction during a three-year period of being initially released (National Institute of Justice, n.d.).

Assumptions

I assumed that both attachment theory and the theory of love would be good indicators of the type of women who are attracted to violent incarcerated men. I assumed that women would show signs of attachment when developing relationships with violent incarcerated men. The attachments formed with these men have been greatly influenced by their upbringing and relationships with their parental figures. Although attachment styles typically develop in early childhood, it is possible that they can change in adulthood through the formation of new interpersonal relationships. The assumption was that with the previous interpersonal relationships, the women's attachment styles created unrealistic expectations when pursuing a relationship with a violent incarcerated man serving life without parole or on death row.

These assumptions served as good indicators in explaining the phenomena of adult women conscientiously and knowingly entering committed romantic relationships with these men. The men are unable to be emotionally, physically, or mentally present as these women deserve. Yet, that did not stop these women from becoming involved in chat groups or support groups for prisoners in hopes of forming a connection with an inmate. Not all women looked to form an intimate relationship with a violent offender,

but for the women who did seek violent inmates, there must have been a reason or explanation as to why they ignored the red flags and chose to see if any good redeeming qualities.

Scope and Delimitations

The participants were adult women, 18 years of age or older, and resided within the United States. Additionally, the women must have initiated the correspondence and relationship after the inmate was incarcerated. Bowlby's attachment theory was used to help explore the attachment styles of women entering intimate relationships. I excluded participants who were under the age of 18, men, and those who did not reside within the United States.

Limitations

Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, finding enough participants proved to be a challenge. As there were not enough participants to reach saturation, it skewed the results and did not offer an accurate portrayal of the attachment styles of women who sought intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men.

A secondary limitation was obtaining enough case studies that focused on participants who have shared their experiences about their relationships. Another limitation was focusing on case studies that featured participants within the United States who were romantically involved with violent offenders imprisoned overseas. A fourth limitation was focusing on participants who became involved with violent incarcerated men after incarceration. Doing so reduced the number of participants who were already involved with the violent incarcerated men prior to incarceration.

Significance

This study is significant as it sought to fill the research gap in understanding how women find themselves entering relationships with violent incarcerated men. Although similar studies have been conducted, this study was unique in that it focused on the phenomenon of the connection between a woman's upbringing and the relationship that later takes place. This was important as it not only can help potentially provide further insight but also explained the thought process that some of these women were having when entering these relationships, such as feeling safer if they pursued incarcerated men, especially violent offenders, because they had more control in the relationship, which allowed them to walk away sooner if need be.

Despite previous research that has approached this phenomenon of women seeking incarcerated men, the research has mainly focused on those currently in established romantic relationships or the potential problems the women may face, such as financial hardships. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the study, critical thinking, which is defined as conducting objective analysis to form a judgment, was necessary to ensure the integrity of the study.

Summary

In this study, I examined the phenomenon of adult women and their attachment styles and the influence the attachment styles have when seeking intimate romantic relationships with violent incarcerated men. The usage of the theory of attachment styles and the theory of love helped provide further insight into how these well-rounded women are becoming romantically involved with violent men. Although similar studies have

been conducted or those focusing on Hybristophilia, there was still little known about the underlying factors that lead these women to actively pursue and correspond with men, ultimately leading to a committed intimate relationship.

In Chapter 2, I will provide an exhaustive review of the literature. I will focus on the significance of Bowlby's and Sternberg's theories and their relation to the study.

There will be a more in-depth understanding of the attachment theory and the theory of love. Within the chapter, I will also discuss the four types of attachment styles (secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, or disorganized) that adults exhibit in their interpersonal relationships.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the attachment styles of adult women in relationships with violent incarcerated men to include those on death row or serving life sentences without the possibility of parole (LWOP). These women came from all demographics, socioeconomic statuses, and educational backgrounds, and one commonality they shared was romantically, mentally, and emotionally involving themselves with an inmate currently incarcerated, either serving a life sentence at a prison or on death row.

Inmates who are convicted and incarcerated for violent crimes are housed in supermax prisons, which are highly secure facilities that house inmates in isolation for days or years at a time (Anderson, 2023). Anderson stated that advocates and supporters of supermax prisons argue that the use of such facilities helps reduce violence, escape attempts, and contraband sales within the prison environment. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) is labeled as "extended restrictive housing" as the purpose is not formal punishment but rather segregation through solitary confinement, which benefits staff and management (Anderson, 2023).

The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program defines violent crime as an offense that involves some type of force or the threat of force. Violent crimes are composed of four offenses: rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and murder, to include nonnegligent manslaughter (Uniform Crime Reporting, 2023). Vicary and Fraley (2010) state that in 2007, most violent crimes were aggravated assaults, with 79% and 90% for

murders. Over a decade later, it was reported that in 2019, there were an estimated 1,203,808 acts of violent crimes, with aggravated assaults reported accounting for 68.2 percent (Uniform Crime Reporting, 2023).

The use of a gun was reported in 73.7% of murders, 27.6% of aggravated assaults, and 36.4% of robberies, but the data on the use of weapons in rapes was not collected (Uniform Crime Reporting, 2023). Regarding rape, the Uniform Crime Reporting reported there were an estimated 139,815 robberies, an estimated 267,988 aggravated assaults, and an estimated 821,182 rapes. The South experienced a high percentage of estimated murders in 2019 at 48.7% compared to the Northeast, which reported 11.2% (Uniform Crime Reporting, 2023). Scaptura and Boyle (2020) reported that between 74% and 90% of women are victims of stalking and rape. Mass shootings disproportionately affect women, as family and romantic partners are targets in 54% of the shootings (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020).

Literature Search Strategy

I utilized scholarly search engines, university databases, and contacted authors to conduct this literature review. The sources included government websites focusing on statistical data on violent crimes, scholarly journals, and textbooks. Research criteria were limited based on the publication date ranging, from 2018 to 2023, and did not include previous studies. The American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, SAGE Publications, ProQuest, Taylor and Francis Online, PyscInfo, Proquest Central, University of Cincinnati, Walden Library, Wiley Online Library, and PubMed Central databases were often used. Journals most referenced included but were

not limited to Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; Behavioral Neurology and Neuropsychiatry; Frontier Psychology; International Journal of Psycho-Analysis; Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment; Journal of Psychiatric Research; Aggression and Violent Behavior; Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology; Social Psychological and Personality Science.

Search terms included *schizophrenia and male prisoners; substance abuse and male prisoners; anxiety and prisoners; attachment theory; Steinberg's theory of love; prison groupies; love and prison; inmates and love; relationships in prison; male prisoners and psychiatric disorders; supermax and violent offenders; substance abuse OR substance disorder; attachment and prison; mental health OR mental disorders; attraction and male inmates; inmates and love while in prison; incarceration and relationships; Hybristophilia; depression and women; borderline personality disorder and women; PTSD OR post-traumatic disorder; romance and prison; attraction and murderers; attraction and violent offenders; attachment and love and prisoners; alcohol abuse and prisoners OR inmates; social media and inmates OR prisoners; communication and prisoners OR inmates.*

Theoretical Foundation

Attachment Theory

Freud is suggested to have set the stage for the development of the attachment theory, as Freud placed importance on early child and mother relationships (Fitton, 2012). There was an emphasis on recognizing the significance of such mother-infant relationships and later adult-adult relationships (Fitton, 2012). As a result, it would have a

lifelong impact on their interpersonal relationships. The original theory was considered psychobiological and evolutionary rather than parenting, as Bowlby referred to attachment as the tendency of children to seek comfort from consistent caregivers when the child is scared, vulnerable, or simply needs to be comforted (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). The attachment is an emotional bond typically formed with an individual who is perceived as wiser or older (Fearon & Roisman, 2017).

The primary focus of attachment theory is to establish the function of a secure base, which helps the child explore without discomfort or anxiety (Eagle, 2017). Eagle reported that self-exploration enables children to develop social skills and the necessary functions to become well-functioning and adjusted adults. The early attachment bond lies in the notion that it helps set the stage for developing one's interpersonal interpretative mechanism (Eagle, 2017). Researchers agree that when given the opportunity, infants become attached to their primary caregiver within the first eight months of their life (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Although there is still debate about whether it is possible to form multiple attachments simultaneously or after the primary attachment is established, there is still no doubt that infants and children can have various attachment figures (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). The attachment figure provides a sense of safety and support for the child, which also applies to adults.

It is not surprising that the stability of an infant's attachment classification is based on the environment (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). It was revealed that stability ranged from 81% to 96% in stable environments over a 6-month period. In contrast, in an unstable environment, stability is significantly lower, which may depend on the

interactions and temperament of the attachment figure. A previous study noted that, despite environmental instability, there was a 60% stability of attachment classification. An infant's attachment is typically to a mother figure; however, in one study, 24% of the infants had a stronger attachment bond to their fathers, as they had spent a significant amount of time with the infant and actively participated in the infant's care.

Bowlby stated that parental figures are usually members of the hierarchy, but as the infant grows and matures, the attachment naturally changes, either dropping or adding new figures (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). As children grow up, the new attachment figure can become a peer or romantic partner; in a study of 100 adults, 80% were primarily attached to their partner for at least 2 years. The rest of the children were still attached to a parent, but this does not suggest that the attachment was not distributed among multiple figures, as they could all name other people who were sources of security for them, but the majority preferred one attachment figure (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). There are two distinct differences between the adult and child attachment classifications. First, there is an expectation of an internalized secure base, and second, there is the nature of self-exploration (Eagle, 2017).

Psychoanalysts, such as Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Margaret Ribble, Therese Benedeck, and Rene Spitz, have addressed forms of attachment. Freud believed that the mother is an important figure not only because she satisfies the infant's physiological needs but also because, in the process, she stimulates the infant's erotogenic zones (Bowlby, 1958). Bowlby noted Melanie Klein observed infants and realized that there was a deeper relationship between an infant and their mother than just physiological

needs; the two were bound together from the beginning. The relation between good and evil is the breast, as it is the infant's first object of relation.

Margaret Ribble emphasized the concept of non-oral components, suggesting that the infant's need for contact with their mother is equivalent to their need for food. The mother satisfies a physiological need, likened to that of breathing and circulation (Bowlby, 1958). Bowlby stated that Therese Benedeck believed an emotional bond existed between the infant and mother and coined the term "emotional symbiosis". In addition, the bond was evident as the infant needed to be picked up, smiled at, talked to, and held as a form of emotional connection and satisfaction. Rene Spitz stated that Western culture had believed the relationship between mother and infant was not as essential and had denied its importance by reducing the need to establish such a connection.

Attachment Theory helps provide a different perspective on the distress of close and intimate relationships on the partner's mental and physical health (Johnson, 2019). Johnson states that attachment theory can offer nine perspectives on distressed relationships. First, the most significant problem within a relationship is often establishing and acknowledging the partners' security bond, which impacts the secure base, such as closeness and attachment to their partner, and can help alleviate feelings of helplessness and meaninglessness. A key issue within a distressed relationship is the inability to respond to one's emotional cues and accessibility. The second problem is that distressed partners who are emotionally unavailable can become insecure and fearful and, in doing so, embrace the fight, flight, or freeze responses toward traumatic stressors. The

more hopeless the relationship, the more frigid and automatic the emotional reactions between partners will be.

Johnson (2019) reported that the third problem follows the current trend in couples therapy, which is that attachment theory depathologizes dependency needs; this could result from Bowlby's suggestion that there are only two types of dependency, effective and ineffective. Bowlby also suggests that attachment cannot be dysfunctional, but that extreme avoidance can be beneficial if it helps maximize the stability and safety of the relationship by reducing the demands on the attachment figure. The fourth perspective is that patterns of problems in relationships are often predictable and can reflect separation distress. For example, one partner may be willing to pursue an emotional connection, but during an angry state, the other partner often withdraws in hopes of maintaining peace.

The fifth perspective states that depression and anxiety are part of a distressed relationship, along with the loss of security, isolation, and distress, and are more than likely to maintain emotional issues (Johnson, 2019). Attachment theory suggests that there are some links between distress within relationships and mental disorders, which include loss, helplessness, and aloneness. The sixth perspective states that the theory helps focus attention on regulating, processing, and integrating emotional responses in the relationship. The seventh perspective emphasizes the need for emotional connection, whereas the eighth perspective involves understanding how the self is defined through recurring interpersonal interactions. The last perspective addresses the defining moments, which are the injuries that later create insecurities within a relationship.

Notable Psychoanalyst in Child Development

Psychoanalysts Freud, Hinde, Lorenz, and others inspired John Bowlby to delve deeper into the idea behind attachment behavior, and felt it was not restricted to specific stages of life or simple sexual gratification, as stated by Freud. Attachment theory shifted towards the belief that it was not based on dependency theory, but rather on a primary instinctual response (Fitton, 2012). The need for attachment is a biological necessity, and the bond between a mother and child is important and essential to the child's development (Fitton, 2012).

Bowlby suggested that an infant's attachment takes the form of instinctual responses, such as clinging, smiling, crying, and sucking, which are focused on the mother during the first year, specifically after the first six months (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby did feel that clinging and following were stronger indicators of attachment than crying and sucking (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby agreed with psychoanalyst Piaget that it is not until after the age of nine months that the infant fully grasps that they have constructed a world of permanent objects. After this age, the infant will understand that the objects chosen are linked with specific human characteristics (Bowlby, 1958). As a result, there are six attachment components: affective, behavioral, cognitive, psychic, kinesthetic/tactile, and physical security/secure base (Fitton, 2012).

The affective component is the bonds observed through affectionate gestures between the infant and caregiver. This is where emotion and emotional regulation are established within the relationship (Fitton, 2012). If there is prolonged or sudden separation from their attachment figure, the infant can experience grief and sadness. The

behavioral component involves the infant or child attempting to increase proximity or connection with their maternal caregiver. The third component, the cognitive component, refers to the attachment relationship between a parent and child, and the communication patterns of the parents can influence the child's mental processes. The fourth psychic component is trusting and knowing their caregiver, which develops from their secure base. Additionally, the kinesthetic/tactile components are formed through rocking, holding, cuddling, and gazing. Lastly, there is a physical security/secure base, where the caregiver is not just physically present but reliable in creating a secure base for the infant or child.

John Bowlby began his study of attachment relations with children and their parents. Bowlby's first empirical study focused on children at the London Child Guidance Clinic, where he examined 44 cases and was able to link some of the children's symptoms to their history of maternal deprivation and separation (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby noticed that a lot of their symptoms matched students at a school for maladjusted children, many of whom were prone to stealing and showed little to no affection. In 1948, Bowlby and his colleague began to observe hospitalized and institutionalized children who were separated from their parents. After two years, a film would be made documenting the experiences of the children due to their separation, which helped bring about change and improve the lives of the hospitalized children.

Bowlby's earlier writings on affectionless children garnered the attention of the World Health Organization (WHO), which later asked Bowlby to write a report on homeless children and their mental health in post-war Europe (Bretherton, 1992). In

Bowlby's "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother", he presents four theories that discuss the positive aspects of a child's attachment, which are Secondary Drive, Primary Object Sucking, Primary Object Clinging, and Primary Return-to-Womb Craving. The secondary drive was described as the act of a baby attaching to an individual, especially their mother, as the mother meets not only their physiological needs, and as a result, the infant starts to learn that their mother is now a source of gratification.

Primary object sucking is a phenomenon where the infant has a built-in need to encounter a breast and makes the connection that to eat, they must suck on the breast (Bowlby, 1958). This is where the infant also comes to realize that the breast is attached to their mother. Bowlby indicated that primary object clinging is the infant's instinctive need to touch a person while having an object independent of food, which is just as critical as the need for warmth and food. Lastly, the primary return-to-womb is the notion that the infant resents being taken from their womb and seeks to return to it.

Patterns of Attachment in Children

There are four patterns of attachment when discussing infant-parent relationships: three are characterized as organized, which are secure, avoidant, and resistant, and the fourth is characterized as disorganized (Benoit, 2004). Benoit reported that the quality of attachment is primarily based on the caregiver's response, which activates the infant's attachment system. In addition, around six months of age, the infant can anticipate the caregiver's response, thus shaping their behaviors accordingly. If a caregiver responds to the infant's distress lovingly, such as soothing or picking up the infant when crying, the infant feels secure. This form of dealing with stress is organized and secure; they seek the

caregiver until they feel safe. When the caregiver continuously responds to the infant's distress in an annoyed or ignoring manner, the infant eventually develops an avoidant strategy, such as avoiding the caregiver when upset or experiencing other negative emotions. The strategy is organized so that the infant knows when to avoid the caregiver and what to do; furthermore, this avoidant strategy could be insecure, as it may lead to maladjustment problems.

If the caregiver is inconsistent, unpredictable, or amplifies the infant's distress, the infant develops an organized strategy. As the child learns to elicit care from their caregiver by exaggerating their anger or distress, or another form of extreme negative emotion (Benoit, 2004), they become more effective in doing so. The hope is that the caregiver will respond to such emotions and signals despite their inconsistency. This strategy is also insecure as it is associated with emotional and social maladjustments.

Patterns of Attachment in Adults

According to Simpson and Rholes (2017), two dimensions are the basis of adult romantic attachment orientations. The first is Avoidance, which is the degree to which an individual is comfortable with the emotional intimacy and closeness of being in a romantic relationship. Avoidant people are usually independent or strive to be so, seeking control and individuality in their relationships, as they feel that having an emotional attachment to their partner is impossible or unnecessary. This could lead the individual to use distancing coping mechanisms, which in turn suppress any negative emotion to appear independent.

The second, anxiety, creates worry about being underappreciated or even abandoned by their romantic partner (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). They indicated that individuals who are heavily anxious constantly feel the need to get emotionally closer to their romantic partner so they can feel secure in their relationship. Simpson and Rholes reported that these individuals also tend to have negative feelings and views about themselves, but hold their romantic partner in high regard. In addition, they stated, the anxiety could lead the individuals to act in ways that could drive their partner away, such as the constant need for reassurance. Furthermore, anxious individuals typically use emotion-focused coping strategies when they are distressed, which could escalate the situation. Unfortunately, this partially explains why anxious people tend to have less fulfilling and poorly adjusted relationships. Women tend to score slightly higher than men on the anxiety scale, but men tend to score higher on the avoidance scale than women.

Pioneer Psychoanalyst in Attachment Typologies

Ainsworth was inspired by Bowlby's work, emphasizing the importance of attachment figures and how caregivers form a secure base for infants to develop their skills, which aid in learning and self-protection (Fitton, 2012). Ainsworth (1969) states that to better understand the infant-mother relationship, the terms object relations, dependency, and attachment should be further explained. Although there may be some overlap among these terms, they are distinctly different when discussing early interpersonal development.

The concept of object relations is established within the first year of the infant's life, and typically, the first object is its mother, as the initial relationship is essentially an oral one (Ainsworth, 1969). Ainsworth stated that an individual's dependency is usually linked to social learning theories, and the first dependency relationship is one with their mother or a mother substitute. Dependency is not just helplessness but the need for attention or approval. Attachment is a term specifically used for love relations as it refers to the affectional tie that one person has towards another specific individual.

Ainsworth began studying the attachment styles of infants and their mothers while she was living in Uganda. Ainsworth sought to study the weaning of toddlers from the breast, but she decided to shift her focus to the attachment relationship between the infant and mother (Bretherton, 1992). Ainsworth recruited 26 families for her study, which included nursing babies aged between one month and 24 months. The families were observed every two weeks for two hours over a nine-month period. During these visits, Ainsworth observed the infant's behaviors and signals, which were generally directed toward the mother. The results showed three infant attachment patterns: securely attached, insecurely attached, and not yet attached. This study allowed Ainsworth and Bowlby to collaborate again.

Following the Uganda study, Ainsworth returned to the States and embarked on another study, the Baltimore Project. In 1963, the Baltimore Project took place, comprising 26 families that were observed naturally, without the interview aspect seen in the Uganda study (Bretherton, 1992). Bretherton noted that the visits consisted of 18 home visits, which started on the first of the month and lasted up to 54 weeks, with each

visit lasting up to four hours. Due to the length of visits, Ainsworth collected approximately 72 hours of data per family. Ainsworth stated her findings revealed that when a mother addresses her infant's needs, the act helps the infant develop confidence in the ability to control a situation and what happens to them.

In addition, Ainsworth coined the term “sensitive responsiveness,” which was meant to reflect the caregiver’s ability to respond to the child’s emotional signals accurately and then respond appropriately (Stevenson-Hinde, 2007). Ainsworth decided to tally the frequencies of the occurrences and, in doing so, ultimately developed a rating scale. While working with Bowlby, Ainsworth identified four phases of development in the child-mother attachment, with three of the stages occurring within the first year, and the last phase was initially identified by Bowlby (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

The first phase is the initial pre-attachment phase, which begins at birth and lasts for a few weeks (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The infant can make eye contact when in close proximity and uses signaling behaviors such as crying and smiling, which lead others to approach the infant, thus promoting proximity and closeness. Phase 1 comes to an end when the infant can discern between people, particularly their mother and others (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

In Phase 2, attachment-in-the-making, the infant can discriminate between familiar and unknown figures, as well as distinguish a familiar figure from another familiar one (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Ainsworth et al. reported that discrimination is evident in the way an infant directs their attention and behavior toward an individual. During this phase, the infant’s attachment behaviors, such as coordinated reaching, have

expanded, which is like Piaget's second and third stages of sensorimotor development. During this phase, the infant will prefer one figure over the other; yet attachment is not established until phase 3 (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Phase 3 is known as clearcut attachment, where the infant is aware and able to actively pursue their preferred figure on their own rather than having to rely on their signaling behavior (Ainsworth et al., 1978). A newly acquired behavior that the infant exhibits during this phase is locomotion, where the infant approaches their preferred figure by following, greeting, or simply wanting to be close to that figure. Other "active contact behaviors" include embracing, clambering up, and burying their face in the body of their attachment figure. During this phase, Ainsworth et al. note that the use of signaling behavior continues to decline, but it can still be used on occasion as a form of communication. In this phase, the infant continues to explore their environment, language begins to develop, and the infant's behavior is described as goal-corrected. Goal-corrected behavior is said to emerge with the ability to distinguish between means and ends. This behavior can begin to become apparent as early as six months.

And finally, phase 4, goal-corrected partnership, is the final stage in the development of child-mother attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Bowlby stated that when a child-mother relationship has reached full development, a partnership is formed, which is the hierarchical organization of the child's behavior and the mother's reciprocal behavior. Phase 4 can be described as the maturation of attachment behaviors, the same behaviors that were exhibited as early as Phase 2. Although attachment to their infant's mother is widely discussed and focused on, Bowlby stated that an attachment figure

could be anyone practicing the same model of care and affection. Attachment to one's parent figures can persist into adulthood and continue throughout a person's lifetime.

Strange Situation Procedure

As for the Strange Situation study, Ainsworth observed infants between 12 and 18 months of age to predict their cognitive and social outcomes (Levy et al., 1998). Two longitudinal studies monitored the children for up to 10 years after the procedure and found predictable social and personality behaviors (Levy et al., 1998). The study consisted of a 20-minute mini-drama with eight episodes, where mothers and infants were in a laboratory playroom and later joined by a stranger (Bretherton, 1992). The stranger would then begin to play with the infant, and during this time, the mother would leave the room for a moment (Bretherton, 1992).

The stranger would eventually exit the room, leaving the infant alone, but would later be joined by both their mother and the stranger (Bretherton, 1992). Ainsworth noticed that the infants were more willing to explore their surroundings and play with the toys when the stranger was not present, rather than when the stranger was in the room or when left alone. The data revealed that infants who exhibited mixed reactions or avoided their mother upon reunion were more likely to have lived in a less-than-harmonious environment compared to those who sought to be held or close to their mother when reunited (Bretherton, 1992). Three distinct patterns or attachment styles were identified: Secure, Anxious-Ambivalent, Anxious-Resistant, or Avoidant (Levy et al., 2011).

Following the Strange Situation study, Mary Main and her colleagues developed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (Levy et al., 2011). Levy et al., reported it

consisted of a 1-hour attachment history interview focusing on early relationships, attachment, and adult personalities. Using the AAI, three significant adult attachment patterns were identified: secure/autonomous, dismissing, and enmeshed/preoccupied. However, two additional attachment styles were added: unresolved and cannot be classified (Levy et al., 2011).

Secure/autonomous attachment corresponds with secure attachment in infants, dismissing attachment corresponds with insecure-avoidant attachment in infants, and preoccupied attachment corresponds with insecure-ambivalent attachment in infants (Daniel, 2006). Daniel noted that unresolved issues predict insecure-disorganized attachment in infants, and in terms of interviews, this can be classified as trauma or loss. Lastly, it cannot be classified and was added to interviews that have high levels of dismissiveness and preoccupied speech (Daniel, 2006).

Secure attachment describes individuals who are open, committed, compliant, and trusting of therapists (Levy et al., 2011). Preoccupied attachment can be described as individuals who appear to be easier to treat and more interpersonally engaged; however, clinical studies have revealed that these individuals may be more complex to treat. Dismissing attachment individuals are not resistant to treatment or asking for help, as they evoke countertransference and become more distressed during therapy when addressing emotional issues. As for unresolved attachment, it is used to classify individuals who are hard to treat and have unresolved trauma, according to the AAI. In two clinical studies, between 32% and 60% of patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder (BPD) were classified as having unresolved attachment.

Although attachment styles are generally considered stable and result from early childhood attachment and ongoing factors, there is a possibility that certain individuals can change their attachment style due to their vulnerability, rather than life circumstances (Davila et al., 1997). A study focusing on the stability of romantic attachment styles reported that 60% of individuals maintained the same attachment style for the previous eight months. Davila et al. indicated, in contrast, that another study found that 30% of individuals changed their attachment styles several times. It was suggested that changes in attachment style could result from the functioning of a romantic relationship (Davila et al., 1997).

A study by Davila et al. (1997) examined whether interpersonal stressful life events, psychological symptomatology, and chronic interpersonal stressors could lead to changes in attachment. It was hypothesized that individuals who transition from a secure to an insecure attachment style experience more stress than those who transition from an insecure to a secure attachment style. The study focused on episodic and chronic stressors as they serve as interpersonal disruptions, such as the loss of a loved one, including a romantic partner (Davila et al., 1997). The results yielded four implications.

The first implication was that some women are prone to changes in attachment style because they have lower self-worth, a reduced extent of trust and comfort in relationships, and a lower level of comfort with intimacy and closeness to others (Davila et al., 1997). The second implication is that attachment style fluctuates more often for women who are insecure than for women who are secure. There are beliefs that cognitive and defensive processes are signs of insecure attachment due to the inconsistencies

regarding women's attachment experiences. The third implication is that attachment insecurity and psychopathology are linked, as the attachment style in adulthood is influenced by previous and present symptomology. And fourth is that there is a connection between attachment insecurity and personality disturbance, as they are closely connected in childhood and adulthood ((Davila et al., 1997).

Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love

Steinberg's theory of love comprises three components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment, which form a triangle with intimacy at the top, passion on the left, and decision/commitment on the right (Sternberg, 1986). Intimacy is the closeness and bond that forms within a relationship. Passion is the attraction, romance, and sexual connection that is exhibited in a loving relationship. Decision/commitment is the act of loving someone, whereas commitment is the act of maintaining that love over the long term. The importance of these three components can help dictate the intensity of the relationship, whether it becomes a short-term or long-term commitment. In short-term relationships, the passion component takes the lead, playing a significant role, whereas decision/commitment and intimacy have a larger role in long-term relationships.

There is a difference between the three components across loving relationships, as intimacy is typically reserved for the most loving relationships, whether towards a parent, child, sibling, friend, or partner (Sternberg, 1986). In addition, the intimacy component not only includes the desire for closeness and solidifying a bond, but also involves promoting the well-being of the loved one, sharing happiness, fostering mutual understanding, being emotionally supportive, relying on each other, and holding one in

high regard. Passion is more often associated with romantic relationships, whereas decision/commitment can be experienced through various loving relationships.

According to research, an individual experiences love when they undergo a significant number of emotions, but it is not necessary to experience all of them. In addition, feelings are not experienced individually but as a collective group.

Sternberg (1986), along with fellow researcher Grajek, tested three alternative theories of love, focusing strictly on its intimacy component. The three theories are based on the models of intelligence developed by Spearman, Thomson, and Thurston. The Spearman model states that to experience love, one must have many positive feelings. The Thomson model is the bonds of intelligence, which states that when feelings, such as emotions, motivations, and cognitions, are experienced together, then that is when love is experienced. For the Thurston model, the three components of love are combined, with a primary focus on the intimacy of relationships.

Furthermore, Sternberg (1986) mentions that not only are there three components of love, but also eight types of loving experiences: nonlove, liking, infatuation, empty love, romantic love, companionate love, fatuous love, and consummate love. Nonlove is the absence of the three components of love, which describes personal relationships deemed more casual, where love is not a factor. Liking is when an individual experiences only intimacy without passion and decision/commitment. Such personal relationships would be considered friendships due to the close bond that one has with the other, lacking passion and long-term commitment. Infatuated love can be defined as the feeling of love

at first sight and can be characterized as having a high degree of arousal, increased heartbeat, and other physiological changes.

As for empty love, it is used to describe a relationship that has stalled. Essentially, they have been together for so long and have ultimately lost the attraction and connection that once brought them together (Sternberg, 1986). Romantic love combines intimacy and passion in addition to the liking element, which bonds the partner emotionally and physically. Companionate love defines relationships that combine intimacy and decision/commitment components. The relationship eventually loses the physical attraction and evolves into a long-term committed relationship. Fatuous love is when passion and decision/commitment components are combined due to the absence of intimacy, which can also be described as a whirlwind relationship. Finally, consummate love encompasses the three components and the type of love that one strives for and works toward.

The Love Triangle

When examining the triangle structure, there are two key factors: the amount of love and the balance of love. The amount of love is representative of the area of the triangle and the components within the triangle, so in essence, the larger the triangle, the greater the amount of experienced love is represented by the triangle. An equilateral triangle represents a balanced love when all three components are relatively equally matched (Sternberg, 1986). Sternberg described a scalene triangle that points to the left as a relationship in which the passion component takes precedence over the other two components, whereas an isosceles triangle is one in which the intimacy component is the

larger portion of the triangle, and the other two components are smaller. In addition, Sternberg indicated, this type of triangle indicates a relationship in which the two partners later become good friends, but there is no longer a physical connection or the possibility of long-term commitment. Lastly, a second scalene triangle, which points to the right, represents a committed relationship that places more importance on physical attraction, a tapered attraction, or decision/commitment, and passion components (Sternberg, 1986).

In addition to the structure of the triangle, there are four main types of triangles. The first, real versus ideal triangle, represents the current love the two partners feel for each other, as well as what they would ideally like their relationship to be (Sternberg, 1986). Furthermore, Sternberg reported that this is also known as comparing relationships, where a previous one is included as part of the expectations for what the current relationship can be. Such expectations may or may not be granted. Sternberg noted that within the real versus ideal triangle, there are four possible relations: coincident, under-involvement, over-involvement, and mis-involvement. Research indicates that the overlap between the real and ideal triangles reflects a level of satisfaction, whereas the non-overlapping triangles indicate a level of dissatisfaction (Sternberg, 1986).

Second, a self-versus-other triangle occurs when one partner has a loving triangle, but the other partner is not guaranteed to perceive the same triangle experiences (Sternberg, 1986). In this triangle, each experiences a triangle of love; each could either match triangles or conceptualize the degree of mismatch. There are four possible relations based on the degree of match or mismatch between the partners: perfectly

matched, closely matched, moderately mismatched, and severely mismatched. When the triangles overlap, there is satisfaction in the relationship; if the triangles do not overlap, there is dissatisfaction (Sternberg, 1986).

Third, self-perceived versus other-perceived triangles are when one partner may not perceive the three components of love the same way as the other partner (Sternberg, 1986). Sternberg reported as a result, there are two discrepancies, minor and major, between the self and the other perceived triangles. Fourth, interactions among the love triangles state that the three pairs can create eight variations of triangles within a close relationship (Sternberg, 1986).

In addition to these triangles, there is also the action triangle, which represents the three components of love when turned into action. The intimacy component can include actions such as expressing empathy, sharing one's time and self, and communicating (Sternberg, 1986). The actions that can be experienced within the intimacy components include physical touch, such as kissing, touching, and having sex, according to Sternberg. As for the passion component, some actions exhibited include fidelity, engagement, and perseverance through difficult times (Sternberg, 1986).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

The Women Attracted to Violent Men

In 1966, Truman Capote published *In Cold Blood*, based on the gruesome 1959 murder of a family of four in rural Kansas. Since the publication of nonfiction books on actual crime, including murder, rape, and robbery, has amassed a large following to the point where many of the books are now featured on the New York Times Best Sellers

List (Vicary & Fraley, 2010). Vicary and Fraley conducted five studies examining reading preferences and whether gender indeed plays a role in the fact that more women than men are drawn to the true crime genre. One study focused on whether women enjoy reading true crime because they learn defense tactics, which could explain their fascination, as they do not want to become victims. There were 13,535 participants, with 74% being female. The results revealed that 71% of females selected the book that mentioned an escape or defense tactic, while only 29% selected the book that did not mention such information. As for the males, 66% selected the book that mentioned such information, and 34% selected the other option.

Another study, conducted by Vicary and Fraley (2010), addressed whether women enjoy reading such books because they are often the victims. Within this study, there were 7,435 participants, 72% of whom were female. The results revealed that 59% of females selected the book with a female victim, and 41% selected the book with a male victim. The male participants were relatively close in their responses, with 52% selecting the book with the female victim and 48% selecting the book with the male victim. Vicary and Fraley note that the results are interesting, as males are more likely to be victims of crime. If women are reading such books to gain tactics and survival tips, they could potentially increase their fear of becoming victims.

Some women not only gravitate towards true crime novels but also towards actual violent incarcerated men, which is apparent in a study conducted by Warren and Hazelwood in 2002. The study consisted of 20 women described as compliant victims, and the term was used to classify the women's complicit attitude and cooperation

regarding their victimization and that of others (Warren & Hazelwood, 2002). The women were between 14 and 37 years old when they met the men, with the men initiating contact in all but one case. According to Warren and Hazelwood, of the 20 women, 17 had no arrest history before meeting the men, and the other three had only misdemeanor offenses in 2002. In addition, the women's education levels ranged from 11 to 18 years, and they were either unemployed, unskilled, skilled, or professional, which suggests that they were living a rather conventional lifestyle before starting the relationship (Warren & Hazelwood, 2002).

During the interviews, 15 women, 75%, stated they became involved in a sadistic relationship because they wanted to please their partner, were in love, wanted to get away from home, were incredibly naïve, and one did not have an explanation for her behavior (Warren & Hazelwood, 2002). They even described that during their initial courtship, the men were caring and gentle. However, by the time they started dating, 65% of women received gifts, 40% went on trips, and 85% had large amounts of money spent on them. Such behavior continued for months or even years. About 45% of women were aware of men's explosive anger, and 55% were part of sadistic activities (Warren & Hazelwood, 2002).

One of the women was introduced to her husband through a mutual friend, and despite his illegal activities, she stated that he was charming and attentive (Warren & Hazelwood, 2002). As they became more intimate, he introduced anal sex and then would physically and verbally abuse her. According to Warren and Hazelwood, within 60 days, they were married, and over the next two years, she helped with the abductions and

murders of several women (2002). Warren and Hazelwood reported that another woman met her sadistic partner at 17 years old, and before they were married, he convinced her to participate in the rape of another woman, and during the act of rape, the victim died. Unfortunately, there were two more women who were murdered, and at that time is when she decided to testify against her husband (Warren & Hazelwood, 2002).

Previous studies and research have noted that there are no specific patterns regarding the demographics of these women when comparing their education level, ethnicity, profession, religion, and employment status to those of the general population (Slavikova & Panza, 2014). The women who are attracted to violent incarcerated men are more likely to come from families that have engaged in criminal behavior. In addition, their upbringings have been described as chaotic, and they have a history of physical and sexual abuse. One study focused on 26 women who entered a relationship with a violent, incarcerated man, either serving a life sentence or on death row. The women ranged in age from 41 to 67 years, were financially independent, held professional-level jobs, and had educational levels ranging from 11th grade to postgraduate degrees. Half of the women described violent, controlling, and chaotic households, and nearly 90% stated their previous marriages were also abusive, consisted of either SUD or alcohol abuse, and had extramarital affairs.

Slavikova and Panza (2014) conducted a study that sought to gather information regarding the personality characteristics and backgrounds of women who entered a romantic relationship with a violent incarcerated man. Ninety-nine women participated in an online questionnaire based on the revised Three-Category Measure of adult attachment

style. This questionnaire was translated from Ainsworth's work to reflect adult romantic love rather than infant attachment. The women were then asked to select one of the three attachment styles —Avoidant, Anxious/Ambivalent, and Secure —which best described their relationship. After selecting the attachment styles, they were then asked to select the option that best matched their personal relationship style.

The results revealed most women, 84.1%, stated it was their first relationship with an incarcerated man, but 48.9% did state they had previously contacted inmates in the past (Slavikova & Panza, 2014). According to Slavikova and Panza, thirty inmates were on death row, 14% had a life sentence with no possibility of parole, and 15.1% were sentenced to life with the possibility of parole. Furthermore, they reported that twenty of the inmates were sentenced to 15 years or more, 32.6% were serving 5 to 15 years, and 9.3% were to be released within the next five years. And 82.8% were housed in medium to maximum-security facilities (Slavikova & Panza, 2014).

Regarding the attachment styles, only 54 women answered, and 64.8% identified themselves as Securely Attached, 22.2% as Avoidant, and 13% as Anxious (Slavikova & Panza, 2014). As for the personality characteristics, the most frequent subtype women identified with was Manipulator/Pragmatist, at 31%, which is classified as a risk taker, adventurous, emotional, or accepting of others, according to Slavikova and Panza. A motivation to enter such a relationship could be the feeling of control they have over their partner due to the limitations the inmate has placed on them (Slavikova & Panza, 2014).

The next frequent characteristic subtype was Neurotic, Anxious/Introspective at 25%, which is described as a negative self-image, anxiety over perceived failures, and a

history of interpersonal conflicts (Slavikova & Panza, 2014). In addition, they noted this characteristic subtype goes along with the descriptive information that matched the respondents' responses regarding abuse as a child. This subtype could be the reason why women are drawn to incarcerated men, as they need to be with someone who will readily accept them (Slavikova & Panza, 2014).

According to Giebel and Elbert (2014), in a study of 50 women in relationships with inmates at San Quentin, three types of women were identified. The first type is the women who get to know the inmates when they are imprisoned. The women stated they have a romantic commitment and expressed high levels of satisfaction. As for the second type, the women are those who established a relationship with the inmate prior to the incarceration; sometimes, even after multiple stints in prison, the women stand behind their partner; they are extremely loyal. The third type is the women who feel safer when the inmate is incarcerated, as it provides stability, especially if the woman has experienced prior domestic violence.

Hybristophilia

The term hybristophilia derives from the Greek words "hybridzein," meaning to commit an outrage against someone, and "philo," meaning to have a strong preference (Gurian, 2013). This is also referred to as the Bonnie and Clyde syndrome, which is named after the notorious couple Bonnie and Clyde, who robbed banks and murdered people during the 1930s (Takas, 2004). Hybristophiles may be victims of physical or sexual abuse, which can create low self-esteem and, in turn, make them more susceptible to deviant preferences (Gurian, 2013). Hybristophilia is characterized as a rare sexual

paraphilia in which an individual derives sexual pleasure from an intimate partner who engages in violent crimes such as rape or murder (Pettigrew, 2019; Seeman, 2018).

Hybristophilia consists of two derivatives, passive and aggressive, with passive being the most common (Pettigrew, 2019).

Passive hybristophilia is defined as women who write to inmates, particularly those on death row and serial killers; the women hope to develop romantic relationships with said inmates (Pettigrew, 2019). These types of women are often known as "murder groupies" and tend to be delusional as they believe that their love is enough to change the inmate, in essence, a rescue fantasy. Pettigrew notes that aggressive hybristophilia is when women engage in criminal acts with their partner, with the most common act being murder. During the time of the criminal act, the women are unaware they are being manipulated, and many women will never experience physical intimacy, thus having to fantasize about sexual contact (Pettigrew, 2019).

Hybristophiles are aroused not just by the inmate and the nature of their crimes, but the identifying feature would be that the more heinous the crime, the bigger the sexual attraction (Pettigrew, 2019). An example of such a dynamic would be the infamous Bonnie and Clyde, with Clyde being the protagonist and Bonnie being the accomplice. Although the motivation remains unclear, one possible reason is that women consider these men as exemplifying "ultimate masculinity" (Pettigrew, 2019).

The Adult Women, Their Mental Health, and Disorders

Attachment theory states that the interactions between a caregiver and an infant influence the type of attachment style that develops; it is no surprise that when they grow

up with an insecure and unstable figure, it can lead the child to become more susceptible to mental illness (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). This is also dependent on the genetic, developmental, and environmental factors. A study of several hundred cross-sectional longitudinal studies found that attachment insecurity was very common among individuals who had an array of mental disorders, including severe personality disorders and schizophrenia (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Attachment insecurity varies across different disorders. For example, anxious attachment is associated more with dependent, borderline, and histrionic disorders, whereas avoidant attachment is for schizoid and avoidant disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Individuals who exhibit attachment anxiety tend to have emotional inability, submissiveness, self-harm, and narcissism, which are all given the term “emotional dysregulation” according to Mikulincer and Shaver. Those who exhibit characteristics of social avoidance, personality disorders, less expressiveness of emotion, and problems with intimacy are all referred to as “inhibitedness” (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

There is also a connection between attachment insecurity and depression in individuals who have a history of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). They reported that if the individuals experience stressful life events, including troubled romantic relationships and poverty during adolescence, it simply strengthens the link between attachment insecurity and psychopathology. In a previous study, it was found that late adolescent women who were less securely attached between

periods of six and 24 months were more likely to have a history of psychopathology than their peers (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

BPD is characterized by the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) V as self-harm and suicidal ideations, dissociation, unstable interpersonal relationships, impulsivity, anger, and affective instability (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Personality traits include negative affectivity, characterized by frequent mood changes, anxiousness, feelings of hopelessness, misery, pessimism, and hostility. When discussing attachment styles and BPD, attachment insecurity seems to be the most prominent, but there are some studies that have found links between BPD symptoms and anxious attachment, whereas other studies have shown that avoidant attachment is consistent with high levels of BPD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The dissociation of self in BPD is more consistent with disorganized attachment rather than anxiety or avoidance, as they do not fully match the symptomology, which is observed in BPD (Smith & South, 2020). Traumatic experiences that often occur in childhood can be catalysts for disorganization, fear, and unresolved attachment orientations. According to Smith and Smith, one study set out to examine the relationship between BPD and romantic attachment insecurity to understand how BPD interacts with daily life. The results revealed that there is a medium effect between attachment avoidance and BPD, whereas those who have more symptoms of BPD tend to experience attachment anxiety in romantic relationships (Smith & South, 2020).

The women who are diagnosed with BPD and are in a romantic relationship have reported having a tumultuous relationship, unresolved conflicts, and constant breakups/reunions compared to healthy control (HC) women (Lazarus et al., 2020). In addition, they also experience sadness and hostility, and when in disagreements, they respond in fear according to Lazarus et al. (2020). A study was conducted to examine whether BPD symptoms and diagnosis are related to the fact that relationships have higher rates of conflicts, arguments, and criticism (Lazarus et al., 2020).

Not only do women with BPD have troubled romantic relationships, but they also experience less than favorable support and conflict within their social networks (Lazarus et al., 2020). Results from a study revealed a positive association between relationship instability and BPD symptoms, including conflict, closeness, and the amount of support they perceived within their relationship (Lazarus et al., 2020).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD was previously known as Vietnam syndrome or shell shock; it was used to describe returning veterans from the war. PTSD can develop after witnessing, experiencing, or life-threatening experiences that can harm oneself or others (Svingen, 2023). The DSM-V has five criteria that must be met to be diagnosed with PTSD: (A) Exposure to the instance of death or threat of death, serious injury, or sexual violence (B) avoidance of stimuli (C) negative changes to behavior and cognition (D); pronounced changes in reactivity (E); B, C, D, and E must be present for more than one month (F); symptoms cause significant impairment or distress (G); symptoms are not related to drugs or medical conditions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

There are multiple factors that can contribute to the development of PTSD symptoms, such as abuse, family psychiatric history, lack of social support, and dissociation during the traumatic event (Woodhouse et al., 2015). Social bonds have been proven to be influential in the development and maintenance of PTSD symptoms by how the individual responds to the traumatic event, as noted by Woodhouse et al. (2015). It is also suggested that the attachment individuals experience during infancy mirrors the adult attachment categories, with 24% being avoidant, 20% anxious/ambivalent, and 56% secure (Woodhouse et al., 2015).

The attachment is formed in infancy as the child begins to establish connections with their primary caregivers, whether due to stress, fear, or a need for reassurance (Woodhouse et al., 2015). If the attachment is inconsistent or unreliable, the child develops an internal working model of relationships, which can predict, interrupt, or regulate relationship behavior later in life. The connection between attachment and PTSD symptoms is proposed to be the result of dysfunctional hyper-activation or the deactivation of emotion regulation strategies, which develop during an insecure attachment between an infant and primary caregiver. If the individual is unable to regulate their emotions while experiencing a traumatic event, this is when the attachment styles can influence the development of PTSD symptoms. If the individual has a secure attachment style and can regulate their emotions during a traumatic event, they have the possibility to lower the development of PTSD symptoms.

The relationship between attachment styles and PTSD symptoms has been viewed in veterans, terrorist attacks, prisoners of war, childbirth, child abuse, incest, and other

traumatic experiences (Woodhouse et al., 2015). The results of those relationships revealed that secure attachment helps lower PTSD symptoms, whereas insecure attachment has higher PTSD symptoms, according to Woodhouse et al. (2015). As for avoidant and anxious attachment styles, there is some debate about whether there is a relation to PTSD symptoms, with some researchers suggesting avoidant attachment can possibly protect against elevated PTSD symptoms through defensive mechanisms and strategies (Woodhouse et al., 2015).

Paranoia

Insecure attachment has increasingly been connected as the result of paranoia (Lavin et al., 2020). Paranoia is characterized as unexaggerated beliefs, suspicious or distressing beliefs, interpersonal threats, and thoughts of conspiracy. It has been reported that up to 90% of individuals with a psychotic disorder experience some form of persecutory delusions. People who are suffering from higher levels of paranoia can experience more frequent hospitalizations, social isolation, poor quality of life, and emotional distress. There is evidence to prove there is a connection between insecure attachment and negative childhood experiences, which are both associated with the increased risk of paranoia. Child sexual abuse is not associated with an increased risk of paranoia but rather hallucinations. A study was conducted to determine if there was an actual relationship between paranoia and insecure attachment.

The results showed there was a positive association between anxious attachment and paranoia in seven out of 11 studies that were investigated (Lavin et al., 2020). Anxious attachment was also positively associated with paranoia in two first-episode

psychosis samples. As for avoidant attachment, it also reported positive associations with paranoia in five out of 11 samples. And in that same study, four samples had a positive association with attachment anxiety. In terms of fearful attachment, two out of three samples also saw a positive association with paranoia. However, one study did not find a positive association between any attachment subtypes and paranoia.

Inmates and their Mental Illness and Disorders

Mental disorders are deemed a public health crisis as it is estimated that 450 million people worldwide are affected by mental disorders (Tripathy et al., 2022). In 2015, there were more than 10 million people incarcerated, and severe mental health disorders were more prevalent than in the general population (Baranyi et al., 2018). The American Psychological Association notes that between 10% and 20% of the prison population suffer more from serious mental disorders compared to 5% of the general population (Tripathy et al., 2022). The most common mental disorders within the prison population include antisocial personality disorder (ASPD), depressive disorders, substance abuse disorders (SUDs), schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), and anxiety disorders (Azevedo et al., 2020; Tripathy et al., 2022). The issues may be pre-existing or could develop while the inmate is incarcerated (Tripathy et al., 2022). Some negative factors that can exacerbate mental disorders in prison are the environment itself, lack of proper health care, lack of privacy or personal space, insolation, overcrowding, lack of social interaction, hostility, and violence (Tripathy et al., 2022).

The United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has estimated that there are nearly 11 million admitted to local jails, and about 721,300 are held each day (Wood,

2018). Although serious mental illnesses (SMIs) and SUDs are often addressed when discussing prison inmates, jail inmates also suffer from such ailments. It is suggested that chronic SMIs, including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, may increase the likelihood of serial or repeat offenders; in one reported county jail, 72% of inmates who were arrested for violent crimes were said to have some form of SMIs. In another study, it was found that 40% of inmates with SMIs who needed transitional treatment services were incarcerated for violent offenses. In addition, one in four jail inmates who have a history of psychiatric illness are incarcerated for a violent offense, and one in three jail inmates is a violent recidivist.

It was found that of adult male inmates housed in five jails, 15% of them were diagnosed with a depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, or psychotic disorder (Wood, 2018). It is estimated that 1% of jail inmates suffer from psychotic disorders, 2-3% are bipolar, 8-15% have major depression, and 4-8% suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is also common for an inmate to have a co-occurring disorder, whether it is alcohol or substance abuse, as two of every three jail inmates meet the criteria for alcohol or substance abuse dependency. Prison inmates with SMIs are more likely to have an increased risk of being charged with violent and nonviolent offenses, especially when psychotic illness or depression are present (Wood, 2018).

Kuo (2020) states that there are an estimated 383,000 individuals in prisons and jails who are reported to have serious mental illness, which is ten times more than those in state hospitals reported by Kuo. It was also estimated that 230 million people had used an illicit drug in 2010 (Kuo, 2020). There have been numerous reports and studies that

have shown childhood maltreatment and early life stressors can increase the potential for an individual to develop alcohol and drug dependency or abuse (Moustafa et al., 2018).

Child abuse and other traumatic experiences have been shown to impact mental health, develop substance/drug abuse, and contribute to criminal activity and imprisonment (Henry, 2020). Child abuse includes sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. Individuals who experience more than four traumatic childhood experiences are at a greater risk of developing depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia, as they are found to be four times higher compared to those who have not. In addition, those with four or more hostile childhood experiences are also at higher risk of drug and alcohol abuse; problematic alcohol use is nearly six times higher, and problematic drug abuse is ten times higher. One research study revealed that if the individual has not experienced a traumatic or hostile event during their adulthood, the previously sustained childhood trauma is unlikely to impact their mental health as an adult.

Another study focused on incarcerated men in Poland, which showed there was a link between personality traits, self-esteem, and latent classes of adversity (Henry, 2020). A secondary study found that the most frequent adverse experiences reported were the incarceration of an immediate family member, parental substance abuse, parental incarceration, or physical abuse, as noted by Henry. Followed by 11.8% reporting living in foster care, 8.7% sexually assaulted more than once, and 8.2% were homeless (Henry, 2020).

Studies have reported that there are higher rates of psychosis, due to the comorbidity of substance abuse among the prison population compared to the general

population; but psychotic symptoms can present themselves during the withdrawal and detoxification process (Capuzzi et al., 2020). Primary psychosis may emerge years after their drug exposure. According to Capuzzi et al., prisoners who were diagnosed with psychosis for the first time had committed more criminal convictions than their nonpsychotic inmates. The inmates who have dual diagnoses have a history of frequent incarcerations, exhibit violent behavior while imprisoned, and have higher suicide attempts compared to the inmates who do not suffer from mental disorders (Capuzzi et al., 2020).

UK-based research focusing on recidivism for prisoners with mental disorders revealed that the symptoms of psychosis when released, the prisoners who exhibited psychosis would reoffend more quickly compared to the prisoners who did not exhibit psychosis (Igoumenou et al., 2019). When presented with treatment and medication, the risk of violent offending would be delayed. In the US, one in five mentally ill prisoners would be civilly committed to a psychiatric facility after prison. In contrast, almost half were hospitalized within 18 months, and a third was the result of criminal behavior. Prisoners presented with both substance abuse and psychiatric disorders had a higher risk of being incarcerated multiple times over six years compared to the prisoners who presented with only psychiatric disorders or substance abuse (Igoumenou et al., 2019).

A study conducted in one Indian prison, Odisha, revealed that the lack of mental health support within the prison is virtually nonexistent despite the qualified mental professionals that are within the health care system (Tripathy et al., 2022). Within the prison population, suicide is a major problem of depression and, unfortunately, leads to

the deaths of numerous inmates; 33% reported countless self-harm attempts, whereas 20% have suicidal ideations. The study revealed that 53.3% of inmates had moderately to severe depression, and 34.2% had mild to moderate depression. Another study showed that 51% of inmates felt their suicidal ideations could be attributed to jail stress, irrational beliefs, loneliness, and low reasons for living. In comparison, another 54.3% stated that the jail environment was unsuitable for living.

Personality Disorders (PDs) and Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD)

Flórez et al. (2019) state that two psychiatric disorders are more prevalent in presenting themselves in criminal behavior: personality disorders and addictive behavior. ASPD is present in about 21% of the prison population compared to 4% for psychotic disorders and 12% for depression. An international study in Spain showed the prevalence of personality disorders between 30% and 76.7%, whereas ASPD showed a percentage rate between 11.9% and 47.5%, respectively. In addition, international studies showed a prevalence of addictive behavior with alcohol abuse ranging from 10% to 30% and for illicit drugs between 10% and 60%. Although the study did not address psychopathy or psychopathic personality disorder (PPD), it did show a prevalence of slightly over 20%. This could be due to an overlap between ASPD and psychopathy symptoms, as they share a lack of remorse, impulsiveness, and not valuing the truth.

Personality disorders are reported to be the most common within prison populations, with BPD accounting for almost half of the population (Mundt & Baranyl, 2020). ASPD was present in more than half of the male prison population, and in addition, 90% had childhood onset conduct disorder (Mundt & Baranyl, 2020). Azevedo

et al. (2020) note that in males diagnosed with ASPD, the feeling of aggression is a frequent and common manifestation. DSM-V categorizes ASPD as failure to conform to laws and norms, impulsivity, reckless disregard for safety, and lack of remorse (American Psychological Association, 2020). It is estimated that between .6% and 3% are diagnosed with ASPD and are three times more likely to be diagnosed with ASPD than women (Azevedo et al., 2020).

In a study of 134 inmates conducted by Azevedo et al. (2020), there was a 71.9% prevalence of ASPD and a 28.1% prevalence of premeditated aggression. Physical aggression is a common denominator of ASPD as it is linked to impulsivity, psychopathy, criminal acts, and SUDs (Azevedo et al., 2020). It was reported that for crimes involving sexual murderers and sexual aggressors towards women, 55% of offenders felt anger prior to committing sexual murder, and 33% for sexual aggression (Beech, Fisher, & Ward, 2005).

ASPD is the only psychiatric disorder that is linked with both premeditated aggression and an increase in impulsivity (Azevedo et al., 2020). The 134 inmates of the study all received sentences of ten years or longer, were all over the age of 18, and were referred for clinical services for exhibiting physical aggression towards other inmates. According to Azevedo et al., within the sample, 71.9% were single, 49.4% had children, and 64.2% of the inmates were convicted of violent crimes. In addition, 71.8% of those with ASPD exhibited impulsive aggression, and in 28.2% with ASPD, premeditated aggression was reported by Azevedo et al. As for those who fantasize about aggression

and violence, they have a higher likelihood of inflicting harm on others as well as themselves (Scaptura & Boyle, 2020).

Schizophrenia

Walsh et al. (2002) noted that although schizophrenics are not typically violent, there is a significantly small group that can become violent. A previous finding estimated that 20% of first-admission patients diagnosed with schizophrenia behaved in a life-threatening manner before their initial admission. It is also suggested that while being held, the risk of committing assault is greatly increased; it can be argued that the risk of violence could be more attributed to being confined rather than the individual's mental state. A previous study followed the discharge of the patients and, with the use of the MacArthur Risk Assessment Study, estimated that the use of violence was measured every ten weeks for an entire year. Of the 17% of patients diagnosed with schizophrenia, 9% engaged in violent activity within the first 20 weeks of release.

In one of three studies conducted, 644 schizophrenic patients who were followed for up to 15 years were found to be four times more likely to have committed a violent crime compared to the general population (Walsh, Buchanan, & Fahy, 2002). In addition, male schizophrenic patients were twice more likely to be violent than men who were diagnosed with other mental disorders to have violent convictions (Walsh, Buchanan, & Fahy, 2002). When researching recidivism rates for prisoners being released from Medium Secure Units (MSU), about 15% had reoffended within two years of discharge (Igoumenou et al., 2019). Those who are at risk are early onset offenders, have a

comorbid or primary diagnosis of personality disorder, and are younger (Igoumenou et al., 2019).

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD was previously known as Vietnam syndrome or shell shock; it was used to describe returning veterans from the war. PTSD can develop after witnessing, experiencing, or life-threatening experiences that can harm oneself or others (Svingen, 2023). The DSM-V has five criteria that must be met to be diagnosed with PTSD: (A) Exposure to the instance of death or threat of death, serious injury, or sexual violence (B) avoidance of stimuli (C) negative changes to behavior and cognition (D); pronounced changes in reactivity (E); B, C, D, and E must be present for more than one month (F); symptoms cause significant impairment or distress (G); symptoms are not related to drugs or medical conditions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

PTSD is said to be one of the most common psychiatric disorders within the correctional system (Fovet et al., 2022). For the longest time, PTSD was looked at as the outcome of the crime but not the cause itself that led to being diagnosed (Svingen, 2023). One study found that male inmates suffer from PTSD symptoms, including lifetime PTSD, between 30% and 60%, which is higher than men in the general population (Guston et al., 2018). The same study also found a significant difference in diagnosis rates between male and female offenders, with rates of 12.5% for males and 40.2% for females (Guston et al., 2018). Approximately 4% of the prison population is estimated to have some form of psychotic illness, and more than 10% of males suffer from major

depression (Baranyi et al., 2018). PTSD typically occurs before the onset of SUD, which could be the result of trying to calm the symptoms of PTSD (Sindicich et al., 2014).

The percentage of inmates who have PTSD is not clear, even though there have been previous reports stating that PTSD is a major problem within the prison population due to the high rates of sexual assault, physical assault, and emotional damage (Baranyi et al., 2018). If PTSD is left untreated, it can increase the risk of self-harm and suicide, and in one study, the results revealed that 90% of inmates with PTSD reported their needs were not being met in terms of receiving psychological treatment, medication, or psychiatric care (Baranyi et al., 2018).

An inmate's PTSD symptoms can be exacerbated by strip searches, pat-downs, seclusion, loud noises, lack of privacy, and disciplinary actions (Sindicich et al., 2014). One study found that approximately a quarter of inmates experienced some form of physical violence within the previous six months (Fovet et al., 2022). The combination of SUD and PTSD-related symptoms of hypervigilance, anger, and irritability may increase the prisoner's risk of engaging in violent activity (Sindicich et al., 2014). A study comparing the mental health of individuals in both general and prison populations found that 10.6% of male inmates had symptoms of PTSD but did not meet the full criteria for PTSD according to the DSM-IV (Fovet et al., 2022). The same study reported that at least one in every five people in the general population had a psychiatric disorder. Still, without the trauma, exposure was 29.4%, whereas in the prison population, it was 53.6% (Fovet et al., 2022).

Substance Abuse Disorders (SUDs) and Alcohol Abuse

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates there are about 185 million illicit drug users (Moustafa et al., 2018). In the United States, inmates with mental disorders 70% to 75% reported having either a substance abuse or dependency problem, and worldwide, it is estimated that 4.9% of the adult population suffers from a form of alcohol disorder, 3.5% use marijuana, and 0.3% inject psychoactive drugs (Kuo, 2020; Moustafa et al., 2018). Over 60% of inmates have reported being physically or sexually abused as a child; heroin users reported higher rates of childhood trauma as they experienced various injuries through physical neglect, emotional abuse, physical punishment, and sexual abuse (Moustafa et al.). As for cocaine dependency, 34% of inmates experienced physical and/or sexual abuse (Moustafa et al., 2018).

It was reported that 70% of inmates with alcohol dependency suffered at least one childhood trauma event (Moustafa et al., 2018). Between 2007 and 2009, the National Inmate Surveys (NIS) reported that 58% of state prisoners and 63% of jailed inmates met the criteria for drug dependency or abuse (Bronson et al., 2017). State prisoners who were incarcerated for violent offenses met the DSM-IV criteria for drug dependence or abuse at 54% compared to 61% of sentenced jail inmates, as reported by Bronson et al. Furthermore, Bronson et al. reported that when comparing other crimes to violent offenses, such as DUI/DWI, it was 56%, and other public offenses were 55% as well. However, it was surprisingly higher for property offenses at 68% for prisoners and 72% for jail inmates. In addition, Bronson et al. noted that between 2007 and 2009, about four out of 10 prisoners stated they used drugs during the time of the offense for which they

are currently incarcerated. During this same time, state prisoners who committed violent offenses were less likely to use drugs before they committed the offense compared to those who committed property crimes, drug offenses, or public order offenses (Bronson et al., 2017).

According to Gulati et al. (2019), SUD, as well as alcohol abuse, can cause a significant economic burden and increase the risk of offending. In a study of 13 prisons, the findings revealed that the prevalence of alcohol abuse and dependence ranged from 18% to 30% for male prisoners, as reported by Gulati et al. At the same time, substance abuse and dependence ranged from 10% to 48% whereas for drug abuse and dependence, it was estimated between 10% to 48% (Gulati et al., 2019). Since the surveys from 2002 and 2004, there has been an increase in drug usage among inmates and prisoners in 2007 and 2009 (Bronson et al., 2017). During the years between 2007 and 2009, the preferred drug of choice for state prisoners was marijuana/hash at 77%, followed by cocaine/crack at 47% (Bronson et al.). The use of hallucinogens was close to 42%, and regular use of depressants almost doubled from 10% to 18% in 2007 (Bronson et al., 2017).

In Australia, it was reported that the two most prevalent Axis 1 disorders are SUDs and PTSD, with approximately two-thirds of Australians meeting the criteria for the DSM-IV and one-quarter suffering from PTSD (Sindicich et al., 2014). It is not surprising that the high prevalence of SUD among male inmates was 63%, given that their current sentences are drug-related (Sindicich et al.). It was found that 55% of male inmates, while entering a SUD prison treatment program, did meet the criteria for lifetime PTSD (Sindicich et al., 2014).

Exposure to interpersonal violence, such as physical assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, or mugging, were all associated with the highest risk of lifetime drug usage for all illicit drug types (Moustafa et al., 2018). Childhood maltreatment was an indicator of alcohol abuse or dependency, but for women, as opposed to men, and childhood sexual abuse was a predictor for substance abuse for women but not men (Moustafa et al., 2018).

Psychopathy and Male Inmates

In addition to impulsivity that is experienced in conjunction with ASPD, there is also psychopathy, which is described as a more narrative or psychodynamic concept (Martin et al., 2019). The first attempt at defining psychopathy could be traced back to Hervey Cleckley, who did not believe in maltreatment and poor parenting, such as John Bowlby, but rather the lack of affection (van der Zouwen et al., 2018). Cleckley believed there were 16 characteristics, along with the inability to love, inability to form interpersonal connections, and egocentricity, that contributed to the development of a psychopath (van der Zouwen et al., 2018).

Today, psychopathy is defined as a personality disorder that is consistent with persistent antisocial behavior, bold, disinhibited, egotistical traits, and impaired empathy and remorse (Gulati et al., 2019). There is a difference between psychopaths and those who exhibit psychopathic traits, and such traits include callousness, antisocial behavior, impulsivity, and narcissism (van Der Zouwen et al., 2018). Multiple studies have found that psychopathic offenders have atrophy located in the frontal cortex as well as the limbic regions, including the insula and amygdala (Nummenmaa et al., 2021).

Hickey (2015) states that modern research now supports the theory that various biochemical factors, including allergies, environmental conditions, and diet, are linked to criminal behavior. Five previous studies have found that eliminating fatty acids is known to reduce hyperactivity symptoms and decrease violence. It has been found that hypoglycemia, which is low blood sugar, affects the functioning of the brain, which has been connected to antisocial behavior as well as violence. The brains of individuals who are deemed as aggressive, prone to substance abuse, and antisocial all reveal a deficit as they are unable to process identifying errors within their behaviors.

Psychopaths are classified into two categories; one dimension consists of emotional and interpersonal traits, which include a lack of guilt and empathy and narcissism (van Der Zouwen et al., 2018). The second dimension is impulsivity and antisocial behavior. Individuals who exhibit psychopathic traits and antisocial behavior are psychopaths. It was revealed that 29.2% of individuals show one or more signs of psychopathic traits, but only 0.6% would be psychopaths. In addition, when discussing children and adolescents, it is recommended that the term psychopathic traits should be used rather than psychopathy.

Often with psychopathy, the term psychosis is used, which is defined as a state in which an individual loses their concept of reality in specific ways (Hickey, 2015). The DSM-V notes psychotic symptoms can include hallucinations, catatonic behavior, delusions, disorganized speech, or grossly disorganized; psychosis is considered a defining feature of schizophrenia, common with mood and substance abuse disorders, as

well as common with developmental, neurological, and degenerative medical conditions (Hickey, 2015; Arciniegas, 2015).

Previous research has determined that emotional deprivation, lack of affection, and parental alienation lead to the development of psychopathic traits as well as affective deficits (van Der Zouwen et al., 2018). In addition, van Der Zouwen et al. (2018) state that Bowlby suggested that maternal rejection and deprivation are the cause of the development of psychopathic traits. Those are not the only two risk factors for the development of psychopathic traits, as there is also early maltreatment, parental indifference, negative parental discipline, emotional abuse, insensitive parenting, or attachment difficulties.

There is a common misconception that psychotic people are more prone to kill others. Previous research has shown this is not accurate; previously examined psychiatric assessments of about 2,000 individuals arrested between 1964 and 1973 determined that only 1% of individuals were considered psychotic (Hickey, 2015). Serial killers are rarely described as psychotic (Hickey, 2015). The Triarchic Model of Psychopathy was developed as a framework that incorporates personality traits and neurobiological indices (Hyatt et al., 2020). The Triarchic Model of Psychopathy comprises three dimensions: meanness, boldness, and disinhibition; boldness primarily characterizes ASPD (Martin et al., 2019). Psychopathy traits consist of callousness, lack of remorse and empathy, and glibness (Mossière, Olver, & Marche, 2020).

Psychopaths experience reduced emotions and increased tolerance, which is indicative of antisocial behavior (Mossière, Olver, & Marche, 2020). In addition,

psychopaths have a disregard for the safety and welfare of others, as well as have a deficit in social affective processing (Drayton & Santos, 2018). Balafoutas et al. (2021) note that psychopaths commit significantly higher numbers of crimes and tend to be more violent offenses. Even though most inmates may exhibit aggressive tendencies, only a small number are categorized as psychopaths (Balafoutas et al., 2021).

To help measure individuals for psychopathy, the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) is a tool that scores the individual on 20 items (Drayton, Santos & Baskin-Sommers, 2018). The answers are scored with either a 0, 1, or 2 based on the degree of present characteristic (Drayton, Santos & Baskin-Sommers). If the combined score is under 20, then they are characterized as nonpsychotic, and if the score is above 30, then the individual is determined to be psychopathic (Drayton, Santos & Baskin-Sommers, 2018). The PCL-R has found evidence of poor emotional regulation, and in some studies, poor emotional regulation was related to affective interpersonal psychopathic traits (Garofalo, Neumann, & Velotti, 2018). Several studies have consistently demonstrated a positive association between emotion dysregulation and affective traits. In addition, recent findings have revealed a relationship between interpersonal and affective facets, specifically with executive functioning and intelligence, particularly in positive and negative associations (Garofalo, Neumann, & Velotti, 2018).

Communication with the Outside World

Even though many violent offenders are diagnosed with ASPD due to exhibiting impulsivity, lack of remorse, and reckless regard for safety, as well as showing aggressiveness towards other inmates, many still look for ways to communicate with

those outside of the prison walls. The use of social media has allowed offenders to reach individuals worldwide to facilitate communication between offenders and the free world

In the United States, it was estimated that by the end of March 2021, 1.8 million incarcerated inmates were using social media (Kang-Brown, Montagnet & Heiss, 2021). Despite these numbers, they are not representative of all inmates, as some do not engage in social media, even though the likelihood is high. Social media has helped bridge the gap and increase the response time between interested parties. There are specific groups, such as True Love in Prison, Prison Wives Love Letters, and Prisoners Looking for Love (Facebook, 2023), as well as Loveaproner.com, which cater to those looking to connect with offenders, whether romantically or to establish a connection with an inmate. It is currently reported that four billion individuals use social media platforms worldwide (Montag & Hegelich, 2020).

Loveaproner.com enables friends and family to communicate with their loved ones; it also boasts a 75% success rate for individuals seeking to find their soulmate within the prison system (Seeman, 2018). The website writeaproner.com enables inmates to post pictures, profiles, and contact information, allowing interested individuals to connect with the inmates they are interested in (2018). Another similar site is Pigeonly, an app that allows members to send messages and photos and get lower phone rates, with monthly memberships ranging from \$7.99 to \$19.99 (Isenberg, 2021). Flikshop is considered "Instagram for prisons" as it allows women to send postcards with pictures and a message to their loved ones for only 99 cents (Isenberg, 2021). Jail WAGS (Wives and Girlfriends) is an online group with 4,000 members, catering to individuals who are

romantically involved with inmates (2021). With the help of such groups, not just in the US but worldwide, they have been allowed to establish connections with convicted murderers (2021).

Emergence of Cell Phones

Despite being allowed to use computers, the inmates still manage to obtain cell phones, which are deemed contraband. Within the last decade, cell phones have become one of the fastest-growing problems inside correctional facilities (Grommon, 2018). Between 2008 and 2010, the number of cell phones confiscated in state prisons increased by 137%, whereas in federal prisons, that number rose by 108% during the same period (Grommon, 2018). The cell phones are being smuggled in by visitors, staff, and correctional officers. In Texas, more than a dozen correctional officers were charged with bribery in exchange for providing inmates with cell phones (National Institute of Justice, 2011). Cell phones are not only used to connect to the outside world, but also to facilitate ongoing criminal activity.

Cellphones have been used to organize escapes, assaults, riots, harassment, homicides, kidnapping, extortion, and even witness tampering (Peterson et al., 2024). A recent study spanning over 20 states found that prison officials recovered more than 25,840 cell phones in one year (Peterson et al., 2024). The National Institute of Justice reported that the illegal use of a cell phone helped with the facilitation of the murder of a correctional officer (Kariuki et al., 2020). Between March and July 2012, 4,678 illegal daily calls were made (Kariuki et al.). In the Kenyan Naivasha Maximum Prison (NMP), it is estimated that at least 30% of inmates possess at least one cell phone, while all

inmates have a SIM card (Kariuki et al., 2020). In 2017, correctional officers in South Carolina confiscated one cell phone for every three inmates (Parsons et al., 2021). Oklahoma had one cell phone confiscated for every six inmates, and in Mississippi, about one in ten inmates had a cell phone (Parsons et al., 2021).

Cell phones are being smuggled in by visitors, staff, and correctional officers. Inmates have also smuggled cell phones through objects and body cavities, thrown over prison walls or dropped into the yard through a drone, and delivered through shipments (Parson et al., 2021). In Texas, more than a dozen correctional officers were charged with bribery in exchange for providing inmates with cell phones (National Institute of Justice, 2011). On average, 140 security staff members per agency received administrative sanctions, 14 were arrested or charged, and 30 were terminated for smuggling contraband cell phones into the prison (Shukla et al., 2024). In a 2020 study, 25,840 cell phones were recovered in 20 Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities, representing an average of 1,292 cell phones recovered per state (Shukla et al.). The same study revealed that about 38% of facilities reported that visitors bringing in contraband was a “big problem,” and the staff was viewed as a “big problem” by 6.4%, but more than 65% were viewed as “somewhat of a problem” (Peterson et al., 2023).

Summary and Conclusions

Previous research has focused on women becoming romantically involved with notorious serial killers such as Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, and, more recently, family annihilators Scott Peterson and Chris Watts. The women, or prison groupies as they are often referred to, in these relationships span all backgrounds and demographics and are

educated, independent, intelligent, well-adjusted, hard-working, religious, and share a commonality of being romantically involved with a violent incarcerated man.

Although there has been previous research that has used attachment theory and addressed a similar question as to why some experience attraction towards violent men, the use of Steinberg's theory of love can provide a more in-depth insight regarding these relationships. These men have committed such crimes as rape, aggravated assault, and murder, and where some would view such criminal offenses as turn-offs, these women are choosing to see what good qualities lie underneath the hardened exterior and violent demeanors.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of the attachment styles of adult women who seek intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men, with some of the men serving LWOP or on death row. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and explained the rationale for choosing a case study approach.

For the study I focused on participants residing within the United States who were 18 years or older. The participants signed an official consent form prior to their interview. The chapter further discussed the requirements that the participants met to be chosen for an interview. Given the subject's sensitivity, the participants were hesitant to disclose intimate parts of their relationship; however, safety precautions were taken to ensure that no personal information was collected. Although they discussed their relationship with the inmate, some biases arose, which were addressed accordingly.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research is based on two fundamental aspects: rooted in phenomenology, which tries to understand an individual's lived experiences, and second, the attempt to interpret the meaning within the context of the research (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

I conducted the study with a phenomenological approach as it focused on the lived experiences of the women who seek relationships with violent incarcerated men, which was why a phenomenological approach was appropriate to gather data for this

qualitative research study. Since I explored women's upbringing and attachment styles for this study, the variables cannot be manipulated. Given the population and subject matter, conducting an experimental design was not be beneficial or ethical.

RQ 1: What are the attachment styles of women seeking intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men?

RQ 2: How do these adult women describe the meanings of these attachments?

Role of the Researcher

As the interviewer in this qualitative study, I explored the phenomenon of attachment styles and how they influenced the current relationships of violent incarcerated men. My goal was to accurately assess and portray the participant's feelings and thoughts, which proved challenging due to the participant's reluctance to disclose certain aspects of their intimate relationship. I conducted the interviews anonymously, so any personally identifiable information, such as name, address, date of birth, or place of employment, was not collected.

Biases

A personal bias that could have arisen was the stigma that women who are attracted to men must have a mental illness, mental disorder, or both. Although it may be true for some women, it could quite possibly be that they are simply attracted to violent men, the bad boys.

A second potential bias was that, since having previously seen the shows *Love After Lockup* and *Love During Lockup*, women share similar stories and backgrounds. An example was that they were introduced to the inmate through a mutual friend or

family member. This may not be the case, as some women could have decided to correspond with the inmates because they were lonely, wanted to offer support, or were simply curious; they wanted to hear the information about the crime directly from the source. Another bias was expecting the women to have more than one inmate with whom they corresponded. This would mean that the women are talking to several inmates in hopes of developing relationships with more than one, or simply so they can keep their options open when one relationship does not work out.

A third potential bias was that the women engage in these relationships because they believe or feel they can fix these men. The women believe that showing them love and support and being readily available will give these men a sense of belonging and make them want to turn their lives around. Although it may be true that some women want to help men improve and become model citizens, women could enter the relationships with a project mindset.

A fourth potential bias was that the women grew up in a single-parent household, specifically without a positive male role model. This could be a reason why the women seek violent incarcerated men, as they are looking for the love and affection they did not experience growing up as a child. The women could feel that the men inside prison are the only ones who can fully understand the feeling of growing up without a positive male role model.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population I focused on was adult women who entered relationships with violent, incarcerated men, including those on death row or LWOP, who were already sentenced at the time the relationship began. The participant identified their relationship as one of a romantic nature despite the lack of intimacy or physical closeness. The goal was to interview eight to 10 adult women to reach saturation; however, six women were interviewed, with the interview lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours.

- Must be 18 years of age or older and reside in the United States
- Cis gender female
- Current relationship with a violent incarcerated male to include LWOP incarcerated male
- Began a relationship after incarceration
- Participants may be married to the inmate
- The participants are actively involved

Instrumentation

The women were interviewed anonymously via Zoom or phone calls and recorded for transcription. To help transcribe the interviews, the transcription service, TurboScribe, was implemented to ensure the participants' words are accurately presented and analyzed. There was the possibility of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), such as ELAN, which helped to annotate and transcribe audio, or NVivo,

which was used for the analysis of text and audio in interviews (Parameswaran et al., 2019).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The participants were recruited through online ads distributed on social media, particularly Facebook groups, including True Love in Prison, Prison Wives Love Letters, and Prisoners Looking for Love, which were specifically designed for family members, spouses, and girlfriends of incarcerated individuals. The study was not published on the Walden University participant pool, even though doing so could have increased the possibility of reaching potentially more participants. Before the interview, the women had to agree to participate, and a consent form was provided for them to review before scheduling a time.

To ensure that the women were selected as participants, they had to meet specific requirements, including being 18 years old or older and residing in the United States. The participants had to be cisgender females, which meant that the women identified as the same gender they were biologically born with. The relationship must have started after the inmate was incarcerated. The participant was actively involved with the inmate, such as sending letters or packages, making calls, depositing money into their account, and visiting. The women did not need to be married to the inmate. In addition, the participant could have been in another relationship with a violent incarcerated man prior to their current relationship.

The participant's demographic data was collected to include their age, employment status, educational level, marital status, and race, but no other identifying

factors. The participant was asked questions about their relationship with the inmate, including the length of the relationship, its status, correspondence, visitation, and whether they were assisting the inmate with the appeal process, if applicable. The participants were not contacted after the interview was completed.

Data Analysis Plan

The data was separated into brackets, which was the process of compiling a list of my preconceived notions and beliefs (Greening, 2019). Doing so helped avoid misrepresenting the participant's experience or reception (Greening, 2019). As the study was phenomenological, there were several brackets as the women had different experiences. Some brackets included assumptions, prejudices, beliefs, past experiences, and clinical experiences (Thomas & Sohn, 2023). The use of bracketing was helpful and beneficial as it allowed a readiness to listen to the participant (Thomas & Sohn, 2023). It allowed for self-awareness, accountability, and empathy.

The data from the brackets was compiled and coded, which was when the interviews were transcribed. Coding refers to identifying the issues, similarities, and differences shown through the participants' interviews, which I later interpreted. The coding allowed me to get a deeper insight into the participant's life and relationship. The use of coding was met with some concern, as some researchers view coding as limiting the participants' narratives to mere words and taking away from the connection the participant and interviewer had previously established (Parameswaran et al., 2019).

From the coding, I established themes, which are the combinations of one or more codes developed from the transcripts to help present the research more coherently (Sutton

& Austin, 2015). The data from the themes were synthesized, which involved gathering and summarizing the participants' narratives (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The conclusions drawn from the summarization were supported by the identified themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

There was a concern that the interpretation and representation of the participant's narratives could have been misconstrued. To establish trustworthiness, four criteria were met: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Sutton & Austin, 2015). As I was the only one conducting and interpreting the interviews, the credibility issue was addressed by using a transcription service to ensure that the participants' experiences were accurately portrayed.

Credibility

Peer debriefing was implemented as it allowed for sharing and discussing with peers who are affiliated with the study. The peers offered further insights and interpretations as they are unbiased about the project, which created another level of trustworthiness. In addition, triangulation was implemented. There are four types of triangulation: data, researcher, theoretical, and methodological. The advantage of triangulation was that it helped confirm the findings as well as provided deeper insight, which helped better explain the phenomenon.

For this study, methodological triangulation was used, specifically within methods triangulation, which involved comparing the participants' responses to the previously published findings from other studies (Natow, 2019). Triangulation within methods involved combining two or more data collection approaches, including

observation and open interviews, to assess the phenomenon (Arias Valencia, 2022). The findings from the observation and open interview were coded and analyzed separately and then compared to validate the results (2022).

Transferability

A thick description was employed, which involved providing detailed accounts of the participant's views, circumstances, meanings, motives, and understandings (Younas et al., 2023). A thick description provides meaningful, interpretative, relational, authentic, contextualized, linked, and emic narratives. A meaningful narrative includes words or statements that allow the researcher to capture an accurate representation of the participants. Interpretative analysis allows readers to differentiate between the experiences and statements of the participants and how the researcher interprets these statements. Relational reporting involves presenting findings related to the environmental, social, and cultural contexts that may impact participants' experiences.

An authentic narrative is the act of supporting the findings that are genuine to the participants' experiences, whereas a contextualized narrative provides details about the participants, settings, cultural orientations, and ethnicities (Younas et al., 2023). As for the linked narrative, it is the link between the participants' data and the interpretation of data (Younas et al.). Lastly, there is the emic narrative, which adopts a person-centered approach by describing the participants' gestures, viewpoints, and experiences (Younas et al., 2023).

Dependability

To help establish dependability, an audit trail was used, which implemented detailed record-keeping of the data collection process (Forero et al., 2018). The audit trail included the documentation of the process, analysis, and methodological process notes. As for the reflexive journal, it was my personal notes and thoughts regarding the research process. According to Merrick (1999), there are three types of reflexivity: personal, functional, and disciplinary. Personal reflexivity is described as acknowledging myself as a researcher and how personal interests and values may influence the study from conception to completion. Functional reflexivity is the constant examination of the research process to reveal any biases or assumptions. In contrast, disciplinary reflexivity is the act of reflecting on the larger issues, which includes the methodology (Merrick, 1999).

Confirmability

An audit trail and a reflexive journal were implemented for conformity. Due to the detailed record keeping and analysis, along with reflexive notes, the use of an audit trail helped with authenticating the data and any potential bias. And regarding the reflexive journal, once again, the full disclosure of my notes detailing thoughts, bias, and research documentation was available. The availability of the journal helped establish trust in the research.

Ethical Procedures

The participants provided full disclosure about the data used in the study, as well as the benefits and possible risks associated with participating in it. The participants were

required to provide implied consent before proceeding with the interview. Although the women were interviewed, no identifying factors were collected, such as their names, locations, dates of birth, or places of employment. As previously stated, the interviews were conducted via Zoom or phone. If the participant selected the Zoom option, they were not expected to be on camera or display their name to conduct the interview.

It was highly recommended that participants conduct the interview, whichever option they chose, in a location that allowed for privacy and was free from possible distractions. This helped ensure complete anonymity for the participant, as there were no identifying markers. Additionally, this allowed the participant to become more comfortable discussing their upbringing and current relationship. The only personal data collected pertained to age, employment status, education level, race, and marital status.

Due to the nature of the study, the participants could have been considered a vulnerable population. In an effort to help address any concerns, I was fully transparent regarding the study by informing the participant what the study entailed and what information would be gathered. Additionally, contact information was disclosed on the consent form, allowing the participants to contact me with any questions.

Summary

By utilizing both the Attachment Style theory and the theory of love helped explore the phenomenon of the attachment styles of women who are attracted to violent incarcerated men. The data was collected through anonymous interviews with the women. The participants were recruited through social media and had to agree to an official informed consent form before being interviewed. Even though the participants

were interviewed, no identifying information was collected to ensure complete anonymity.

The participants met the requirements to be considered for the study, including being over 18, residing in the United States, being in an active relationship with an incarcerated male, including an LWOP incarcerated male, and establishing the relationship after incarceration. Peer debriefing and a reflexive journal were implemented to establish trustworthiness using an audit trail. These tools allowed for full disclosure regarding the research process and findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of the attachment styles of adult women who seek intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men, with some of the men serving on death row or serving LWOP. In this chapter, I discuss the results of the interviews.

Setting

The use of firsthand accounts through interviews. Conducted through the phone and Zoom. For those who decided to interview over the phone, the participant provided me with their phone number, which was not stored or saved once the interview was concluded. For those who decided to interview on Zoom, the camera option was disabled for both participants, and the interview was recorded, along with the phone calls.

Demographics

The study consisted of six women who met the criteria for inclusion in the research. Any specific identifying demographic information was intentionally excluded to ensure participant confidentiality.

Parameter 1 for inclusion: Must be 18 years old or older. This ensured that the participant was aware of their consent to the interview. Due to the sensitive nature of the interview, participants aged 18 and over were necessary for the study.

Parameter 2 for inclusion: Must reside in the United States. For this study, I interviewed only women who were permanent residents of the United States.

Parameter 3 for inclusion: Cisgender female. For this study, I only interviewed women who were assigned female at birth.

Parameter 4 for inclusion: Current relationship with a violent incarcerated male, to include a life without parole inmate. In this instance, the male had to be detained during the interview.

Parameter 5 for inclusion: Participants are actively involved (sending mail/packages, visiting, etc.). For this study, the participant had to actively partake in the relationship, whether through writing and sending letters, sending packages, visiting, talking on the phone, or putting money in their loved one's commissary account.

Parameter 6 for inclusion: The participant may be married to the inmate. For this study, the participants included women married to the inmate, not just women dating or engaged.

Six questions were asked regarding the demographics of the women interviewed: age, ethnicity, level of education, marital status prior to initial contact, employment status, and number of dependents, if any. Of the six women interviewed, three reported being in the 26-35 age range, three identified as White or Caucasian, five indicated they were single prior to the initial contact, three stated they worked full-time, and four reported being single before the initial communication with the inmate.

Data Collection

I created a flyer that was distributed throughout numerous Facebook support groups. Those groups consisted of Ride or Die Prison Wives and Families, Lovely Prison Love, TDCJ Support for Wives, Girlfriends, and Family, Prison Wives and Girlfriends,

Prison Wives: The Forgotten Women, Uplifting Prison Wives, and Prison Wives

Through the Wire, as well as Proud Prison Wives and Families. The data I collected was from primary sources, such as the participants themselves. Although in the study I was looking for women who are in an intimate relationship with a violent incarcerated male, I did not interview any incarcerated males or collect any information related to the incarcerated males' offenses, charges, or sentences. Although the topic may have been sensitive or triggering to some, the women were not considered to be part of the vulnerable population. Additionally, informed consent was requested to proceed with the interview and meet the requirements.

Before the start of the interview, the women were asked again for consent to proceed, which they provided verbally. I once again explained that the interview questions would be geared to their perspectives and that no information related to the inmate's charge, offense, or sentence would be asked or collected. Most of the questions asked during the interview were derived from the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), which was created by Mary Ainsworth. A semistructured interview allowed further follow-up questions about the participant's responses. The rest of the questions asked were related to the participant's relationship with the inmate, such as "How old were you when you met your loved one?" and "What is the current status of your relationship (dating, engaged, married)?"

Data Analysis

As I interviewed the women, I used Microsoft Excel to chart their demographics. Doing so helped view initial similarities before continuing with the interview. I used

Zoom and TapACall Recorder to record the interviews. Following the conclusion of the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed using TurboScribe. I then compared the audio multiple times with the transcriptions to ensure accuracy, and the notes taken during the interviews were also compared with the transcriptions. This was to further ensure that the information and responses provided by the participants matched with each other. The first two interviews were hand-coded, and the remaining four were then coded using NVivo's Autocode Wizard. Following the coding patterns established in the first two interviews, the themes emerged from the codes. The themes that were revealed were incarcerated loved ones, childhood abuse, parental drug use, neglect/trauma in childhood, and parental drug use.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

There was a concern that the interpretation and representation of the participant's narratives may be misconstrued. To establish trustworthiness, four criteria were met: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Sutton & Austin, 2015). As I was the only one conducting and interpreting the interviews, the credibility issue was addressed using a transcription service to ensure that the participants' experiences were portrayed accurately.

Credibility

Although peer debriefing was initially suggested as a viable option for enhancing credibility, it proved to be implausible. This was due to the peers no longer being close by to consult with in person. Although virtual meetups were possible, maintaining the participants' confidentiality was paramount, so virtual meetups were no longer an option.

Methodological triangulation was used for the study, which compared a participant's responses to previously published findings from other studies (Natow, 2019).

Transferability

The population of women interviewed, although a small sample size, could provide organizations and outreach programs with further insight into some of the hardships the women experience when they are involved with an incarcerated male. The transferability of this study could help with larger research programs when looking to implement resources and support. The potential of transferability could reduce the strain and hardships the women and their families feel when they have an incarcerated family member.

Dependability

Using the reflexive journal was a great tool in acknowledging my difficulties obtaining participants and addressing the backlash, hesitation, and concerns with conducting the interviews. The constant questioning of my legitimacy and character was starting to get to me as a researcher because the continuous attacks and assumptions without listening to reason or explanation made it harder to convey the purpose of the study. Despite these concerns, I started acknowledging any preconceived notions and assumptions I had of the women before each interview. After the interviews, I would go back and review those assumptions and see how they related to each other. In addition, I would review previous notes from the prior interviews after the most recent interview and compare and note any similarities and differences between them.

Confirmability

The participants were all asked the same questions. They were followed up on specific questions depending on the participant's responses, such as "Was this your first time engaging in a relationship with an incarcerated male?" If the participant answered "no, " they were asked for further clarification. The participants were not obligated to give more clarification or information if they felt uncomfortable doing so.

Results

Research Question 1

RQ 1: What are the attachment styles of women seeking intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men?

After transcribing the interviews with the women, they stated they experienced or felt rejected as a child due to their parents' incarceration, abuse, drug usage, assault, and significant loss. Given this information 83.33% were classified as having anxiety attachments, specifically insecure-ambivalent/resistant, whereas the remaining 16.67% were classified as having a secure attachment style. In addition, the women, they were classified as experiencing fatuous love.

Research Question 2

RQ 2: How do these adult women describe the meanings of these attachments?

Based on the interviews, the women do not view themselves as having attachments, but rather as simply looking for companionship and creating a meaningful relationship, despite their loved one's incarceration. This is apparent in their response to question: "How do you think your childhood experiences with your mother have affected

your personality?” Interviewee #6 responded: “I think that’s a lot of reasons why I pick someone I pick. I tend to try to be a fixer. I pick people who have issues that I feel that if I love them hard enough, I can fix.”

Figure 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

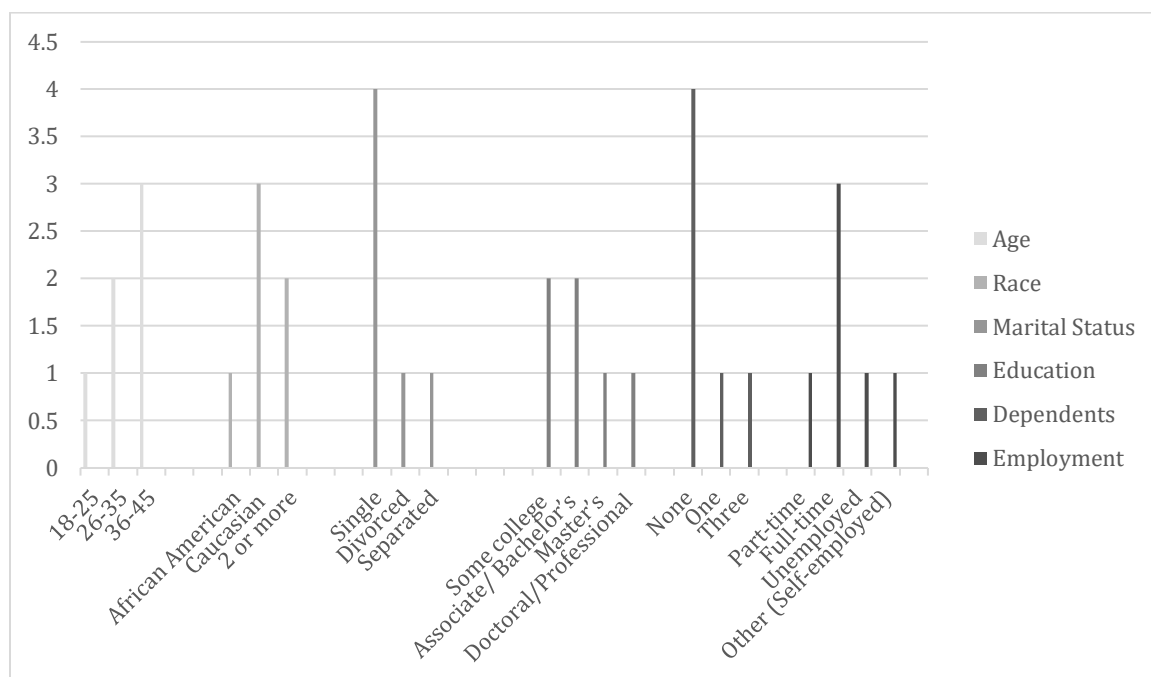
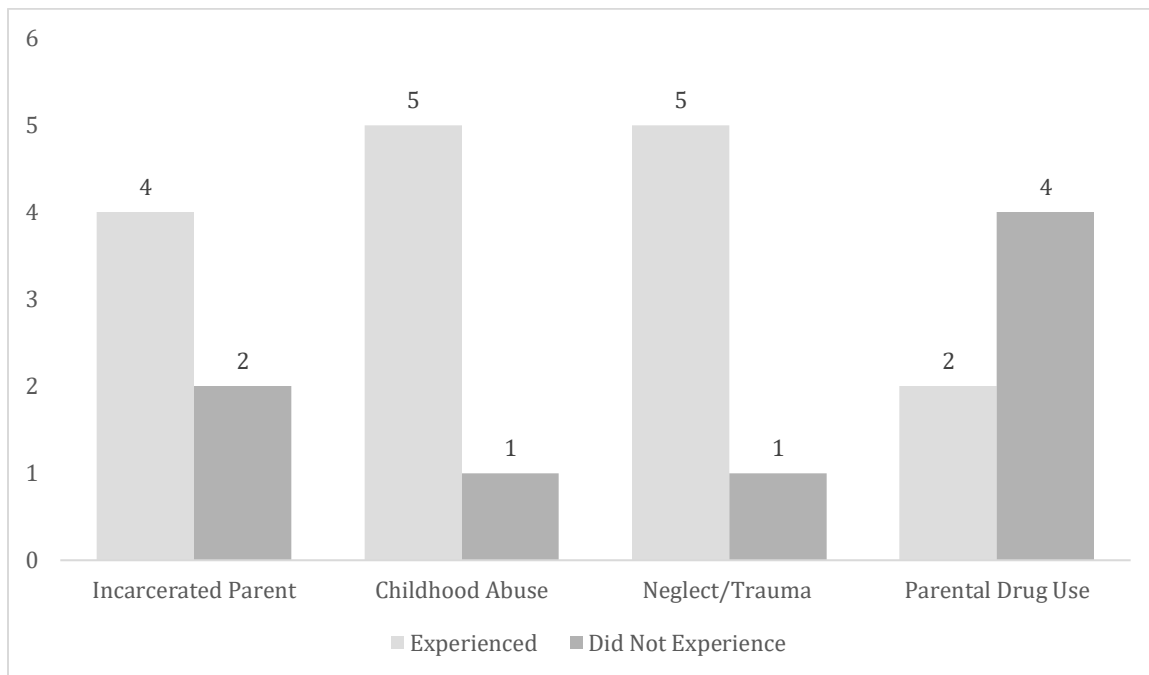


Figure 2*Experiences of the Participants***Theme 1: Incarcerated Parents**

The theme of incarcerated parents is not limited to their parents or stepparents, but to any adult parental figure they had during their upbringing. Four of the six participants stated they had a parent, stepparent, or grandparent who was incarcerated during their childhood. The women expressed that having a loved one incarcerated while growing up had lots of challenges, one being the financial strain that impacted the family, as well as the rejection that came from not having them around.

Ashraf and Farhad (2022) mention that when a family member is incarcerated, the entire family structure, including the health and life of the family, is changed. The reversal of normality and roles, where the incarcerated family member used to be, becomes the new normal. Maintaining familial relationships while the family member is

incarcerated requires a great deal of support, which is overwhelmingly shouldered by women.

Interviewee 3 responded:

My stepfather was incarcerated growing up, and we kind of had to uproot our whole life because he was kind of like the one paying most of the bills... we had to move from our city to a small town like three hours away and start all over again.

Interviewee 2 expressed a similar sentiment: “It was hard. It was probably, it was my stepdad who was incarcerated, and it was probably the hardest thing I've seen my mom go through.”

Theme 2: Childhood Abuse

The theme of childhood abuse encompasses the abuse the women experienced and endured during their upbringing, including not just verbal and emotional abuse but also sexual and physical abuse. Some of the women stated they did inform their parental figure or a trusted adult of the abuse they faced, but were either ignored, dismissed, or not protected. This led to resentment, with some of the women now experiencing strained or no-contact relationships with their parental figures due to their lack of action when they reached out for help. Perlman et al. (2016) noted that childhood maltreatment and abuse have been potential causal factors for the development of insecure attachments. In addition, there have been numerous studies that have linked different forms of childhood abuse to insecurity within adult attachments (2016).

The theme captured the responses to the question, “How would you describe your childhood upbringing?” Interviewee 2 responded: “She told me all the time that she would have given me up for abortion. She was very mentally and physically abusive.” Interviewee 5 responded with the following: “Um, with my dad, uh, there are times that I wonder if there was some minor sexual assaults, just, just minor stuff going on. I'm not sure. Um, he was always really flirtatious.”

As for the second question, “Other than any difficult experiences you've already described, have you had any other experiences which you should regard as potentially traumatic?” Interviewee 3 responded with the following: “I was, I was abused by my mom's first husband growing up, not sexually, but physically and verbally.”

Theme 3: Neglect/Trauma in Childhood

The theme of neglect/trauma in childhood addressed the hardships the women grew up with. Although all the women experienced different upbringings and circumstances, it was not lost that 66.67% of the women described various degrees of trauma, which has carried over into their adult lives. In a study by Özcan et al (2016), it was revealed that women with secure attachments were less abused than women who had insecure attachments. In addition, the children with secure attachments were less likely to experience both physical and emotional abuse (2016). As a result, there was a positive relationship between childhood traumas and insecure attachment (2016).

The question “How would you describe your overall childhood upbringing?” allowed the participant to provide as much detail as they felt comfortable disclosing. Interviewee 6 responded:

“For the most part, it was okay. My grandpa decided to go on like the road of a truck driver, so I had to move with my aunt, who was a drug addict. It wasn't so nice. And that's where a lot of bad stuff started to happen.”

Interviewee 1 described her upbringing as the opposite and responded:

“My parents were together my entire upbringing and are still together. I grew up in an upper middle-class household. I grew up in an extremely wealthy neighborhood, but my family was not extremely wealthy.”

Theme 4: Parental Drug Use

Out of the six participants, two, or 33.33%, responded that their parents had an active drug addiction, which led to their parents being incarcerated for most of their childhood. Capuzzi et al. (2020) stated that a previous study revealed that between 10%-61% of drug use disorder, as well as 16%-51% of alcohol abuse disorder, are prevalent in male prisoners. Moreover, there are higher rates of mental disorders along with substance abuse among the prison population compared to those who are not incarcerated (2020). The study also revealed that cocaine was the most common substance, with 83.7% followed by cannabis and alcohol (2020).

The question, “Did you ever feel rejected as a child?” Interviewee 4 responded with the following: “Um, so his drug addiction kind of affected me as a child because he would choose drugs and alcohol over his children. So that's what made me feel very rejected.” Interviewee 6 responded with a similar sentiment: “I think having my mom in and out of jail, and also her being on heroin in and out of my life, there were times where she would make a lot of promises, and she wouldn't show up.”

Summary

The ability to interview the women allowed for a more in-depth perspective on how they began intimate relationships with incarcerated males. The women came from different socio-economic backgrounds, upbringings, and experiences. A commonality that the six women shared was that they were in intimate relationships with an incarcerated male. In doing so, they presented the women with another set of challenges: at times, the lack of support and understanding from their families and friends. Despite any hesitation the women may have had participating in the interview, they still welcomed me into their world and allowed themselves to be vulnerable so that I, and ultimately others, could better understand them and their relationships.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of the attachment styles of adult women who seek intimate relationships with violent incarcerated men, with some of the men on death row or serving LWOP. I also examined how Sternberg's theory of love influenced the women in their pursuit of relationships with incarcerated men. In the following chapter, I will discuss the findings drawn from the interviews, along with the limitations that arose, and provide recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

Daniel (2006) stated that the need to form attachment relationships is rooted in an individual's innate need for survival, as represented in human evolution. Woodhouse et al. (2015) reported that the attachment styles observed in adulthood were reflective of those observed in infancy, with 56% secure, 24% avoidant, and 20% anxious/ambivalent attachments. This is indicative of the responses from the women, as five of the six women, or 83.33%, reported tumultuous and traumatizing upbringings, which they stated have impacted their personality or relationships as they grew up. According to the attachment theory, people who exhibit avoidant, anxious, and secure attachment styles should develop relationships that do not mirror their emotions (Simpson, 1990).

It is suggested that individuals who are anxious and insecure may have experienced at least one but usually more than one pattern of pathogenic parenting, which can include being unresponsive to the child, actively disparaging and rejecting them,

constant threats by parents not to love, or patterns of abandonment (Bowlby, 1977).

Bowlby noted that any of those instances can lead a child to be in constant anxiety as they lose their attachment figure, which is described as anxious attachment. There is also the possibility of underlying resentment, which is garnered by the yearning for love and support and is directed against weaker individuals (Bowlby, 1977).

Simpson (1990) noted that individuals with anxious attachment styles yearn to develop supportive relationships due to their insecurities hindering them from forming trust, achieving satisfaction, commitment, and interdependence. In addition to these conditions, there is the possibility that anxious individuals can become guilt-ridden and over-conscientious (Bowlby, 1977). This becomes unconscious resentment as the child inhibits their anger towards their parents' behavior (Bowlby, 1977). Anxious attachment styles experience more distress than secure attachment styles (Simpson, 1990). This was apparent with 83.33% of the women I interviewed, as they stated they experienced or felt rejected as a child due to their parents' incarceration, abuse, drug usage, assault, and significant loss. Bifulco et al. (2019) noted that behavioral vulnerabilities may show that individuals are incredibly susceptible to environmental stress, such as those with anxious attachment, as they may find events with high degrees of humiliation painful due to their sensitivity to rejection.

The opposite of anxious attachment is compulsive self-reliance and compulsive caregiving within the pattern of attachment behavior. Compulsive self-reliance is described as individuals who do not seek love and care from others but are determined to do everything themselves, regardless of the conditions (Bowlby, 1977). According to

Bowlby, individuals are also more likely to crack under stress and show signs of depression and psychosomatic symptoms. Bowlby indicated that although they may not have experienced similar upbringings as anxious individuals, they are also distrustful of any close relationships to avoid the possibility of rejection. There is also an unexpressed yearning for love and support, much like that of anxious individuals (Bowlby, 1977).

As for those who are compulsive caregiving individuals, they engage in many close relationships, but in the role of caregiver, never as the one who is receiving the care (Bowlby, 1977). They tend to care for those who do not seek or welcome the care. A typical childhood experience would be having a mother who suffers from depression or a disability, for example, and the mother welcomed the idea of being cared for and possibly demanded the care of any younger siblings (Bowlby, 1977).

Thus, at a young age, they find that providing care is the only affectionate bond available, which means they must always be the caretaker (Bowlby, 1977). The only care they can ever receive is providing care to others. Moreover, just like those who are compulsively self-reliant, they also harbor resentment and have latent anger towards their parents, and are yearning for love and care. They even feel guilty about expressing their desires and feelings to their parents (Bowlby, 1977).

In addition, high levels of attachment anxiety can also lead to feelings of unworthiness, excessive worry, and relational distress (Brophy et al., 2020). According to Brophy et al., high levels of attachment avoidance are associated with discomfort in intimacy, suppressing emotional responses, behavioral independence, and a striving to maintain self-reliance. Both anxiety and avoidance have been known to be related to

psychopathology, including depression and anxiety, which are then related to the individual's quality of life (Brophy et al., 2020).

Adult attachment anxiety is referred to as the fear of abandonment by partners, the constant and sometimes excessive need for approval, and being distressed by perceived rejection by their partners (Woodhouse et al., 2015). Individuals who experienced an insecure childhood attachment are more likely to exhibit lower stability rates in adulthood (Tadros & Ansell, 2022).

Based on the interviews with the six women, 83.33% were classified as having anxiety attachments, specifically insecure-ambivalent/resistant, which is characterized as less emotionally developed babies who are more prone to separation distress (Tadros & Ansell, 2022). Those with anxious attachment styles worry about being underappreciated or even abandoned by their partners. They are highly invested in their relationships, as they strive to become more emotionally available to their partners in order to feel more secure (Simpson & Rholes, 2017).

It is also suggested that those who have anxious attachment also exhibit conflicted perceptions that lead them to question their self-worth, stay vigilant for signs their partner is becoming distant, and worry about losing their partners (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). In addition, they tend to use more emotion-focused or hyperactive coping strategies when distressed, which raises their worries, thereby constantly activating their attachment styles as reported by Simpson & Rholes. This, in turn, can explain why anxious people tend to have less satisfying and more poorly adjusted relationships (Simpson & Rholes, 2017).

The remaining 16.67% were classified as having a secure attachment style, which refers to the absence of attachment anxiety and avoidance (Woodhouse et al., 2015). These individuals do not worry about being alone or even being abandoned. They are comfortable with the idea of being dependent on others and having others depend on them. Secure attachment is evident when the baby receives affection and is provided with a safe and predictable relationship with their caregiver. Previous longitudinal data have indicated that individuals who experience a safe and secure early attachment do, in fact, exhibit higher rates of stability in adulthood. Although early attachment styles have been known to influence adult attachment styles, the stability of attachment styles in adult romantic relationships is lower.

Moreover, in Sternberg's theory of love, he stated that there are three components of love: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. Each of the three components acts accordingly, depending on whether the relationship is short-term or long-term (Sternberg, 1986). Furthermore, Sternberg notes that in short-term relationships, the passion component plays a larger role, whereas in longer-term relationships, the intimacy and decision/commitment components play a much larger role (1986). The passion component is more moderate and may decline over time (Sternberg, 1986).

The three components also differ in their psychophysiological involvement within the relationships. The passion component is highly dependent on psychophysiological involvement, whereas the decision/commitment components are more modest, and the intimacy component has more intermediate involvement (Sternberg, 1986).

In addition, four of the six women reported that they had contacted the inmate first; one stated it was a mutual communication, as they both contacted each other simultaneously, and one woman reported that the inmate had contacted them first. When they started communicating, four of the six women made their relationship official within two weeks to a month after the initial conversation. As for the other two women, one formed a relationship after a few months and the other after 6 months. They all stated that their relationship is serious, with the possibility of marriage being discussed, depending on the outcome of their loved one's sentencing.

So, given the information presented by the women, they were classified as experiencing fatuous love. Fatuous love is categorized as a combination of passion and decision/commitment components, which are combined due to the absence of the intimacy component; this type of love can also be described as a whirlwind relationship (Sternberg, 1986). The passion component is established almost instantaneously, but the intimacy component does not, which makes fatuous relationships at risk for termination and sometimes shotgun marriages for divorce (Sternberg, 1986).

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations arose when conducting the study. The first limitation was finding Facebook groups that would allow me to join. I initially messaged five administrators of Facebook prison wives and girlfriends support groups and did not hear back. During this time, I continued to search for groups and was eventually permitted to join Proud Prison Wives and Families, where I then shared my flyer. About three weeks later, I was able to join a total of six more support groups: Ride or Die Prison Wives and

Families, Lovely Prison Love, TDCJ Support for Wives, Girlfriends, and Family, Prison Wives and Girlfriends, Prison Wives: The Forgotten Women, Uplifting Prison Wives, and Prison Wives Through the Wire.

Upon sharing my flyer in one of the groups, I was met with backlash, and some of the women were visibly upset and angry because I had used the term “violent.” I was called unprofessional because of the word usage. A few of the women felt it was necessary to explain that by using the word violent I was actively perpetuating the belief that the men must be guilty if they are convicted of the violent crime. One of the women went on to state that just because they are convicted of a violent crime does not mean they are inherently violent. They later voluntarily described their loved one’s situation, criminal charges, and sentencing, and continuously reiterated that their loved one was not violent.

A second limitation was convincing some women that I was not a scammer. One of the groups questioned my legitimacy because they could not see my information or pictures on my personal page. I explained that my personal page was private, meaning that only my friends or family could view it. The explanation did not quell concerns about my legitimacy because they could not even view pictures. Some women even stated that I had submitted a similar flyer over a year ago, looking for participants. I quickly replied that I had never submitted anything prior and did not join the group. In addition, some women were questioning whether I even knew or had a family member within the prison system. In addition, I was questioned about the study's legitimacy and

what precautions were being taken to ensure confidentiality was maintained. This led some to ask if I had sought approval before engaging in interviews.

A third limitation was that some women felt I was actively and intentionally excluding specific groups of individuals. I was again called “unprofessional” and that the “study was exclusionary” since one of the requirements was that the participant had to be in a heterosexual relationship. One of the members of the group went as far as calling me a “TERF,” which stands for trans-exclusionary radical feminist, because I did not include the LGBTQIA+ community in the study. I did try to explain to them that the LGBTQIA+ community was not my target audience, and yet, the member was still unwilling to accept the explanation. The same individual was upset that there was no financial compensation for the participants and voiced their disapproval of the study.

A fourth limitation was that four willing participants expressed interest in being interviewed but did not meet all or some of the requirements. The most common reasons were that they were not currently residing in the United States, their loved one was no longer incarcerated by the time of the interview, or they were already in a relationship before the incarceration, as well as not being in a heterosexual relationship. Additionally, two other women reached out to set up an interview and consented, but never followed up to schedule one. A fifth limitation was that I was living overseas at the time of data collection, so I could not post any actual flyers within the community, severely limiting my ability to find participants online. As a result, posting the flyer strictly online and the backlash and concerns I received could have negatively influenced potential participants who were curious or willing.

Recommendations

I recommend using the community and organizations to post the flyer for future research, and alternatively, conducting face-to-face interviews. Conducting the interviews face-to-face would allow for establishing a more personable connection with the participant and gauge their behavior towards the questions, which can create better opportunities for follow-up questions, thus allowing for more clarity. Relying strictly on online methods has drawbacks, as I experienced, and it can take longer to find eligible and willing participants, as it took me close to seven months.

Moreover, given the backlash and concerns that were voiced by the women on the support pages, I would suggest ensuring that the women understand the verbiage, specifically when using keywords such as violent. Many of the women from my experience were not willing to hear that violent crimes encompass several different types of violent crimes. The Uniform Crime Reporting (2023) stated that violent crimes consisted of: robbery, rape, murder, aggravated assault, and negligent manslaughter. The women read the word “violent” and more than likely assumed I was looking for those who were in a romantic relationship with an inmate who was convicted of a heinous crime. So, ensuring that the public understands the verbiage will make it easier and create a smoother process in obtaining participants.

A third recommendation for future research would be to compare the relationships of heterosexual women with those who are in same sex relationships. Doing so would allow further insight into women who are in same sex relationships to see if they share

similar backgrounds as those in heterosexual relationships. And if they do share similar backgrounds, they may also share similar attachment styles.

Implications

Based on the findings, it is apparent that five of the six women did not receive the necessary support during their childhood. They lacked emotional, physical, and psychological support as they did not have consistent supportive caregivers and had a turbulent home life. Although some of the women did not go into extensive detail regarding their upbringings, they did state they experienced abuse, whether it was sexual, physical, or emotional. At times, they voiced feelings of being ignored, dismissed, and even blamed. And as for the other woman, she stated she grew up in a rather loving, stable home in a two-parent household.

Despite the vast difference in upbringings and childhood experiences, they still voiced similar feelings regarding not being heard or fully supported, especially in their emotional well-being and mental health. This was very telling because growing up, many adults tend to ask, “How are you feeling? Are you okay? You can talk to me,” and yet these women were telling who they assumed, and should have been, a trusted adult, and yet instead were left feeling unimportant and abandoned.

As they grew up, they sought solace in individuals and established relationships with them, specifically inmates, who cannot provide the physical connection they need in a healthy relationship. But rather, they are now being listened to, something that has been lacking since their childhood. They seem to have chosen individuals who have nothing but time to listen to them, their concerns, their hopes and dreams, to feel safe emotionally

and mentally. Yet, they are still not receiving everything that is needed for a healthy relationship. The women seem to have made concessions regarding having little to no physical connection and intimacy for the hopes of a stable relationship that allows them to be listened to and have a voice, as well as feel emotionally safe. They felt “heard and seen,” as the women stated, and that they had a deeper connection than they previously lacked in previous relationships.

Social Change

This study can help provide more consistent support to families and loved ones of incarcerated males. Some ways support can be granted could be through therapy for the families and loved ones left behind. The therapy could help address the change in family dynamics and support system, as well as navigate the stigma that comes with having a loved one who is incarcerated. Community outreach can also help bridge the gap between those who have incarcerated families and those who do not. An opportunity would be partnering or creating a similar organization to Big Brother, so those with children can have another form of support and guidance for their children, especially if they have no other family. Another opportunity would be to have a community event with resources and organizations, as well as with other families of incarcerated individuals, in hopes of fostering connections with other families and creating a larger support system.

Conclusion

Anxiety attachment, specifically insecure-ambivalent/resistant attachment, and fatuous love have played a factor in the women pursuing and continuing a relationship with their incarcerated loved one. Despite the concerns, hesitations, and disapproval from

some of their family and friends, they are still willing to sacrifice their freedoms as well for a chance of happiness. This research study addressed whether Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Sternberg's theory of love influenced the women when engaging in a romantic relationship with violent incarcerated men. The combination of both did provide a closer or deeper insight into how these women are gravitating to such relationships. They may not have started out looking for a partner who was incarcerated, but for better or worse, they find themselves committed to an inmate.

There is still much to be learned from women who are involved with incarcerated men, but the interviews did allow a glimpse into why these women continue a relationship with an incarcerated male. Despite the hardships, distance, and sometimes disapproval and constant questions about their relationship, the women remain steadfast in working to maintain a successful relationship with their loved ones. If nothing more, the women's need for love and support remains constant in the face of adversity, much as it did in their childhood.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. How old are you?
 - 18-25
 - 26-35
 - 36-45
 - 46 and older
 - Prefer not to answer

2. What is your ethnic background?
 - White or Caucasian
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - African- American
 - Native American
 - Other
 - Prefer not to answer

3. What is your level of education?
 - Less than high school
 - High school including GED
 - Some college (no degree)
 - Associate or Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctoral or Professional degree
 - Prefer not to answer

4. What was your marital status prior to communicating with loved one?
 - Married
 - Widowed
 - Divorced
 - Separated
 - Single
 - Prefer not to answer

5. What is your current employment status?
 - Part-time
 - Full-time
 - Retired
 - Unemployed
 - Other

- Prefer not to answer
6. How many dependents live in the household with you?
 - None
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4+
 - Prefer not to answer
 1. How old were you when you met your loved one?
 - a. And who contacted whom?
 2. What is the current status of your relationship (dating, engaged, married)?
 - a. And how long after connecting/talking did you decide to get together?
 - b. And how long have you been together?
 - c. Do you both reside in the same state?
 3. How often do you write, send letters/packages, visit, talk on the phone?
 4. Was this your first time engaging in a relationship with an incarcerated male?
 - a. If not, what was the length of that relationship?
 - b. And why did it end?
 5. Other than your loved one do you have a family member (parent/grandparent/siblings/aunts/uncles) that is currently incarcerated or was incarcerated when you were a child?
 - a. If so, how did their incarceration affect your upbringing?
 6. How would you describe your childhood upbringing?
 7. Did you experience the loss of a parent or other close loved one when you were a child?
 8. Did you ever feel rejected as a child?
 9. Why do you think your parents behaved as they did during your childhood?
 10. Were your parents ever threatening with you in any way- maybe for discipline even jokingly?
 11. Other than any difficult experiences you've already described, have you had any other experiences which you should regard as potentially traumatic?

12. When you were upset emotionally, when you were little what would you do?
 - a. Can you think of a specific time that would happen?
13. How do you think your childhood experiences with your parents have affected your personality?
14. Which parent do you feel closest to and why?
 - a. Why isn't there this feeling with the other parent?
15. What is your relationship with your parents [or remaining parent in cases of loss] like for you now as an adult?
16. What did your family say about your relationship initially?
17. How does your family feel about your relationship now?
18. How does your relationship affect your other relationships? (work, friends)
19. Where do you see the relationship going? (plans to marry?)
20. Is there anything specific you would like for me to know about your relationship?
Or dating someone that is incarcerated?

Appendix B: Flyer for Participation

Interview Study seeks Women in an Intimate relationship



w/ a Violent Incarcerated Male

Caption: There is a new study about the experiences of women in an intimate relationship w/ a violent incarcerated male.

About the study:

- One 30–60-minute Zoom or phone interview (names will not be collected & camera will be off)
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that could identify you

Participant Qualifications:

- Must be 18 and over
- Must reside in the United States
- Cisgender female
- Began relationship after incarceration
- Current relationship with a violent incarcerated male to include life without parole inmate
- Participants actively involved (send mail/packages, visit, etc)
- May be married to the inmate

Interviews are 100% confidential.

The decision to participate or not participate in the study will have no impact on the inmate's prison life or sentence