

Critically explore the efficacy of Humanistic modalities in supporting a client's journey from experiencing an insecure relational attachment to achieving therapeutic change. Consider the role of attachment and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in this process.

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Attachment Theory

John Bowlby

- Responses and availability from early caregivers form our an 'internal working model', shaping our future close relationships (Bowlby, 1969, cited in Puckett, Sood and Newman-Taylor, 2024).

Mary Ainsworth

- 'Strange situations' study developed a model of 3 different attachment styles: Secure Attachment, Insecure avoidant attachment and insecure ambivalent attachment (Ainsworth et al, 1978, cited in Pollard, Bucci and Berry, 2023).

Mary Main and Judith Solomon

- Identified an additional style of attachment 'disorganised attachment' (Main and Solomon, 1990, cited in Pollard, Bucci and Berry, 2023).

Secure Attachment

Child

- Develops from an available and responsive caregiver.

Adult

- Can regulate emotions, form relationships, hold a positive view of self and others, developed from sensitive and responsive care giving (Mikulincer et al., 2003, cited in Pollard, Bucci and Berry, 2023).
- Tend to deal with threats and challenges more confidently and be more open to experiencing their emotions fully and accurately and communicate this to others (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019).

Insecure Attachment

Child

Adult

- Attachment insecurity can be damaging to the physical and mental health of the person but also of those they are in close relationships with (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019).
- Avoidant
 - Caregiver is physically or emotionally absent.
 - Negative view of others, withdraw from relationships (Mikulincer et al., 2003 cited in Pollard, Bucci and Berry, 2023).
 - Avoiding experiencing and expressing unpleasant emotions reduces the likelihood of these experiences being integrated into existing cognitive-affective structures, and less likely to effectively process this information in social settings (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019).
 - Owing to the association of pain and rejection with close contact this group may experience a therapists' interpretations as too intrusive and would require a more friendly and flexible approach (Holmes, 2014, pp. 138-139)

Insecure Attachment

- Ambivalent (or Anxious)

child

- Inconsistent caregiving
- Negative view of self, fear of rejection from others (Mikulincer et al., 2003 cited in Pollard, Bucci and Berry, 2023).

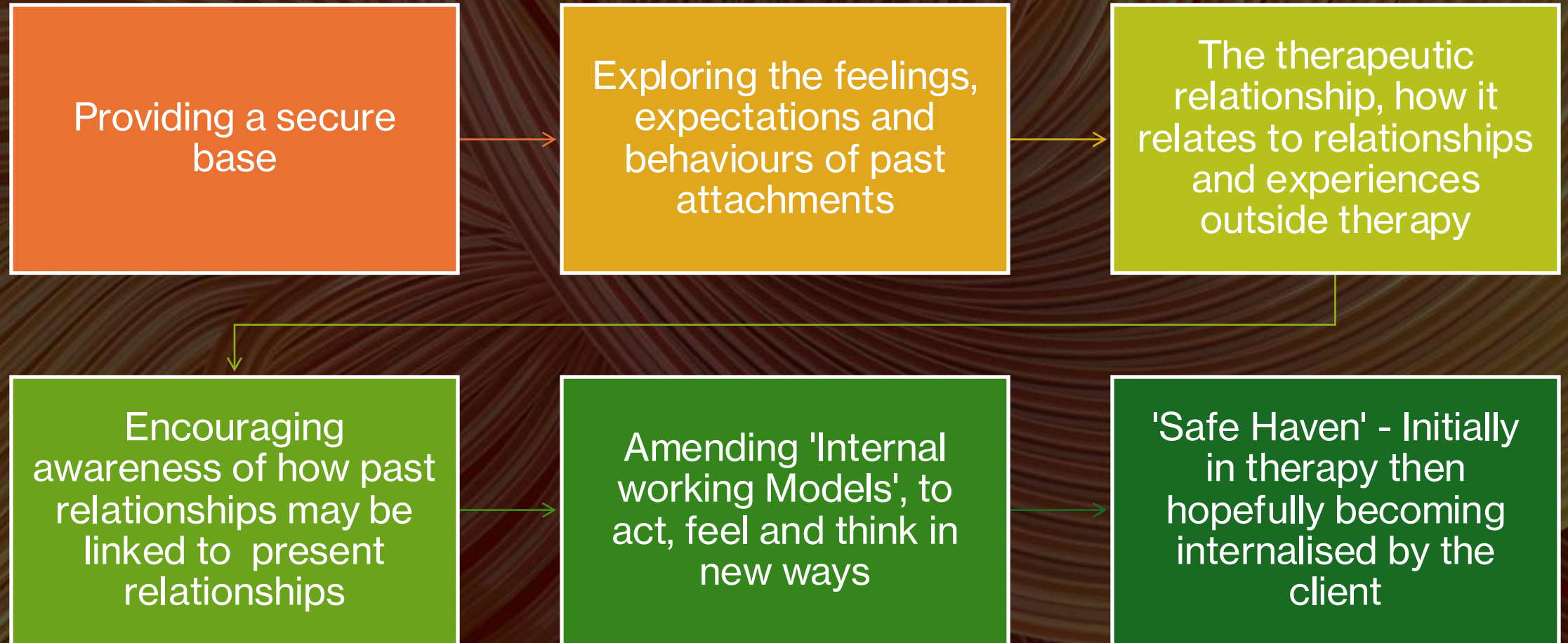
Adult

- May focus on or exaggerate negative emotions as their distress become hyperactivated, needing the proximity of their attachment figure to cope (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2019).
- This attachment style in therapy requires reliability, firm limits and encouragement to explore past attachments in order to achieve attachment security (Holmes, 2014, p.138).

Disorganised Attachment

- Frightened or frightening caregiver.
- More complex, can present as a mixture of 'avoidant' and 'ambivalent'.
- Simultaneously experiencing fear and fright whilst yearning for closeness and safety (Sekowski and Prigerson, 2022).
- Associated with dissociation in adults, which can lead to paranoia and hearing voices (Puckett, Sood and Newman-Taylor, 2024).
- Pollard, Bucci and Berry (2023) claim there are controversies when trying to define disorganised attachment when evaluating measures that assess disorganised attachment in adults.
- Puckett, Sood and Newman-Taylor (2024), also highlight the confusion when defining disorganised attachment and call for agreed working definitions of disorganised and fearful attachment.
- Duschinsky et al. (2021) noted that commentators of attachment theory often refer to organised attachment as a more natural state whereas disorganised attachment tends to be treated as a 'state of madness'.

Bowlby's Theory of attachment - 6 Key goals for Psychotherapy



(Bowlby, 1977, cited in Levy and Johnson, 2019)

Overview

- The longevity of attachment theory and the many disciplines which have used and developed the theory highlights its significance. Thompson, Simpson and Berlin (2022) comment that it is **not** common for a psychological theory to be so prominent and influential for so long.
- Sood, Carnelly and Newman Taylor (2022) state therapists should assess and target attachment styles to predict and understand a clients' use of different emotion regulation strategies.
- Levy and Johnson (2019) believe attachment theory, being developmentally informed, provides us with a universal language, bridging different psychotherapy treatment orientations.
- We do not always display the same attachment attitudes toward **all** relationships, suggesting a multiplicity of attachment tendencies for a given individual. (Levy and Johnson, 2019)
- Criticism has been made of attachment theory's Western, industrialised bias It has been claimed that the care-giver relationship assumed by many researchers is not applicable to cultures which emphasize communal care (Keller, 2021, cited in Thompson, Simpson and Berlin, 2022)
- Thompson , Simpson and Belin (2022) feel hopeful for the future direction of the theory, but do feel that some challenges need to be addressed, including; a better and more direct review of Internal Working Models and attachment assessment measures. Do the existing measures need further examination or new measures developed?

Linking ACEs and attachment styles

Adverse childhood experiences and the development of attachment styles are closely linked.

Experiencing ACEs would have a significant impact on the development of attachment styles on individuals.

Already developed attachment styles can shape how individuals respond to experiencing ACEs.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

In Wales 50% of
people have
experienced 1 ACE

14% have
experienced 4 or
more.

Individuals reporting experience of four or more ACEs were:

- 4 times more likely to be a high-risk drinker.
- 6 times more likely to have had sex under the age of 16 years.
- 6 times more likely to smoke.
- 16 times more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin.
- 15 Times more likely to have inflicted violence on another person.
- 20 times more likely to have been in prison.

• (Public Health Wales NHS Trust, 2015)

ACEs and their Association with Adult Wellbeing:

- The data compares adults who had experienced no ACEs in childhood with adults who had experienced 4 or more ACEs.
- They reported in the last 2 weeks to have felt:

3 times more likely to have never or rarely felt relaxed

3 times more likely to have never or rarely felt close to other people

4 times more likely to have never or rarely been thinking clearly

5 times more likely to have never or rarely to have dealt with problems well

5 times more likely to have never or rarely been able to make up their own mind about things

6 times more likely to have never or rarely felt optimistic about the future

6 times more likely to have never or rarely felt useful

- The previous slide gives us an insight into clients' experiences and how they may present in therapy when they have experienced 4 or more ACEs. Amos et al. (2023) assert that assessing the effect of ACEs can guide targeted outcomes.
- Keeping score of the number of ACEs experienced can give us some insight into the affect they have on an individual.
- Amos et al.(2023) compared the effect of ACEs when they occurred in isolation and the co-concurrence in different categories of ACEs, they found differing outcomes depending on which categories of ACEs had been experienced together rather than the number of ACEs experienced.
- This highlights the need to see our client holistically.





- The evidence demonstrates the connection between ACEs and outcomes is not inevitable, as how people experience ACEs is not identical, (the intensity, timing and longevity may not be the same), but also individuals experience adversity differently due to their circumstances, personality, resilience and support available. (Welsh Government, 2021).
- Coping styles are one example of how ACEs may be experienced differently. 'Problem focused' and 'avoidant emotion-focused' strategies are often examined in relation to ACEs (Sheffler et al., 2019)
- Sheffler et al. (2019) found individuals who had experienced ACEs were more likely to use 'avoidant emotion-focused' coping strategies rather than 'problem focused' which was associated with increased psychiatric symptoms.
- This may be a modifiable pathway for those who experience ACEs and their likelihood of developing health and psychiatric problems (Sheffler et al., 2019).
- This would indicate successful therapeutic interventions could play a vital role in change for clients.



Person-Centered Therapy

- Carl Rogers Six Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Therapeutic Change:
 - Psychological contact
 - Client incongruence
 - Therapist congruence
 - Unconditional positive regard
 - Empathy
 - Client acceptance of unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding

(Rogers, 1957 ,cited in Rodgers, Tudor and Ashcroft 2021).

The conditions are incredibly important, but nothing is necessary and sufficient for everyone, a more pluralistic approach is needed (Cooper, 2019).



Gestalt – The Paradoxical Theory of Change



- 'Change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not.' (Beisser, 1970, quoted in Joyce and Sills, 2018)
 - The therapist encourages the client to explore and accept themselves and stop trying to change, this is when change can occur through a natural process of growth (Joyce and Sills, 2018)
 - This requires the client to be fully themselves, fully in the present, fully aware and fully accepting who they are in a non-critical way.
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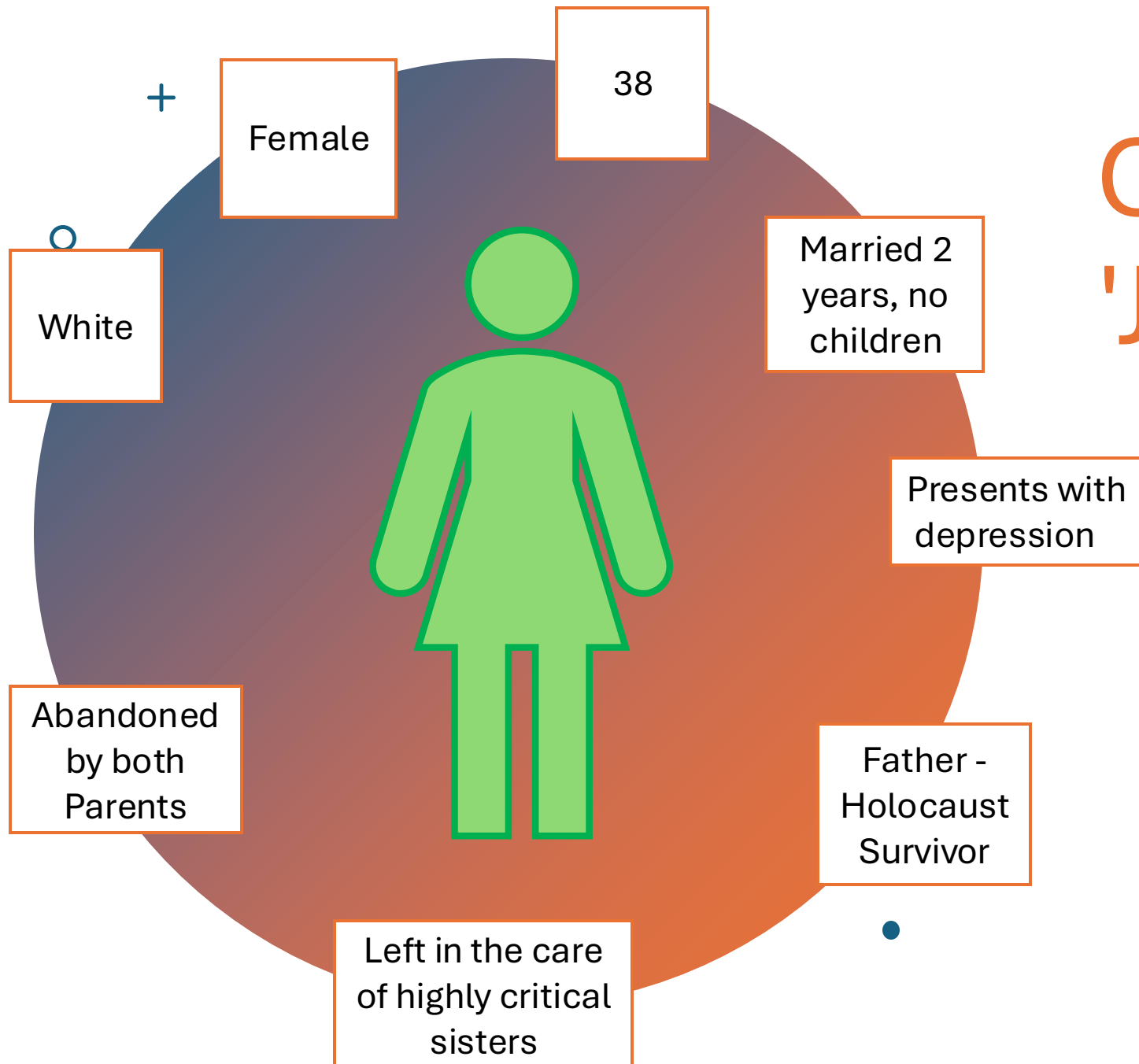


Emotion Focused Therapy

- Relationship Principles:
 - Empathic Attunement
 - Therapeutic Bond
 - Active Task Collaboration
- Task Principles:
 - Therapeutic Responsiveness
 - Emotional Transformation through Deepening
 - Client Personal Agency and Growth

(Elliott and Greenberg,
2021, pp.11-13)

Case Study 'Jina'



(Goldman and Golsdstein, 2022)

3 Stages of 'Jina's' EFT Therapy

1

Therapist remains open and empathically attuned.

Core Concerns -
Relational difficulties
need further processing

2

The nature of the core
maladaptive emotion.
Markers emerge leading
to chairwork.

3

Reconstructed
narrative.
Core emotional
schemes transformed.
Strengthens self-worth.

(Goldman and Goldstein, 2022)

Conclusion

- Awareness of attachment styles can provide important information to the therapist and give the client an insight and awareness of how this affects their past and current relationships.
- Humanistic therapies can allow clients to process their attachment styles, working through any trauma, by using their expressions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence. This can create a strong therapeutic bond to provide a secure base allowing for personal growth through therapeutic interventions to change internal working models.
- This does assume that the client wants this change, that the therapist has the skills to facilitate it and the client and therapist have a collaborative outlook and a strong bond to achieve it.

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AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

