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The Influence of Attachment Styles on Employee Engagement

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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Ian D. Briggs

MBA, University of New England, 1997

B.Bus, Curtin University, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the influence of adult attachment styles on the engagement of employees in an attempt to address increasing losses in U.S. work productivity. Researchers have documented that organizations able to maintain better manager-employee relationships demonstrated positive employee engagement and improved productivity. However, a distinct gap in the literature remains as to how organizational leaders can stimulate healthier manager-employee relationships. Adult attachment theory was used as the foundation to explore how employees' relationships with their immediate manager affect their work engagement. To address this question, a purposeful sample of 16 full time mid level employees who had a direct line reporting relationship to an immediate manager were selected from various industries across the United States. The Experiences of Close Relationship – Relationship Structures questionnaire was used to assess the employee's attachment style prior to in-depth interviews being performed to gather rich data on their lived experiences. Interview data was analyzed using the modified 7-step Van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis. Two themes emerged: employees have a need for purpose and value, and employees require varying levels of dependency. These findings indicate that managers must cater to the attachment needs of the employee to positively address productivity losses. Implications for positive social change pertain to both the financial benefits derived from an increase in industry productivity and profitability levels due to improvements in employee engagement, as well as the recovery of employees' commitment to the workplace through the provision of a healthy work environment.

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Dedication

I sincerely thank my partner Angela for her encouragement and care throughout this process, as well as the faculty, friends, and colleagues who have provided support and added to my knowledge and well-being along the way. In addition, this study is dedicated to those people who strive to better themselves and have a passion for the support and betterment of others.

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I acknowledge my committee: Dr. Steven Tippins (chair); Dr. David Banner (second committee member), and Dr. Haussmann (university research reviewer) for their care and diligence in helping me successfully complete this highest level of academic achievement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The performance of any organization depends on the productivity of its employees (Handa & Gulati, 2014; Shaukat, Ashraf, & Ghafoor, 2015). The demands made of an organization's employees are increasing due to advances in technology and the globalization of industries (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009). It is incumbent upon an organization's managers to motivate employees to foster positive employee engagement experiences that improve company productivity (Anitha, 2014). One of the greatest contributing factors to effective employee engagement is the development of a strong manager-employee relationship (Frazier, Gooty, Little, & Nelson, 2015). Relationships play a significant role in determining how individuals, work groups, and organizations function (Richards & Schat, 2011).

To understand how managers can inspire and motivate employees towards the achievement of organizational goals, human resource departments have relied on a variety of personality tests that attempt to select and develop personnel. However, personality tests demonstrate very low validity for predicting job performance (Morgenson et al., 2007). Subsequently, researchers (Noftle & Shaver, 2006) have attempted to map attachment styles to the Big Five personality traits quantified by the five factor model. However, results from these studies attempting to define specific relationships between attachment style and personality traits have been inconsistent in predicting relationship quality (Fraley, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Owen, & Holland, 2013).

Knowledge of how people relate and interact is rooted in the field of psychology. Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory is used to explain how an individual's relational behaviors develop. Behaviors associated with relationships are formed during infancy and operate to establish and maintain proximity to a primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1982). These behaviors, known as attachment styles, ground and shape the way in which individuals approach interpersonal relationships.

This research addresses a gap in understanding that the variations in the relational needs of employees and catering to those needs creates the opportunity for organizations to address a significant loss in productivity as well as support employee health, well-being, motivation, turnover intention, and job satisfaction. The contributions from this study provide much needed insight into the relationship between attachment styles and employee engagement.

In this chapter, I provide a background to the study that lays the foundation for the problem to be addressed. The problem and purpose of the research are outlined, followed by the research question that guides the study. The conceptual framework of attachment theory is summarized, as is the qualitative research methodology. I describe the study's definitions, assumptions, scope and limitations, and delimitations. Finally, the significance of the study to practice, theory, and positive social change are emphasized.

Background of the Study

The value that attachment theory can provide in a work context is extensive, as adult attachment styles are important antecedents of interpersonal relationship quality and psychological well-being (Harms, 2011). The majority of prior research has focused on

attachment behaviors in intimate relationships. However, the concept of attachment is also relevant in a work context (Scrima, Di Stefano, Guarnaccia, & Lorito, 2015). The most significant advances in attachment theory in a work situation suggest that attachment style can affect an individual's behavior at work (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). However, little research has been conducted on the impact of attachment styles in a work setting. What has been uncovered is that attachment behaviors demonstrated in the workplace appear to be similar to those determined by extensive studies conducted on romantic relationships in the field of psychology (Boatwright, Lopez, Sauer, VanDerWege, & Huber, 2010; Harms, 2011; Richards & Schat, 2011).

The concept of employee engagement was proposed by Kahn (1990) and was defined as a psychological and emotional connection to the company for which an employee worked (Sharma & Kaur, 2014). Engaged employees identified with their job role and work environment, resulting in greater job involvement and work participation (Kahn, 1992). In addition to having a positive effect on numerous other performance indicators, engaged employees improve organizational effectiveness, productivity, and financial returns (Medlin & Green, 2014). The role of the manager-employee relationship is the single most important contributor to employee engagement (Dávila & Piña-Ramírez, 2014). Individual variability exists among employees. Therefore, managers are required to understand what behaviors will positively affect an employee’s engagement levels (Xu & Thomas, 2011). The most effective way to understand individual relationship interactions is through the knowledge of an employee’s attachment style.

The way in which managers and employees relate through knowledge of their attachment styles can have a significant impact upon employee work engagement levels (Riley, 2011). However, limited studies have addressed attachment styles and manager-employee relationships and their impact on employee engagement. Much of the research has been focused on a single type of attachment style and a specific leadership style or has been restricted to leadership development (Hinojosa, McCauley, Randolph-Seng, & Gardner, 2014; Kafetsios, Athanasiadou, & Dimou, 2014). For example, Zhang, Waldman, and Wang (2012) emphasized that employees with a secure attachment style would more likely develop as leaders, and those who did maintained a more relational leadership approach. Rahimnia and Sharifirad (2015) expressed that employees with a more avoidant attachment style tended to have a greater focus towards task orientation.

There is a gap in the literature concerning how an employees' attachment style with their manager affects work behavior and subsequent work engagement. More specifically, without an understanding of what individual employees require from their managers based on their attachment needs, substantial improvements to employee engagement cannot be made given that relationships play a significant role in determining how individuals, work groups, and organizations function (Richards & Schat, 2011). Therefore, based on the employee's attachment style, I examined this problem in depth by exploring the perceived behaviors of managers affecting the manager-employee relationship, and in turn, how these behaviors affect employee engagement.

Knowledge of how employees behave in the work setting based on their attachment styles and the knowledge that these behaviors are both flexible and situational

has the potential to provide organizations with the opportunities to select, train, and develop individuals toward a more secure attachment base and greater work engagement (Boatwright et al., 2010; Harms, 2011).

Problem Statement

Lack of employee engagement contributes to a loss of over $450 billion in work productivity each year in the United States alone (Gallup, 2013). Organizations that have better manager-employee relationships have 50% fewer accidents, 41% fewer quality defects and incur significantly reduced healthcare costs (Gallup, 2013). The general problem is that a lack of knowledge of employee attachment styles by managers leaves them unable to positively affect work behavior and subsequent work engagement. The specific problem is that without an understanding of what individual employees require from their managers, based on their attachment needs, substantial improvements to employee engagement cannot be made given that relationships play a significant role in determining how individuals, work groups, and organizations function (Richards & Schat, 2011).

Implications for social change for the organization pertain to both the financial benefits derived from an increase in industry productivity and profitability levels and reduced costs associated with healthcare. For the employee, social change improvements relate to the recovery of their commitment to the workplace and enthusiasm and passion for their job role through provision of a healthy work environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological inquiry was to explore how the lived attachment experiences of a purposeful sample of 20 full-time employees affect their work engagement needs. The full-time employees selected from various industries across the United States comprised mid level employees who had had at least 5 years of experience in a full time salaried job role. The salaried, full time employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers may affect work engagement levels.

Research Question

The following research question was at the center of the study. Development of the research questions too early in the process could have led to a limitation of the study and insufficient exploration of the phenomenon. To that end, the research question was posed as a general issue so as not to limit the scope of the inquiry. The central question that guided the study was as follows: How do full time employees' perceptions of their attachment experiences affect their work engagement? The purpose of the presentation of this question, with a focus on the employee with a direct line reporting to a manager, was to gain insight and knowledge into the differences in the desired behavior of managers based on the employee's attachment style.

Conceptual Framework

Introduced by Bowlby in 1969, attachment theory outlines that people are born with innate behaviors that function to attract and maintain proximity to attachment

figures (supportive others) to protect against psychological or physical threats when the individuals are in distress (as cited in Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). An infant develops secure attachment when their primary caregiver attends to the individual's needs in a consistent and positive manner (Bowlby, 1988). The child comes to recognize that the caregiver will act as both a safe haven and a secure base for their physical, emotional, and social needs (Bowlby, 1969).

A safe haven provides the child with a place to be comforted during times of distress, while a secure base allows for the development of independent and exploratory behaviors (Bowlby, 1988). Those individuals who develop insecure attachment styles experience rejection or inconsistent responses from their primary caregiver. Attachment bonds fail to occur with infants whose safety and security needs go unfulfilled, resulting in underdeveloped social behaviors (Ainsworth, 1989).

Affected by both caregivers during infancy and subsequent relationships, individuals establish a dominant attachment style that remains relatively stable in adulthood but is flexible and may be influenced by situational factors (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). The attachment style an individual develops establishes internal working models of behavior that determine assumptions and beliefs regarding social interactions Bowlby, 1988). These rules regulate how individuals think, feel, and behave in relationship situations. In the context of relationships, secure attachment leads to self-sufficient and confident behaviors while insecure attachment promotes personal doubt and poor emotional adjustment (Bowlby, 1982). Styles of attachment are described in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Attachment theory is the most well-respected framework for the understanding of individual, interpersonal relationships (Berson, Dan, & Yammarino, 2006). Given that interrelationships occur amongst individuals in a work context, researchers (Harms, 2011; Richards & Schat, 2011) have posited that attachment theory can be extended beyond romantic relationships to include those experienced in work settings, due to the speculation that leaders act as proxy father figures. Frazier et al. (2007) asserted that the relationships between managers and employees would be better understood by exploring the individual's attachment style. Contemporary attachment theory provides a significant advancement to understanding the behavioral variations found amongst employees in the workplace (Boatwright et al., 2010; Harms, 2011; Richards & Schat, 2011).

Relational interactions between managers and employees are vital to organizations for the achievement of performance goals and objectives (Gallup, 2013). Companies that promote positive manager-employee relationships through the engagement of employees maintain fewer accidents and product quality defects and maintain lower healthcare costs (Gallup, 2013). In addition, companies experience increases in revenue and shareholder returns when they have a more engaged workforce (Medlin & Green, 2014). The manager-employee relationship is a pivotal contributor to employee engagement (Dávila & Piña-Ramírez, 2014).

Organizations have used personality testing to gain greater insight into factors that will better engage their employees. However, as a measure of job performance, these tests provide low levels of validity (Morgenson et al., 2007). Using attachment theory as a framework to explore how employees' perceptions of their attachment experiences

affect their work engagement may provide additional knowledge to the way in which managers and employees develop relationships, positively contributing to organizational goals and employee well-being.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative method with a phenomenological research design was used to explore perceptions of employees through the creation of recurring themes. A phenomenological research design was selected for this study because of the design's emphasis on understanding the lived attachment experiences of employees and their resultant influence on desired behaviors from their managers. The emergence of themes was built on previous literature. This particular study built on research that has previously identified the importance of manager-employee relationships concerning engagement and that a lack of employee engagement leads to a significant loss in company productivity. Outcomes may assist organizational leaders with a greater depth of understanding and detail concerning this particular phenomenon.

Quantitative research would not have been a satisfactory methodology for this study as it focuses on empirical, statistical analysis to generalize findings. Phenomenology was the most appropriate method for the investigation of the research question as one-on-one interview feedback is critical to developing an understanding of the emergent conceptual themes. In this study, the phenomenological inquiry allowed for the exploration of lived attachment experiences and perceptions related to employee engagement. Other forms of qualitative inquiry were not appropriate for this study as

they do not gather the personal lived experiences for individuals in a personal context for an acknowledged phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

To gather the required data effectively, participants completed the Experience of Close Relationships – Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) questionnaire to determine their attachment style. Participants were then selected to take part in the interview portion of the study based on their attachment style. Interview data were gathered from a purposeful sample of 20 interview participants until saturation was obtained. Participants comprised mid level employees selected from various industries across the United States who have had at least 5 years' experience in a full time salaried job role.

The salaried, full time employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers may affect work engagement levels. Data were gathered in one-on-one interviews with employees of organizations who comprised a variety of attachment styles and who could provide first hand feedback regarding the types of management behaviors that make them more engaged in their job roles.

The rich dialogue attained from the interview participants was used to construct the broad themes and categories required to understand the differences between the distinct attachment styles. This study was an attempt to understand the experience of the employee and capture the language used to describe and understand the meanings of the experience. Prior quantitative research was used to assist in the construction of a semistructured, open ended interview protocol and subsequent theme development.

Before this study, this depth of behavioral and relational data had not been gathered, exposing a gap in research.

Definitions

Adult attachment: Manifests as an aggregate of an individual's caregiving experiences during infancy and subsequent quality of relationship experiences throughout various life stages (Fraley et al., 2013). Adult attachment styles comprise a more refined combination of positive and negative view of self and others, including secure, anxious preoccupied, avoidant-dismissing, and avoidant-fearful (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment: The psychological connectedness between an infant and primary caregiver that allows for the development of an individual's sense of security and safety in relationship interactions (Bowlby, 1969). An individual's internal working models of behavior determine their assumptions, rules, and beliefs regarding social interactions (Bowlby, 1988). Attachment styles develop from these internal working models, which have been identified in children as secure, avoidant, and anxious ambivalent (Ainsworth, 1989; Zhang & Labouvie-Vief, 2004).

Behavioral engagement: An element of employee engagement that is the physical demonstration of cognitive and emotional engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014).

Cognitive engagement: The employee's understanding of the value of their work experience and knowledge such that they view it as meaningful (Shuck & Reio, 2014).

Emotional engagement: Involves an employee's emotional connection toward their workplace (Shuck & Reio, 2014).

Employee engagement: Comprises the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state of an employee in the work setting (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Engagement is defined as the attitude an employee develops with their job role that affects their commitment and discretionary effort toward the company (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Engagement is measured according to the level to which the employee feels valued and trusted by the organization (Berens, 2013).

Employee disengagement: The removal of an employee's "preferred self" from physical, cognitive, and emotional work tasks to protect themselves from a threat (Kahn, 1990). Disengaged employees act defensively and disassociate themselves from their work roles due to uncertainty, stress, and insecurity, which affects a company's productivity (Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2011).

Meaningfulness: Creates a psychological attachment to the workplace through the challenges and variety of an employee's job role and the value the employee perceives it provides to the organization (Ali Memon, Salleh, & Rosli Baharom, 2014). Meaningfulness is positively associated with elevating psychological attachment and supporting employee engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Ali Memon et al., 2014).

Motivation: Involves the energized, directive, and consequence oriented behaviors that drive employees towards the achievement of their goals. Intrinsic motivation is the pursuit of something enjoyable and interesting without any external influence. Extrinsic

motivation occurs as a result of external influence. Employees become engaged in their work through motivation (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2016).

Organizational citizenship behavior: Involves voluntary actions that assist the organization with revenue generation, through the employee's willing provision of constructive opinions, skill development, and cooperation (Sawitri, Suswati, & Huda, 2016).

Organizational commitment: Defined as an employee's psychological feelings of loyalty and obligation towards remaining employed with a company. Organizational commitment comprises affective commitment, which involves an emotional attachment to the company; continuance commitment, which is a recognition of the associated costs of leaving the company; and normative commitment, which is the employee's sense of obligation to the company (Yousef, 2017).

Perceived organizational support: An employee's perceived beliefs regarding the extent to which an organization is committed to their well-being based on the value of their contribution to the company (Shusha, 2013).

Retention: Refers to the policies and practices that a company employs to encouraged employees to remain with the organization (Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursière, & Raymond, 2016).

Turnover: Involves the intention of an employee to look for alternate employment and results in the resignation, transfer, or permanent departure from the organization (Nazir, Shafi, Qun, Nazir, & Tran, 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions are conditions that the researcher takes for granted without obtaining actual evidence (Bailey, Marshall, & Rossman, 1996). The most significant assumption for this study was that attachment style is presumed to influence employee engagement. A second assumption was that an individual having 5 years of experience in manager-employee relationships would be sufficient time for an employee to have determined the types of manager behaviors required to influence engagement. Concerning the sincerity of the study's participants, I assumed that the participants would complete the self-report attachment questionnaire truthfully and without bias. The accuracy of participant feedback is the result of unbiased feedback from participants (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013).

Bias for the survey portion of the study was a concern, as participants may perceive an insecure attachment style to be a measure of personal inadequacy or be socially unacceptable. The second assumption was that participants would feel comfortable enough to divulge behaviors about their managers openly and honestly. Participants may have felt the need to not fully reveal the behaviors required from their managers to mediate for what is socially acceptable in the work setting or for fear of reprisal from their manager or coworkers.

The final two assumptions concerned the sample and instrument to measure attachment. One was that the participants represented a satisfactory cross section of attachment styles and diversity amongst individuals to detect significant differences, such that themes would emerge to help understand the phenomenon. It was my presumption

that gender, race, and cultural differences would not affect the emergent themes. For example, an anxious preoccupied participant will desire the same behaviors of their manager regardless of gender, culture, or race. Further, it was assumed that the purposeful sample would be sufficient to attain saturation across all adult attachment styles. The final assumption was that the instrument used for the measurement of attachment is suitable for the categorization of the participant's attachment style in a work context.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations stipulate the parameters for the research study (Bailey et al., 1996). The parameters for this study included participants who were located within various regions of the United States. The sample population included individuals who were in mid level, full time positions within their organization and have had a reporting relationship with an immediate manager for at least 5 years. Participants outside of that population were not eligible to participate. These parameters were selected due to the significance, size, and accessibility of the sample population.

The sample size in this phenomenological study involved mitigation through data saturation. A purposeful sampling method was used to uncover themes on the relationship between attachment and employee engagement. The findings from this study may not be transferable to other levels of hierarchy within an organization or to other organization outside of the United States.

Limitations

Data collected for this study were only comprised of mid level employees and do not reflect the perceptions of other employees within the organization. The population for the study was limited to mid level employees in the United States and may not represent the lived experiences of other mid level employees in other geographical regions. The phenomenological study is not broad enough to generalize results to all work settings, populations, and industries.

Another limitation involves the inherent problems inherent with self-report data. Inaccurate results may occur when completing self-report instruments due to a lack of proper completion of the tool for self evaluation or participants being concerned about the extent of the information they are willing to disclose regarding their person and personal experiences. The final limitation for the study concerns the fact that most individuals do not fall perfectly into one of the attachment categories. As with all scales, people have varying levels of each of the attachment categories. Therefore, while individuals may be categorized into each of the attachment styles, there will be a variation in behaviors that may be influenced by their environment. This limitation may lead to a broad deviation in results that may increase the difficulty in establishment of themes and categories, or definition of outcomes.

Significance of the Study

Engaged employees positively contribute the productivity and profitability of organizations through improvements in revenue and shareholders value (Medlin & Green, 2014). Disengaged employees contribute to productivity loss through the negative

effects of healthcare costs, product quality defects, workplace accidents, job stress, and turnover (Bersin, 2014; Peretz, Levi, & Fried, 2015). Researchers have noted that annual losses for the U.S. economy due to disengaged employees are in excess of $450 billion (Gallup, 2013; Hoolahan, Greenhouse, Hoffmann, & Lehman, 2012).

This research fills a gap in understanding regarding the variations in relational needs of employees based on their lived attachment experiences. At a time when many organizations are undergoing rapid transformational change, the understanding and implementation of practices that assist with the encouragement of employee engagement have the potential to mitigate losses in business productivity. Catering to the needs of employees creates an opportunity for organizational leaders to address a significant loss in productivity as well as support employee health, well-being, motivation, turnover intention, and job satisfaction. The contributions from this study provide much needed insight into the relationship between attachment styles and employee engagement.

Significance to Practice

This study is significant to practice as the knowledge gained could help organizational leaders resolve disengagement issues by providing strategies that can be implemented to improve employee engagement. It is clear from prior research that employee engagement positively influences the business outcomes of profitability, productivity, customer loyalty, retention, and product quality (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner, & More, 2014). Conversely, lack of employee engagement reaches far beyond an organization's internal boundaries and issues by negatively influencing customer loyalty, leading to reduced stakeholder value (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011).

The insights from this study should afford human resource departments and management the opportunity to better understand social interactions and personal behavioral variations in employees. This knowledge could assist with improvements in employee relations and engagement. Exploring the behaviors that managers may use with mid level employees to increase employee engagement may help to influence employee performance and commitment through trusting relationships. Further, managers may be better armed to identify and respond to situations that lead to employee disengagement.

The significance of gaining greater understanding of the manager-employee relationship is strongly indicated by the findings that poor employee engagement will be detrimental to organizational success (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). It is vital for a company's top management to foster positive, effective managers along with workplace policies and practices that focus on employee well-being, health, and work life balance.

Significance to Theory

Given the inconsistent conclusions drawn from prior quantitative studies that have attempted to align attachment styles with personality traits, there is an opportunity for greater clarity as to what relationship based leadership behaviors affect employee engagement. The purpose of this study was to uncover additional qualitative findings that provide new insights into the needs of employees based on their attachment style. The development of categories and themes should provide researchers with new foundational concepts with which to cultivate future studies.

Significance to Social Change

Implications for positive social change for the current study pertain to the financial benefits derived from an increase in industry productivity and profitability levels and reduced costs that occur as a result of disengaged employees. Also, positive social change occurs as a result of the recovery of employees' commitment to the workplace and enthusiasm and passion for their job role through the provision of a healthy work environment. From a community standpoint, an increase in employee engagement could contribute to the growth of the local economy through the improvement in social infrastructure and development as businesses reinvest in their communities. Consumers could experience better quality products and services because of increased employee engagement.

Summary and Transition

The loss of annual productivity in the United States due to employee disengagement is significant and increasing. Researchers have uncovered that there is increasing demand placed on workers to improve their performance to keep companies productive. Employees need to be cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged with the organization in order to be productive. Thus, managers are required to motivate employees to create positive employee engagement experiences (Anitha, 2014).

Organizational leaders and human resource departments have implemented a variety of personality tests in order to select, train, and develop employees toward greater performance. However, personality tests are poor at predicting job performance (Morgenson et al., 2007). Researchers have uncovered that one of the main influencers of

positive employee engagement experiences is the strength of the manager-employee relationship (Frazier et al., 2015).

Attachment theory has been used in the field of psychology to understand behavioral interactions in intimate relationships. These behaviors are formed in infancy based on the way in which a primary caregiver is able to effectively cater to the physical and emotional needs of the child (Bowlby, 1969). As a result, relationship behaviors, known as attachment styles, are formed during childhood and are maintained throughout the stages of life, influencing how individuals view themselves and others.

Few researchers have attempted to explore how attachment styles influence behaviors in the work setting, and employees appear to display similar behaviors and characteristics to those seen in intimate relationships. Knowledge of employee attachment styles can influence an employee's work engagement (Riley, 2011). Given the importance of the manager-employee relationship on employee engagement experiences, there is an opportunity for organizational leaders to understand the requirements of employees from an attachment standpoint. Addressing these attachment needs could positively influence employee engagement.

Chapter 2 includes a review of relevant and applicable research information to provide an in depth discussion on attachment styles and employee engagement. The section on attachment outlines how attachment styles develop from childhood to adulthood as well as the instruments used to measure them. The factors contributing to employee engagement and disengagement are discussed, as are their associated outcomes. The relational nature of employee engagement and the importance of the

manager-employee relationship dynamic are examined. Finally, current research is reviewed regarding behavioral expectations and characteristics that occur in a work context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Lack of employee engagement contributes to a loss of over $450 billion in work productivity each year in the United States alone (Gallup, 2013). Organizations that have better manager-employee relationships have 50% fewer accidents, 41% fewer quality defects, and incur significantly reduced healthcare costs (Gallup, 2013). Contemporary attachment theory provides a significant advancement in understanding relationships and the behavioral variations found amongst employees in the workplace (Boatwright et al., 2010; Harms, 2011; Richards & Schat, 2011).

The general problem is that a lack of knowledge of employee attachment styles by managers leaves them unable to positively affect work behavior and subsequent work engagement. The specific problem is that without an understanding of what individual employees require from their managers, based on their attachment needs, substantial improvements to employee engagement will not occur given that relationships play a significant role in determining how individuals, work groups, and organizations function (Richards & Schat, 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how the lived attachment experiences of a purposeful sample of 20 full-time employees affects their work engagement needs. The full-time employees selected from various industries throughout the United States comprised mid level employees who have had at least 5 years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. These salaried, full-time employees

were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how managers may affect engagement levels.

The conceptual framework of attachment theory was used to investigate the effect of attachment styles on employee engagement. More specifically, I aimed to discover what individual employees require from their managers, based on their attachment needs, to produce improvements to employee engagement. Little prior research has been conducted on the intersection of attachment and employee engagement and its importance to organizational productivity. Therefore, an overview of employee engagement and its impact on the organization is provided followed by an in-depth review of the importance of manager-employee interpersonal interactions that lead to improvements in the work setting.

I begin this chapter with an outline of the literature search strategy. The following section provides a review of Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory and how attachment interactions are established during childhood. This section is followed by a description of adult attachment styles and an outline of the instruments used to measure and categorize adult attachment. The concept of employee engagement is introduced including inhibitors, organizational benefits, and factors that promote work engagement. An outline of the various attachment behaviors adults demonstrate in social and work contexts is provided.

Studies investigating the importance of understanding attachment interactions between a manager and employee in the workplace are explored, as is their impact on employee engagement. I conclude the chapter with a review of how attachment factors

influence the manager-employee relationship and why these factors are significant to the improvement of employee engagement and subsequent organizational productivity. From a review of the literature, there is demonstrable cause for additional research into the topic of attachment and employee engagement.

Literature Search Strategy

The comprehensive selection of relevant peer-reviewed articles for this literature review was identified using psychology and management databases available through Walden University Library. Specific psychology databases referenced included PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX, and Sage Premier. Management and multidisciplinary databases referenced included ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, ScienceDirect, ProQuest Central, and Academic Search Complete. Google Scholar was used to identify additional peer-reviewed articles that were not immediately accessible from the previously listed databases.

A list of search terms and/or combinations of search terms used to locate the articles used in this chapter include *attachment theory, attachment, adult attachment, adult attachment styles, adult attachment in the workplace, attachment insecurity, psychological engagement, organizational behavior, leadership, followership, leadership development, leadership roles, leader–follower rela tionships, leader–follower relations, leader–follower interaction, perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, withdrawal behavior, withdrawal intentions, turnover intentions, perfectionism, job motivation, job engagement, employee engagement, work engagement,*

employee well-being, job satisfaction, trust, trustworthiness, motivation, performance, work authenticity, work stress, emotion at work, morality, and *ethics.*

The publication dates for the literature review ranged from 1969 to 2017. Earlier articles and books were used to establish the theoretical constructs, definitions, and progressive research on attachment theory. More recent literature was used to determine contemporary research on attachment theory and the concept of employee engagement. All of the 173 articles reviewed were located using the keywords listed for this literature search, and 149 were used as sources for this study.

Attachment Theory

Attachment describes a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p.194). Attachment theory explains the importance for infants to develop behaviors that operate to establish and maintain proximity to a primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1982). From an evolutionary standpoint, attachment needs and behaviors were formed with caregivers to protect an infant from the perils of physical survival (Landa & Duschinsky, 2013). In contemporary society, attachment interactions serve to protect an infant against psychological or physical distress. According to attachment theory, the first bond created with a primary caregiver in a child's life establishes the basis from which all other relationships form.

Parent-Child Attachment

Caregivers function to provide a secure base for infant support and protection during times of anguish or danger as well as to promote independence (Frazier et al., 2015). From a secure base perspective, characteristic infant behaviors such as crying or

clinging serve to attract the primary caregiver to attend to the child's needs. These behaviors are not directed at anyone specific at birth. However, as the infant develops over the coming years, the child begins to form close attachment bonds with specific people (Bowlby, 1969).

Early attachment encounters experienced by the child affect their beliefs regarding the sensitivity and trustworthiness of caregivers. Secure attachment occurs between the parent and child through the parent providing a secure base from which the child's physical, emotional, and social needs are met in a consistent and positive manner (Bowlby, 1988). A child feels securely attached to the caregiver when they act as both a safe haven and a secure base (Bretherton, 2010). Challenging this secure base activates the child's attachment need, and they look to the parent to restore a secure base (Bowlby, 1969).

Secure attachment is achieved when the parent successfully attends to the proximity needs of the child. Repetitive experiences that relieve the child's distress through the promotion of consistent, safe, and protective behaviors establish a safe haven and a secure environment for the child. The function of a secure base and safe haven are that they allow the child to feel confident and pursue exploratory behaviors (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment behavior is not only activated when a child senses distress but is also an important precedent for exploratory behavior and the development of independence (Grossmann, Grossmann, Kindler, & Zimmermann, 2008). Parent-child attachment behavior exists even when risks are low, as these behaviors support exploration and self-sufficiency (Cassidy, 2008).

Not meeting the infant's need for security through rejection or inconsistent responses increases the opportunity for an infant to experience emotional issues and personal doubt and promotes insecure attachment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Attachment bonds do not develop with children whose safety and security needs are not properly met. Lack of secure attachment occurs through neglect of emotional and physical needs, an unstable home environment, abuse, parental death, adoption, or inability to form an emotional bond with the primary caregiver. Insecure attachment in a child may lead to aggression, dependency, anxiety, intellectual retardation, social maladjustment, poor emotional expression, delinquency, and depression (Bowlby, 1982).

Bowlby (1988) emphasized that attachment styles develop from an infants' internal working models of behavior. These internal working models determine an individual's assumptions, rules, and beliefs regarding social interactions, which in turn affect thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Differing behavioral responses have been demonstrated by three distinct working models or styles of attachment in children (Ainsworth, 1989). Children exhibiting secure attachment who were separated from, and then reunited with, their mother approached the parent willingly and were easily comforted (Bowlby, 1988). In contrast, avoidantly-attached children resisted contact with their mothers, while anxious/ambivalent children demonstrated anger and were difficult to comfort. (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). Insecure behaviors such as aggression, helplessness, withdrawal, and controlling or fearful behaviors become evident in children as early as 6 years old (Zilberstein & Messer, 2010).

Infant behavioral characteristics that are positively developed within securely attached parent-child relationships include persistence, adaptive emotion, and flexibility of action. As children progress towards adolescence, their need for a caregiver remains while the frequency and intensity of attachment behaviors decrease. Attachment needs transform from those of proximity to those of security (Kerns, Mathews, Koehn, Williams, & Siener-Ciesla, 2015). During the adolescent life stage, the relationship between parent and child becomes more focused on communication and collaboration to meet the attachment needs of the developing individuals (Kerns et al., 2015).

As individuals progress through the stages of life, attachment interactions shape their social development, behavior, self-image, and the way in which they approach interpersonal relationships. Secure attachment promotes adaptive social coping skills and emotional development, leading to effective management of emotional experiences and superior emotional management in the absence of caregivers (Psouni & Apetroaia, 2014; Thompson, 2008). Insecure attachment negatively affects self-esteem, peer collaboration, and self-control and results in more antisocial and delinquent behaviors (Seibert & Kerns, 2015). While attachment behavior is resistant to change, there is a continuing potential for modification, which means that at no time of life is a person impermeable to adversity or favorable influence.

Adult Attachment

Expectations that children establish for themselves, others, and within close relationships influence interaction experiences in adulthood. For example, a significant correlation has been established between insecure attachment styles in adults and their

negative behavioral functioning as children (McCarthy & Maughan, 2010). Recurring relationship experiences, maternal sensitivity, social competence, and quality of peer relationships act as antecedents to attachment development (Fraley et al., 2013). These antecedents influence attachment styles over the course of an individual's life. Affected by both caregivers during infancy and subsequent close relationships, individuals establish a dominant attachment style that remains relatively stable in adulthood and affects the quality of interactions. However, it is important to note that adult attachment styles are flexible and impacted by situational factors (Buist, Reitz, & Dekovic, 2008; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Adult Attachment Styles. Attachment styles are innate to a person's psychological patterns, and understanding these patterns provides the opportunity to enhance the individual's well-being. Researchers have established various classifications of attachment style over time. Three types of childhood attachment, consisting of secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent style, are consistent throughout the literature (Ainsworth, 1989; Zhang & Labouvie-Vief, 2004). However, as adults, a more refined schema of four attachment styles has been developed that incorporates a view of both self and others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Adult attachment styles include a matrix combination of a positive and negative view of self with a positive and negative view of others.

Accounting for approximately 50% of the population, adults with a secure attachment style tend to have a positive view of themselves and others and engage in trusting close relationships (Hudson, 2013). As an extension of childhood development,

securely attached adults maintain well-connected relationships and have the capacity for self-sufficiency (Bowlby, 1988). Secure adults are characterized by high levels of self-esteem, are comfortable with autonomy, and demonstrate low levels of dependency and avoidance.

Formerly anxious-ambivalent in childhood, adults with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style tend to have a negative view of themselves and a positive view of others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). These individuals seek close overdependent support to allay their fear of abandonment. Anxious-preoccupied adults are characterized by lower levels of self-esteem, have low levels of satisfaction and trust in relationships, and demonstrate ineffective problem-solving and coping skills (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Their unbalanced emotional states make them more prone to stress and more easily overcome by negative emotions. Resultantly, in times of distress, these individuals turn to others in an attempt to manage their aroused emotional state (Hudson, 2013).

Adults who were formerly avoidant in childhood may develop to demonstrate one of two styles of avoidance. Adults with an avoidant-dismissing attachment style have a positive view of themselves but perceive others as unavailable and untrustworthy, thus avoiding close relationships (Boatwright et al., 2010; Ross, McKim, & Ditommaso, 2006). Avoidant-dismissing individuals are characterized by being overly self-reliant, overrating the importance of their independence in relationships with other adults, not acknowledging feelings of vulnerability, and distance themselves from others when stressed (Hazan & Shaver, 1990).

Adults with a fearful-avoidant attachment style have both a negative view of themselves and others, thus avoiding close relationships but maintaining a desire for them (Boatwright et al., 2010; Ross et al., 2006). While maintaining many of the same characteristics as individuals with an avoidant-dismissing attachment style, fearful-avoidant adults are characterized by a fear of rejection and respond negatively to criticism (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

Measurement of personality traits has been the practical measure for organizations to predict how people will behave, interact, and perform at work. Assessments such as the Big 5 model, an instrument that measures personality characteristics such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, have attempted to determine how individuals are affected by others' behaviors at work, and in turn, how their behavior affects others. Researchers have attempted to measure how the quality of personality attributes, depth of knowledge, and level of skills and abilities contribute to an individual's successful functioning in the workplace (Neal, Yeo, Koy, & Xiao, 2012). However, results from past studies have been inconsistent, and scholars have emphasized that these characteristics are shared by less successful individuals in a work setting (Morrison, 2015; Yukl, 2006).

What has been consistent in prior research is that successful workplace functioning requires a balance of qualitatively different emotional and psychological attributes and behaviors, and unsuccessful functioning is characterized by behavioral imbalance (Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Morrison, 2015). Research into the influence of attachment styles on workplace behavior and relationships is still limited (Lanciano &

Zammuner, 2014). However, attachment theory provides a sound psychologically-based methodology for understanding how people interrelate based on their individual internal working models (Bresnahan & Mitroff, 2007; Gillath, Karantzas, & Fraley, 2016). Prior researchers have asserted that knowledge of attachment styles is an important antecedent for understanding interpersonal relationship quality, psychological well-being, effective leadership, trust, satisfaction, performance, and other organizational outcomes (Harms, 2011; Lanciano & Zammuner, 2014).

Measurements of Adult Attachment. In an effort to understand and determine individual adult attachment styles, a number of self-report and interview style instruments have been developed. Each tool was constructed in response to developments in attachment knowledge in the hope that these new understandings would improve the accuracy of attachment style categorization in a broader variety of contexts.

The original measure of adult attachment, called the Attachment Style Prototype (ASP), was developed by Hazan and Shaver in 1987. This instrument was revised in 1990 and consisted of a three-category self-report measure (secure, anxious, and avoidant). The ASP measured attachment experiences within romantic relationships (Shi, Wampler, & Wampler, 2013). The instrument only included the one dimension of self, and concerns that the three categories described in the ASP may lead to an individual being able to relate themselves to each attachment style led Collins and Read (1990) to create the Adult Attachment Styles self-report measure.

Adult Attachment Styles (AAS) was a two dimensional, self-report instrument that examined adult attachment styles on feelings of oneself and others in romantic

relationships. The AAS was developed by deconstructing Hazan and Shaver's original Attachment Style Prototype model and instituting three distinct scales that described the three attachment styles of secure, anxious and avoidant. Collins and Read's (1990) introduction of dichotomizing self-image, as well as the image of others, advanced prior measures. However, while there was an improvement with the inclusion of the two dimensions, the measure did not include all four categories required for measurement of adult attachment. This prompted Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) to create an attachment measure called the Relationship Questionnaire.

The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) was a self-report attachment measure that included the two dimensions of feelings of oneself and others within relationships. The instrument required participants to answer a 4-item questionnaire that determined their dominant attachment style corresponding to the adult attachment categories of secure, anxious-preoccupied, avoidant-dismissing, and avoidant-fearful. This tool used the additional adult category of avoidant-dismissing, who are individuals characterized by high levels of self-reliance and independence. There has been limited use of this measure in contemporary attachment research as this model only uses a 4-item questionnaire in comparison to other instruments using multi-item scales.

Concurrently, interview-based methods were established that determined attachment styles based on descriptions of parent-child relationships. George, Kaplan, and Main (1985) developed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), which is a semi-structured interview protocol that directed participants to reflect on their attachment

experiences in childhood and how these experiences impacted their adolescent and adult behavior.

Coding for the AAI varies from the self-report measures by classifying individuals into three categories of autonomous (secure), preoccupied (anxious), or dismissing (avoidant). The category of autonomous attachment are represented by individuals who can provide unbiased and articulate depictions of their attachment experiences. Preoccupied individuals maintain negative representations of childhood experiences that still often manifest as anger towards parents. Avoidant-dismissing attachment is often verbalized through devaluation of the attachment experience so that the impact of the encounters on the individual's behaviors are denied (De Haas, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van Ijzendoorn, 1994).

While the AAI enabled researchers to judge the level to which positive or negative childhood experiences impact adult attachment, the protocol is time consuming for researchers. Expectations are that each interview and subsequent transcription and coding requires at least five hours for an experienced interviewer with this protocol (De Haas et al., 1994). Further, rather than determine attachment experiences to specific relationships, the AAI categorizes individuals based on general attachment outcomes.

The most comprehensive self-report model is the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale developed by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998). The ECR was a two-scale, 36-item measure of attachment that divided individuals into one of four adult attachment categories and incorporated relationships with parents, intimate partners, and friends. The instrument used statements concerning interrelationships with others

using a 7-point Likert scale. A revised version of the ECR measure by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) used Item Response Theory to ascertain differences between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in romantic relationships. The Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) used the same scales and measures as the original version and assessed attachment in a general sense providing no distinct advantage over the use of the original version.

The Experiences in Close Relationships – Relationship Structures (ECR-RS) addressed concerns related to relationship specific attachment and built upon the concept that individuals harbor relationship specific working models in different relationship contexts. Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, and Brumbaugh (2011) established that the ECR-RS was superior in predicting intra and interpersonal outcomes than broader attachment instruments. The advantages of this model are that target relationships can be clearly specified, the measures are not specific to one type of relational domain, and that it is simple to implement for research purposes.

Over the past three decades, various self-report measures and interview protocols have been constructed to determine the dominant attachment style attributed to an individual. Each instrument has been devised to measure attachment experiences in certain relationship situations. Over time, attachment measures have progressed to more accurately assess a person's dominant attachment style within distinct relationships. Contemporary attachment measures include multi-item scales that are constructed of multiple attachment categories and include the assessment dimensions of self and others.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has become an important topic in recent years among consulting firms and in the popular business press. In 2011, the engagement of employees was one of the top five most important challenges for management, according to a global survey of 656 chief executive officers (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). Employee engagement is conceptualized as the level to which employees are dedicated to their work and encompasses aspects such as job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, motivation, and citizenship behaviors (Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel and LeBreton, 2012; Sahoo & Mishra, 2012). When employees engage with their preferred selves their psychological presence increases, resulting in greater involvement and work participation (Kahn, 1992).

Kahn (1990) was the first researcher to have expounded the theory of employee engagement, changing the focus from the negative aspects of employee turnover and burnout to positive associations of work commitment. Kahn's position of psycho-emotional importance was supported by Thompson, Lemmon, & Walter (2015) who agreed that a fully engaged employee demonstrates complete cognitive, emotional, and physical immersion in the individual's work, leading to higher quality work performance, increased organizational commitment and reduced turnover intention.

Employee engagement not only involves the strong relationship between organizational outcomes, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment but contains emotional factors that relate to the overall work experience (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Sharma & Kaur, 2014). Engaged employees comprise individuals who are energized and

dedicated to their job, and who are also challenged and mentally strong at work (Handa & Gulati, 2014).

Positively engaged employees identify with their job roles and find their work environment safe, while disengaged employees act defensively and disassociate with their "preferred selves," essentially being absent from their work tasks. While Kahn did not operationalize the concept of employee engagement, subsequent researchers developed the theory in comparison to measurable physical, emotional, and cognitive facets such as energy levels, burnout rates, performance levels, and personality traits. Of importance is the consideration that employee engagement was continuous and required stability over time, ensuring that it was not a one-off event (Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Therefore, employee engagement is a concept that asserts the best experience for the employee over time, enabling them to flourish in a work context.

The concept of employee engagement is crucial to understanding how individuals operate in a work context. For an organization, engagement of employees is required for ongoing company performance. Given the dynamics and speed of contemporary organizational change, firms are requiring an increasing level of effort from their employees to sustain performance and competitive advantage. Of concern, however, are surveys conducted by organizations such as Gallup Consulting (2013) that highlight engaged employees who have a passion for work and advancing the organization to only consist of 11% of the work population.

Disengaged employees who work without passion account for 62% of the population, and actively disengaged employees, who actively demonstrate their unhappiness at work, consist of 27% of workers. Disengaged employees adversely affect the productivity in the workplace (Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2011). Therefore, reducing the number of disengaged employees can improve productivity and profitability of US-based organizations.

While job satisfaction is an important precedent to positive organizational outcomes, newer attitudes toward organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, and job involvement, under the guise of employee engagement, have been shown to be statistically relevant to job satisfaction, task performance, and work productivity (Yeh, 2013). Furthermore, the negative occurrence of these factors contributes to lower task performance and counter-productive work behaviors (Dalal et al., 2012). Given that the majority of global employees are disengaged in their job role, researchers have attempted to determine why this is the case.

Employee Disengagement

Employee disengagement is an internal process typified by individuals who are disconnected physically, mentally, and emotionally from their job role due to a perceived or real threat (Kahn, 1990). Employee disengagement may materialize through a concern that employees are powerless to control frustrations that occur in their workplace, do not find meaningfulness in their work, and do not believe in their company's purpose (Sheep, 2006). Consequently, employees emotionally withdraw from their work environment resulting in lax work behaviors and a deficiency of care concerning colleagues and job

tasks (Kahn, 1990). The process of disengagement occurs over time, from fully engaged to actively disengaged (Evans & Redfern, 2010). Therefore, disengagement behaviors that negatively impact both the organization and employee occur over time.

The disengagement process occurs in stages. Employees new to the organization enter with high engagement levels which tend to progressively decrease (Trahant, 2009). Diminishing engagement levels begin with the employee uncovering perceived issues with the company and attempting to rectify the problems. Once this process begins, the individual establishes protection strategies in an effort to reduce their distress with the organization (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The employee's course of action is to communicate dissatisfaction to his manager or leave the organization (Cusack, 2009). If the individual's disengagement concerns are unresolved, their next course of action is to cognitively decide to withdraw effort and reduce their level of work engagement both mentally and emotionally (Wollard, 2011). In difficult employment environments, employees may feel forced to retain their job role, causing an increase in negative emotions and irregular behaviors.

Loss of an employee's trust in an organization results from cynicism generated from feelings of helplessness and anger (Watt & Piotrowski, 2008). Frustrations emerge that cause behavioral disengagement. At this stage of the process, the employee engages in protective behaviors to defend themselves from perceived threats within the organization (Cusack, 2009). Protective behaviors displayed by employees have been associated with burnout, turnover, ethical issues, and poor mental health (Wollard, 2011). A negative behavioral cycle begins involving incivility, resistance, and absenteeism.

Resultantly, a lack of peer and managerial support can lead to further disengagement and the potential disengagement of others (Kahn, 1990).

While research has suggested that work experiences are emotional, few studies have investigated the involvement of emotions and behaviors in employee disengagement. In contemporary literature, the topic of burnout has been used to address the erosion of engagement behaviors (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). Burnout is understood to be one of the physical and emotional constructs used to define the disengagement process prior to resignation.

Thus, the physical, mental, and emotional withdrawal of an employee to protect themselves from their company, colleagues, and manager, establishes the foundation for employee disengagement. Employee behavioral disengagement typically leads to burnout and ultimately to resignation or termination of the employee (Herman, Olivo, & Gioia, 2003). Turnover is the resignation or termination of an employee. Turnover occurs as a result of an employee feeling inadequate and unable to resolve problems with the organization (Herman, Olivo, & Gioia, 2003).

While it has been established that employee engagement benefits a company, various issues have been identified that prohibit the engagement of employees and lead to disengagement. These issues consist of both operational and emotional factors that impact individuals at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, psychological factors experienced by employees draw similarity to those associated with personal relationships.

Roadblocks to Worker Engagement and Manager Intervention

Various operational factors may influence and impede employee engagement. Factors such as infrastructure, cross-functional discussions, communication and interaction with corporate office employees, reflection on feedback and proper support and orientation through induction programs, as well as inadequate interaction with peers from other locations/offices, can impede engagement. Further, lack of accountable responses from the corporate office for issues related to personnel, employee facilities, deficient communication regarding seminars, workshops, and other training sessions, and inadequate visits by the business team, can be stumbling blocks to better employee engagement (Vaijayanthi, Shreenivasan, & Prabhakaran, 2011).

Pater and Lewis (2012) outlined reasons for employee roadblocks to engagement as well as the reasons behind why managers are unable to effectively engage workers. From a relationship perspective, a number of the aspects in the workplace felt by employees draw similarity to the reasons for disengagement in intimate relationships, they: (a) feel taken for granted; (b) are scared of failure; (c) may be provided with a better offer; (d) do not feel as though they received what they expected; (e) had a change in priorities; (f) feel as though there is all talk and no action; (g) feel as though changes in values and interests have changed; and, (h) there is a change is the dynamic of trust and power.

Many of the issues surrounding engagement of employees have to do with emotional and cognitive aspects of an individual's psychology. Employee engagement is significantly influenced by how an employee feels about their work experience and how

he or she is treated in the organization. Employee engagement is driven by emotion, which is fundamentally related to and drives bottom line success in a company (Sahoo & Mishra, 2012). In a similar vain to intimate relationships, the underlying emotional and psychological foundation of employee engagement is that employees want to commit to a company as it fulfills a basic relational need where the employee receives gratification and feels part of something bigger than themselves (Sahoo & Mishra, 2012).

Managers of employees face roadblocks when wanting to engage their staff due to their: (a) inability to determine what motivates employees; (b) distrust of the engagement concept and obstruction of change; (c) belief that employee engagement is too time consuming and lack of belief in a positive return on investment; and (d) concern regarding the enforcement of the engagement process and culture. However, for those managers that can engage employees to align to the company's goals, there are significant benefits.

Organizational Benefits of Engaging Employees

Companies benefit from engaged employees through improvements in organizational effectiveness and increases in financial returns (Saks, 2006; Medlin & Green, 2009). A study conducted by WorkUSA over a two-year period from 2008/2009 determined that firms that consisted of more highly engaged employees were able to attain an increase of 26% of revenue for each employee over those who were had disengaged employees. Further, that shareholder returns over five years were 13% higher and were associated with a 50% premium over less engaged worker organizations (Medlin & Green, 2014).

The extensive array of positive practical relationships at the business-unit level between employee engagement and business-unit outcomes includes improvements in advocacy for the company and its product or services, and increases in customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, productivity, profitability, employee retention and motivation, safety, shareholder value, and perceived organizational support (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009; Ram and Prabhakar, 2011).

Organizations that had better manager-employee relationships sustained 50% fewer accidents, 41% fewer quality defects, and incurred significantly reduced healthcare costs (Gallup, 2013). Therefore, it is apparent that while significant roadblocks to engagement of employees exist, changes to management practices that increase employee engagement have a positive effect on business-unit outcomes and organizational productivity.

Customer Satisfaction

The service-profit chain model emphasizes that engaged employees create loyal customers, who in turn create larger profits (Zablah, Carlson, Donavan, Maxham, & Brown, 2016). Increases in work engagement influences improvements in service performance development, which in turn positively increases customer relationship satisfaction over time (Yuan, Lin, Shieh, & Li, 2012). Previous research has demonstrated that positive front-line salespeople's service behaviors transform into desirable external customer outcomes (Heymann, 2015). These results suggest that high levels of service performance may be achieved when positive managerial behaviors and employee engagement practices are encouraged.

Competitive Advantage

Organizational competitive advantage has gained significant focus in research and practice as employees are viewed as service differentiators (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Competitive advantage through customer engagement is a psychological and relationship-based process as it extends beyond customer purchase behaviors (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Given that customer and employee relationship interactions contribute to perceptions of the organization, competitive advantage can be gained through positive employee behaviors (Sirianni, Bitner, Brown & Mandel, 2013). The resultant business outcomes are lower cost through customer retention, return business, potential for referrals, and valuable customer feedback that can benefit the organization.

Employee Retention and Turnover

Employee turnover occurs when there is an unplanned loss of workers from the organization that the company would prefer to have retained. Employee retention is a crucial determinant of competitive advantage (Alias, Noor & Hassan, 2014). Firms able to retain their employees demonstrate higher operating performance, higher ROI's, superior return on employed capital, and improved profits, not to mention the circumvention of loss of knowledge and experience (Alias, Noor & Hassan, 2014).

Eighty percent of corporations experience retention problems, and 74% understand that employee turnover negatively impacts their business (Tziner, Ben-David, Oren, & Sharoni, 2014). Therefore, organizations wanting to retain employees have begun to focus increasing attention towards meaningfulness at work and its impact upon psychological attachment to the workplace (Ali Memon et al., 2014). Research has

demonstrated the importance of meaningfulness and psychological attachment to work-role fit, job enrichment, co-worker relations, and employee engagement (Rothmann & Welsh, 2013).

Organizational leaders wanting to navigate the roadblocks to engagement can employ a number of strategies to promote both company productivity and the well-being of employees. These factors comprise tangible and psycho-emotional influences that vary by individual.

Factors Promoting Employee Engagement

There are some factors that affect employee engagement within the organization and these need to be considered by management who are acting in an effort to improve engagement levels. Increases in workplace energy, as well as enrichment of loyalty and trust with employees, create an emotional bond and commitment to the organization and align to its goals and strategies.

Rewards

Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards contribute to engagement both through tangible compensation and psychological reinforcement for "doing a good job." Academic literature indicates a growing understanding that extrinsic rewards, once attaining a certain subsistent level, are of diminishing importance to the employee in favor of meaningfulness. Having pleasure in the tasks an employee undertakes is crucial to the job experience (Locke and Henne, 1986). Jupiter Hotels experienced improvements in employee engagement when employing staff recognition and reward strategies. Recognition was provided in the form of enhancements to staff facilities through

employee consultation, and individual workers were provided with spot bonuses and formally recognized by their managers (Cattermole, Johnson, & Jackson, 2014).

Perceived Justice

This aspect of employee engagement concerns how decisions are made and what the decision are, essentially the perceived level of fairness within the organization. Colquitt (2001) determined that perceptions regarding justice are related to organizational commitment and citizenship behavior as well as job performance and satisfaction, making it a strong mediator for engagement. Engaged employees are passionate about the role they play within the company, as they perceive their contributions to be essential to the success of the business. Thus, there is a need for them to be directed toward the organizations goals and expectations so that they may drive the business forward.

Job Characteristics and Meaningfulness

Individuals look to their organization for meaningfulness in their work. The characteristics an individual's job entails and the associated variety and challenge of the work that allows for the use of skills and autonomy contributes to meaningfulness for an employee. An employee is more engaged when the role they play for their organization is significant and utilizes their skill set. Meaningfulness, conjoined with an understanding that the person is making an important contribution to the company, supports engagement (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004). Meaningfulness elevates psychological attachment and reduces the potential for employee turnover (Ali Memon et al., 2014). In addition, employees look to their manager for support through greater autonomy and timely feedback.

Research has emphasized that job characteristics are positively correlated with employee engagement, indicating that factors such as skill variety, task identity, and significance, autonomy and feedback are all crucial to employee engagement (Ram and Prabhakar, 2011). Therefore, an employee's relationship with their manager and the relationship they develop can have a significant impact on the way they engage in their job role.

Perceived Organizational Support

For an organization to improve productivity, managers require employees to be committed to the organization, while employees require the organization to be committed to them. While researchers (Bates, 2004; Frank, Finnegan & Taylor, 2004) have established the pivotal importance of immediate managers as being the foundational relationship for supporting employee engagement, individuals must also perceive that the company for which they work will enable processes and procedures that increase job effectiveness and reduce stress.

Employee commitment occurs in the form of an emotional attachment where the employee is committed to and identifies with the organization and its goals. Perceived organizational support is the extent to which employees perceived the organization to value their contributions and consider their well-being. Positive employee perception of organizational support assists with the knowledge that companies will reward individuals fairly for the work undertaken, and meets a level of socio-emotional desires held by employees. High levels of perceived organization commitment have been associated with

increased job performance and attendance, improved citizenships behaviors and meaningfulness at work, and greater organizational commitment (Shusha, 2013).

In summary, each of the gains to productivity for the organization is interrelated. In return for the gains to the organization, there is a required reciprocal need for the employee, such as job meaningfulness and perceived organizational support. Organizational goals such as productivity and profitability can be attained through providing both tangible and psycho-emotional benefits (Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik, 2016). Social Exchange Theory emphasizes the obligatory nature between parties of an interdependent relationship, such as in a work scenario.

Trusted, committed, and loyal relationships occur over time as reciprocal needs are met by both parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For example, job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate have been demonstrated as all being significantly related to employee engagement, while employee engagement was significantly related to both discretionary effort and reduced intention to leave the organization. Employees who reported experiencing a positive psychological climate were more likely to report higher levels of discretionary effort. Affective commitment and employee engagement have shown to provide lower levels of employees' intention to turnover.

Therefore, managers need to determine ways to create relationships with employees in a work setting that is atypical for relationship-building. Managers must develop relationships with employees by creating conditions that facilitate the development of employee engagement as a means for improving organizational performance and productivity for organizational success (Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011).

Relational Nature of Employee Engagement

Close, quality personal relationships are essential for human life and encompass the requirements for successful human development and well-being (Thomas, Martin, Epitropaki, Guillaume, & Lee, 2013). Employee engagement involves a psychological connection to the organization where employees feel energized and enabled (Sharma and Kaur, 2014). Employee engagement is not only the strong relationship between organizational outcomes, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, but contains psycho-emotional factors that relate to the overall work experience (Ali Memon et al., 2014; Sharma & Kaur, 2014). Therefore, there is both a need for employees to maintain personal relationships with colleagues and their manager to be engaged in their work environment.

While intra-individual variability amongst employees exists, the relationship between employee engagement and subsequent behaviors is strengthened by positive co-worker, team, and manager-employee exchange relationships (Anitha, 2014). A number of studies have highlighted the positive effect of various leadership characteristics on worker engagement (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013). A transformational leadership style, which is characterized by a relational approach to employees, influenced followers' attributes of work engagement and mediated employees' perceptions of meaning in work (Yasin-Ghadi, Fernando, & Caputi, 2013).

Those managers who use emotional intelligence as a leadership competency and promote self-awareness ascertain that they need to pay close attention to their followers' needs on a basic level and be willing to respond appropriately, and view leadership as an

invitational and collaborative process, not an autocratic act (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Behavior from leaders has a demonstrable effect on employee engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011). There are multiple ways in which leadership behaviors are associated with employee engagement. Support of the individual and work group should be a priority and leaders should capitalize on their strengths to improve engagement among their followers.

An opportunity exists for leaders to support the team by understanding each member's attachment style individually. Of importance for the manager is to determine exactly what "support" means, as individuals will respond to support differently based on the way they seek attachment from the leader. Managers are positioned to create relationships with employees that may positively or negatively affect an individual's level of engagement. High quality relationships between manager and employee are characterized by mutual trust, respect, and job engagement, while low quality relationships are portrayed by low mutual trust levels and job obligation.

Psychological research into relationship science provides researchers with the opportunity to better understand the manager–employee relationship and therefore advance theory in this area. A social cognitive approach to close relationships can benefit the understanding of how the manager–employee relationship operates. This approach can also demonstrate how previous research designs and methodologies, developed in relationship science, can be applied to better understand these relationships.

Adult Attachment at Work

The concept of attachment interrelationships among individuals can be extended beyond romantic relationships to a work context as leaders act as proxy father-figures (Richards & Schat, 2011). Work is fundamentally a relational act where actions, decisions, and experiences are influenced by relationships (Blustein, 2011). Conceptualizing work in a relational context allows for greater understanding of how individuals' behaviors and attitudes are affected in a work environment. Characteristics of adult attachment in work situations align to similar positive or negative coping behaviors associated with the caregiver-infant relationship.

Individuals at work who self-report higher levels of security and lower levels of anxiety demonstrate positive associations to career decision-making and exploration, highlighting their confidence in having a secure base (Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Littman-Ovadia, 2008). Employees with a secure attachment style are more likely develop as leaders and maintain a more relational leadership approach, demonstrating their comfort in relating with others (Mayseless, 2010).

Peer-rated leadership potential is associated with self-report secure attachment (Berson, Dan, & Yammarino, 2006). Further, leaders' ratings of subordinates' leadership qualities are associated with subordinates' ratings of attachment security emphasizing that secure individuals exhibit behaviors others view as worthy of leadership (Popper, Amit, Gal, Sinai, & Lisak, 2004). In a similar vain to secure infants, secure employees demonstrate greater levels of confidence in relationships and exhibit exploratory behaviors.

In contrast, insecure attachment styles are associated with lower levels of organizational commitment and sociable behaviors and higher levels of co-worker conflict highlighting the difficulty these individuals have within relationships and adopting the associated coping mechanisms (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Job satisfaction is negatively affected by insecure attachment orientation (Ronen & Mikulincer, 2012).

Employees with an avoidant attachment style self-report lower levels of performance and attractiveness to colleagues as well as higher levels of turnover intentions (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Due to the inability to properly regulate emotions, rather than seek emotional support at work, these individuals tend to mask their true feelings, known as surface-acting (Richards & Schat, 2011). As with infant attachment, employees who demonstrate an avoidant attachment style exhibit behaviors that are not a true representation of their true selves and find coping in relationships difficult. These difficulties affect their ability to fully engage in a work setting.

As with the caregiver-infant bond, preoccupied employees describe themselves as undervalued by co-workers and as such have difficulty with behaviors associated with helping them (Geller & Bamberger, 2009). In addition, these employees feel anxious with relationships at work reinforced by low self-esteem, emotional insecurity, and fear of rejection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In response to their heightened anxiety, these individuals will often overreact in order to gain attention and support. Further, preoccupied employees will constantly seek approval for the tasks they perform, compelling them into behaviors that detract from their performance (Hudson, 2013).

Table 1 summarizes the behaviors and characteristics associated with adult attachment styles in a work setting.

Table 1

Individual Attachment Style Work Behaviors and Characteristics

Attachment style	Behaviors and characteristics
Secure	High self-esteem promoting confidence in self and others High degree of mutual trust and care Comfortable working both autonomously or in groups, demonstrating low levels of dependency Provides assistance and aid to those in need Provides advice, suggestions, and information as a way of coping with problems
Insecure/preoccupied	Low level of self-worth and self-esteem Low degree of mutual trust as concerned others will not be available to reciprocate relationships High level of dependency requiring reassurance and support High need for acceptance and fulfilled only when others care about them Prone to stress and more easily overcome by negative emotions Demonstrate ineffective problem-solving and coping skills
Insecure/dismissing	High self-esteem but perceive others as unavailable Low degree of mutual trust and fear of others Overly self-reliant and independent in relationships Highly sensitive to rejection and criticism Prone to surface acting Distance themselves from others when stressed
Insecure/fearful	Low levels of self-esteem and confidence in others Low degree of mutual trust and fear of others Avoiding close relationships but maintain a desire for them Highly sensitive to rejection and criticism Prone to surface acting Distance themselves from others when stressed

Note. Adapted with permission from "Attachment theory and leader-follower relationships" by D. Hudson, 2013, *Psychologist-Manager Journal (American Psychological Association),* 16, p. 151. Copyright 2013 by the American Psychological Association.

The Manager-Employee Attachment Relationship

Managers within the work environment are responsible for directing leader-follower relationships in ways that help achieve the organization's goals. A secure manager-employee relationship provides the employee with meaningfulness through the value of work and protection from risk or threat. The strong bond created between manager and employee supports the employee to have the confidence to demonstrate behaviors that will contribute the company's performance (Hudson, 2013).

In a work setting, there is an unequal relationship between the manager and employee that distinguishes managers as being wiser and more experienced. Therefore, managers act as a secure base from which employees may learn and develop, as well as provide a safe haven who subordinates may seek out when distressed (Kafetsios, Athanasiadou, & Dimou, 2014). The manager-employee relationship functions in a similar manner to that of the bond between caregiver and infant.

Attachment theory provides valuable insights that may be employed when attempting to predict and understand manager-employee relationships, as the concept is foundational to the way individuals act and behave (Hudson, 2013). Further, knowledge of attachment styles provides a predictive framework regarding managers' success or failure in coping with the complex issues affecting the nature of the manager-employee relationship, which in turn impacts organizational performance.

Prior research suggests that secure individuals establish more trusting relationships while insecure individuals find others less trustworthy due to the fear of others not being available when they were needed (Frazier, Gooty, Little, & Nelson,

2015). Secure employees establish and maintain trust, and are willing to be vulnerable with their manager due to the self-perception that they can effectively manage relationships (Frazier et al., 2015). As previously highlighted, relationship quality differences between secure and insecure individuals are driven by their working models of themselves and others.

While a vast amount of research has been conducted into required personality traits of leaders to make organizations effective, results appear inconsistent. Rather than focus on extraneous leadership dimensions, an organization has the opportunity to focus on the ability of a manager to form stable, secure relationships with employees. Such an action would allow for insecure managers to move towards a more secure attachment style, and for secure managers to relate to their employees based on their individual attachment characteristics.

An employee's attachment style has an influence on their preferred leadership approach (Boatwright et al., 2010). Employees displaying anxious or avoidant attachment required additional attention and a more relational approach from their managers in order to function effectively in the work environment. Only employees categorized as avoidant-dismissing do not prefer relational-oriented leadership behaviors (Boatwright et al., 2010).

Social Exchange Theory emphasizes that the cost-benefit analysis and alternatives of all human relationships are based on comparisons. An individual will continue to successfully function and interacts in their environment as long as the perceived benefit outweighs the cost of the relationship. If the attributed cost outweighs the benefits, this

interaction will no longer continue. Employees develop an attitude and a psychological state that is in line with the data received from the organization and group in which they are employed. Employees show more physical, emotional, and cognitive association with their work, and establish a positive development both mentally and psychologically as long as they are supported, strengthened, and benefited, and because they are benefited, this interaction and commitment becomes stronger.

Managers' Effect on Employee Engagement Through Attachment

Given that employees have adopted cognitive patterns that affect engagement behaviors in interpersonal relationships, managers can highlight these patterns objectively to demonstrate how they are affecting current behaviors. Such knowledge provides organizational managers with insight into employee trait affectivity and personality characteristics, as well as the relationship between attachment and emotion regulation behaviors, turnover intentions, counterproductive work behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior. Attachment styles are malleable indicating that focused interventions can correct potential undesirable behavioral situations.

Managers can be trained to understand and foster participative, balanced, behavioral patterns in order to create more secure and engaged employees. Armed with the knowledge that attachment behaviors are both flexible and situational provides managers with the opportunity to select, train, and develop individuals toward a more secure attachment base and improved job satisfaction and performance (Boatwright et al., 2010; Harms, 2011). For example, employees with a more avoidant-dismissing attachment style tend to have a greater focus towards task-orientation.

Due to their decreased need for relational supportive behaviors, avoidant individuals may be counterproductive if relational style behaviors are enforced (Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015). Therefore, not all people require supportive behaviors in times of adversity. Insecure attachment outcomes may be positively affected by leaders creating positive intra-organizational relationships. Interventions enable managers to positively affect undesirable attachment behaviors through the use of coaching and mentoring programs, or narrative strategies that allow employees to reframe 'resistance' as the discovery of a self-definitional boundary to be explored to allow for greater self-awareness (Drake, 2009), Transfers within the organization to prevent dysfunctional attachment relationships may also be considered.

Prior research has highlighted that leader behavior and employee self-concept affects psychological perceptions of behavior in workers (Berson et al., 2006). Employee engagement is an effective variable on the psychological capital and performance of employees. The contribution of psychological capital to the organization depends upon employees feeling that individuals have control over their work and are excited about their job's contribution to the firm's success (Sahin, Çubuk, & Uslu, 2014).

As the use of workplace knowledge increases and emerging motivational-state variables such as employee engagement become more widely used, current frameworks of leadership are undergoing changes in perspective and practice. Moreover, while shifts in workplace dynamics have occurred in practice for some time, scholars are now calling for a new perspective of leadership. Organizations must look at ways to create a positive

work environment where employees can look toward continuous growth and expansion of knowledge.

Interventions to enhance employee engagement and disengagement do not need to focus exclusively on the operational, physical, and cognitive aspects of the work environment. Relationships are key to developing and retaining engaged employees (Yuan et al., 2012). Manager behaviors can be incorporated into training courses to improve employee outcomes and yield better results in comparison to those achieved via eclectic leadership training. While certain employees may be drawn to certain types of leadership behaviors, a gap in knowledge still exists as to the reason why this is so.

In summary, managers have the opportunity to positively influence the behavior of employees toward the achievement of organizational goals and the well-being of employees. Given that attachment styles are malleable, knowledge of an individual's attachment style assists managers with developing behaviors in employees that can create a more secure attachment base. Fostering secure attachment behaviors leads to more engaged employees.

Summary and Conclusions

In this literature review, a comprehensive evaluation of prior research has demonstrated the influence of employees' attachment styles on work behavior and engagement. Research has shown that because relationships play a significant role in the functioning of organizations, understanding what individual attachment needs employees require from their managers reduces productivity losses and increases employee engagement. I concluded that attachment styles affect how individuals in manager-

employee relationships interact. Moreover, I have shown that a manager's knowledge of whether an employee is secure, anxious, or avoidant in their attachment style provides direction with which to manage that individual towards a more secure base, creating greater engagement.

When categorizing individuals based on their attachment needs, context is important, and results are impacted by the type of instrument used. Both self-report and interviewing techniques can be used to determine an individual's attachment style, however, self-report measures are deemed more appropriate for determining attachment specific relationships, while interviewing is better for the measure of general attachment to others (Hudson, 2013). Limited studies have been conducted to investigate the influence of attachment styles on the relationships between manager and subordinate in the workplace. However, researchers carried out studies that have demonstrated consistencies in individual attachment style behaviors and characteristics.

In summary, this research may fill a gap in understanding regarding how the variations in relational needs of employees, and catering to those needs, creates the opportunity for organizations to address a significant loss in productivity. The findings from this study may also provide awareness into support factors that influence employee engagement such as employee health, well-being, motivation, turnover intention, and job satisfaction.

The insights from this study could contribute to positive social change by aiding human resource departments and organizational management in better understanding how to relate to their employees to improve engagement. Furthermore, implications for

positive social change pertain to both the financial benefits derived from an increase in industry productivity and profitability levels due to improvements in employee engagement, as well as the recovery of employee's commitment to the workplace, and enthusiasm and passion for their job role through provision of a healthy work environment. Future research studies should focus on greater generalizability of the conclusions determined by this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological inquiry was to explore how the lived attachment experiences of a purposeful sample of 20 full-time employees affect their work engagement needs. The full-time employees selected from various industries across the United States was comprised of mid level employees who have had at least 5 years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. The salaried, full-time employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers may affect work engagement levels.

This chapter includes the rationale for the research method employed for the study. A specific review of the research design and methodological approach to the study is presented, including participant selection, instrumentation, research procedures, and the data analysis plan. This section is followed by the ethical considerations and strategies taken into consideration to maintain trustworthiness for the participants regarding the questionnaire and interview protocol for data collection and analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

Research questions live at the foundation of the research design and link all other components (Maxwell, 2013). The following research question was at the center of the study. Development of the research question too early in the process could have led to limitation of the study and insufficient exploration of the phenomenon. To that end, the research question was posed as a general issue so as not to limit the scope of the inquiry. The central question that guided the study was as follows: How do full-time employee's

perceptions of their attachment experiences affect their work engagement? The purpose of presenting this question, with a focus on the employee with direct line reporting to a manager, was to gain insight and knowledge into the differences in the desired behavior of managers based on the employee's attachment style.

Attachment theory is used to understand how individuals perceive themselves and others in relationships, and these perceptions determine their behaviors. In a work context, positive relationships between managers and employees can affect employee engagement leading to increases in productivity for the organization and improvements in well-being for the employees. A phenomenological research design was used to explore the perceptions of employees to understand how manager behaviors affect their work engagement, based on their lived attachment experiences.

A phenomenological research design was selected for this study because of the design's emphasis on understanding the lived attachment experiences of employees and their resultant influence on desired behaviors from their managers. Phenomenological research requires the researcher to investigate and understand the reason behaviors occur, then develops themes to explain the events that cause the occurrence of those behaviors (Van Manen, 2007). The emergence of themes for this study will build on previous literature. This particular study builds on research that has previously identified the importance of manager-employee relationships concerning engagement and that a lack of employee engagement leads to a significant loss in company productivity.

Quantitative research would not have been a satisfactory methodology for this study as it focuses on empirical, statistical analysis to generalize findings.

Phenomenology was the most appropriate method for the investigation of the research question as one-on-one interview feedback is critical to developing an understanding of the emergent conceptual themes. In this study, the phenomenological inquiry allowed for the exploration of lived attachment experiences and perceptions related to employee engagement. Other forms of qualitative inquiry were not appropriate for this study as they do not gather the personal lived experiences for individuals in a personal context for an acknowledged phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher and interviewer in this study was to capture the lived attachment experiences of the participants to identify recurring themes regarding employee engagement. It was crucial for me to identify any potential relationship so as not to create any situation that could be viewed as deceptive. For this study, the initial sample of participants was comprised of individuals from the Walden participant pool who met the selected criteria. No personal acquaintances or individuals with whom I have previously had a work relationship were used for the sample population due to the sensitivity of the subject being researched.

Potential researcher bias, especially concerning the knowledge of participant attachment styles during the data collection process, was mitigated through member checking procedures and a peer review of the data analysis. Further precautions regarding researcher bias were undertaken through rigorous field testing protocols, and an audit trail was created to establish and verify the credibility of the data collection process (see Patton, 2015). The phenomenological *epoche* process was followed to reduce

personal bias and minimize preconceptions regarding both attachment behaviors and employee engagement expectations.

Methodology

To gather the required data effectively, participants from the Walden participant pool and LinkedIn were canvassed, given a description of the study, and asked for their confirmation of involvement. Once confirmed, the participants were sent a consent form asking for their permission to be involved in the survey. The survey revealed the participant's attachment style. A second consent form was requested from those participants asked to take part in the one-on-one interviews. Through the interviews, I investigated the participants' views on employee engagement and relationships with their immediate manager. Based on the outcome of the results from the first part of the study, only some participants were asked to be involved in the interview portion.

Upon receiving their survey consent form, participants were sent an online link to complete the ECR-RS questionnaire to determine their attachment style. Sixteen participants took part in the study. Five participants were employed from each of the secure and anxious-preoccupied attachment styles. Each of the two avoidant attachment styles were represented by three participants. Each questionnaire was identified with a unique identifier. A total of 33 initial ECR-RS questionnaires were required to provide a sufficient sample population for progression to the interview process.

Interview data were gathered from a purposeful sample of 16 interview participants until saturation was obtained. Participants comprised mid level employees selected from various industries across the United States who have had at least 5 years'

experience in a full-time salaried job role. The salaried, full-time employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers may affect work engagement levels. Data were gathered in one-on-one interviews with employees of organizations who comprised a variety of attachment styles and who could provide first-hand feedback regarding the types of management behaviors that make them more engaged in their job roles.

The rich dialogue attained from the interview participants was used to construct the broad themes and categories required to understand the differences in employee engagement needs between the distinct attachment styles. The intention behind this study was to understand the experiences of the employee and capture the language used to describe and understand the meanings of the experience. Prior quantitative research was used to assist in the construction of a semi structured open-ended interview protocol and subsequent theme development. Before this study, this depth of behavioral and relational data had not been gathered, exposing a gap in research.

Participant Selection Logic

Qualitative research, in comparison to quantitative research, generally provides a greater depth of investigation to glean rich information, and as such requires smaller samples of participants. Sampling strategies and techniques vary greatly, using different approaches based on the study's purpose. Purposeful sampling, in comparison to random sampling, provides qualitative researchers with participation from cases that will provide insight and understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2015). The goal

of this research study was to engage 20 participants who comprise mid level employees having at least 5 years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. The salaried, full-time employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers may affect work engagement levels.

This proposed population was identified due to its population size, accessibility, and likelihood of having an established long-term manager-employee relationship. The Walden participant pool and LinkedIn were used to recruit participants, and their suitability for the study was verified through the provision of their resume. The Walden participant pool was canvassed first. The Walden participant pool did not provide sufficient participants; therefore, LinkedIn was used to gain the required participants. Once the participant's suitability was verified, they were emailed with details of the study and an informed consent form to be returned to accept their participation into the study. Participants were advised that the study would consist of two parts and that completion of the questionnaire may not result in them participating in the interview portion of the study.

Qualitative researcher authors (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Patton, 2015) outlined that there are no rules when it comes to determination of sample size. Based on the proposed research problem and questions, a rationale for the following sample size was proposed. Based on the level of expertise from prior research, in preparing for effective sampling for this study, there was an expectation that a total of approximately five individual samples from each attachment style would be required.

Thus, this qualitative study necessitated a sample size of approximately 20 individuals who experienced a direct reporting relationship to an immediate manager.

As interviews, not observation, were the method for data collection, the sample size appeared to be satisfactory from both a data analysis and timeliness perspective. To support this sampling strategy, not only was a semistructured approach required for data gathering to allow for theme emergence, due to the originality of the study's concept, but saturation also had to be considered. Therefore, if themes continued to emerge, I was open to recruiting a greater number of participants. Saturation is an indicator of sampling adequacy and is a point where categories are fully accounted for (Parker & Berman, 2016).

Instrumentation

Two instruments were administered for the data collection process. The first consisted of a questionnaire that was used to determine an individual's attachment style, known as the ECR-RS scale. The ECR-RS scale was developed by Fraley et al. (2011) to measure adult attachment styles across a variety of relationship contexts. The instrument is a nine-item questionnaire that asks participants to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each question. Each question includes a 7-point scale rated from 1 indicating *strongly disagree* to 7 indicating *strongly agree*.

The ECR-RS focused on the domains of mother, father, intimate partner, and best friend. Subsequently, the ECR-RS has been used extensively in multiple relationships domains and across cultures (Burgess Moser et al., 2015; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Moreira, Martins, Gouveia, & Canavarro, 2015) with significant levels of reliability and

repeatability. For this study, the domain was directed towards the employee's manager. Given that the instrument has been used across multiple domains, it is the most effective self-report questionnaire to establish the adult attachment styles in a work context. I planned at least 24 hours between the completion of the ECR-RS questionnaire and one-on-one interview to help ensure that participants were not influenced by the connotations of the questionnaire.

The second instrument used for data collection was one-on-one interviews with employees who fit within the parameters required for the purposeful sample participants. Interviews were conducted to allow participants to share their experiences using a semistructured, open-ended protocol. A semistructured protocol provides the researcher with a standardized framework so that the same questions are asked of each participant. However, flexibility is afforded to the researcher to allow for more in depth probing of the participants lived experiences (Patton, 2015). A semistructured open-ended interview protocol creates the opportunity for the deeper investigation of common experiences amongst participants.

The following open-ended interview questions were generated from a selection of prior qualitative and quantitative journal articles to elicit responses to answer the research question (Brad Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz, 2011; Frazier et al., 2015; Lanciano & Zammuner, 2014). The purpose of these questions was to understand both the participants' experiences regarding the phenomenon as well as what influences their experience (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews consisted of one or two 30 to 45 minute sessions conducted via Skype or phone and were audio recorded.

The semistructured interview questions included the following questions:

1. What keeps you fully engaged in your work tasks? (The purpose of this question was to elicit general feedback regarding the internal and external factors that positively influence the employee at work.)

2. What causes you to become disengaged in your work tasks? (The purpose of this question was to elicit general feedback regarding the internal and external factors that negatively influence the employee at work.)

3. How engaged are you in your current job role? (Based on the identification of engagement and disengagement factors, the purpose of this question was to understand the current engagement level of the participant in their job role. This question was used to encourage the participant to think about his or her current work situation.)

4. How would you describe the role and responsibilities of your current manager to you? (The purpose of this question was to gain understanding of the type of operational relationship the employee had with his or her manager.)

5. How does your manager influence your level of engagement? (The purpose of this question was to investigate the influence of the manager on the employee's level of engagement or disengagement.)

6. What behaviors does your manager demonstrate that shows you that the work you do is important? (The purpose of this question was to uncover the general behaviors exhibited by the manager that influence the employee's level of engagement or disengagement.)

7. How do these manager behaviors influence your work engagement? (The purpose of this question was to explore the specific effect of the behaviors exhibited by the manager that influence the employee's level of engagement or disengagement.)

8. Are there behaviors your manager could demonstrate that would increase your engagement at work? (The purpose of this question was to discover if there were behaviors that the manager could exhibit that would positively influence the employee's level of engagement.)

9. If your immediate manager portrayed these behaviors, how would you feel about your job, and how might it change your behavior at work? (The purpose of this question was to understand how the impact of the positive behaviors exhibited by the manager would influence the employee's level of engagement.)

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

This study was comprised of a survey and an interview, and hence two sets of data collection procedures. Purposefully selected participants were recruited from LinkedIn as the Walden participant pool did not provide sufficient participants. The initial data collection instrument was the ECR-RS, which was used to determine the participant's attachment style. An initial pool of 33 participants that met the study's sample parameters were asked to take the nine-item questionnaire. The preliminary contact email explained the data collection process relevant to the participants. Those individuals that provided consent for the survey were sent a subsequent email asking them to complete the ECR-RS questionnaire that was replicated in SurveyMonkey. The

purpose of replicating the questionnaire was to remove the potential stigma of attachment from the participant materials.

Participant responses were inserted into the ECR-RS assessment sheet to ascertain the participant's attachment style. A unique identifier code was matched to the participant's response so that it could subsequently by used to correspond with their interview, should they be selected. The process of data collection for the survey was expected to take two weeks. Individual participant's names, attachment style, contact information, and email address were recorded in a spreadsheet and maintained in a secure Microsoft OneDrive file that can only be accessed by myself. Participants who were not required for the interview portion of the study were advised by email and thanked for their participation.

Participants who met the study's criteria were sent a consent form by email asking them to participate in a Skype interview or phone call that would be audio recorded. An interview time was scheduled with the participant, and a confirmation email was provided that confirmed their appointment time. This email also included a reminder of the purpose of the study. One to two days before the interview, the participant was contacted by email or phone reminding them of their interview date and time. The duration of the interviews was between 30 and 45 minutes.

The introductory section of the interview involved thanking the individual for their participation and an explanation of the dissertation topic and details of confidentiality and researcher ethics. Consent was sought from participant to audio record the interview. The Skype audio or phone call recording was collected from a third party

software add-in and the recorded audio data was stored on a separate secure Microsoft OneDrive file that is only be able to be accessed by me. The data was subsequently transcribed.

At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was thanked again for their participation and reminded that there might be a requirement for a second interview lasting between 30 and 45 minutes if further clarification of feedback was needed. Participants were emailed a $20 Amazon gift card to thank them for their involvement in the study, and reminding them that they would receive a one to two--page executive summary of the study once it is complete. The expected time frame to collect the interview data was 8 weeks. A unique alpha numeric interview file was created for each participant that contained both the audio recording and transcription of their interview. This code was matched to the participants ECR-RS questionnaire code during the data analysis phase.

Data Analysis Plan

Analysis and interpretation of data are important components of the research process to address the research questions (Basurto & Speer, 2012). The participants' attachment styles were determined by using the ECR-RS questionnaire. Each participant completing the ECR-RS was assigned a unique and confidential code. The code consisted of an abbreviated version of the identified attachment style (AP for anxious-preoccupied, S for secure, AD for avoidant-dismissing, AF for avoidant-fearful) followed by the participant's last name and first initial.

Those individuals that consented to complete the interview portion of the study were asked to respond to questions concerning employee engagement and how the perceived behaviors of their manager affected their levels of engagement. Data collected from the interview participants was assigned a code of capital P for participant and the number in which they were interviewed (i.e., P1, P2). During the data analysis stage, the code relating to the participant's ECR-RS data and interview data were combined, and the name of the participant was removed, leaving only the attachment style code and participant number.

Given the extensive nature of the data collection, there were significant advantages to using qualitative data analysis software. Such positives include a reduction in administrative and clerical task work; being able to arrange and be flexible with large amounts of qualitative data; having improved ability to confirm the validity and auditability of the research data; and potentially saving a significant amount of time, and thus, expense. Some possible concerns facing researchers who use qualitative data analysis software involve lack of technical knowledge of computer use and associated software packages, as well as the potential of focusing more on the distraction of the computer software than on the real meaning associated with the data and its analysis. These concerns appear to be outweighed by the value which qualitative data analysis software brings to the speed, integration, and storage of large amounts of collected data.

Increasingly, computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) are being used by researchers in the data collection process, incorporating the gathering, organization, and analysis of data. CAQDAS allows for coding and retrieval of data and

provides fast, comprehensive data searches, as well as the ability to store an extensive assortment of data types. For data analysis, the NVivo data analysis package was used as it allows for a broad range of data formats to be utilized which can be linked and protected using a read only format to maintain data integrity.

NVivo provides the simplest and most effective use and retrieval of memos, which as a novice researcher delivers significant advantages. Color-coding of all data elements makes this program very usable for the visual viewer, and the search tool allows for ease of data retrieval, making automatic relationships amongst coding simple to navigate. Weightings and code frequency tables can be added to interrogation of the dataset adding additional dimensions to the search functionality.

Visually, NVivo outputs documents in the format in which they have been coded making a comparison amongst documents simple. Charts, maps, and trees can be produced, which enables visualization of all items to be analyzed. The visualization features of the NVivo program allow for ease of relationship demonstration, as windows containing the different elements of work can be displayed and worked with simultaneously (Silver & Lewins, 2014). This is especially useful when working with smaller data sets. In addition, the flexibility of coding schema and the re-organization of codes into mapping format provided improved visibility into the creation of relationships. NVivo was used to help decode and interpret the raw data, which in turn was developed into categories and themes.

The modified seven-step Van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis as outlined by Moustakis (1994) was used to provide the basis for understanding the

influence of attachment styles on employee engagement. The methodology involves using the full transcript of each participant and then performing (a) horizontalization of terms, which lists all lived experiences of the participants and entails a preliminary theme grouping, (b) test the participant's expressions, to determine if they are part of the horizon of the experience, known as the invariant constituents, or eliminate them, (c) clustering of invariant constituents, that become the core themes, (d) final identification of themes, (e) construct an individual textural description of the experience, (f) construct an individual structural description of the experience, (g) combine the textural and structural descriptions and themes to provide the essence of the experience.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Researchers are required to attend to the aspects of quality, trustworthiness, and credibility within the realm of qualitative research. Creswell and Miller (2000) emphasized eight strategies that researchers may use to address the facets of validation (trustworthiness and credibility), the purpose of which is to foundationally check for misinformation. Misinformation may arise through lack of corroborating information, researcher bias, or poor research plan structure. Mitigation strategies commonly involve the scrutiny of data through checking against an alternative source.

Checking of data occurred through triangulation, which examines research data against prior research, or with checking with human sources of information such as participants, peers, or external consultants to determine evidence that corroborates the themes and findings uncovered. A second method that was used is member checking,

which allows researchers to gain feedback on interpretations gleaned from the data retrieved. Member checking involves returning the data analysis, interpretations, and findings to the participants so that they can confirm the accuracy and credibility of their account.

After an extensive review of the information provided on validation of qualitative research, a critical facet concerning validation of a study is the reflexivity of the researcher. It was important that I provide the context of both my position in the study and the related biases and values that I bring to their research. Given the multi-faceted approach my qualitative research plan, exposing context to participants and reader alike was vital to its validation, and the value it creates to extend current literature.

Transferability

Transferability is defined as the ability of a researcher to generalize the findings of the study beyond the controlled parameters of the research (Maxwell, 2013). While qualitative research may not be able to provide the same level of generalizability to the broader population as qualitative studies, qualitative studies are used to develop theories that may be pertinent to other situations under other circumstances (Yin, 2013).

The participant parameters that pertain to this study are that the individuals comprised mid level employees who had at least five years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. Further, the salaried, full-time employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager. Age, race, sex, industry, or role did not limit the participants, demonstrating a significant variety in the selected population. In addition, the use of thick descriptions as part of the data analysis process

provided additional support for external validity. A detailed account of the interview experiences provided improved context through the understanding of explicit patterns of social relationships (Holloway, 1997).

Data quality strategies incorporated the use of some of the *Ten Systematic Analysis Strategies to Enhance Credibility and Utility* (Patton, 2015). Many of these strategies dovetail into one another to provide credibility of data in an effective and efficient way. Assessment of rival explanations was a relevant strategy, as the study crossed the boundaries of psychology and management. This also assisted to manage my bias based on 25 years of people management experience.

Using the *Devil's Advocate* role is of immense value especially when you are considered a novice to a field of study, such as psychology. There was a significant amount of data collected from the interviews. Therefore, I constantly and consistently compared and contrasted my data often for consistency. The strategy of keeping analysis connected to purpose and design by often referring back to the purpose of the study was most important, especially when conducting a study where there is limited prior research such as this one. Finally, triangulation through diverse data sources, such as prior quantitative studies, helped to establish consistency across data sources.

Dependability

Two main strategies were used to establish dependability of the research. The first was the use of an audit trail. An audit trail provides two functions in this study. To provide a clear description of the research path so that other researchers may expand on the findings, and to provide a transparent outline of the steps taken to develop and report

the findings from the study. The audit trail was used to report all data, summarize data reduction and analysis, demonstrate data reconstruction and synthesis, convey detailed process and reflexive notes, and outline instrument process information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

There is limited literature on the topics of attachment and employee engagement. Much of the currently published material is either from the perspective of leadership or is quantitative in nature. However, this literature was used as a method of triangulation to compare findings from prior research. While this is not a straightforward approach to establishing dependability due to the scarcity of prior research, authors have established commonalities between intimate and work contexts (Richards & Schat, 2011). Therefore, quantitative studies involving intimate relationships could also be used for triangulation.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the ability of others to be able to objectively approve the study's conclusion (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). Qualitative interviews involve a continuous review of the research. Thus, reflexivity is required for ongoing examination of my assumptions and preconceptions regarding the topic of study. To assist with the mitigation of potential misalignment of assumptions, participants were asked to verify their interview transcripts so that my preconceptions were not introduced into the research relationship. This process allowed participants to provide correction, authentication, and clarification to the interview transcripts (Hartman, 2013).

Ethical Procedures

Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. While no incentive was offered to participants in the study, a $20 Amazon gift card will be provided to participants who completed the interview process as a token of appreciation. The only identifiable risk to participants was exposure to the knowledge of their attachment style as this may be associated with childhood trauma. If participants indicated that they would like to be made aware of their attachment style, this information was revealed to them in a confidential email with a list of resources after study was complete. To demonstrate that this study has conformed to the highest possible ethical standards, participant recruitment did not begin until the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on May 11, 2017 (Approval #05-11-17-0345244).

Ethical considerations must be acknowledged when proposing data collection. With this study, and in this particular instance, no greater threat looms than that of negative information regarding personal data being exposed to any of the participants or outside parties. The questionnaire and interview protocol were conveyed from the outset of the data collection process and incorporated an introductory script that welcomed the participant.

This information was followed by an outline of (a) provision of agreement to participate in the research; (b) an overview of the questionnaire in part 1 of the study and an overview of the interview procedures for part 2; (c) an outline of why the study is being conducted and its purpose; (d) an explanation of the anonymity and confidentiality

of information and feedback, and value of feedback and its risks; (e) reinforcement of the written consent of participation (in the form of continuance) and voluntary nature of questionnaire and interview, and the ability to withdraw consent; and (f) researcher contact information for any enquiries concerning the survey (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

All participant data and information was kept confidential to ensure participant safety. The ECR-RS questionnaire was completed online and in such a way that the participants were unaware of their attachment style. I only maintained knowledge of a participants' attachment style. All data and documentation has been stored and protected by me. As the codes from the questionnaire and survey were joined and the participant's name removed from the questionnaire code, the data was anonymous during the data analysis phase. All other remain data will remain confidential and stored in a password protected file in Microsoft OneDrive for a period of 5 years before being deleted.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and employee engagement. Attachment style was measured by using the Experiences of Close Relationship – Relationship Structures questionnaire to categorize participants into one of four of the adult attachment style classifications. Subsequently, one-on-one interviews were conducted to determine the types of behaviors each participant desires from their manager based on their attachment style.

The findings gained from this study could be used to understand the types of behaviors employees require from their manager to improve their well-being as well as

the productivity of the organization. Understanding the individual variations of employees' needs from their manager based on their attachment style provides organizational leaders with the opportunity to address the diminishing levels of engagement and losses in productivity. Consequently, factors that support employee engagement also sustain employee health, well-being, motivation, turnover intention, job performance, and job satisfaction, providing a healthier work environment.

This study may positively affect social change by providing aid to an organization's management and human resource department for understanding how they may improve their ability to relate to their employees and improve levels of engagement. Financial benefits to an organization have been identified through increases in productivity and profitability levels (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). At the same time, improvements to the well-being of employee's commitment towards the workplace generate a healthy work environment where employees can re-establish passion for their job role (Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, (2013).

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological inquiry was to explore how the lived attachment experiences of a purposeful sample of 20 full-time employees affect their work engagement needs. The research question to be explored was as follows: How do full time employees' perceptions of their attachment experiences affect their work engagement? Twenty full-time employees were selected from various industries across the United States and comprised mid level employees who had at least 5 years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. The salaried, full-time employees had a direct line reporting relationship to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers affected their work engagement levels. The participants consisted of company employees who all agreed to participate voluntarily.

In Chapter 3, I provided an overview of the methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study. Presented in Chapter 4 is an outline of the setting for the study and any influence this may have had on participant responses. Further, the participant demographics are highlighted to demonstrate their relevance to the study. Specifics relevant to the data collection method include collection duration for both instruments, data recording techniques, and data collection variations. This section is followed by the ethical deliberations and strategies taken into consideration to maintain trustworthiness for the participants. Instruments considered for trustworthiness involve the ECR-RS questionnaire and interview protocol for data collection and analysis.

Data collected from the study helped to determine how an employee's attachment experiences affected their work engagement needs. Understanding lived attachment experiences of employees may assist organizational leaders in resolving disengagement issues that negatively influence customer loyalty and stakeholder value (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). In addition, strategies may be developed that can positively influence profitability, productivity, customer loyalty, employee retention, and product quality (Zhang et al., 2014).

Research Setting

The data collection process was conducted remotely. The Walden participant pool and LinkedIn were used to reach out to participants willing to take part in the study. There were no personal or organizational conditions that impacted participants or their experience at the time of the study to influence interpretation of the study results. Each participant received a copy of the survey consent form and consented via email prior to taking the ECR-RS survey. A replication of the ECR-RS questionnaire (Appendix A), used to determine the participant's attachment style, was conducted online via SurveyMonkey.

The purpose of replicating the questionnaire was to remove the potential stigma of attachment from the participant materials and ensured that it only related to the work domain. The survey was scored using an ECR-RS Assessment Sheet (Appendix B) and transcribed to the ECR-RS Dimensions Sheet (Appendix C) to visually assess the participant's attachment style. Thirty-three surveys were completed to gain sufficient interview participants. Based on the participant's attachment style, individuals were

selected to interview to provide greater insight into their survey responses regarding their employee engagement experiences.

Each participant received a copy of the interview consent form and consented via email before the interview. Participants were attained from throughout the United States. Interviews occurred using Skype audio or telephone, as in-person face-to-face interviews were not practical due to the participant's geographic dispersion. Two participants chose to interview via Skype, while the remaining 14 participants chose telephone interviews. All the participants in this study were U.S.-based, and held salaried, mid level employee positions with a minimum of 5 years' experience reporting to a direct manager. Prior to each audio interview, two digital recorders were tested. Telephone conversations were recorded using Audio Call Recorder for Android and Easy Voice Recorder. Skype conversations were digitally recorded using the software programs Pamela Call Recorder and MP3 Skype Recorder.

Demographics

Data collected for the research study required the exploration of lived experiences of salaried, mid level employees who had had at least 5 years working for a direct line manager. Participants who took part in this phenomenological study articulated their different experiences regarding the manager-employee relationship based on their personal experiences and expectations with their direct line manager. Resumes were collected from each of the participants to ensure they adhered to the parameters of the study. Demographic information collected from the participants

identified their gender, age, years in their current role, industry in which they worked, and adult attachment style (see Table 2).

Table 2

Demographic Information of Participants

Classification		Number of participants
Gender		
	Male	6
	Female	10
Age		
	30-40	11
	40-50	5
Years in current role		
	0-2	5
	2-3	1
	3-4	2
	4-5	1
	5+	7
Industry		
	Banking	1
	Media	2
	Military	2
	Healthcare	4
	Education	3
	Retail	1
	Information Technology	3
Adult attachment style		
	Secure	5
	Anxious-preoccupied	5
	Avoidant-dismissing	3
	Avoidant-fearful	3

From the 33 participants who completed the online ECR-RS survey, 17 were invited to undertake the interview; all agreed to participate except one, resulting in 16 completed interviews. Given the requirement that the study consisted of mid level

employees, the limited age range was to be expected, given that typically time and experience are required to attain mid level positions. Six men and 10 women participated in the interviews. Participants had been in their role for a varying number of years. Some participants had been in role for as little as 6 months while others had been in their current position for over 5 years. At the same time, some participants had been with the same company for significantly longer than their most recent position but had been promoted at least once.

All participants in this study had sufficient time to have developed relationships with their current manager, with the average participant having over 3 years in their current role. Each of the participants had been in direct line reporting relationships with a manager for over 5 years. Length of time in role working for the same manager enhanced the quality of the collected data given the opportunity for development of long term relationships.

To contribute to the generalizability of the current literature, participants came from a broad spectrum of industry categories and held various roles, demonstrating that insights may be generalized across diverse areas of business. Some employees were individual contributors while others held managerial positions with employees reporting to them. The adult attachment style demographics did not correlate specifically to any gender, age, number of years in role, or industry. Lack of correlation to any other demographic influences supports information provided by prior literature that attachment is unaffected by these demographic factors.

Data Collection

Prior to collection of data, approval was gained from the IRB. IRB approval ensured the protection of participants involved in the study as well as assurance that the research was conducted ethically. Participants were solicited using the Walden participant pool and LinkedIn. The same style and format for solicitation of participants was used for both the Walden participant pool and LinkedIn, ensuring consistent presentation of materials. My email address was included with the information contained in the solicitation document to provide interested participants with a point of contact for the study.

Interested participants contacted me through email. Participants were sent a return email containing the Survey Consent Form that outlined information regarding the study and requested the participant's consent. The Survey Consent Form required the participant to provide his or her resume to ensure that they conformed to the requirements of the study. Once the participants consented and were approved to take part in the study, a subsequent email link was dispatched directing them to complete the online ECR-RS questionnaire. Data for the study were subsequently collected from questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaire

The first data collection instrument consisted of a questionnaire used to determine an individual's attachment style, known as the ECR-RS scale. An email containing a link to Survey Monkey, where a replication of the ECR-RS was maintained, was sent to participants. The ECR-RS focused on the domain of the participant's manager. There was

a planned distance of at least 24 hours between the participant completing the ECR-RS questionnaire and their one-on-one interview to help ensure that participants were not influenced by the connotations of the questionnaire.

Most interviews occurred at least a week after the participant had completed the questionnaire. The average time to complete the nine-question survey was approximately two minutes. Thirty-three questionnaires were completed over a 12-week period from May 12, 2017 to August 6, 2017. Each time a participant completed the questionnaire, they would advise me of their completion by email. Participants were sent a thank you email to express my gratitude for completing the instrument.

Questionnaire data were collected from the Survey Monkey website corresponding to the participant's completion email. Data were transposed to the ECR-RS Assessment Sheet to determine the participant's adult attachment style in the manager-employee context. The assessment data were also recorded on an ECR-RS Dimensions Sheet to provide a visual representation of the participant's attachment style. Questionnaire responses by attachment style are represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Total Questionnaire Responses by Adult Attachment Style

Attachment style	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Secure	19	57.6
Anxious-preoccupied	5	15.2
Avoidant-dismissing	5	15.2
Avoidant-fearful	4	12.0

The initial plan for data collection was to employ 20 participants and have five participants from each adult attachment style. The expected recruitment time for data

collection time was to be 2 weeks. However, after 12 weeks, only 16 participants had been identified to interview. Thirty-three questionnaire responses were collected from participants to achieve 16 participants to take part in the interview process. A significant number of respondents were categorized as secure. Only five of these securely-attached participants were selected from the initial number of respondents to attain saturation. All five participants who were categorized as anxious-preoccupied were selected to take part in the interviews. Only three of the four participants categorized as avoidant-dismissing made themselves available to interview, while all three of the participants categorized as avoidant-fearful accepted an invitation to share their experiences in the interview process.

I sought advice from my committee who suggested that I cease data collection due to the inflated collection period. A sufficient number of participants were achieved from the secure and anxious-preoccupied categories. Given that I had not gained sufficient participants from the avoidant-dismissing and avoidant-fearful categories, I decided to analyze these two categories both separately and as one group.

Interviews

Sixteen participants took part in the interview process, based on their responses to the ECR-RS questionnaire, over an 8-week period from June 14, 2017 to August 10, 2017. Participants were emailed an Interview Consent Form that outlined the structure and process for the interview and asked for their consent to be interviewed. If the participant consented by return email, they received an email asking them to participate in an audio recorded Skype interview or phone call. An interview time was scheduled with the participant, and a confirmation email was provided confirming their appointment

time. One to 2 days before the interview, the participant was emailed or contacted by phone reminding them of their interview date and time. Only one interviewee did not respond when contacted for their confirmed interview appointment. This individual did not respond to any further contact so was sent an email thanking them for their time.

The introductory section of the interview involved thanking the individual for their participation and an explanation of the dissertation topic and details of confidentiality and researcher ethics. Consent was sought from the participant to audio record the interview. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded using third party software and subsequently transcribed. A copy of the transcribed interview was provided for interviewees for member checking. Fifteen interviewees returned their transcriptions without edits, confirming the accuracy of the information. One participant returned their transcript with a single edit.

Data Analysis

As outlined in Chapter 3, each participant who completed the ECR-RS was assigned a unique and confidential code. The code consisted of an abbreviated version for the identified attachment style (AP for anxious-preoccupied, S for secure, AD for avoidant-dismissing, AF for avoidant-fearful) followed by the participant's last name and first initial. The participants who took part in the interview process were assigned a code of capital P for the participant and the number in which they were interviewed (i.e., P1, P2). For data analysis, the code relating to the participant's attachment style, determined by the ECR-RS data, and the interview participant code were combined, and the name of the participant was removed. This resulted in participants being identified by codes such

as S1, being the first participant with a secure attachment style, or AF2, being the second participant with an avoidant-fearful attachment style.

The data analysis process involved the review of information gained from the recorded audio files and transcribed interviews to delineate significant and relevant material. I listened to each of the recorded interviews to ensure that I was familiar with their meaning and content (see Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). Inductive analysis involves the capture of general information reduced to more specific themes and categories (Neale, 2016). Each transcript was printed for hand coding and note capture to reduce the amount of data collected. I read and hand coded each interview transcript, highlighting relevant phrases and words. These phrases and words were grouped into similar categories.

For comparison and completeness of evaluation, NVivo 11 Pro software was also used to organize the raw data and aid in the decoding of the data. The NVivo 11 Pro data analysis package was selected as I was unsure at the outset of the data collection process which types of data formats may be required during data analysis. Furthermore, NVivo 11 Pro allows for utilization of a broad range of data formats. These formats can be linked and protected using read-only format to maintain data integrity. Survey data were also loaded into NVivo 11 Pro to provide comparisons amongst attachment styles. Using the NVivo 11 Pro program helped to make the comparison amongst the interview documents simple. Decoding of the interview transcripts allowed for interpretation of the data and categorization into themes.

To provide the basis for the influence of attachment styles on employee engagement, the modified seven step Van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis was used, as outlined by Moustakis (1994). The modified Van Kaam method provided a rigorous structure for the data analysis process. This methodology involved using the full transcript of each interview participant. Each interview was coded by reducing the lived experience interview transcripts and recorded audio files into subcategories. Data coding assisted in the sorting of data so that comparison of individual experiences could be categorized in a uniform manner (Basurto & Speer, 2012).

Color-coding of attachment categories made the NVivo 11 Pro program very user-friendly for relationship development. Charts were used to enable visualization of source word frequency coded to nodes. Visualization of the NVivo Pro 11 program provided ease of relationship development, as windows containing the different elements of work were displayed and worked with simultaneously (Silver & Lewins, 2014).

Horizontalization was used to list all lived experiences of the participants and coding provided a preliminary theme grouping. Both the recorded audio interview files and interview transcripts were then tested to determine if the participant's expressions were part of the horizon of the experience. Data analysis involved using verbatim examples from the interview transcripts. If the expressions did not conform to the experience, they were eliminated. The remaining expressions were concentrated into core themes and finalized by a review of the collected data. An individual textural and structural description of the experience was combined with the themes to provide the

essence of the experience. Adult attachment style compared the descriptions of the manager-employee experience.

Before starting the interview, each participant was asked for their interpretation of the term employee engagement in a work context. All the participants defined employee engagement in terms of motivation and job satisfaction. Some participants expanded on this definition to include terms that related to shared goals, trusting relationships among team member, growth and development, organizational commitment, and the need for engagement to occur over time. Therefore, the responses provided by all participants were given in the knowledge that employee engagement was conceptualized as the level to which employees are dedicated to their work and encompass aspects such as job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, motivation, and citizenship behaviors (Dalal et al., 2012; Sahoo & Mishra, 2012).

Question 1 explored general feedback regarding the internal and external factors that positively influence employees at work. Table 4 shows that 62% of the interview participants were positively engaged in their work tasks by having the sense of a higher purpose, shared success, and improving the lives of others. Participants responded with comments such as “It's usually something of a higher purpose or trying to help people improve their lives in some way” (AP1). S2 responded, “What keeps me engaged in my task, regardless of whether or not I like to do certain things, is knowing that it's not to my benefit, it's actually to the benefit of a child and a family in need.”

Most respondents (9 out of 10) who supported the emerging theme of having a higher purpose, shared success and improving the lives of others, were of a secure (4 out of 5) and anxious-preoccupied (5 out of 5) attachment style.

Table 4

Question 1. What Keeps You Fully Engaged in Your Work Tasks?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Role provides a higher purpose, shared success, improving lives of others	10	62	S1, S2, S4, S5, AP1, AP2, AP3, AP4, AP5, AD3
My work is valued and appreciated, trust in my abilities	8	50	S3, AP2, AP3, AP4, AP5, AD2, AF2, AF3
Personal drive, work ethic	4	25	AP3, AP5, AF2, AF3
Personal & professional growth, challenge and variety of tasks, learning	3	19	S5, AD3, AF1
Feeling of community, relationship with co-workers, connectedness	3	19	AP1, AP3, AF1
Clarity of job role and work tasks	1	6	AP2
Only having to do what's asked of me	1	6	AD1

Fifty percent of the interview participants responded that the value of their work through trust in their abilities and demonstration of appreciation, kept them engaged in their work tasks. S3 stated, "definitely knowing that I'm appreciated and valued by those individuals who are above me." AP4 shared, "value to me, value to the organization, and then value to whatever it is that I'm doing." AF3 responded, "I definitely am a creature of positive reinforcement. I like you to notice that I'm doing a good job."

Respondents (4 out of 7) who maintained that the value of their work through trust in their abilities and demonstration of appreciation, kept them engaged in their work

tasks were of an anxious-preoccupied (4 out of 5) attachment style. Three out of six participants with an avoidant attachment style viewed this emerging theme as important. Two of the three avoidant-fearful participants and one of the three avoidant-dismissing participants responded positively to this theme.

Twenty-five percent of the interview participants expressed that their work ethic kept them fully engaged in their work tasks. Participants expressed that engagement in work tasks was reinforced by "work ethics and making sure that you do the right thing" (AF2), and that "I just wouldn't be me if I wasn't giving my all every time that I'm there" (AF3). Respondents who expressed that their work ethic kept them fully engaged in their work tasks comprised anxious-preoccupied (2 out of 5) and avoidant-fearful (2 out of 3). Each of these participants has also responded positively to the previous theme that the value of their work through trust in their abilities and demonstration of appreciation, kept them engaged in their work tasks.

Question 2 was posed to elicit general feedback regarding the internal and external factors that negatively influence the employee at work. As shown in Table 5, 50% of the respondents become disengaged in their work tasks when they experienced a lack of support from within the organization, or when internal politics, processes, and procedures blocked them from effectively completing their job role. Respondents who identified with this theme stated that they became disengaged when they felt a "lack of support from C level management as it demonstrates a lack of loyalty to people and a lack of support and understanding of the business" (S1). Further, AF2 expressed, "I get

frustrated when I am doing my part, and something is not happening because of bad planning, or just because they don't want to help."

Table 5

Question 2. What Causes You to Become Disengaged in Your Work Tasks?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Lack of support, poor internal politics and policies, lack of understanding	8	50	S1, S2, S3, S4, AP2, AP4, AP5, AF2
Lack of trust, lack of autonomy, lack of challenge, mundane tasks, micro-management	7	44	S5, AP2, AP4, AP5, AD1, AD2, AD3
Lack of appreciation, lack of value	5	31	S4, AP1, AP3, AD3, AF3
Poor communication, lack of clarity	4	25	S5, AP2, AD1, AD2
Lack of professionalism and respect, lack of integrity and honesty	3	19	AF1, AF2, AF3

The theme concerned with lack of support was perceived as a disengagement factor by most of the participants with a secure (4 out of 5) or anxious-preoccupied (3 out of 5) attachment style. Lack of support, poor internal politics and policies, and lack of understanding were areas that prohibited the respondents from achieving engagement in their work tasks.

Forty-four percent of the interview participants considered a lack of trust, autonomy, and challenge, resulting in micro-management and mundane tasks as being factors that influenced disengagement. S5 commented, "If I'm not provided an opportunity to challenge myself, I can feel myself becoming disengaged." AD1 stated, "It

is a lack of challenge on tasks, a lack of trust within the work environment from coworkers and supervisors and then senior leadership." These comments aligned the lack of trust in an employees' abilities with micro-management, the assignment of mundane and repetitive tasks, and absence of challenging work tasks.

Most anxious-preoccupied respondents (3 of the 5) considered the *lack of trust* theme to be an area of disengagement, while all of the avoidant-dismissing participants (3 out of 3) were in agreement that this issue was a concern. Two of the three avoidant-dismissing interviewees expressed that poor communication and lack of clarity caused disengagement in their work tasks. All of the respondents (3 out of 3) who were categorized as avoidant-fearful perceived that a lack of professionalism and respect contributed significantly to their disengagement.

Question 3 was more of a closed-ended question to understand the current engagement level of the participant in their job role. This question was planned to encourage the participant to begin to think more specifically about their current work situation. As shown in Table 6, 63% of interview participants (10 out of 16) expressed that they were very engaged in their current job role, indicating that most of their engagement needs were being met at work. All of the participants identified as having a secure attachment style (5 out of 5) stated that they were very engaged in their job role.

Table 6

Question 3. How Engaged Are You in Your Current Job Role?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Very engaged	10	63	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, AP3, AD2, AD3, AF1, AF2
Actively disengaged	4	25	AP1, AP4, AP5, AF3
Disengaged	2	12	AP2, AD1

The respondents identified as secure and anxious-preoccupied all indicated that it was their immediate manager who significantly influenced their engagement in a positive manner. S4 stated, “I think because I feel like I get that (engagement needs) from my supervisor, it helps me want other people to feel like they get that as well.” Further, “I know that if I need her there and it's something important I feel like she'd be there. So, it keeps me engaged because I truly feel like she cares about what's going on, and me personally, so it makes me want to stick with her.”

Respondents who indicated that they were very engaged in their job role but were identified as avoidant-dismissing or avoidant-fearful indicated that factors other than their manager were reasons why they were engaged. AD3 articulated, “I feel very lucky to be doing what I'm doing at this present moment, and it's a lot of work, but it's a lot of good work, and get to implement my own ideas.” While AF1 conveyed, “I am learning a lot, and I feel like as time passes I grow as a human being and professionally, so I think that's the only reason why I'm still in the department.”

Thirty-seven percent of respondents stated that they were either actively disengaged or disengaged in their job role. These individuals consisted of mostly

anxious-preoccupied (4 of the 5) respondents and two of the avoidant respondents (1 dismissing and 1 fearful). The four individuals who stated that they were actively disengaged were actively seeking or had found, new job roles with different companies. The two participants who reported themselves as being disengaged were in a state of resignation from the fact that their situation may change in a positive manner, but were enduring for personal reasons.

The purpose of Question 4 was to gain an understanding of the type of relationship the employee requires from their manager. As shown in Table 7, participants indicated that in 81% of cases, a supportive manager-employee relationship was required to help complement the employee's skills and demonstrate a genuine appreciation of the value those skills brought to the organization.

Table 7

Question 4. How Would You Describe the Role and Responsibilities of Your Current Manager to You?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Supportive, complementary relationship that demonstrates appreciation of my value	13	81	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, AP1, AP2, AP3, AP4, AP5, AD2, AD3, AF2
Relationship with honest, clear, respectful communication	10	63	AP1, AP2, AP3, AP4, AD1, AD2, AD3, AF1, AF2, AF3
Developmental relationship that provides growth and development	5	31	S2, S5, AD1, AD3, AF1

Participant responses supporting the need for a supportive relationship included, “within the organization, people recognize what you do and how important your role is to the company as a whole and they make sure that you are appreciated and that you know that you're appreciated. Had my manager not been that way, I definitely think that I would have already been looking for something else” (S2). S3 declared,

> I expect her to be an advocate within sort of a chain of command here. If I bring a concern to her I expect it to be heard and I expect it to go somewhere, not to just sit with her and then just get lost. I expect her to, if I'm having any sort of clinical issues within my own work, to be available to hear me out. And then on the flipside of that when she sees that I'm doing a good job and has things that she's appreciating, I want to hear those things.

Each of the secure and anxious-preoccupied participants designated this factor as a role and responsibility of their manager. Also, 66% of the avoidant-dismissing and 33% of the avoidant-fearful participants perceived a supportive relationship to be important.

Ten of the 16 participants (63%) stated that they required a manager-employee relationship with honest, clear, and respectful communication. Quotes from participants supporting this theme follow. “I was more engaged in my role when I was with a manager who was really open. He delivered a lot of clarity, and he was really very straight forward” (AP2). AD2 expressed, “I like to communicate with my manager. I like to talk to them about what's going on, even in the day to day business” and AF3 stated, “what I expect is a clear outline of job duties and expectations.”

Four of the five anxious-preoccupied respondents indicated that manager-employee relationship based on honest, clear, and respectful communication was important. Further, all of the avoidant respondents, including avoidant-dismissing (3 out of 3) and avoidant-fearful (3 out of 3), expected managers to provide clarity and respect in their interactions. The responses from the avoidant-fearful participants indicated a greater need for respect and professionalism in the interactions with their managers than communication specific to the clarity of job expectations.

Based on the responses from Question 4, Question 5 was posed to investigate the influence of the manager on the employee's level of engagement or disengagement. Table 8 highlights the influence of the behaviors of the manager for the employee. When responding to Question 5, 63% of the participants specified that their manager influenced their level of engagement positively through maintaining a complementary relationship and providing the participant with autonomy and authority. Supporting this theme, S1 stated, "my manager influences my engagement positively through complementing me in my job role. He is effective, organized, and provides me with autonomy." AP3 expressed, "my manager involves me in the business, providing support when needed and an open channel of communication." Conversely, four of the participants stated that this factor influenced them in a negative manner.

Table 8

Question 5. How Does Your Manager Influence Your Level of Engagement?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Positively through complementary relationship, autonomy and authority	10	63	S1, S3, S4, S5, AP1, AP3, AP4, AD1, AD3, AF3
Negatively through lack of honest, clear, respectful communication and feedback	7	44	AP1, AP2, AP5, AD1, AD2, AF1, AF2, AF3
Negatively through lack of complementary relationship, autonomy and authority	4	25	AD1, AD2, AF2, AF3,
Positively through provision of growth and development	3	19	S2, S3, AD3
Positively through honest, clear, respectful communication and feedback	2	12	AP2, AP3,

Of the ten participants who indicated that their manager influenced them in a positive fashion, four of the participants identified as secure, three of the participants were categorized as anxious-preoccupied, two were avoidant-dismissing, and one was avoidant-fearful. Half of the avoidant category identified with this theme in a positive form. Four of the participants, who were all designated as avoidant, identified with this theme in a negative manner. The negative form of this theme was supported by two of the three avoidant-dismissing participants and two of the three avoidant-fearful participants. AF3 represented both positive and negative influences with their manager as they truly felt impacted in both ways.

The second most important theme was that participants were concerned that their manager influenced their engagement negatively through a lack of clear and respectful

communication. AD1 articulated, “all of the negativity and the elementary tasks that are assigned and told exactly how it is, doesn't engage me.” AF1 expressed that the manager, “treats women in his team disrespectfully…with the men, if they are not in a position like him, they are not directors, or they don't hold a Ph.D., he treats them disrespectfully too.” Conversely, two of the participants stated that this factor influenced them in a positive manner. AP2 highlighted both positive and negative influence from their manager regarding communication as the manager’s inconsistent delivery of feedback and information, “has me sitting on the fence” (AP2).

Participants who were influenced by lack of clarity and poor communication comprised four of the six avoidant individuals, consisting of two of three avoidant-dismissing participants and two of the three avoidant-fearful participants.

When responding to Question 6, respondents illustrated the behaviors that managers currently demonstrated to create positive engagement (see Table 9). The first reported theme was supported by 69% of participants who outlined that their managers provided a supportive environment that reinforced the value of the employee to the organization. S5 asserted, “my manager’s a big part of the reason that I don’t want to move somewhere else…what she's giving me keeps me wanting to stay here.” Other comments expressed by participants highlighted, “All the things I expect of her she absolutely does. That has helped me, since I've been in this role, to continue wanting to invest myself in the company and to make sure that it does have a good reputation” (S3).

Table 9

Question 6. What Behaviors Does Your Manager Demonstrate That Shows You That the Work You Do Is Important?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Supportive, complementary relationship that demonstrates appreciation of my value	11	69	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, AP2, AP3, AP4, AD1, AD3, AF3
Financial rewards	5	31	S5, AP1, AP2, AP3, AP5,
Nothing – other factors provide engagement.	4	25	AD2, AF1, AF2, AF3

All of the five secure participants reported that their manager highlighted the importance of their work by providing support and communicating the employee's value to the organization. Three of the anxious-preoccupied and three of the avoidant respondents supported this theme. The avoidant individuals consisted of two respondents from the avoidant-dismissing group and one from the avoidant-fearful group.

Thirty-one percent of participants perceived that their manager displayed the employees work importance through improvement in their financial rewards. AP1 stated, "For my manager, the way he shows importance is money, if you get your bonus or if he gives you money. That's his way of showing thanks." AP5 maintained, "the only way I know I'm really doing well is at the end of the year when I get my rewards. Outside of that all communication is non-genuine." Four of the five anxious-preoccupied participants responded that this factor was how they were shown that their work was important by their manager.

Four of the respondents stated that their manager did nothing to demonstrate the work they did was important. When asked what behaviors the manager showed to demonstrate importance, AD2 declared, “I don’t know until my annual review when he writes one sentence or two.” Other supporting quotations included “No, he doesn't. I know my work is important because of the researchers” (AF1); “No. He says that he doesn't know anything about what I'm doing and walks away. He's a very disconnected guy” (AF2); and, “Nothing, it makes me want to start sending out applications immediately and just do what I can not to quit that day” (AF3).

Of the four participants who responded that their manager did nothing to show the importance of their work, three (100%) were categorized with an avoidant-fearful attachment style. The additional participant who agreed to this theme was in the avoidant-dismissing category.

Based on the responses from Question 6, the purpose of Question 7 was to explore the specific effect of the behaviors exhibited by the manager that influence the employee’s level of engagement or disengagement. Most participants perceived their managers to demonstrate behaviors that influenced their work engagement positively (see Table 10). Fifty-six percent of the participants felt that their manager made them feel valued and cared for, making them more productive and committed to the organization. This theme was reinforced by S3 who stated, “since I've been in this role, I continue wanting to invest myself in the company and make sure that it does have a good reputation, and that we are getting enough in referrals and that we're continuing to grow

and succeed as an agency." Four of the five participants who identified as secure, and four of the five participants who identified as anxious-preoccupied supported this theme.

Table 10

Question 7. How Do These Manager Behaviors Influence Your Work Engagement?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Positively – value and cared for, committed and productive	9	56	S2, S3, S4, S5, AP1, AP3, AP4, AP5, AD3
Negatively – discouraged, look for engagement elsewhere	6	38	AP1, AP2, AP5, AF1, AF2, AF3
Positively – focused to achieve goals, collaborative environment	5	31	S1, S2, S4, S5, AD3
Negatively – Lose productivity, withdraw	5	31	AP1, AP2, AD1, AD2, AD3

When considering the influence of manager behaviors on work performance, most of the securely-attached participants (4 out of 5) perceived that their managers provided a collaborative environment for the achievement of personal and organizational goals. S2 explained, "that I feel like everybody takes a role and takes their role very seriously and making sure that every single person is engaged and is a part of the process and that you know that you're a part of the process.

From a disengagement perspective, participants also highlighted that their manager demonstrated behaviors which discouraged them in their work environment to the point that they sought engagement elsewhere. When asked about the effect of manager behaviors, AF3 expressed, "Sometimes when I am arriving at work, when I'm in the parking lot, I just want to drive through it and go somewhere else, and just forget

about the work. I just want to leave. But, once again, I really like my job." Three of the five anxious-preoccupied participants and each of the three avoidant-fearful participants perceived this to be the case.

In addition, two of the five anxious-preoccupied participants, and each of the three avoidant-dismissing participants stated that they withdraw, and lose productivity and interest in their job tasks when their manager's behaviors influence them negatively. AD1 stated, "It makes me want to pull away, it makes me want to just do the very minimal," while AD3 articulated, "I think the major thing that happens is lack of productivity. You lose interest in your work essentially. You pretty much feel like even if you're fulfilling your job, you're not motivated to go the extra step."

The purpose of Question 8 was to discover if there are behaviors that the participant's manager could exhibit that would positively influence the employee's level of engagement. Three themes were generated from this question. Question 8 revealed emerging themes such as demonstrated recognition of value (9 out of 16), communication (6 out of 16), and trust in the employee's abilities (2 out of 16) (see Table 12). Four of the participants could not pinpoint any behaviors their manager could exhibit that would improve their level of engagement.

Table 11

Question 8. Are There Behaviors Your Manager Could Demonstrate That Would Increase Your Engagement at Work?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Demonstrate recognition of value and importance	9	56	S1, S5, AP1, AP4, AP5, AD2, AF1, AF2, AF3
Communication - open, respectful, clear	6	38	AP2, AP3, AD1, AD2, AF2, AF3
No	4	25	S2, S3, S4 AD3
Trust in abilities	2	12	AD1, AP2

Supporting the need for a manager to provide demonstrable recognition of the employee's value and importance at work, S1 emphasized "My manager could show more verbal appreciation and acknowledgement in front of executive management." AP1 expressed that it was important to hear "You're valuable. We want you here and there are things that you're doing really well." AF1 conveyed, "In order to help people engage at work, your manager should be able to praise when you do something good." S5 shared,

> I think sincere thank you is one way, not publicly. I don't know that you always have to have a big public display, but a thank you card on your desk. Hey, I noticed this project went well or I've noticed things have been stressful. I appreciate your working through, whatever, little things that just acknowledged your contribution or effort probably would have helped.

The need for action by managers to demonstrate employee value was voiced by employees from each of the attachment styles. Two of the five securely attached, three of

the five anxious-preoccupied, one of the avoidant-dismissing, and all three of the avoidant-fearful participants vowed that action was important.

Clarity and communication were important to 38% of the participants. This theme was supporting by comments such as AP2, “I need a manager who is open, who provides clarity, who may be tough but fair, but is going to provide you with genuine feedback that's going to help you improve” and, “One is actually sitting down and giving people what their jobs are…what he expects from each person” (AF3). Two of the five anxious-preoccupied, two of the three avoidant-dismissing, and two of the three of the avoidant-fearful participants perceived that better communication would increase their current level of engagement.

In four instances, participants were satisfied with current engagement levels and could not identify any areas with which their managers could improve their engagement. Three of the four participants were categorized as securely attached while the other participant was avoidant-dismissing. S2 commented, “No, I don't actually because they're pretty positive already in the way that they talk to me. They're very supportive in guiding as well.”

Other statements that supported managers meeting employee’s engagement needs included, “No, not at all. Not at all. He gives us so much leeway to do our jobs and take care of what's going on in the unit that there's nothing more he could possibly do” (S4); “I don't necessarily think so. One of the things I really appreciate about her is she's very, very transparent and very down to earth and so when she's able to relate to our

frustrations on our level as if she were a direct line staff, and for me that just helps to normalize the things that I might be experiencing."

In response to feedback from Question 8, Question 9 was presented to participants to understand how the impact of the positive behaviors exhibited by their manager would influence the employee's level of engagement. Table 12 displays themes from Question 9 which involved the employee's perception of increased self-efficacy and growth (11 out of 16) and an increase in productivity (7 out of 16) through managers portraying more engaging behaviors. The respondents from Question 8, who were already satisfied with the engagement behaviors their manager portrayed were unable to contribute to this question.

Table 12

Question 9. If Your Immediate Manager Portrayed These Behaviors, How Would You Feel About Your Job, and How Might It Change Your Behavior at Work?

Theme	No. of participants	% of participants	Style of participants
Self-efficacy and growth	11	69	S1, AP1, AP2 AP3, AP4, AP5, AD1, AD2, AF1, AF2, AF3
Increase productivity	7	44	S1, S5, AP1, AP2, AD1, AF2, AF3
Already satisfied	4	25	S2, S3, S4, AD3

Eleven of the sixteen participants indicated that improvements in manager behaviors would make them feel better about themselves and their job role. This demonstrated the emotional and personal nature of the engagement relationship between

manager and employee, and the extent to which manager behaviors can influence the engagement of the employee.

Participant responses supporting the self-efficacy theme included, “This would set a better example for me to be a better manager, I would be more productive, make me feel better about myself, and increase my motivation” (S1); “I think that the feedback part would have probably made me better” (AP1); and, “I think you just feel more important. You feel more a part of the system. You're more intimately connected to it and again I think that gets easier to have motivation.” The theme of self-efficacy and growth was supported by five of the five anxious-preoccupied participants, and five of the six avoidant participants. From respondents in the avoidant category, two of the three avoidant-dismissing, and all three of the avoidant-fearful participants perceived that positive manager behaviors would lead to self-efficacy and growth.

Often related to the theme of self-improvement and personal growth was an associated increase in productivity, which 7 of the 11 respondents viewed as important. Two participants from each of the secure, anxious-preoccupied, and avoidant-fearful groups connected these two themes. S5 conveyed, “I think it can't but have a more positive effect on my output. Even put excitement in your everyday, mundane tasks. I think just encourage you to want to do even better.” AP2 expressed, “when your manager is able to coach you or provide feedback on the things that you should do better, or you can do better, it makes you feel you're growing… I would be more engaged because I am doing something that is never done before, or I'm taking a different approach to something that can be improved.”

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Qualitative research requires smaller samples of participants. There are no rules when it comes to determination of sample size (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). From the outset of the study, there was an expectation that a total of approximately five individual samples from each attachment style would be required for saturation. Thus, the proposed phenomenological study necessitated a sample size of 20 individuals who experienced a direct reporting relationship to an immediate manager.

The goal of this research study was to engage 20 participants who comprise mid level employees having at least 5 years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. The salaried, full-time employees are required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they can share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers may affect work engagement levels.

While it was expected that a lesser number of participants would not produce the required themes to address the research question, difficulty in gaining sufficient participation from each attachment group resulted in the employment of three rather than five participants for each of the avoidant groups. Saturation is an indicator of sampling adequacy and is a point where categories are fully accounted for (Parker & Berman, 2016). As interviews were the method for data collection, I concluded that the sample size was satisfactory from both a data analysis and timeliness perspective. During data analysis, new themes did not continue to emerge, so a greater number of participants were not required for recruitment.

Credibility

For this study, checking of data occurred through triangulation. Data collected from the interviews such as notes, audio files, and interview transcripts were compared with both prior literature and human sources of information. Interview data were collected from a purposeful sample of 16 interview participants until saturation was obtained.

A semi-structured open-ended interview protocol afforded deeper investigation of common experiences amongst participants. Open-ended interview questions were generated from a selection of prior qualitative and quantitative journal articles that elicited responses to the research question (Brad Shuck et al., 2011; Frazier et al., 2015; Lanciano & Zammuner, 2014). These questions attempted to understand both the participants experience regarding the phenomenon as well as what influenced their experience (Moustakas, 1994). Participants and peers were asked to corroborate the themes and findings uncovered.

Member checking allowed for feedback on interpretations gleaned from the interview data collected. Member checking involved returning the transcript data and interpretations to the participants so that they could confirm the accuracy and credibility of their account. One participant made an edit to the transcript data.

Transferability

Qualitative studies develop theories that may be pertinent to other situations under other circumstances (Yin, 2013). Transferability allows the researcher to generalize the findings of the study beyond the controlled parameters of the research (Maxwell, 2013).

With this study, age, race, sex, industry, or role did not limit the participants, demonstrating a significant variety in the selected population. The study was limited to mid level employees from the United States who had sufficient time and experience to develop a manager-employee relationship. The use of thick descriptions as part of the data analysis process provided additional support for external validity.

The *Ten Systematic Analysis Strategies to Enhance Credibility and Utility* (Patton, 2015) helped to maintain the credibility of data collection and analysis through assessment of rival explanations. Further, I constantly and consistently compared and contrasted my data for consistency. The strategy of keeping data analysis connected to purpose and design by often referring to the purpose of the study was especially important given the limited prior research.

Dependability

Dependability assists with establishing trustworthiness by demonstrating that the finding from the study are consistent and repeatable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was used to provide dependability of the research and create a transparent outline of the steps taken to develop and report the findings from the study. The audit trail was used to report all data, summarize data reduction and analysis, demonstrate data reconstruction and synthesis, convey detailed process and reflexive notes, and outline instrument process information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail provided a clear description of the research path so that other researchers could expand on the findings.

In addition, I developed detailed systematic protocols for the research using Microsoft Excel to increase the dependability of the study (Yin, 2013). I recorded the

process used for data collection in a journal, including interview notes, dates, and reflections. The purpose of journaling was to allow others to examine the process if required (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

Prior quantitative literature was used for methods triangulation to compare findings from prior research. While this was not a straightforward approach to establishing dependability due to the scarcity of prior research, authors have established commonalities between intimate and work contexts (Richards & Schat, 2011).

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the ability of others to be able to objectively approve the study's conclusion (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). Reflexivity was required for ongoing examination of my assumptions and preconceptions regarding the topic of study. Therefore, I maintained a detailed journal of processes and protocols used for collecting the data.

To assist with the mitigation of potential misalignment of assumptions, I asked each of the participants to verify their interview transcripts so that my preconceptions were not introduced into the research relationship. This process allowed the participants to provide correction, authentication, and clarification to the interview transcripts (Hartman, 2013). All 16 interview participants agreed with the transcripts, and only one requested a single edit to their transcript.

Results of Study

Triangulation was used to analyze the data and identify the findings from which the conclusions were drawn. The findings from this study result from triangulation of

interviews conducted with the participants and past literature regarding adult attachment and employee engagement. Two core themes emerged from the data sources used during the analysis. The central question that guided the study was: how do full-time employee's perceptions of their attachment experiences affect their work engagement? The purpose of this question, with a focus on the employee, was to gain insight and knowledge into the differences in desired behavior of managers based on the employee's attachment style. The significant findings that emerged were categorized by two inter-related core themes: the need for value and purpose, and level of dependence.

Need for Value and Purpose

In this study, the first theme to emerge was the level to which an employee required their manager to support and recognize them for their value and purpose. When questioned about what engaged the employee in their job role (Question 1), 62% of respondents emphasized the importance of having a higher purpose than themselves and shared success amongst members with whom they worked (see Table 4). Most respondents highlighted that their manager influenced their engagement positively to allow them to fulfill their engagement needs (see Table 8).

Having a higher purpose, such as improving the lives or others, subordinate success in the form of employees or clients, and shared success in attaining organizational goals, was highly sought after by secure and anxious-preoccupied participants. Secure participants reported establishing their relationship with higher purpose attainment and success achievement with support of others. They, in turn,

supported others to achieve their own success but did not require explicit recognition of their role in others' achievement.

Anxious-preoccupied participants also sought a higher purpose but looked for their manager to recognize their value when providing support for the organization or others. Such outcomes are supported by researchers who have established that securely attached employees are more likely to demonstrate organizational citizenship behaviors, while anxious-preoccupied individuals seek to gain approval from others due to their high level of dependence (Little, Nelson, Wallace, & Johnson, 2010).

Insecure participants were less driven by a higher purpose and the success of others, and more of individual worth, success, and personal development. Establishment of value for insecure participants was heavily influenced by aspects related to manager communications including appreciation and praise, clarity of expectations, honesty, integrity, respect, openness, and professionalism. The importance of communication for insecure individuals was associated with the lack of consistent messaging related to their insecure attachment experiences.

Secure attachment style. Employees exhibiting a secure attachment style have high self-esteem and promote confidence in themselves and others (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2016). Furthermore, these individuals tend to assist those in need. Due to their emotional stability, secure individuals are confident in attaining value and purpose without the necessity of intervention from others.

Secure participants responded with comments that supported the need for a higher purpose that benefitted both themselves and others, such as achievement of corporate

objectives. In each case, the participants indicated that their manager was instrumental in allowing the participant to fulfill their engagement needs through providing autonomy and authority. Low levels of dependence encouraged by high levels of autonomy and authority provided secure employees with the opportunity to contribute to the success of themselves and others and fulfill their engagement needs.

Interview feedback from the secure individuals included responses that supported prior literature concerning low levels of dependency and support of others. S1 categorically stated that her engagement was based on the success of her managers, and their team achieving and aligning to the corporate mission and goals. In her opinion, the role of her manager was to provide an environment for that to occur. S2 emphasized that her engagement was solely focused on the benefit and well-being of the children and families who she served. In a similar statement to S1, the role of her manager was to ensure that internal processes did not prohibit her from successfully performing her job tasks, which in turn could affect the welfare of children and families.

Anxious-preoccupied attachment style. Employees characterized by an anxious-preoccupied attachment style have a tendency for low self-esteem and self-worth (Boatwright et al., 2010). Resultantly, they have a high need for acceptance and look to others in superior positions for acknowledgment of their value to the company. While respondents highlighted the importance of shared success and purpose, it was equally significant that these participants received recognition from their manager for their sacrifice. This was in the form of praise and recognition, financial rewards, autonomy, and authority. The main factor affecting the employee was that the manager showed that

they cared about the employee and valued their worth both personally and to the organization (see Table 10).

Interview feedback from the anxious-preoccupied participants focused on the significance of shared success and being recognized as being an integral part of the relationship. Furthermore, a prominent aspect of this theme was having clarity of expectations and consistent feedback so that they knew what was expected of them, and where they stood in the opinion of the manager. AP1 expressed the importance of a higher purpose and improvement in people's lives. In addition, AP1 explained the importance of relationships and connectedness between people in successfully attaining that purpose. While AP2 felt a critical part of the success by her manager consistently involving her in the achievement of a common purpose. She also felt that feedback was critical to her success, and lack of feedback made her feel very insecure.

The need for clarity was echoed by other anxious-preoccupied participants such as AP2 who identified that the time he was most engaged in his job role was when he had a manager who was genuine, open, and clear with expectations. In agreement with AP2, AP3, and AP5 affirmed the need for honest, clear feedback so that they knew what role they played within the team structure, and what value they brought to that team. One of the participants (AP4) summed up the need for anxious-preoccupied participants as, "the manager needs to provide clarity and give me the autonomy so that I can go and create the value." Engagement for AP4 was supported by verbal praise at both an individual and team level, and recognition for group success and the accomplishment of organizational goals.

The value of open and clear communications and expectations was interpreted by employees as the manager behaving with honest and integrity, which could contribute to the personal and professional growth of the individual (see Table 12). This type of communication style allowed for the participant to understand their value to the manager and improve on any weaknesses the manager identified. Lack of clarity and open communication left anxious-preoccupied respondents confused and unsure of their worth to the manager and the organization.

Avoidant attachment style. In a similar manner to the anxious-preoccupied participants, individuals categorized as avoidant considered communication to be at the foundation of assessment of their value in the workplace (see Table 7). Lack of consistent, trustworthy communications in attachment relationships was the basis for employees requiring clear and respectful manager communications (Boatwright et al., 2010). The role and responsibility of their manager were less focused on a supportive, complementary relationship, and more reliant upon honest, clear, and respectful communication.

Both of the avoidant attachment styles based an effective manager-employee relationship on clear and respectful communication due to their low level of mutual trust, and high level of sensitivity to criticism. Their engagement was achieved from factors relating to personal satisfaction rather than through the commitment to a higher purpose or shared success. These factors involved recognition of their workplace value and work ethic, and trust in their skills and abilities. The differing avoidant attachment styles presented responses that varied in behavioral expectations from their manager.

Avoidant-dismissing attachment style. Respondents who were currently disengaged expressed that a lack of clear and honest communication led them to withdraw and do the very minimum of job-related tasks. Distancing from others is a characteristic of avoidant individuals when they are stressed (Harms, 2011). These individuals wanted recognition of their skills and abilities in the work environment as this was a factor that provided them with value at work. More importantly, feedback rather than praise was paramount to these individuals feeling worthy in the workplace.

The avoidant-dismissing respondents emphasized that an increase in clear and honest communication would help to show that they were trusted, allow them to grow in their job role, and demonstrated that their abilities were recognized in order for them to successfully undertake their job roles (see Table 7). Two of the three participants expressed that they had experienced a lack of trust and challenge that led to employee disengagement. However, the experience of open and clear communication allowed them to produce better quality work and waste significantly less time.

On the topic of communication and trust, AD2 highlighted that she would like to be able to talk with her manager, but often her manager would not even communicate with her. Furthermore, that "after ten years, there are certain things that I should just be trusted to do and move on." Similarly, even though AD3 was very engaged in his current job role, he emphasized the factors of trust and feedback as pivotal to understanding the needs of the manager and being able to provide value to the organization. In a previous role, he became demotivated and did not feel as though his work was valued. Disengagement was due to his manager not providing him with the necessary behaviors

to keep him engaged.

Avoidant-fearful attachment style. Participants responded to the interview questions regarding the behaviors required from their manager in a similar manner to the avoidant-dismissing individuals. However, the importance of clarity, rather than feedback, appeared to be paramount. Clarity provided respondents with an understanding of value in their job role. In the instances where their manager was unable to meet their engagement needs, participants sought relationships with people who could fulfill these needs. Participants used self-identified strengths such as work ethic and value to others to portray their worth. This is supported by researchers (Harms, 2011) who have established that while avoidant-fearful individuals avoid close relationships they still maintain a need for them.

From a communication perspective, while clarity for job tasks was important, so was the need for these respondents to feel as though their manager addressed them in a respectful and professional manner. All of the interviewees felt as though their manager communicated to them in a disrespectful fashion, and this behavior contributed to their level of disengagement. Each of them commented that their manager did nothing to demonstrate to them that the work they did was important (see Table 9). As such, anxious-fearful individuals looked for other avenues to provide meaning and worth.

AF1 expressed that her manager contributed significantly to her disengagement, however her value came from the people whom she supported. AF1 did not believe that her manager was competent at his job role, and in fact, was verbally rude and unprofessional in his conduct. As such, she stated that she would undermine his authority

to ensure that she satisfied those who benefited from her work. Her opinion was that the business operated far more effectively in his absence. In a previous role she had had a manager who provided the type of support that made her feel of value, and the communication was open, professional, and constructive.

These types of responses were echoed by both AF2 and AF3 who provided similar responses regarding their manager. Both felt as though clarity and respectful communication was important, however, because their needs were not being met in their current role, they looked to their own strengths to maintain engagement. Both respondents emphasized that they had an impeccable work ethic, and both individuals highlighted the fact that their manager was not capable of doing the job in which he was currently engaged. As such, both employees had distanced themselves from their manager but continued to fulfill their work tasks.

Level of Dependence

Underpinning the core theme for level of dependence were the concepts of trust and support between manager and employee. Trust, and making oneself vulnerable, is central to relationship development (Harms, 2011). The propensity to trust develops from a general attachment orientation to more person-specific attachment based on experiences and expectations of new relationships (Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007). Thus, individuals who are willing to develop high trust relationships demonstrate a willingness to take greater risks and be vulnerable (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007).

When questioned about the role and responsibility of their immediate manager (Question 4), 81% of respondents highlighted the need for a supportive, complementary

relationship (see Table 7). However, the way in which individuals required the relationship to develop involved differing manager behaviors for the employee. Responses associated with the core theme of level of dependence demonstrated variation between participants of differing adult attachment styles.

Secure attachment style. Empirical research has been used to show that positive relationships exist between employees' secure attachment and manager trust (Harms, 2011), as secure individuals are more willing to take part in emotionally exploratory behaviors. Employees' with a secure attachment style are interested in achieving a more intimate relationship with their manager (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

During data analysis with this study, all participants categorized as secure responded with comments highlighting the need for a complementary and balanced relationship with their manager. The participants' manager fulfilled the roles and responsibilities in a positive way to satisfy the engagement needs of secure employees. The complementary relationship included high levels of autonomy and authority and a lack of micromanagement and mundane tasks. Such a relationship emphasized a high degree of mutual trust and demonstration of a low level of manager-employee dependency.

S1 stated that her manager had a complementary skill set and provided 'air cover,' removed roadblocks, and dealt with difficult protocols that allowed for her and her team to succeed by achieving and aligning to the corporate mission and goals; while, S3 emphasized that her manager did everything that the employee asked of her which helped her to continue to be engaged in the job role and invest in the organization. S4 expressed

that the manager-employee relationship was one of mutual trust and involved protection and support of each other as well as open communication; and, S5 outlined that his manager provided him with significant autonomy and while he dealt with the day to day operations, her role was to support them in carrying out the mission of our organization.

Anxious-preoccupied attachment style. Lower levels of trust and increased levels of dependency have been associated with anxious-preoccupied attachment in a work context (Harms, 2011). High levels of dependency for anxious-preoccupied employees are associated with an increased need for reassurance and support due to concerns regarding reciprocity of emotional fulfillment (Hudson, 2013).

In a similar manner to secure individuals, all employees categorized as anxious-preoccupied responded with a need for a supportive, complementary relationship with their manager. The difference between secure and anxious-preoccupied employees, however, was with the relationship balance. While the supportive relationship between anxious-preoccupied employee and manager included high levels of autonomy and authority, it was also characterized by greater dependency on the manager. Anxious-preoccupied employees expressed a greater need for support through recognition and appreciation of their individual value from their manager.

AP1 articulated that she had had an excellent relationship with her manager that was typified by collaboration and support until the focus of the organization changed. When the manager no longer provided the employee with the level of required authority, value, and importance, the individual ended up resigning from the role; AP4 emphasized that in a prior role the lack of autonomy and support led to her resignation. Conversely,

she was happy with her manager's support in her current role as it was typified by team collaboration, verbal praise, and personal recognition.

Avoidant attachment style. Individuals with avoidant attachment style are characterized by low levels of trust and a fear of others. Furthermore, these individuals are very sensitive to criticism and rejection. The main variation that exists amongst types of avoidant attachment is related to dependency. Avoidant-dismissing people are overly self-reliant and independent, while avoidant-fearful maintain the need for relationships but tend to avoid them. (Hudson, 2013). As with the anxious-preoccupied participants, avoidant individuals wanted recognition of their value in this supportive relationship. Three of the 6 participants categorized as avoidant referenced the manager role and responsibilities as requiring a supportive, complementary relationship.

Avoidant-dismissing attachment style. Individuals characterized as avoidant-dismissing demonstrate lower levels of trust and higher levels of independence and self-reliance. This facet of their attachment style was apparent in the responses gained from the two avoidant-dismissing respondents. AD2 stipulated that she required a high level of autonomy, as micromanagement contributed to her becoming disengaged. She had a specific need for her manager to provide support, especially in conflictual situations at work. Furthermore, she stated that while it would be nice to have appreciation of her value at work, she did not necessarily require it from her manager.

AD3 specified trust as being at the foundation of any strong and effective manager-employee relationship. He continued by indicating that once a trust connection was established between the two individuals, the manager's role was to continue to create

an environment of autonomy and authority for the employees.

Avoidant-fearful attachment style. Individuals characterized as avoidant-fearful demonstrate lower levels of trust and tend to shun relationships even though they have a desire for them. AF2 and AF3 expressed a desire for a supportive relationship with their manager but emphasized a severe lack of confidence in the behaviors demonstrated by their managers. As such, they relied on their own abilities and work ethic to get the job done and support the organization as best they could.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study. Through rigorous data analysis and triangulation, the core themes that emerged from the research question *how do full-time employee's perceptions of their attachment experiences affect their work engagement?* were: (a) the need for value and purpose; and (b) level of dependence. The theme of the need for value and purpose related to the individual's confidence, self-worth, and finding meaning in their work. This theme was crucial to the establishment and maintenance of an employee's engagement in the workplace. The need for value and purpose exposed the behaviors an employee required from their manager for them to experience value and purpose in the work environment. Furthermore, the theme uncovered the way in which the employee required delivery of those behaviors from their manager in order for them to be effective.

Analysis of the level of dependence theme uncovered the extent to which the employee required intervention from their manager through the establishment of trust in order to achieve engagement.

By investigating each of the adult attachment styles, I exposed the nuances with the way in which manager behaviors need to be experienced to fulfill their employees' needs. I discovered that it is not sufficient to simply accept that the concepts of value, purpose, or trust mean the same for everyone. These terms are strongly influenced by a persons' attachment experiences. For example, autonomy to a secure employee means that they are confident in fulfilling the job task and will only require intervention if they require support. Autonomy to an avoidant-dismissing individual requires a manager to provide them with very clear guidelines, then trust in their abilities, and leave them alone to complete the task. Incorrect behaviors by the manager, such as micromanagement or lack of task clarity, may lead to disengagement of the employee.

Also, it is important to note that simply because an employee has an insecure attachment style does not mean that they will be disengaged in their job role. In fact, data collected from this study determined that five of the eleven insecure participants were very engaged in their job. However, disengaged participants expressed that their lack of job satisfaction occurred as a result of their manager not exhibiting behaviors that met their engagement needs. This factor, combined with their reduced ability to cope with emotional stress, increased the probability of turnover, and reduced employee motivation and productivity.

In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings from the analyzed data. The chapter begins with the purpose and nature of the study and summarizes the key findings. I then interpret the findings to extend knowledge on the topic of attachment theory and employee engagement highlighted in Chapter 2. Limitations of the study are outlined as are

recommendations for future research. Implications for positive social change are described prior to the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological inquiry was to explore how the lived attachment experiences of full-time employees affect their work engagement needs. The employees were required to have had direct line reporting relationships to an immediate manager so that they could share their experiences of how the perceived behaviors of their managers affected work engagement levels. A phenomenological research design was selected for this study because of the design's emphasis on understanding the lived attachment experiences of employees and their resultant influence on desired behaviors from their managers.

The emergence of themes was built on previous literature. This particular study built on research that has previously identified the importance of manager-employee relationships concerning engagement and that a lack of employee engagement leads to a significant loss in company productivity.

To gather the required data effectively, participants completed the ECR-RS questionnaire to determine their attachment style. Participants were then selected to take part in the interview portion of the study based on their attachment style. Interview data were gathered from a purposeful sample of 16 interview participants until saturation was obtained. Participants comprised mid level employees selected from various industries across the United States who have had at least 5 years' experience in a full-time salaried job role. Data were gathered in one-on-one interviews with employees of organizations who comprised a variety of attachment styles and who could provide first hand feedback

regarding the types of management behaviors that make them more engaged in their job roles.

The rich dialogue attained from the interview participants was used to construct the broad themes and categories required to understand the differences between the distinct attachment styles. This study was an attempt to understand the experience of the employee and capture the language used to describe and understand the meanings of the experience. Before this study, this depth of behavioral and relational data had not been gathered, exposing a gap in research.

Findings gathered from analysis of the data highlighted two main themes. The first theme centered on the employees' need to feel as though their work efforts provided value and purpose in the work setting. The main differences discovered amongst employees were the extent to which they required recognition from their manager for their efforts. Furthermore, there was the level to which the manager was required to provide clear guidelines for the employee to achieve the required recognition. The second theme exposed the level to which employees depend on their manager to address their engagement needs. Variations were found amongst employees with differing attachment styles with the extent and means to which they require manager intervention. Nuances between the attachment styles significantly impacted engagement and disengagement with employees.

Managers must be aware of the way in which their employees require them to behave in different circumstances. Understanding the basic attachment needs for employees provides significant advantages to positive addressing worker engagement.

Interpretation of the Findings

The work environment exists as a place of many relational acts where relationships influence decisions and the actions people perform (Blustein, 2011). The most effective way to understand relationship interactions is through the knowledge of people's attachment styles, as they are innate to a person's psychological patterns. Attachment theory provides a sound psychologically-based methodology for understanding how people interrelate based on an individual's internal working models (Gillath et al., 2016).

Understanding these psychological patterns allows for a greater understanding as to what types of behaviors positively and negatively influence individuals with varying attachment styles. Knowing employees' attachment styles in the work place is crucial for understanding interpersonal relationship quality, psychological well-being, effective leadership, trust, satisfaction, performance, and other organizational outcomes (Lanciano & Zammuner, 2014).

Adult attachment styles consist of a matrix that includes positive and negative views of self and others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Approximately half of the adult population has a secure attachment style and have a positive view of themselves and others. These individuals' behaviors are characterized by trusting, close, well-connected relationships (Bowlby, 1988). Secure adults maintain high levels of self-esteem, are comfortable with autonomy, and demonstrate low levels of dependency.

People with an anxious-preoccupied attachment style comprise approximately a quarter of the population and have a negative view of themselves and a positive view of

others. These individuals pursue close overdependent relationships as they have fears of abandonment. They are characterized by lower self-esteem, have low levels of satisfaction and trust in relationships, and are more easily overwhelmed by negative emotions. Because of their poor emotional coping skills, anxious-preoccupied people turn to others when they are in an aroused emotional state.

Avoidant-dismissing adults have a positive view of themselves and a negative view of others. They perceive others as unavailable and untrustworthy and avoid close relationships (Boatwright et al., 2010). Avoidant-dismissing individuals are very self-reliant and tend not to acknowledge feelings of vulnerability. They distance themselves from others in stressful situations. Those adults with avoidant-fearful attachment have a negative view of themselves and others. They avoid close relationships but desire them (Boatwright et al., 2010). Both avoidant attachment styles maintain similar characteristics; however, avoidant-fearful adults have a distinct fear of rejection and negatively respond to criticism.

Attachment in the work domain operates similarly to other relationship domains. In the work environment, the manager-employee relationship operates in a similar way to the caregiver of an infant. There is an unequal relationship between manager and employee, where the manager is viewed in a supervisory capacity. The role of the manager is to maintain responsibility for directing employee relationships in such a way that they achieve organizational goals.

Managers provide the secure base from which employees can explore, while also providing a safe haven in times of distress (Kafetsios et al., 2014). A secure manager-

employee relationship delivers meaningfulness to the employee through the value of work and protection from risk or threat. Furthermore, a strong bond created between manager and employee allows the employee to have the confidence to demonstrate behaviors that will contribute the company's performance (Hudson, 2013). The results of the research supported the findings highlighted in prior literature and reinforced that variations occur in employee behaviors based on their attachment experiences. In addition, the data uncovered two core themes that extended knowledge and understanding of attachment in the workplace.

The first core theme highlighted the level to which an employee required the manager to support and recognize them for their value and purpose. Participants specified that the main factors that provided them with engagement at work were aspiring towards some level of higher purpose or being recognized for the value that they delivered to the organization. The second core theme emphasized the level and type of dependency an employee requires from a manager to feel engaged at work. Supporting the theme of level of dependence was the need for trust between manager and employee.

Secure Employees

Due to their ability to develop trusting relationships, secure employees do not require considerable reinforcement of their value to the company through constant praise and appreciation. Instead, they prefer to establish themselves in roles where they feel as though they are contributing to a higher purpose. Higher purpose was represented as any mission that contributed to the success and well-being of others.

Thus, the purpose of a manager for a secure employee was creating an environment where the employee could improve the lives of others, contribute to subordinate or customer success, and share in the success of attaining organizational goals. These individuals had established relationships with their manager to achieve the complementary, balanced relationship they desired. As such, all participants perceived their managers as providing for their engagement needs. In addition, secure employees felt that their managers demonstrated limited behaviors that led to their disengagement. Thus, where managers are able to place secure individuals in positions where they may use their self-esteem and confidence to support others, their secure attachment style may promote security and confidence as they are prone to assist and support others in need.

While securely-attached employees understand the importance their manager plays in their success, they do not require significant intervention from their manager as they have a low level of dependence. Instead, they require their manager to provide them with the autonomy and authority relevant to their position and abilities. Once established, they require a supportive and complementary relationship that provides balance to their own abilities.

Secure employees require their managers to remove roadblocks that prevent them from attaining work engagement as they view these as impacting *the greater good*. Roadblocks were described as frivolous internal politics and unproductive procedures, lack of understanding of an employee's level of business, poor communication, and lack of support from higher levels of management. Thus, low levels of dependence encouraged by high levels of autonomy and authority provided secure employees with the

opportunity to contribute to the success of themselves and others.

Anxious-Preoccupied Employees

Due to their lower levels of trust, insecure participants demonstrated a greater need for recognition of individual worth and greater reliance on manager intervention. Anxious-preoccupied employees, who are described as having low self-esteem and self-worth (Boatwright et al., 2010), required greater attention from their manager as they had a higher need for acceptance and recognition of their value. In a similar manner to secure individuals, anxious-preoccupied participants reported that having a higher purpose and shared success was important to their engagement.

The difference from secure employees was that they required the manager to recognize the value of their efforts. Recognition could be conveyed by the manager in the form of praise at an individual and group level, through the provision of financial rewards, and by providing the employee with autonomy and authority. Anxious-preoccupied employees wanted to be recognized as being important and integral to the manager-employee relationship.

In order to establish value, anxious-preoccupied employees required their manager to provide clear expectations so that they were absolutely aware of the ways in which they were to provide value and be recognized accordingly. Once clarity was attained, these employees then required constant feedback so that they knew that they were providing the necessary value in the opinion of their manager. Managers who provided clear expectations through open communication with the employee were regarded as having integrity and honesty. This may be due to the mixed emotional

messages that anxious-preoccupied employees have experienced in past relationships. The clarity of messaging unravels the confusion of mixed messages.

Not only do clear communications provide clarity of expectations for employees, they also provide a platform for which employees feel safe to explore personal and professional growth. An honest, open, and constructive communication style from their manager allowed anxious-preoccupied employees to safely acknowledge any improvements to areas for development without contributing to feelings of insecurity.

Lower levels of trust and increased levels of dependency have been associated with anxious-preoccupied attachment in a work context (Harms, 2011). Anxious-preoccupied individuals desperately want connected relationships. These relationships are based on over-dependent attachment needs, which, if not addressed, will lead to increasing insecurity. High levels of dependency required managers of anxious-preoccupied employees to provide greater consistent levels of reassurance and support to provide for their attachment needs. The variation from secure to anxious-preoccupied employees in the manager-employee relationship was with the relationship balance. While the supportive relationship between the anxious-preoccupied employee and manager included high levels of autonomy and authority, it was also characterized by greater dependency and intervention on the part of the manager.

Avoidant Employees

The two categories of avoidant employees have similar attachment characteristics, such as low levels of trust and a fear of others. Furthermore, these individuals are very sensitive to criticism and rejection. However, they have varying

requirements and distinct behaviors of their manager in a work context. As with anxious-preoccupied employees, avoidant employees require communication that is clear, consistent, and trustworthy.

Due to their low level of mutual trust and high level of sensitivity to criticism, avoidant employees require clarity of communications to minimize mixed messages experienced in previous relationships. Their purpose was achieved through attainment of individual satisfaction more than shared success with others. Individual purpose comprised recognition of their workplace value by their manager or others should their manager not fulfill this need. Furthermore, it was important for their manager to recognize their exceptional work ethic, such that everyone should maintain trust in the employee's skills and abilities. The main variation that existed amongst types of avoidant attachment is related to dependency.

Avoidant-dismissing employees. Avoidant-dismissing employees, characterized as being overly self-reliant and independent, require recognition of their value from their manager but only in the form they are willing to accept. Recognition is required in the form of autonomy and authority rather than significant praise and recognition. Typified by low levels of trust and high levels of self-reliance, these employees require only genuine and constructive recognition of their skills and abilities that reinforces the value of their work. Disengaged employees who receive a lack of clear and honest communication will tend to withdraw and become less productive. Distancing, or withdrawing, is a characteristic of avoidant individuals when they are stressed (Harms, 2011).

With avoidant-dismissing employees, there was an emphasis on clear and honest communication from their manager that conveyed trust in the relationship. Trust translated to the employee's value to the manager, job role, organization, and personal growth opportunities. Manager recognition that satisfied their work engagement allowed them to produce better quality work and be more efficient in their job role. As such, these individuals required high levels of autonomy and authority while at the same time requiring manager support in case of conflict with others in the workplace.

Avoidant-fearful employees. In a similar manner, low levels of trust and poor relationship development characterized avoidant-fearful employees. Unlike avoidant-dismissing employees, these individuals desired relationships with others, even though it was difficult for them to be trusting. Regarding the need for value and purpose, clarity appeared to be central to these employees for understanding their value to their job role. Where their manager was unable to meet their engagement needs, participants sought relationships with others who could fulfill them. Employees expressed that they would go to the extent to sabotage the relationship with their manager to support others who realized their value. In addition, these employees used self-identified strengths such as work ethic and value to others to portray their worth.

Manager communication to avoidant-fearful employees, as with avoidant-dismissing individuals, needed to be clear. However, there was a definite need for these interactions to be respectful and professional. Their perception of disrespectful manager communication from their manager led to disengagement. In cases where the manager of

these employees does meet their attachment needs, they withdraw by shunning their manager.

Disengagement for an avoidant-fearful employee may be demonstrated when the manager does nothing to validate that the work they did was important. In such instances, employees demonstrated a lack of respect for the manager via statements of incompetence and that the business operated far more effectively when the manager was absent. From a perspective of dependence, when an avoidant-fearful employee's attachment needs are not met, they look to their own strengths to maintain engagement. Employees will distance themselves from their manager but continue to fulfill their work tasks.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study was that it only included one tier of an organizational employee based in the United States. Participants consisted of mid level employees only, and thus did not reflect the perceptions of other levels of employee hierarchy within the organization. As such, the population was not representative of other levels of employees within the organizational structure. Nor did data from the study capture the lived experiences of individuals from other geographical regions. This means that cultural factors were not considered in this study. While the phenomenological study was not broad enough to generalize results to all work settings, populations, and industries, it did incorporate individuals who had a range of experience with their current organization, were from multiple industries, and were of both genders.

A second limitation included the inherent problems with self-report data. Inaccurate results may have occurred when completing self-report instruments if the participant may have had a particularly influential experience prior to completing the ECR-RS. During the interviews, participants were particularly forthcoming and open with the disclosure of information regarding their work situation and experiences with their manager.

The third limitation concerned individuals not falling clearly into a specific attachment category when completing the ECR-RS. Only two of the 33 participants who completed the ECR-RS did not plainly fall into a specific attachment style. Therefore, these individuals were not included in the interview portion of the study. All of the participants who were interviewed fell distinctly into one of the four attachment categories. Noteworthy, is that the ECR-RS data only represented their attachment style within the work domain.

Recommendations

The concept of attachment is one that must be handled delicately in a work setting. It is quite possible that the personal nature of an individual's relationship during their upbringing could be used with mistaken or unethical intention. However, if used with moral and ethical purpose, understanding an employee's attachment style can positively contribute to their work engagement. As organizations strive to maintain competitive advantage through improvements to productivity in a dynamic global environment, understanding practices that encourage employee engagement may mitigate losses in business productivity. Positive employee attitudes are critical to achieving

organizational goals (Katsaros, Tsirikas, & Bani, 2014). Organizational leaders can incorporate measurement of attachment styles into their employee assessment procedures to better understand how to affect their engagement.

The purpose of this study was to uncover additional qualitative findings that provided new insights into the needs of employees based on their attachment style. New core themes were uncovered regarding the need for employee value and purpose, as well as the level of dependence the employee has with their manager. These themes provide researchers with new foundational concepts with which to cultivate future studies. Future research studies should focus on greater generalizability of the conclusions determined by this study. Furthermore, studies should seek greater detail on the attachment requirements for each attachment style.

Implications

Employees who are engaged in their work tasks contribute to company productivity and profitability through improvement to revenue growth and enhancements of shareholders value (Medlin & Green, 2014). Conversely, disengaged employees contribute to productivity losses through increases to healthcare costs, product quality defects, workplace accidents, job stress, and turnover intentions (Peretz, Levi, & Fried, 2015). Disengaged employees contribute to annual losses in excess of $450 billion for the U.S. economy (Gallup, 2013; Hoolahan, Greenhouse, Hoffmann, & Lehman, 2012).

Improvements to understanding the manager-employee relationship has the potential to assist with mitigation of productivity losses which are detrimental to organizational success (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). Thus, it is critical company

management to develop effective managers and workplace policies and practices that focus on the positive engagement of employees. This research fills a gap in understanding the variations in relational needs of employees based on their lived attachment experiences.

The contributions from this study provide much needed insight into the manger-employee relationship, and the associated link to attachment styles and employee engagement. Results from this study indicate that by improvement in manager behaviors that supports the attachment needs of employees contributes to an increase in employee engagement. The support of an employees' attachment needs provides organizational leaders with the opportunity to address losses in productivity as well as support employee health, well-being, motivation, turnover intention, and job performance and satisfaction.

Organizational leaders, through their human resource departments, have the ability to better understand social interactions between managers and employees and personal attachment variations of employees. Knowledge generated from the data collected in this study could assist with improvements in manager-employee relations and improve worker engagement. Understanding the behaviors that managers may use with mid level employees to increase employee engagement may help to influence employee performance and commitment through trusting relationships. Further, managers may be better armed to identify and respond to situations that lead to employee disengagement.

Implications for positive social change for the current study incorporate the financial benefits derived from an increase in industry productivity and profitability. Furthermore, there is an associated reduction in the cost of healthcare due to lower

incidence of stress-related issues and workplace accidents. Improvements to worker productivity and motivation result from the recovery of employees' commitment to the workplace, and enthusiasm and passion for their job role. A healthy work environment occurs through the provision of a trusting work environment where managers understand the needs of their workers based on their attachment styles.

In a broader sense, consumers could experience better quality products and services as a result of the reduction in product and service defects. The additional revenue generated from corporate productivity and profitability increases could provide additional funding for the local economy. Enhancements to the local economy through the improvement in community infrastructure would assist with public development opportunities as businesses reinvest in their communities.

Conclusion

The results of the study suggested that positive changes to employee work engagement can occur through greater understanding of an employee's attachment style. Managers of employees are in an ideal position to constructively influence the engagement of employees to the benefit of both the organization and the individual. The variations of individuals' attachment styles require managers to behave differently when addressing the needs of employees.

Employees require purpose and value in their job role. The employees' attachment style strongly influences how their manager attends to issues of engagement so that the employee feels a sense of security. Security allows employees to be more

engaged in their job role. Employees with different attachment styles demand varying levels of dependence with their manager to meet their attachment needs.

Organizational leaders should ensure attachment styles are considered when employing and developing employees. Managers should be trained to understand and cater to their employee's attachment needs so that the work environment is more conducive to the emotional and psychological health and well-being of its workers.

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Appendix A: ECR-RS Questionnaire

Q1. It helps to turn to my manager in times of need.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my manager.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. I talk things over with my manager.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. I find it easy to depend on my manager.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. I don't feel comfortable opening up to my manager.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I prefer not to show my manager how I feel deep down.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. I often worry that my manager doesn't really care for me.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. I'm afraid that my manager may abandon me.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I worry that my manager won't care about me as much as I care about him or her.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B: ECR-RS Assessment Sheet

The statements below are about how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. Using the 1 to 7 scale below, after each statement write a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement when applied to the relationship(s) you are looking at.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Qu. #	Question	Score
1.	It helps to turn to this person in times of need (R)	
2.	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with this person (R)	
3.	I talk things over with this person (R)	
4.	I find it easy to depend on this person (R)	
5.	I don't feel comfortable opening up to this person	
6.	I prefer not to show this person how I feel deep down.	
7.	I often worry that this person doesn't really care for me	
8.	I'm afraid that this person may abandon me	
9.	I worry that this person won't care about me as much as I care about him or her	
	Average Avoidance: sum of items 1 to 6, with 1 to 4 reverse-scored (R)	
	Average Anxiety: sum of items 7-9	

* Transfer these scores to the companion “ECR-R/RS Dimensions Diagram

Appendix C: ECR-RS Dimensions Sheet