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ATTACHMENT PATTERNS PRESENT WITHIN THE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS OF
INDIVIDUALS WITH ASD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the types of attachment patterns that are most prevalent within the romantic relationships of those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Through the semi-structured interviews of nine participants with ASD, data were collected and analyzed and classified as representing either 1.) secure attachment pattern, 2.) anxious-resistant attachment pattern, or 3.) avoidant attachment pattern. Results indicated a majority of the participants were securely attached individuals with most participants displaying the knowledge of secure attachment within a romantic relationship, but having difficulty carrying out this knowledge and putting it to use. Therefore, further research into the intervention and practice of social skills in social situations is needed to help create more positive romantic interactions for individuals with ASD.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Attachment Theory within Neurotypical Development	2
Attachment Theory within ASD	3
Attachment Theory within Romantic Relationships	5
Romantic Relationships within ASD	8
Chapter 2 Method	11
Design	11
Materials.....	11
Participant Recruitment.....	12
Inclusion Criteria.....	12
Procedures	14
Data Analysis	14
Chapter 3 Results	16
Secure Attachment Pattern.....	17
Happy, Friendly, Trusting Relationship	17
“Move Freely”	18
Compromise in Conflict Resolution.....	18
“Secure and Connected” Companionship	19
“Honest and Open”	20
Intimacy.....	21
Acceptance and Support of Partner	21
Idea of Love Not Fading	22
Can Always Leave in Bad Situation.....	22
Anxious-Resistant Attachment Pattern	23
Idea of “Fantasy Bond”	23
Worry About Losing Partner	23
Insecure	24
Dominance	24
Paranoia.....	25
Avoidant Attachment Pattern	25
Fear Intimacy.....	25
Defensive.....	26
Emotionally Distance Themselves	26
Withdraw From Conflict Resolution.....	27
Difficulty Trusting Partner	28
Lack of Connection	28

Chapter 4 Discussion	29
Companionship	29
Intimacy vs. Fear of Intimacy	30
Self -Worth.....	30
Compromise	31
Clinical Implications for Speech- Language Pathologists	31
Limitations	32
Future Directions for Research	32
Summary	33
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 51

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Demographic Information of Participants 13

Table 2 Percentages of Attachment Patterns Displayed By Participants 16

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding how attachment style affects personal development from the moment of birth. Attachment styles present between parents and their children have been known to influence the “emotional and social development of an infant and the health of future relationships” (Grzadzinski et. al 2008, p. 85). Throughout the lifespan, relationships grow in complexity ranging from friendships to romantic relationships. The complexity of romantic relationships and attachment patterns in people with neurotypical development has been researched, but there is very limited information concerning these relationships involving those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2013), individuals with ASD show “deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships.” Since most research studies on those with ASD focus mainly on infants and children, there is limited information on how attachment styles present within young adults with ASD, and even more specifically how attachment style affects their romantic relationships. Through semi-structured interviews of young adults with ASD, this study was designed to analyze the types of attachment styles that are most prevalent in the romantic relationships of young adults with ASD.

Attachment Theory within Neurotypical Development

In the 1950's attachment theory was developed by a British psychoanalyst, John Bowlby, and focused specifically on infants and their caregivers (Fraley, 2010). Bowlby classified crying and infant reactions as attachment behaviors which were demonstrated towards their caregivers or attachment figures. (Fraley, 2010). There are three main attachment patterns: a.) Secure, b.) Anxious/Resistant, and c.) Avoidant (Fraley, 2010). Soon after Bowlby proposed this theory, Mary Ainsworth decided to examine these attachment behaviors more closely. Ainsworth traveled to Uganda to study the behaviors of mothers and their infants (Saltman, 2016). She created and experience within her laboratory that became known as "the strange situation" in which infants and caregivers were separated and then reunited. Secure babies tended to seek their caregiver when they were separated and were easily comforted at the caregiver's return, whereas anxious-resistant babies reacted right away to their caregiver's absence and had a hard time calming down even at the caregiver's return. Lastly, avoidant babies seemed to show no reaction to the absence and return of their caregiver, some focusing their gaze and attention to objects within the room. (Fraley, 2010; Saltman, 2016). Ainsworth discovered that about 60% of children demonstrated secure attachment, while 20% were anxious-resistant, and 20% were avoidant. Ainsworth saw a reciprocal connection between "maternal attunement", or responsiveness to baby's cues, and the patterns the infants demonstrated (Ainsworth, 1979).

It has been reported, secure infants view their mother as a secure base from which they felt comfortable exploring from as long as she was both available and responsive to their needs (Lin Shi, 2003). Anxious/Resistant infants could not seem to find any comfort from their mother and seemed to be worked up whether she was present or absent. Contrastingly, avoidant infants

seemed to show no reaction whether or not their mother was present or absent, but had the possible tendency to display anger and frustration at times (Lin Shi, 2003).

Common infant to mother reactions such as crying, smiling, following, sucking, etc. are classified as attachment behaviors (Saltman, 2016, p. 9). Bowlby reported these behaviors were demonstrated by infants, because they could not handle their own feelings and emotions and needed their caregiver to handle things for them (Saltman, 2016). He also believed these behaviors stemmed from an infant's basic need for protection (Bowlby, 1988). This idea of the caregiver handling things for the infant is known as "co-regulation". If needs are met, this allows for a smooth transition to "the establishment of the self as the main executive agency of security-based strategies." (Saltman, 2016). Therefore, attachment is a major part of development not only for social relationships but also for the development of self; which will affect future relationships. Therefore, Bowlby emphasized the relationships between infants and their mothers was extremely important for future development (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

Attachment Theory within ASD

Since infant-mother relationships were placed at such a high level of importance; in the 1960's Bettelheim proposed mothers were to blame if their child had autism. He believed autism stemmed from poor parenting, a demonstration of a "lack of sensitivity", and an "unresponsive and unsympathetic environment" (Grzadzinski et. al, 2014). Recent research has debunked the "refrigerator mother" hypothesis as a possible etiology for ASD and current theories suggest a neuro-biological origin for the disorder (Bettelheim, 1967). Moving forward, researchers have, in

recent years, focused on more clearly describing the nature of ASD, potential subtypes, as well as potential causes.

Three basic social subtypes within ASD have been proffered in the research literature over the last few years. These include: aloof, passive, and active-but-odd (Rutgers, et. al, 2007). Individuals classified as aloof do not seem to show an interest in social interaction and reject others when they try to interact with them. Individuals classified as passive likewise do not seem to show an interest in social interaction, but do not reject others when they try to interact with them. Lastly, individuals classified as active-but-odd show an interest in interacting socially with others, but their interactions can be described as “odd and egocentric” (Rutgers, et. al, 2007, p. 191). These classifications are very broad social subtypes within ASD that help to differentiate between individuals and demonstrate the complexity of the autism spectrum.

While investigating the attachment patterns of individuals with ASD, it is important to be aware of different factors. For example, responses from individuals with neurotypical development who are placed in the strange situation compared to individuals with ASD who are placed in the strange situation may vary due to the changes in setting. For example, children with ASD may be more sensitive to, and react more to, environmental changes around them in a laboratory setting than to the absence of their caregiver (Rutgers et. al, 2007). Cognitive functioning also plays a role in the attachment behaviors displayed by those with ASD. For example, those who may be perceived to have an insecure attachment may have “a lower level of cognitive functioning and more strictly defined autism” (Rutgers et. al, 2004, 2007, p. 196).

When looking at children with ASD and their play behaviors, there are some differences compared to children who are neuro-typically developing. Children with neurotypical development who are securely attached tend to explore their environment and use their mother as

a check in base, while children with ASD may be a bit more restrictive and inhibited in their exploratory play. For example, a child with ASD may zero in on a specific group of toys or even a specific part on a toy, spending a lot of time just focusing and showing intense visual attention to that one object (Freeman, 1979, Naber et. al, 2007). Joint attention is demonstrated when a child looks at an object, looks at their communication partner, and then looks back at the object to communicate that they are both looking at the same thing. Children with ASD demonstrate lower levels of joint attention skills than their typically developing peers (Naber et. al, 2007).

It is important to understand, however, that children with ASD are capable of forming secure attachments with their caregivers (Rutgers et. al, 2007). A study by Naber found that level of play was higher in securely attached individuals with ASD than those who were not securely attached. This is true for peers with neurotypical development as well and shows attachment does serve a role in how a child plays (Naber et. al, 2007). However, it is important to note that even a securely attached child with ASD can struggle to experience the benefits of joint attention with their caregiver (Naber et. al, 2007).

Attachment Theory within Romantic Relationships

Attachment style of infants plays a major role on their formation of self and can possibly affect their future relationships throughout their life. (Saltman, 2016). As children approach adolescence, their relationships start to grow in complexity and variation while they start to establish romantic relationships. Forming a sense of identity and the development of sexuality are just some of the major tasks faced by adolescents (Furman et. al, 2003). As adolescents

navigate through the task of establishing romantic connections, they begin to form romantic self-concept which is related to one's idea of self-worth (Furman, et. al, 2003).

Romantic love is described as a “multidimensional phenomenon” (Hazan and Shaver, 1987, p. 515). It is difficult to pinpoint when and exactly how people fall in love with each other, because it differs across individuals. However, research conducted in 1997 by Capaldi and Crosby showed individuals with neurotypical development are drawn to romantic partners that share the same interests, attitudes, and values as they do (Furman et. al, 2003). Positive romantic experiences build confidence and influence one's romantic self-concept, whereas negative romantic experiences can result in feelings of failure and lack of capability to experience positive relationships in the future (Furman et. al, 2003).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) examined attachment within romantic relationships. In doing so, they compared romantic relationships to infant-caregiver relationships, finding that they stemmed from the same motivational system; the attachment- behavioral system (Fraley, 2010). This system is responsible for the emotional bond and connection that both infants-caregivers and romantic partners experience. Examining this further, Hazan and Shaver (1987) noted the similarities between these two types of relationships: 1.) “both feel safe when the other is nearby and responsive”, 2.) “both engage in close, intimate, bodily contact”, 3.) “both feel insecure when the other is inaccessible”, 4.) “both share discoveries with one another”, 5.) “both play with one another's facial features and exhibit a mutual fascination and preoccupation with one another”, 6.) “both engage in “baby talk”” (Fraley, 2010, p. 3).

In the mid 1980's Hazan and Shaver explored how attachment carried over into romantic relationships in adulthood by issuing a questionnaire to measure and compare the similarities and differences between individuals' relationships with their parents and their romantic relationships.

(Hazan and Shaver, 1987). According to the questionnaire, participants picked from the category they most identified with: a) secure adults classified themselves as finding it relatively easy to get close to others, being comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them, and not worrying about being abandoned or someone getting too close to them. b) avoidant adults classified being close to others as uncomfortable, difficult to trust others completely, nervous when anyone gets too close to them, and that others want them to be more intimate than they feel comfortable with. c) anxious-resistant adults felt that others were reluctant to get as close to them as they would like, worried their partner didn't really love them or didn't want to stay with them, and wanted to get very close to their partner which sometimes scared them away. Hazan and Shaver (1987) found their results were similar to what Ainsworth (1979) found with infants. Around 60% of adults classified themselves as secure, 20% classified themselves as avoidant, and 20% classified themselves as anxious-resistant. Therefore, adults who had a secure attachment with their caregivers as children were more likely to demonstrate secure attachment in their romantic relationships as adults. (Hazan and Shaver, 1987).

Attachment classification can also play a role in styles of conflict resolution that are present within couples. It has been found that securely attached partners partake in the most "verbal engagement" (Collins & Read, 1990), "self-disclosure" (Mickulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Pistole, 1993), and "mutual discussion and understanding" (Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994; LinShi, 2003). Partners with an avoidant attachment style tended to put up a guard and avoid deep and intimate situations with their partner to protect themselves from heartbreak or pain (LinShi, 2003). Contrastingly, partners with anxious-resistant attachment, feared their partner would leave them so they begin to seek dominance in the relationship as a means to ensure that this would not happen (LinShi, 2003). Concerning the three types of attachment related to

romantic relationships, it is important to note secure attachment seems to be the most beneficial in both healthy relationships and human development. Additionally, it seems infant attachment patterns tend to mirror their parent's attachment pattern while also remaining fairly consistent throughout their lifetime (Saltman, 2016).

The Berkeley Study conducted by Main (1988) consisted of a typical strange situation with infants and caregivers, but also included interviews with caregivers about their childhood attachment experiences. Parent attachment classification matched very closely with their child's attachment classification. Due to this correlation, Main followed up with the children in this study 19 years later and found a majority of their attachment classifications had remained consistent since childhood (Saltman, 2016).

Romantic Relationships within ASD

Just as typically developing individuals show an interest in forming romantic relationships, so do individuals with ASD. However, individuals with ASD struggle in that they lack the skills and knowledge to go about forming these relationships (Henault & Attwood, 2002; Stokes & Kaur, 2005, Stokes, et. al 2007). Awareness of social deficits can be detrimental to the overall psychological health of an individual and cause both depression and anxiety (Mazurek and Kanne, 2010; Sterling et al., 2008; Mazurek, 2013).

In examining individuals with ASD and their friendships, Osmond found it was rare for adolescents with ASD to have friends their own age (Osmond, 2004). In struggling to form social connections with their peers, individuals with ASD are likely to experience loneliness. Loneliness can lead to an increase in depression, anxiety, decreased life satisfaction, and a

decreased sense of their self-worth (Mazurek, 2013). Adolescents with ASD also tended to limit the activities that they took part in, avoid activities that involve reciprocity from another individual, and stuck to prearranged settings such as planned school events, religious youth clubs, etc. (Osmond et. al, 2004).

It was interesting to note that within Osmond's study, individuals with ASD were more likely to engage in social and recreational activities if their mother shared that she had participated in those activities before (Osmond et. al, 2004). This may or may not relate back to the attachment theory and the relationships children share with their mothers. Locke et. al. (2010) found that "adolescents with ASDs reported poorer quality friendships than typically developing peers, particularly with regard to companionship and helpfulness. (Mazurek, 2013)." Both the qualities of companionship and helpfulness would not only aid in forming friendships but would most likely also transfer over to help in forming romantic relationships as well. Since adults with ASD desire romantic relationships, these deficits hinder them from achieving these types of relationships.

Research done by Stokes examined and compared individuals with neurotypical development and individuals with ASD on both their social functioning and romantic functioning. Neurotypical social functioning was shown to increase with age, while social functioning within individuals with ASD increased with knowledge from observing the behaviors of those around them (Stokes et. al, 2007). As individuals with neurotypical development grew older, their romantic functioning increased. There was an apparent developmental delay in romantic functioning for individuals with ASD suggesting these romantic functioning skills can still develop but just take a bit longer (Stokes et. al, 2007). Common struggles that were noted by the parents of these individuals with ASD were

that their children displayed a.) “difficulties with making small talk”, b.) “not fully understanding the concept of a girlfriend or boyfriend”, c.) “lack of empathy”, d.) “lack of understanding in social contexts”, and “difficulty reading social cues” (Stokes et. al, 2007, p. 1976). Since these descriptions were provided by parents, this information lacks the subjectivity of the individuals with ASD. Through interviewing individuals with ASD who are in a romantic relationship, have previously been in a romantic relationship, or wish to be in a romantic relationship, we can gain further insight into their point of view. Since attachment patterns seem to play a role in the romantic relationships of neurotypical individuals, this study examined the shared experiences of individuals with ASD to determine the types of attachment patterns most prevalent within this group.

Chapter 2

Method

Design

A qualitative interview methodology was used to gain insight into the thoughts and experiences of individuals with ASD and Asperger's Syndrome regarding making and maintaining romantic relationships. Interviews are an appropriate methodology for gaining first-person stakeholder perspectives on an experience that is underrepresented in the research literature (Creswell, 1998; Morse & Field, 1995). Using a semi-structured approach with open-ended questions, young adults with ASD answered various questions about romantic relationships. The interviews had no time limit, and the researchers encouraged the participants to take their time, provide thoughtful responses, and asked follow-up questions when appropriate.

Materials

The iPhone application, Tape A Call®, was used to record the interviews as the participants preferred to participate in interviews over the phone rather than through a video calling program such as Skype® or FaceTime®. None of the participants were from the local area, so in-person interviewing was not a realistic option. After each interview was completed, the recorded call was transferred to iTunes™ software on a secure laboratory computer. The

audio interviews were then transcribed and saved word for word in a word processing document. The final word processing document was used in the additional data analysis procedures including checking for transcription reliability in creating and application of the coding scheme.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited in various ways. First, the research team reached out to personal contacts they thought might be interested in the study and who also seemed to meet the desired inclusion criteria. Next, the research team networked within the Penn State community by disseminating information to both faculty and students through word-of-mouth and by flyers. Flyers were posted in both downtown State College and throughout the University Park campus (after appropriate permissions were sought and obtained). Last, individuals who had participated in previous ASD research studies at the Pennsylvania State University were contacted via e-mail.

Inclusion Criteria. Participants in the current investigation met the following five criteria: (1) were 18 years of age or older, (2) had an ASD diagnosis, (3) provided their own informed consent for the study, (4) had been in a romantic relationship at some point (either prior to the interview or during the interview), or (5) had an interest in being in a romantic relationship at some point in the future. The demographic information of the nine participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Information of Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Race	Ethnicity	Education	Diagnosis
Jason	24	Male	Heterosexual	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	Pursuing associates degree	High functioning ASD
Bill	25	Male	Chose not to answer	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	Associates Degree	High functioning ASD
Chris	21	Male	Heterosexual	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	High School	PDD NOS
Sarah	24	Female	Heterosexual	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	Pursuing Bachelor Degree	ASD
Calvin	32	Male	Heterosexual with caveats transgender/cis	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	N/A	N/A
Jake	22	Male	Asexual, but romantically attracted to women	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	Bachelors Degree (pursuing PhD)	Asperger Syndrome
Rob	23	Male	Heterosexual	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	High School	Asperger Syndrome
Sean	25	Male	Chose not to answer	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	Associates (and continuing)	High functioning ASD
Roy	22	Male	Heterosexual	White	Not Hispanic or Latino	Pursuing Bachelors Degree	Asperger with OCD

Procedures

The university's Office of Research Protections approved this research study. Prior to the start of the interview, the first author provided each participant with the opportunity to ask questions about the study and provide their verbal informed consent. After all questions had been answered, the interview began. Interviews were conducted via the telephone, and were recorded using the iPhone application, Tape A Call®. Following the interview, the researcher provided the participant with a copy of the informed consent for their personal records.

All interviews began with general demographic questions, which were optional for the participants. The demographic questions included age, ethnicity, highest level of education, and diagnosis information including the specific diagnosis and type of professional who initially provided the diagnosis. Following the demographic questions, the interviewer continued with the questions centering around romantic relationships. The interview questions were developed by the research team after reading previous studies concerning adults with ASD and their romantic relationships in order to create the most relevant and efficient questions. Follow up questions were asked throughout the various interviews based on the participants' responses to gain more insight and understanding about each participant's experiences. Interviews ranged from 30-60 minutes varying based on the length of the responses of each participant.

Data Analysis

After each interview was recorded, it was saved to a secure drive within the lab as a recorded audio file within iTunes™ software. Members of the research team transcribed each interview verbatim within a word processing document. To ensure confidentiality for

participants, interviews were saved using pseudonyms for each file. Interviews were then checked for reliability by another research assistant before steps were made to move forward.

The nine transcribed interviews were then reread to identify statements made by participants that related to attachment. Each individual participant's statements that related to attachment were then classified demonstrating either a.) secure attachment, b.) anxious-resistant attachment, or c.) avoidant attachment and fell within subcategories under each attachment pattern. The number of statements a participant made relating to a specific attachment pattern was divided by the total number of statements they made relating to attachment overall to calculate the percentages of their specific attachment patterns.

Chapter 3

Results

Attachment patterns were predicted for each of the nine participants based on the traits and qualities expressed in statements during qualitative interviews. Each individual was classified as either demonstrating a mostly (1) secure, (2) anxious-avoidant, or (3) avoidant attachment pattern. Statements from each participant were classified by traits expressed and categorized into one of the three attachment patterns. The percentages of each participants' attachment patterns can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 Percentages of Attachment Patterns Displayed By Participants

Participant	Secure	Anxious-Resistant	Avoidant
Jason	73%	18%	9%
Bill	92%	0%	8%
Chris	88%	12%	0%
Sarah	59%	8%	33%
Calvin	20%	0%	80%
Jake	67%	22%	11%
Rob	25%	25%	50%
Sean	89%	0%	11%
Roy	0%	0%	100%

Secure Attachment Pattern

Six of the nine participants were classified as securely attached individuals. Although each individual made other statements that fell under either the anxious-resistant pattern, avoidant pattern, or both, the majority of their responses were consistent with a securely attached pattern. Out of these six securely attached participants, the percentage of comments coded as representing secure attachment ranged from 59% to 92%.

Happy, Friendly, Trusting Relationship

According to Hazan and Shaver, “securely attached individuals described their most important love experience as especially happy, friendly and trusting.” (Hazan and Shaver, 1987, p. 515). Participants Jason, Sarah, Chris, Bill, and Calvin, all made statements that reflected experiencing either a happy time with their partner, or having trust as a component of the relationship. Jason shared that he and his partner, “got along good” and also demonstrated the healthy knowledge that an abusive partner would not be someone he would date, relating to trust and safety within a relationship. Sarah shared that in her past relationship, her partner was verbally abusive, however Sarah seemed trustful that in the future she would find a healthy relationship. Sarah also described that forming a friendship before dating would be “fun” relating to the happy component of secure relationships. The participant Chris shared, “I like hanging out with her. I like more than anything her.” and also shared that he enjoyed playing games with his partner demonstrating they shared enjoyable and happy experiences together. Bill also shared that he liked the aspect of having someone to hangout with. Out of these five individuals, four of

them were classified as mostly securely attached, while only one, Calvin, was classified overall as an individual with avoidant attachment. Calvin shared he would like to feel safe with his partner, relating to the trust component present in securely attached individuals.

“Move Freely”

Secure individuals tend to allow both themselves and their partner to “move freely” and not be overly controlling (Firestone, 2016). Three of the nine participants (Jason, Bill, and Sean) made statements related to this idea. All of these individuals were classified as securely attached. Jason shared he would most likely draw the line if a partner tried to control him or decide what he could and couldn’t do emphasizing the “moving freely” idea of a relationship. Bill shared that his career may cause him to move and he would only ask someone to move with him, “if we’ve been dating long enough.” This reflects the lack of control and possession of a partner and emphasizes the healthy independence that should be present for each individual. When Sean was asked what he looked for in a partner, he stated, “somebody who can stand up and be their own person.” The confidence in being your own person while also being with someone else sums up the idea of “moving freely.”

Compromise in Conflict Resolution

Within relationships, the conflict resolution behaviors of securely attached individuals tends to center around acceptance and support of the other individual even when disagreements arise (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Four of the securely attached individuals (Jason, Bill, Jake, and

Sean) made statements reflecting the idea of compromising in conflict resolution. Jason shared that to resolve a disagreement he would try and figure out the disagreement and try to come to a compromise. In describing “agreeing to disagree”, Jason noted it was completely acceptable to have differing opinions even stating that in some cases some of the things argued over really don’t matter. In the case that agreeing to disagree wouldn’t work, Jason felt compromising was key. Bill stated that in negotiating with his partner he would, “Work out a little compromise. That listening to one another and then just uh, see if we can figure it out together.” Jake described that he and his partner used to argue over who would pay for each date. Jake stated, “So, like we eventually just kind of agreed, okay like, if whoever offers first, we just accept the first offer first. We don’t argue about it at all. We’re just... we’ll keep it at that.” All three of these participants displayed the knowledge of compromising strategies to use within a relationship.

“Secure and Connected” Companionship

Securely attached individuals tend to feel “secure and connected” with their partners (Firestone, 2016). Feeling “secure and connected” can be reflected through healthy communication and the feeling of companionship between partners. Six of the nine participants (Bill, Chris, Sarah, Jake, Sean, and Rob) made statements relating to this concept of companionship and communication. Bill stated, “I just want someone to share some things in my life.” Bill also shared he would like to “get to know someone first before asking them out”, talk about interests like music, and even get to meet their family. Chris also shared he would like to become friends with someone first and talk to his partner about common interests. Sarah

similarly stated, “Make sure to be their friend first.” and shared she would talk about hobbies with a romantic partner. Sean stated he stayed connected because: “We talked more on um on Skype and everything and I really liked talking to her.” Sean also shared that having common interests made his relationship enjoyable, “the perfect romantic relationship; a person who really likes to be with me, would really like to spend a lot of time with me more or who really likes to get close to me a lot.” Out of these six participants, five of them were classified as securely attached, however, Rob was classified as avoidantly attached, demonstrating only 25% secure attachment. Rob shared he would like to have someone around to talk to him.

“Honest and Open”

Securely attached individuals tend to be both “honest and open” with their partners (Firestone, 2016). Five out of the nine participants (Bill, Chris, Sarah, Jake, Sean) made statements that reflected both honesty and openness in their thoughts on relationships. Bill stated, “I was ver-very uh, honest with this girl.” Bill also shared that in ending a previous relationship that both he and his partner were honest and open stating, “And just one day we just came to a mutual agreement then we just called it quits.” Bill also shared the idea of openness in addressing a problem with his partner stating, “Well, I would uh try to confront the problem uh very delicately as I can and if possible uh we can find a solution to figure it out.” Sarah also described this honesty in ending things with a partner if they weren’t working out by sharing that she would tell her partner, “I need to move onto something now, or, I, it depends on the situation, of course.” Both Jeremy and Sean shared they would talk to their partner and be honest if something was bothering them. Jake stated, “Like if something upsets me or if something upsets

her we just kind of sit down and discuss it and see what we can do to move forward.” Sean shared that if something his partner was doing bothered him, “I would I would talk to her about it.” When Chris was asked whether he’d tell someone directly he was interested in them, he responded, “Yes.” All five of these participants were classified as securely attached individuals within this study.

Intimacy

Unlike in avoidant attachment, securely attached individuals do not fear intimacy, but rather most enjoy this aspect of the relationship with their partner (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Two out of the nine participants (Jake and Sean) made statements relating to intimate interactions they enjoyed within their relationships. Jake stated, “Um, I mean like some of the relationships that I’ve really liked, yaknow, like cuddling and things like that.” and “kissing’s nice.” Sean shared a range from “holding hands” to “kissing and going all the way.” Both Joe and Sean were classified as displaying a secure attachment pattern within this study.

Acceptance and Support of Partner

According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), securely attached individuals tend to “accept and support their partner despite their partner’s faults.” Bill, who was classified as 92% securely attached stated, “I don’t care if uh she’s uh skinny or uh or big as a house.” The reference “big as a house” has a negative connotation that Bill is aware that others may perceive as a fault. However, Bill makes known the acceptance he will display no matter one’s physical appearance.

Idea of Love Not Fading

According to research conducted by Hazan and Shaver (1987, p. 515), “secure lovers said that romantic feelings wax and wane but at times reach the intensity experienced at the start of the relationship and that in some relationships romantic love never fades.” One out of the nine participants (Bill) made a statement relating to this idea. Bill described his perfect relationship as, “Well, I would kinda see it like if uh, you were like newlywed married. Like, it’s all about fun and it’s all about planning your whole life ahead of ya.” Bill seemed to think this aspect or honeymoon stage would be ideal to keep throughout the relationship. Bill was classified as demonstrating a secure attachment within this study.

Can Always Leave in Bad Situation

When one is faced with any type of abuse or harmful situations within a relationship, it is important for that individual to leave the relationship (Stapf, 2016). Sarah stated, “If somebody does something bad or that you don’t think is good you can always leave the friendship or relationship.” Unlike anxious resistant individuals who may show desperation and not leave a harmful relationship, Sarah demonstrates knowledge that stems from a secure attachment pattern. Sarah was classified as a 59% securely attached individual within this study.

Anxious-Resistant Attachment Pattern

Idea of “Fantasy Bond”

Issues whether they be big or small arise in all relationships. People with anxious-resistant attachments tend to show desperation in forming a so-called perfect relationship or “fantasy bond” (Firestone, 2016). Two out of the nine participants (Sarah and Jake) made statements relating to desperation to form a fantasy bond. Sarah stated, “He didn’t make sure everything was okay, so. But it’s okay.” This statement showed that Sarah was convincing herself things were okay in her relationship when they weren’t. Jake spoke of a previous relationship and stated, “It was kind of an idealized kind of relationship. Like we didn’t really like think much about like any kind of faults or any kind of possible disagreements we might have, yaknow?” This “idealized kind of relationship” relates to a “fantasy bond.” Both of these individuals were classified as securely attached individuals within this study with Sarah showing only 8% anxious-resistant qualities and Joe showing 22% anxious-resistant qualities.

Worry About Losing Partner

Individuals who are anxious-resistant sometimes feel unsure about how their partner feels towards them, and in return become worried about losing them (Firestone, 2016). One out of the nine participants (Chris) stated, “I don’t want to lose it.” and “I don’t wanna miss doing that.” referring to spending time with a possible romantic partner. This fear of losing the opportunities to hangout with the future partner demonstrate Chris’ fear of losing the partner in general. This

may cause Chris to seem “clingy, demanding, or possessive” towards his partner which are all traits present in individuals who have an anxious-resistant attachment style (Firestone, 2016). Chris was classified as a securely attached individual in this study and demonstrated only 12% anxious-resistant qualities.

Insecure

Individuals that display anxious-resistant attachments tend to act insecure (Firestone, 2016). One out of the nine participants (Jason) shared he couldn't be picky with partners, because of his ASD diagnosis. This demonstrates insecurities regarding the diagnosis. Jason was classified as a securely attached individual in this study and only displayed 18% anxious-resistant qualities.

Dominance

Individuals with anxious-resistant attachment tend to use “dominance as an attempt to ensure their partner's availability” (Lin Shi, 2003, p. 153). One out of the nine participants (Jake) made a statement in which he shared his methods of planning things to annoy his romantic partner. This sense of dominance and control in planning relates to anxious-resistant attachment. Jake was classified as a securely attached individual in this study, but displayed only 22% anxious resistant qualities.

Paranoia

Individuals with anxious-resistant attachment tend to worry that their partner doesn't really love them (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Two of the nine participants (Jason and Rob) made statements that reflected this type of paranoia. Jason stated, "I mean, they're dating someone who has, has a mental disability, so isn't that, I mean I'm pretty much grateful enough for that." This reflects Zach worries his ASD diagnosis is a burden for someone else to accept and will prevent others from loving him. Rob shared he sometimes felt paranoid. Jason was classified as securely attached within this study but he demonstrated 18% anxious-resistant qualities. Rob was classified as avoidantly attached within this study, but he demonstrated 25% anxious-resistant qualities.

Avoidant Attachment Pattern

Fear Intimacy

Individuals with avoidant attachment tend to fear intimacy (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). According to Lin Shi (2003), they avoid the intimate interactions to try to guard themselves for fear of pain they may experience emotionally. Three out of the nine participants (Bill, Sarah, and Calvin) made statements that reflected this fear of intimacy. Bob shared he never fought or disagreed in a relationship, possibly avoiding these deeper interactions. Sarah shared she had been in a verbally and physically abusive relationship. Being involved in this type of relationship may cause a fear for intimacy in future relationships. Calvin stated, "I give people quite a lot of

double standards, and well I didn't mean anything by it but you kissed me without asking first. It's something that we're taught very strongly not to do." Both Bob and Sarah were classified as securely attached individuals within this study, however Bob demonstrated 8% avoidant attachment qualities and Sarah demonstrated 33% avoidant attachment qualities. Calvin was classified as mainly avoidantly attached within this study, demonstrating 80% avoidant qualities.

Defensive

Individuals with avoidant attachment tend to be more hostile and defensive (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Three out of the nine participants (Sarah, Calvin, and Roy) made statements that reflected this hostile and defensive tone. Sarah stated, "That wasn't my fault." describing a past experience in a relationship. When asked as to how Calvin would ask someone out, he shared he probably wouldn't be interested in anyone in the first place. Roy stated, "Women are just too difficult to understand so I just gave up." Calvin and Roy were both classified as avoidantly attached within this study, with Calvin demonstrating 80% avoidant qualities and Roy demonstrating 100% avoidant qualities. Sarah was classified as securely attached within this study with 33% avoidant qualities.

Emotionally Distance Themselves

Individuals demonstrating avoidant attachment tend to "emotionally distance themselves from their partner" (Firestone, 2016, p. 2). Four out of the nine participants (Jason, Sarah,

Calvin, and Roy) made statements relating to emotionally distancing themselves from their partner. When Zach was asked what he would do if he found out his partner was dating someone else, he responded, “Well then I’ll move on.” Sarah shared, “Make sure that you’re not abusive at all. You can always check their background, too”, indicating some form of trust issues present which may lead to possibly emotionally distancing herself from partners in the future. Calvin stated the generalization that, “It’s just reminding me how autistic people lack empathy.” He also shared, “Truth be told I wouldn’t expect it to succeed in the future and also would say it was rather expensive in terms of movies. And that person, being a lawyer and at least somewhat uh in keeping with the oath associated with it. I can’t just download them online.” These excuses are ways in which this individual would emotionally distance himself from their partner. Roy stated, “I have already started to give up on love, I gave up three years ago. Never looked back since...”. Roy also shared, “My guard is up and studded with titanium spikes.” and “My guard is up and never coming down.” Both Jason and Sarah were classified as securely attached individuals within this study with Jason demonstrating 9% avoidant qualities and Sarah demonstrating 33% avoidant qualities. Both Calvin and Roy were classified as individuals with avoidant attachment within this study with Calvin demonstrating 80% avoidant qualities and Roy demonstrating 100% avoidant qualities.

Withdraw From Conflict Resolution

Individuals with avoidant attachment tend to withdraw from conflict resolution (LinShi, 2003). Two out of the nine participants (Jake and Sean) made statements that reflected this type of withdrawal. Jake stated, “discussions didn’t really happen much in that relationship.” When

asked what Sean would do when faced with a conflict, he stated, “I would try to avoid it.” Both Jake and Sean were classified as securely attached individuals within this study with Jake demonstrating 11% avoidant qualities and Sean demonstrating 11% avoidant qualities.

Difficulty Trusting Partner

Individuals with avoidant attachment described that they find it difficult to trust their partner and they became nervous when anyone got too close (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). One out of the nine participants (Rob) stated, “I also don’t do well on the whole trusting part either.” Rob was classified as avoidantly attached within this study, demonstrating 50% avoidant qualities.

Lack of Connection

Individuals with avoidant attachment tend to lack the connectedness that is present in securely attached individuals. One out of the nine participants (Roy) felt relationships were difficult because, “Probably because my inability to kinda- I don’t know really relate to anyone or really figure out anything.” This awareness of the lack of connection with others demonstrates an avoidant attachment. Roy was classified as an individual with avoidant attachment within this study, demonstrating 100% avoidant qualities.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Semi structured interviews were used to examine the attachment patterns of young adults with ASD and how those attachment styles affect perspectives on past and current romantic relationships. Out of the nine participants in this study, six participants (67%) were classified as securely attached and three participants (33%) were classified as avoidantly attached. There were similarities and differences across all of the participants, however, that could be attributed to the range of different attachment patterns. These similarities and differences as they related to the subcategories of companionship, intimacy vs. fear of intimacy, self-worth, and compromise, will be discussed and compared to the previous literature.

Companionship

Six out of the nine participants demonstrated both the knowledge of and desire for companionship. More than half of the individuals in the study were able to appropriately describe and point out the benefits of companionship, contradicting the findings from previous literature that young adults with ASD struggled more than their typically developing peers to express the concept of companionship within friendships or relationships (Locke et. al., 2010). The idea of sharing interests and the importance of developing friendship by spending time together were some key ideas mentioned by the participants in the current project. Although five of the participants were securely attached, the one avoidantly attached participant, Roy, shared his desire for the social component of companionship in having someone to talk to. Therefore, the desire for companionship is not just limited to those with secure attachment. In summary,

from this sample, the knowledge of and desire for socialization and the connectedness associated with companionship were extremely evident among this group.

Intimacy vs. Fear of Intimacy

Lin Shi (2003) found that avoidantly attached individuals avoided intimate situations with their partner, whether that be sexual intimacy or deeply intimate conversation. As defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2013), individuals with ASD may display “hyper-or hypo-reactivity to sensory input”. Interestingly, two out of the nine participants made statements sharing their enjoyment of intimate acts (ex. holding hands, kissing, cuddling) with a romantic partner, while three of the nine participants shared that they struggled with intimate situations. Both the individuals who reportedly enjoyed intimate acts were classified as securely attached. However, two out of the three individuals (Bob and Sarah) who struggled with intimate situations were also securely attached, with only Calvin being avoidantly attached. This makes known that even secure individuals with ASD can struggle with intimate situations.

Self -Worth

Previous research has indicated the loneliness experienced by individuals with ASD can lead to a decreased sense of self-worth (Mazurek, 2013). Although only one out of the nine participants, Zach, made a statement relating to decreased self-worth in relation to his ASD diagnosis, it is important to note, overall, he was securely attached. Additionally, another participant, Chris, made statements in regards to worrying about losing a possible romantic

partner. Chris, like Zach, was also securely attached. These data indicate the decreased self-worth and paranoia experienced by individuals with ASD is real and prevalent even for those who are securely attached.

Compromise

Concerning conflict resolution within relationships, securely attached individuals tend to discuss issues that arise and attempt to come to an understanding with their partner (Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994; Lin Shi, 2003). Four out of the nine participants made statements regarding their knowledge of compromising strategies when disagreements arose. These four participants were all classified as securely attached, matching up with the literature.

Clinical Implications for Speech- Language Pathologists

Speech-language pathologists can utilize these findings in developing future clinical interventions to help young adults with ASD form and maintain romantic relationships. A majority of clinical interventions within the field of speech language pathology relating to ASD are currently designed for children. Therefore, familiarizing SLPs with attachment patterns may aid in creating more interventions for young adults with ASD.

Attachment patterns can be examined across all ages. Speech-language pathologists can become more aware of how to identify attachment patterns, and how attachment patterns affect functioning in a variety of areas, in order to create, structure, and deliver effective interventions for young adults with ASD. Speech-language pathologists can utilize the information from this study to understand that most young adults with ASD already possess the knowledge of certain

social skills, but do not know how to apply these skills in real world situations. Therefore, SLPs can observe young adults with ASD across various environments in various social settings in order to structure their treatment.

Limitations

Within this study there are several limitations that should be considered. This research study examined only nine individuals, which is a moderate sample size, for a qualitative investigation, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results. Additionally, out of this sample size, eight out of nine of the individuals were male with only one female participant. This study did not account for the variations of results between gender. Each participant was also Caucasian, limiting the cultural diversity of this study. Specific individual diagnoses of participants consisted of high functioning ASD, Asperger syndrome, and PDD-NOS. Each individual's specific ASD or Asperger diagnosis was not taken into consideration in analyzing the results of this study. Interview questions were not specifically constructed to examine attachment patterns, which may have limited the data relating to attachment. Finally, through the interpretation of these qualitative interviews, the results may have been interpreted differently by this researcher than by another individual.

Future Directions for Research

To make steps to further this research, more interviews should be conducted across all genders and cultures within the ASD population. New interview questions should be constructed specifically to help determine a participant's attachment pattern. All of this would allow for an

increase in the number of subjective point of views and increase the reliability and validity of future research relating to attachment patterns. Attachment patterns relating to individual diagnoses could then be analyzed further to examine participants more specifically. Through increased awareness and knowledge of attachment patterns present within individuals with ASD, more specific and effective interventions can be created to help individuals with ASD apply appropriate social skills within their relationships.

Summary

Six out the nine participants within this study had secure attachments ranging from 59%-92%. Therefore, from this study not only are individuals with ASD completely capable of being securely attached, but a majority of these individuals were securely attached. From this study's findings, most young adults with ASD seemed to possess the knowledge of appropriate social skills within relationships. This knowledge seemed to stem from either their experiences within relationships or observing their typically developing peers. However even with this knowledge, these individuals still found difficulty in applying these skills to use in actual social situation.

Appendix A

Interview Quote Classification

Participant: Jason

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
<p>Researcher: So what did you find out from your date? Jason: Well, that we got along good.</p>	<p>Researcher: Yeah I definitely wouldn't want to be in an abusive relationship, like I could totally understand that. But other than that there's like no, no other characteristics that you really would be looking for? Jason: I don't think so, I mean they're dating someone who has, has a mental disability, so isn't that, I mean I'm pretty much grateful enough for that.</p>	<p>Researcher: How long ago was the Baskin Robbins date? Jason: I think a year ago, maybe. Researcher: That's a long time! What is she's dating someone else now? Jason: Well then I'll move on.</p>
<p>Researcher: (laughs) I feel the same way. I like all kinds of different things too. So, I can understand that. Um, are there certain qualities that you're looking for in a particular person that you might want to date? Jason: I'm not really sure. I mean I guess almost anything is fine as long as it's not an abusive relationship, but I would guess that, I would say almost anyone has that as a standard.</p>	<p>Researcher: So you feel like you just have to take what you can get because of your Autism? Jason: On some level, yeah. Like there is a line to be drawn but don't draw it too soon. Because I don't know if, cause I haven't dated that much so I haven't set, sort of a standard.</p>	
<p>Researcher: Like within a certain reason, you wouldn't just put up with anything?</p>		

<p>Jason: Yeah, yeah there is a, there is a certain point where I draw the line.</p> <p>Researcher: Do you know where that would be?</p> <p>Jason: Huh, not sure. That's maybe trying to be a tad more controlling or something, I don't know.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, like if they were trying to be more controlling of you, you might draw the line there?</p> <p>Jason: Yeah, like deciding what my interests were or something along those lines.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Ok, how would you, how do you um, how do you resolve disagreements when you have a disagreement with someone?</p> <p>Jason: Well I try to figure out the source of the disagreement first and try to come up with a compromise.</p>		
<p>Researcher: (laughs) So what did you um, what, how did you explain what agree to disagree means to him?</p> <p>Jason: Well that we both agree that neither one of us is going to change each other's minds and it's okay for us to have different opinions.</p>		
<p>Jason: Yeah I mean in the end what we were arguing about didn't really matter</p>		
<p>Researcher: So having a separate opinion about it was perfectly acceptable?</p> <p>Jason: Yeah.</p>		

<p>Researcher: And what would you do in those situation where agree to disagree wasn't really an option?</p> <p>Jason: Well we'd try to find a compromise.</p>		
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Participant: Bill

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
<p>Bill: Okay. Well um, my last relationship only lasted 3 months. But I was ver- very uh, honest with this girl...</p>		<p>Researcher: Yeah! I mean I think I wo- I understand that. So when you were in those relationships, did you ever have to confront your partner about something you disagreed with them about?</p> <p>Bill: Oh, no!</p> <p>Researcher: You never, you never fought or had a disagreement at any about anything?</p> <p>Bill: Nope.</p>
<p>Researcher: (laughing) Okay. So you want...</p> <p>Bill: But I just,</p> <p>Researcher: A companion?</p> <p>Bill: I just want someone to s- yes, exactly. I just want someone to share some things in my life. I mean not just uh with me, but I would also like to hear her interests as well.</p>		
<p>Bill: Um, someone who's fun to hangout with.</p>		
<p>Bill: I don't care if uh if she's uh skinny or uh or big as a house.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Okay. So you would just mar- like walk</p>		

<p>straight up to someone even if you didn't know them and say "Hi! I'm B and I, you know you seem like a really nice person and I'd like to see if you'd like to hangout this weekend"?</p> <p>Bill: Uh, more like I would get to know them first and then I would ask them out.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Yeah, yeah school and the job were getting in the way. So they just kinda faded, like faded out or did someone like actually say "this isn't working anymore, like I don't think we should date anymore"?</p> <p>Bill: Kinda happened both ways, we both knew that uh, if things weren't going to well because we weren't seeing each other much. And just one day we just came to a mutual agreement then we just called it quits.</p>		
<p>Researcher:(laughing) So how do you think you'll go about negotiating that?</p> <p>Bill: Eh work out a little compromise. That listening to one another and then just uh, see if we can figure it out together.</p>		
<p>Bill: Well, I would uh try to confront the problem uh very delicately as I can and if possible uh we can find a solution to figure it out.</p>		

<p>Researcher: Alright, very cool. So, um, so when you're like in a relationship with someone you, what do you, what kinds of things do you guys talk about like, probably obviously music, what else?</p> <p>Bill: Well uh we could talk about what's going on in our lives like how's work going and are they uh doing anything else in their future that they have in mind</p>		
<p>Bill: And uh hopefully uh get to know their families a little better.</p>		
<p>Researcher: That's very cool! Very, very cool. So um, so you say like you'd really like to, like leave the area and go to Tennessee for your music career. If you were to meet someone, would that be something that you would tell them? Like would you want them to move with you? How would you approach that?</p> <p>Bill: Well, if uh I told them they would probably know that uh, I just have a big dream about moving up there. But if I did have the opportunity, and if we've been dating long enough, I probably would ask them to come with me.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Okay. So, can you tell me what the perfect romantic relationship would be like for you?</p>		

<p>Bill: Hmm. Well, I would kinda see it like if uh, you were like newlywed married. Like, it's all about fun and it's all about planning your whole life ahead of ya.</p>		
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Participant: Chris

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
<p>Chris: Huh? Work experience. Things we like. Researcher: You talk to her about work experience? I'm sorry what else? Chris: Things we like....</p>	<p>Woman: When you call her again. Chris: I don't wanna lose it. Woman: Okay Chris: I don't wanna miss doing that. Woman: Okay...</p>	
<p>Chris: I want her to be my friend....</p>		
<p>Woman: Okay Researcher: I think it's a good strategy. So what's your so what's your plan? How are you how are you gonna become her new boyfriend? Woman: How do you think you'll do that? Chris: Huh? Woman: How do you think you'll do that? Chris: (unintelligible) Woman: Talk to her... Chris: Talk to her. Yes. (unintelligible) Talk about animals in the zoo with her.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Yellow! Oh I like yellow roses. That's good. She sounds like a pretty special girl. So do you think</p>		

<p>she already knows that you like her? Chris: Yes! Woman: (laughs) Researcher: (laughs) How do you think she knows? Did you tell her? Chris: Yes....</p>		
<p>Researcher: And he tells her he tells her do you tell her when you talk to her like I like you Ch? Chris: I like you Ch. Researcher: Yeah. I want you to be my girlfriend. Chris: I want you to by my girlfriend....</p>		
<p>Researcher: Okay. What do you wanna tell me? Chris: I like hanging out with her. I like more than anything her.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Oh that's cool. That's very cool. You can do two players so you can play together at the same time Chris: Yes Researcher: Do you play any other games together? Chris: Yes. Majong.</p>		

Participant: Sarah

SECURE	ANXIOUS-AVOIDANT	AVOIDANT
<p>Researcher: Yeah, I wouldn't tolerate someone being verbally abusive to me either. I'm glad you were able to get away from it. Do you think you would ever have another romantic relationship?</p>	<p>Sarah: We need to practice consent. Of course, right? Researcher: Yeah, yeah. There definitely needs to be consent in a relationship. I definitely agree with that. Do you feel like there was a</p>	<p>Researcher: Hey, are you there? Hey sorry I think we're having like a difficult time. Um, so you dated for 5 months, why did your relationship with him end? Sarah: Um, abuse....</p>

<p>Sarah: Hopefully in the future, yeah....</p>	<p>difficulty with that in your last relationship? Sarah: Yeah. Yes. Researcher: So he wouldn't make sure things were okay with you before it would happen or before he would say something? Sarah: (Unintelligible) It was pretty hard. He didn't make sure everything was okay, so. But it's okay. ...</p>	<p>Researcher: So, was he like verbally abusive, physically abusive? Sarah: A little of both, I would say</p>
<p>Researcher: Ok, that's good. How do you think um, what are you going to try to do to meet someone else? You say you would like to have another romantic relationship, how will you try to meet someone else? Sarah: Make sure to be their friend first and then make sure that you give consent. ...</p>		<p>Researcher: How did you get out of that situation? Sarah: That wasn't my fault....</p>
<p>Researcher: So when you meet someone that you like, how do you let them know that you like them? Sarah: Well, we become friends first. Researcher: Mhm. Sarah: And if it gets more serious, where we can talk more and stuff, then it's more dating.</p>		<p>Sarah: Make sure that you're not abusive at all. You can always check their background, too. Researcher: You're going to do a background check? I don't blame you. Sarah: Yeah, make them do a background check if you want to....</p>
<p>Researcher: So would you just go up to someone that is nice and say "Hi" to them? Sarah: Well, we would become friends first and be a lot more obvious it would be</p>		<p>Researcher: Do you ever use online dating or anything like that? Sarah: No.</p>

<p>more fun, then we would start dating....</p>		<p>Researcher: No, not at all? You just want to meet someone in person? Sarah: Yeah. Researcher: Yeah. Sometimes that is definitely easier. Sarah: It's safer too. Researcher: It can be, you're right. Yeah, it can be safer. I think it's kind of difficult to figure out who you can trust when you're just interacting with someone on the internet. Sarah: Yeah... (unintelligible)</p>
<p>Sarah: Right. If somebody does something bad or that you don't think is good you can always leave the friendship or the relationship...</p>		
<p>Researcher: Yeah, you can. If someone does something that you don't like, you can always leave the friendship or relationship. That is true. How would you tell someone, like if they were a friend or even a boyfriend, if you thought you wanted to leave the relationship what would you say? Sarah: What would I have said? Well, you've been, I need to move onto something now, or, I, it depends on the situation, of course. Or, it depends, you know? Researcher: It does depend. You would just say "it's not working out" or something like that? Sarah: Yeah, yeah...</p>		

<p>Researcher: So, when you had a boyfriend that you were dating for a while, what did you guys talk about with each other?</p> <p>Sarah: Hobbies...</p>		
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Participant: Calvin

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
<p>Researcher: So are there certain qualities that you look for in someone that you would date?</p> <p>Calvin: Uh I probably had them at some point. I would say at this point aside from maybe being able to feel safe with the person, probably not many. They're also gonna push back on that. Oh you have standards so nice high standards you got they're too no wonder you can't find anybody We have to have standards too that sort of thing</p> <p>Researcher: I mean I think that your standard of feeling safe, like being able to trust someone that's probably what I would say is the cornerstone of the relationship too. You know? That's fair.</p>		<p>Calvin: I give people quite a lot double standards, and well I didn't mean anything by it but you kissed me without asking first. It's something that we're taught very strongly not to do.</p>
		<p>Calvin: (sigh) yeah. It's just reminding me how autistic people lack empathy. Keep in mind..."</p>
		<p>Researcher: Yeah. Um....so...how would you let someone know if you were</p>

		<p>actually interested in someone? Like hanging out with them more, or whatever. How would you let them know that you're interested in them?</p> <p>Calvin: I probably wouldn't be. Yeah uh the closest thing I ever did was probably when I initiated a 'hey I might want to watch a movie with you, how's the ARC going?' that was the previous, that was how the movie thing got started and then truth be told, that was because the person had previously made movie references and they never saw that movie or something. And like well there... "</p>
		<p>Researcher: There's an opportunity, we can watch that movie together and we can have that as a common reference.</p> <p>Calvin: (sigh) and truth be told I wouldn't expect it to succeed in the future and also would say it was rather expensive in terms of movies. And that person, being a lawyer and at least somewhat uh in keeping with the oath associated with it. I can't just download them online.</p>

Participant: Jake

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
<p>Jake: So, like we eventually just kind of agreed, okay like, if whoever offers first, we just accept the first offer first. We</p>	<p>Researcher: (laughing) Did any of your other girlfriends, or people who</p>	<p>Jake: Yeah. The abusive one it kind of turned into whatever she wanted was kind of the answer.</p>

<p>don't argue about it at all. We're just... we'll keep it at that.</p> <p>Researcher: Yeah, yeah that's good...</p>	<p>you were in relationships with like your planning?</p> <p>Jake: (laughing) Did any of your other girlfriends, or people who you were in relationships with like your planning?</p> <p>Researcher: Uh-huh.</p> <p>Jake: Like it was one of those things, when they got a bit better about it like later on. So the first one was kind of the worst out of all of that. In that sense....</p>	<p>Researcher: Mhm.</p> <p>Jake: So... that was kind of a... discussions really didn't happen much in that relationship.</p>
<p>Jake: Um, I mean like some of the relationships that I've really liked yaknow like cuddling and things like that.</p>	<p>Jake: It was kind of an idealized kind of relationship. Like we</p> <p>Researcher: Yeah</p> <p>Jake: ... didn't really like think much about like any kind of faults or any kind of possible disagreements we might have, yaknow?</p>	
<p>Researcher: Yeah, I agree. Okay so you like the cuddling, you like spending time with the person you're in a relationship with. What-what else do you like about or enjoy about dating?</p> <p>Jake: Um, I mean there's kissing. Kissing's nice.</p>		
<p>Researcher: Alright so... if um how do you deal with disagreements in a relationship? So if there's a disagreement that comes up, how do you handle it?</p> <p>Jake: Uh, we have a discussion.</p>		

Jake: Like if something upsets me or if something upsets her we just kind of sit down and discuss it and see what we can do to move forward.		
Researcher: Yeah that's really good. So like try to find a compromise? Jake: Yeah exactly...		

Participant: Rob

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
Researcher: What kinds of things about dating did you really like? Rob: Just having someone to talk to, having somebody around. But I, I sleep maybe 12 hours a week. Uh, so just having somebody around to talk to or, you know 11 o'clock in the morning I could call, talk to her -...	Rob: We had issues with like, communication – me misunderstanding something and overreacting, or me being paranoid.	Rob: Yeah, and I also don't do well on the whole trusting people part either....
		Rob: It's not that easy to get close to me...

Participant: Sean

SECURE	ANXIOUS-RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
Sean: Well I started to get a little bit of an interest in her. We talked more on um on skype and everything and I really liked talking to her....		Researcher: Okay, so what if it happens again? Sean: I would try to avoid it. And just tell her that uh that maybe we should just change the subject....
Researcher: (laughs) okay that's a good. You gave me		

<p>the answer I just took confirmed what you said so that's (laughter) I'm glad I got that right. Um so what aspects of dating someone or having a significant other do you really enjoy?</p> <p>Sean: Having a umm it would be having common interests and to feel to feel like um you really wanna be with that person</p> <p>Researcher: Mhm so companionship part of it?</p> <p>Sean: The companionship part of it. Yes. ...</p>		
<p>Sean: Kiss and go all the way. Like that sort of thing</p> <p>Researcher: And hug them and have that like intimate part of the relationship?</p> <p>Sean: Yes pretty much. ...</p>		
<p>Sean: Characteristics would be Im looking for someone really nice, someone who um somebody who has most the common interests that I would have, somebody's who um and somebody who can stand up and be their own person....</p> <p><u>Move freely</u></p>		
<p>Researcher: So do you feel like like if you had one fight that would be like all it would take or is there a certain circumstance where you would try to like work out something that you were disagreeing about with someone or</p> <p>Sean: I would try to work out something like give it a</p>		

couple of um tries... compromise		
<p>Sean: Well um well I pretty much tolerate peoples' opinions about things but uh</p> <p>Researcher: If you were unhappy with something that you were that your girlfriend was doing how would you let your girlfriend know that?</p> <p>Sean: I would I would talk to her about it....</p>		
<p>Researcher: Can you describe the perfect romantic relationship for you?</p> <p>Sean: The perfect romantic relationship. A person who really likes to be with me, would really like to to spend a lot of time with me more or who really likes to get close to me a lot....</p>		
<p>Woman: Is it somebody that would like to hold your hand?</p> <p>S- Yeah stuff like that. People who like to hold my hand, people who like to you spend time with me. That sort of thing....</p>		

Participant: Roy

SECURE	ANXIOUS RESISTANT	AVOIDANT
		<p>Researcher: You would say it was difficult? Why do you think that it's been difficult?</p> <p>Roy: probably because my inability to kinda- I don't know really relate to anyone or really figure out anything. I mean girls to me are like a- are like a</p>

		<p>terrorist strapped with a (unintelligible) speaking another language</p> <p>Researcher: (Laughs) girls are like a terrorist strapped with a bomb speaking another language. That's a pretty interesting analogy, I like that one. Do you have trouble relating with everyone or is it mostly just girls?</p> <p>Roy: Everyone really....</p>
		<p>Researcher: So do you think you'll ever give up on love or do you think you'll just try to keep trying to find someone</p> <p>Roy: I have already started to give up on love, I gave up three years ago. Never looked back since...</p>
		<p>Researcher: Oh. are there any aspects of dating that you do enjoy?</p> <p>Roy: Eh no. Not really, like I said women are just too difficult to understand so I just gave up....</p>
		<p>Researcher: Do you think that you'll ever let your guard down?</p> <p>Roy: Nope. My guard</p> <p>Researcher: Why not?</p> <p>Roy: My guard is up and studded with</p> <p>Researcher: Your guard is what? I'm sorry</p> <p>Roy: My guard is up and studded with titanium spikes.</p> <p>....</p>
		<p>Roy: Yup. My guard is never coming down, not around a</p>

		single person. Well except around, my little brother T but he's just an idiot. So I don't really care ...
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ACADEMIC VITA

Patricia Cummings
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Education:

The Pennsylvania State University: University Park, PA

- B.S. Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Schreyer Honors College
- Graduation: May 2017

Research Experience:

Penn State Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
University Park, PA

Research Assistant for Dr. Erinn Finke

- Work in the lab of Dr. Erinn Finke on a study examining how individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder form and maintain romantic relationships.
- Recruit participants by sending out e-mails to previous participants of Dr. Finke's other research studies.
- Help formulate questions for the interviews and assist in scheduling and conducting the interviews with Dr. Finke.
- Transcribe, unitize, and code the data to search for patterns.
- Write undergraduate thesis on this topic.

Speech and Hearing Experience:

NSSLHA (National Student Speech Language and Hearing Association)
University Park, PA

Student Volunteer and National Member

- Serve as an active member by participating in service events throughout the State College community.
- Visit residents of Hearthside Nursing home to socialize with residents, play games, and paint the women's nails.
- Work with individuals of all ages with Down Syndrome.
- Attended the ASHA National Convention in November 2016 as a NSSLHA member.

MOSS Rehab Main Campus

Elkins Park, PA

Student Observer

- Shadowed the speech language pathologists working with both inpatient and outpatient traumatic brain injury patients.
- Observed a video fluoroscopic swallowing exam.

MOSS Rehab and Einstein Hospital

Philadelphia, PA

Student Observer

- Shadowed the speech language pathologists working with traumatic brain injury outpatients, pediatric speech language pathologist, and the speech language pathologist working within the hospital for swallow therapy.

Penn State College of Education ELL Tutoring Program

University Park, PA

ELL Tutor

- Virtually tutored an ELL student from Hazelton, PA each week throughout the semester for the class CI 280 at Penn State.
- Met my tutee in person both at Hazelton and at Penn State through organized visits between the Hazelton after school program and Penn State.

Leadership Experience:

Penn State Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

University Park, PA

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

- Served as an undergraduate TA for the class CSD 300: Developmental Considerations in the Assessment and Treatment of Language Disorders.
- Aided the teacher by helping her check for completeness on assignments and presenting brief summaries to the class.
- Aided students by helping those that had any questions or missed any notes.

Penn State College of Health and Human Development JumpStart Program

University Park, PA

JumpStart Leader

- Served as a leader in guiding freshmen within the college of HHD on an overnight

camping trip and also aiding them in transitioning to college within the first few weeks of classes.

FOTO Special Interest Organization for Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON

University Park, PA

Donor and Alumni Relations Chair

- Communicated and networked with alumni of the organization in order to keep them up to date with all things FOTO through biweekly newsletters. Reached out to them to see if they knew of any possible donors.
- Picked up, distributed and collected THONvelopes for organization members. Ran weekly Donor Alumni sub-committee meetings in which we sent out THONvelopes to past donors of those that had graduated and FOTO alumni as well.
- Organized and made sure handwritten thank you notes were sent out by organizing weekly sub-committee meetings.
- Requested, picked up, and collected donation boxes which were sent out by all of our general members in order to fundraise for THON.
- Attended FOTO executive board meetings each Sunday night to help organize and plan for the week ahead.
- Spoke about all Donor & Alumni related events at general membership meetings each Monday night.

Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON

University Park, PA

Donor & Alumni Relations Weekend Warrior

- Responsible for leading tours within the Bryce Jordan Center for corporate donors throughout THON weekend. Responsible for overseeing that each job within the committee is running smoothly.

Donor & Alumni Relations Donor Calling Chair

- Made phone calls to various corporate donors for THON.

Donor & Alumni Relations Inspiration Chair

- Selected an inspirational video or story about THON's mission to eradicate pediatric cancer to inspire and motivate committee members in order to foster a caring and efficient environment at each meeting.

Extracurricular Activities:

Best Buddies Penn State Chapter State College, PA

Volunteer

- Best Buddies International is a nonprofit organization consisting of volunteers that create opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Plan events to do with buddy such as dinner, going out for ice cream, hockey games, etc.
- Call buddy on the phone to check up on how she is doing.

FOTO Special Interest Organization Benefitting Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON University Park, PA

General Member

- Served as a general members of the organization by participating in fundraising activities such as canning, canvassing for donations door to door, bake sales, and visiting our Four Diamonds families.

Donor Alumni Relations Committee for Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON University Park, PA

Committee Member

- Serve on the committee by participating in activities like THONvelope sorting, distribution, and collection. Participate in benefitting through writing handwritten thank you notes to our donors. Work concession stands at the Bryce Jordan Center during THON weekend.

Employment Experience:

Café Laura University Park, PA

Student Employee

- Working part time as a barista at a coffee bar on campus, managed by Penn State's School of Hospitality Management.

Somerton Springs Day Camp Feasterville, PA

Camp Counselor

- Work alongside another co-counselor to lead a group of 25 girls (ages 9-11 years old) each Monday-Friday for eight weeks (9am-4pm with some extended early morning shifts).
- Supervise and organize sports, games, swimming and crafts at this outdoor camp while also interacting with other groups (around 300 kids in the whole camp).

Lion Line Telefund
State College, PA
Student Caller

- Networked with Penn State alumni, parents, and friends all over the country encouraging them to give monetary gifts to enhance students' college experience and make Penn State a better institution.
- Fundraised about \$100 to \$150 per week working 3 different shifts about 3 hours each.

Findlay Dining Commons
University Park, PA
Student Employee

- Served and prepared food in the dining commons.