THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRAYER AND FORGIVENESS TO GOD ATTACHMENT,

ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT, AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN

CHRISTIAN MARRIED ADULTS: A MEDIATION STUDY

by

Joshua Myers

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

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Joshua Michael Myers

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Dissertation Committee Approval:

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John C. Thomas, Ph.D., Ph.D., Committee Chair

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Lisa Sosin, Ph.D., Committee Member

_____

David E. Jenkins, Psy.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

THE RELATINOSHIP OF PRAYER AND FORGIVENESS TO GOD ATTACHMENT,

ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT, AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN

CHRISTIAN MARRIED ADULTS: A MEDIATION STUDY

Joshua Michael Myers

Center for Counseling and Family Studies

Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia

Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling

Research demonstrates that one's attachment to God accounts for unique variance in

Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment. To

date, only one study has sought to find a similar finding within a predominately married

population. However, no study has attempted to partially explain this effect. This study

seeks to answer the following research question: does Prayer and Forgiveness partially

mediate the relationship between God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction in a

married population? It is hypothesized that Prayer and Forgiveness will partially mediate

the relationship between God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction in a married

population. The study revealed that only the two dimensions of Romantic Attachment,

and God Attachment Anxiety correlated with Relationship Satisfaction. God Attachment

accounted for 1% unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for

Romantic Attachment, Prayer accounted for 4% of unique variance and Forgiveness

just .1% of unique variance after controlling for God Attachment.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely wife, Katie. I know that this kind of goes without saying, but to me things that should "go without saying" usually need to be said. Consequently, Katherine - you are my constant. I've joked over the past few years as we've become parents that I rely on you for my sanity, and this dissertation has been more proof that I need you in my life. Thank you for all of your love and support. You were amazingly generous for even allowing me to get this degree, and I thank you so much for everything you meant to the process. All my love for all my days.

only way I can think to repay them is to follow their lead and love my own children with half as much love as they showed me.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank my Lord. Me, chief of sinners, I am humbled and speechless due to His eternal love and affection. Thank you does not seem like enough, so I hope to show my gratitude through how I live my life honoring Him!

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Relationship satisfaction has been extensively researched using an array of significant relational factors such as nonverbal interactions, communication patterns, perceptions, attitudes, negative emotionality, tone, and personality traits (Blum & Mehrabiam, 1999; Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, & Lucas, 2010; Gottman, 1993; Karney & Bradbury, 1995, 1997; Karney, Bradbury, Fincham, & Sullivan, 1994; Luo et al., 2008; Ottu & Akpan, 2011). The literature has evolved into measuring relationship satisfaction in two interconnected categories: interpersonal processes and intrapersonal constructs (Straub, 2009). These categories are conceptualized as follows: interpersonal processes involve both verbal and nonverbal interactions between the couple (Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Cohen, Schulz, Weiss, & Waldinger, 2012; Gottman, 1993; Graber, Laurenceau, Miga, Chango, & Coan, 2011; Karney & Bradbury, 1995); and intrapersonal constructs relate to perceptions and attitudes of the individuals within the relationship (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Davis & Oathout, 1987; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Franzoi, Davis, & Young, 1985; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1991; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Karney et al., 1994; Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014; Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2013).

Within this body of relationship literature, theorists have spotlighted the significance of attachment theory (Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Klohnen & Bera, 1998). Attachment theory proposes that infant-caregiver relationships influence one's view of

self and others. These views, termed "internal working models" (IWMs), supply a scaffolding for all other relational interactions. Consequently, there are studies that suggest that these IWMs utilized within adult romantic relationships influence relationship satisfaction (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Castellano, Velotti, Crowell, & Zavattini, 2013; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Fuenfhausen & Cashwell, 2013; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Heavey, Shenk, & Christenen, 1994; Ho et al., 2012; Lawrence, Eldridge, & Christenen, 1998; Levy & Davis, 1988; McCarthy & Maughan, 2010; Simpson, 1990).

Interestingly, researchers have demonstrated a link between an individual's relationship with God and this attachment process (Dumont, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Straub, 2009). These studies suggest that God attachment is analogous to that of the parent-child attachment. Theorists have also found a moderate link between God attachment and adult romantic attachment (Kirkpatrick; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). This association suggests that how an individual attaches to God is similar to how he or she attaches to another human in a romantic relationship.

This alliance can be partially explained by two constructs: prayer and forgiveness. Studies have proposed that prayer can become a means of engaging the sacred as a safe haven during times of distress or it can be used as a secure base from which to safely explore (Byrd & Boe, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002), and this engaging of the sacred facilitates the interpersonal work of forgiveness (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Oman, Shapiro, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008). Therefore, research has suggested that engaging the sacred through prayer and working towards forgiveness within marriage aids in positive relational

qualities and relationship satisfaction (Fenell, 1993; Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006; Fincham, Paleari, Regalia, 2002; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004).

Background of the Problem

While the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction has been investigated (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Myers, 2006; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008), only two studies have probed the interplay between relationship satisfaction, romantic attachment and God attachment (Dumont, 2009; Straub, 2009). Straub (2009) analyzed data obtained at an Evangelical university during the first few weeks of classes in the fall of 2006. The first pool of students was exclusively freshman, while the second pool was primarily second year students. Using a cross-sectional design, the purpose of his study was to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction, romantic attachment and God attachment. The students were administered a questionnaire of assessments that included Background Information and Family History, The Experiences in Close Relationships, the Attachment to God Inventory, and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale. A hierarchal multiple regression analysis found that God attachment added a significant amount of unique variance for relationship satisfaction after accounting for the effects of romantic attachment. However, one limitation to Straub's study was the use of undergraduate students; this dynamic provided a mostly unmarried population. Consequently, Straub suggested that future research focus on God attachment roles in partially mediating the relationship between adult attachment and relationship satisfaction in a married population.

Dumont (2009) conducted a similar study analyzing the relationship between God attachment, relationship satisfaction, and adult child of an alcoholic (ACOA) status in a sample of evangelical graduate counseling students. The researcher administered six assessments: Alcoholics Screening Test, the Attachment to God Inventory, the Relationship Satisfaction Questionnaire, the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Revised, the Desirability of Control Scale, and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. Data from 267 participants was analyzed utilizing ANOVA, ANCOVA, and multiple regression. Results indicated that secure God attachment correlates with higher levels of Relationship Satisfaction in the ACOA group, even after controlling for the effects of romantic attachment.

Dumont used data from 172 married individuals, which is a continuation of Straub's (2009) work. However, the focus of Dumont's work was on ACOA status, which added a unique dynamic to her work. And while Dumont did study non-ACOAs, 39% of the participants had considered that either of their parents ever had a drinking problem and 38.2% reported that they did consider that either of their parents may have had an alcohol problem. Consequently, even though a participant did not meet enough criteria to be considered ACOA within the study (64%), he or she could have been in the 38% of participants that reported considering one or both of their parents as having had an alcohol problem. Therefore, the pervasive focus of ACOA status and parental alcohol use in Dumont's work created a unique dynamic that generated difficulty when attempting to generalize the findings to non-alcoholic relationships.

Consequently, this study sought to analyze the connection between God attachment, adult romantic attachment, and relationship satisfaction in a married, non-

parental alcohol use population. If a relationship existed, this study also sought to

partially explain the association using two new variables: prayer and forgiveness.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is seen as a multidimensional construct placed into two

categories: interpersonal and intrapersonal (Decuyper, De Bolle, & De Fruyt, 2012; Erol

& Orth, 2012; Halford & Bodenmann, 2013; Klohnen & Bera, 1998; LeBel & Campbell,

2009; Logan & Cobb, 2012; Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2010;

Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995; Orth, 2013; Williamson et al., 2012; Williamson,

Karney, & Bradbury, 2013). The interpersonal categories provide proximal explanations

for relationship satisfaction (Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Bradley, Friend, & Gottman,

2011; Cohen et al., 2012; Gottman, 1993; Graber et al., 2011; Karney & Bradbury, 1995,

1997), whereas the intrapersonal category provides a perspective on the origins of the

interpersonal interactions (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Davis & Oathout, 1987; Donnellan,

Assad, Robins, & Conger, 2007; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Franzoi et al., 1985; Geist

& Gilbert, 1996; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1991; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Karney et al.,

1994; Malouff et al., 2014; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2013).

Interpersonal interactions such as verbal communications, emotions, tone and

nonverbal cues were found to be the most significant way of predicting relationship

satisfaction (Gottman, 1993). In fact, Wilson, Charker, Lizzio, Halford, and Kimlin

(2005) suggested that self-regulatory behaviors that attempt to facilitate a healthy

relationship are associated with increased relationship satisfaction. Consequently,

healthy interpersonal interactions are positively correlated with increased relationship

satisfaction (Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

Intrapersonal variables such as perceptions, attitudes, attributions about the relationship, and even individual personality traits are also strong predictors of relationship satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Karney et al., 1994). For instance, Heller, Watson, and Hies (2004) found that an individual's emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are traits with robust effects on relationship satisfaction. Emotional stability is another vital intrapersonal variable. It has been found to have the most consistent evidence for positive effects on the partner; in other words, if one has a partner low in emotional stability or high in negative emotionality it is associated with higher levels of relationship dissatisfaction (Barelds, 2005; Donnellan et al., 2007). Accordingly, an individual's own personality and the personality of one's partner contribute to relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). These studies demonstrated that both the interpersonal and intrapersonal categories correlate to relationship satisfaction. Research has revealed that attachment is the link between these two groupings by demonstrating the fact that attachment helps explain how early relationships influence one's development of core relational beliefs about themselves and others; these relational experiences influence intrapersonal processes and help explain how these beliefs affect later interpersonal interactions (Straub, 2009).

Attachment

Bowlby (1969) theorized that infants have a biosocial system that assists in maintaining a close proximity to their primary caregivers; this close proximity supports

interactions that generate a protective and trusting relationship between caregiver and child, creating secure emotional bonds (Ainsworth, 1973, 1985; Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton, 1985; Cassidy, 1988, 1999; Kerns, Abraham, Schlegelmilch, & Morgan, 2007). This realization led researchers to explore attachment in adulthood (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

Adult attachment. Studies suggested that similar to childhood attachment, adult romantic attachments supposedly influence relationship satisfaction through secure or insecure bonds (e.g., Clark, Lemay, Graham, Pataki, & Finkel, 2010; Egeci & Gencoz, 2011; Erol & Orth, 2012; Fuenfhausen & Cashwell, 2013; Givertz, Woszidlo, Segrin, & Knutson, 2013; Ho et al., 2012; Juhl, Sand, & Routledge, 2012; Karantzas, Feeney, Goncalves, & McCabe, 2013). In other words, attachment in adulthood is believed to function in a similar fashion as the infant system (Ainsworth, 1985, 1991; Barthlolomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Main & Solomon, 1986; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Weiss, 1982). For instance, a central theme underlying the infant-caretaker relationship is the expectation of the infant for the caregiver to be available and responsive when needed; Collins and Read (1990) found that these expectations are also present in adulthood resulting in those that are securely attached reporting a trusting attitude toward others (Feeney & Noller, 1990). Furthermore, a secure attachment style was found to be associated with relationship satisfaction (Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006).

Research has found that the opposite is also true. One study suggested that there is an association between attachment anxiety and aggression in romantic relationships

(Fournier, Brassard, & Shaver, 2011). Marchand (2004) demonstrated that husband and wife attachment orientations are significantly related to their attacking behaviors. Another study revealed that those with insecure attachment styles behave differently than persons with more secure attachments in terms of physical contact, supportive comments, and efforts to seek and give emotional support (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). As a result, one's attachment insecurity has been shown to relate to relationship dissatisfaction (Ho et al., 2012).

God Attachment

As this attachment field continues to evolve, more details are being unearthed in regards to one's attachment style as it relates to a personal relationship with God. Attachment research demonstrated that religion can involve an attachment process where God serves as a substitute attachment figure (Beck, 2006; Birgegard & Granqvist, 2004; Dumont, 2009; Eckert & Kimball, 2003; Granqvist, 1998, 2005; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004, 2008; Granqvist, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010; Hood, Spilka, Husberger, & Gorsuch, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, 1992; McDonald, Beck, Allison, & Norsworthy, 2005; Pargament, Steele, & Tyler, 1979; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Sim & Loh, 2003; Simpson, 2002; Spilka, Hood, Husberger, & Gorsuch, 2003; Straub, 2009). Kirkpatrick (1994, 2005) proposed that a Christian's perceived relationship with God tends to meet the defining characteristics for an attachment relationship and hence functions like other attachment relationships. The resemblance between parental attachment and a believer's relationship with God transpires due to the notion that one can have a personal

relationship with Him and that love is central to the relationship (Granqvist, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010). Consequently, God is viewed as an exalted attachment figure, containing just as many traditionally maternal as traditionally paternal attributes (Granqvist, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2005).

As an attachment figure, God fulfills a proximity maintenance function; the omnipresence of God facilitates a nearness to Him that allows believers to connect through singing, going to church, and prayer (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008). These connections are facilitated through viewing God as a safe haven in times of distress or a secure base from which to explore. These two vantage points are examined below. First, God can be viewed as a safe haven. Research has demonstrated that people turn to God in times of distress (Pargament, 1997). In fact, sudden religious conversions are most likely to occur during severe emotional distress and crisis (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Pargament, 1997). As an example, in a prospective survey study of elderly Americans, religious beliefs increased for recently widowed as compared to a matched group of non-widowed elders (Brown, Nesse, House, & Utz, 2004). Second, God can be seen as a secure base from which to explore. There is typically a decrease in distress and a notable increase in well-being following religious conversion (Ullman, 1982). In a review of empirical research on religion and mental health, intrinsic religiousness (i.e., religion as a major motive in one's life) was correlated with freedom from worry and guilt, and a sense of personal competence and control (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). In addition, studies indicated that the aspect of religious belief that relates most strongly to psychological well-being is the religion-as-attachment model (Kirkpatrick, Shillito, & Kellas, 1999; Pollner, 1989; Poloma & Gallup, 1991). For this reason, a secure

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attachment with God, free from worry and guilt, facilitates exploration with God as one's

secure base. This has led research to examine and conclude that one's attachment to God

correlates with relationship satisfaction (Dumont, 2009; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984;

Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver 1992; Mahoney, Pargament,

Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Myers, 2006; Schottenbauer

et al., 2006; Straub, 2009; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008).

Prayer

As previously stated, studies suggested that prayer can become a means of

engaging the sacred as a safe haven [thus increasing attachment to God] during times of

distress and connecting to a secure base from which to explore (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi,

1975; Barnes, Powell-Griner, McFann, & Nahin, 2004; Beck, 2006; Bell, 2009;

Bradshaw, Ellison, & Marcum, 2010; Butler, Gardner, & Bird, 1998; Byrd & Boe, 2001;

Dezutter, Krysinska, & Corveleyn, 2011; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 1992,

1999, 2005; Lambert, Fincham, & Graham, 2011; Masters & Spielmans, 2007;

Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; O'Brien, 1982; Poloma & Pendleton, 1989; Rowatt &

Kirkpatrick, 2002; Whittington & Scher, 2010). Accordingly, prayer functions as an

affiliation system behavior to strengthen the felt security of the God attachment

relationship (Bell, 2009). As a result, there is a correlation between prayer and

attachment to God. First of all, research proposed that soldiers pray frequently before,

during, and after battle (Stouffer, 1949; Wansink & Wansink, 2013). Research also

revealed that in highly distressing situations the most likely response is prayer to God

(Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). Prayer tends to increase following the death of a loved

one or actual or threatened separation from loved ones (Kirkpatrick, 1999). For this reason, prayer can be conceptualized as an affect-regulation strategy (Butler et al., 1998; Butler, Stout, & Gardner, 2002; Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; McMinn et al., 2008). In other words, individuals view God as having a calming effect and tend to seek God's presence as a way of controlling emotionally negative responses.

Second, prayer can also serve as a secure base function of exploration (Beck, 2006; Byrd & Boe, 2001). As an example, Bell proposed that prayer may function as an affiliation system behavior; in other words, speaking and enjoying time together strengthens the felt security of the attachment relationship. Through this attachment lens, research advocated a connection between prayer and increased relationship positivity and satisfaction (Beach, Fincham, Hurt, McNair, & Stanley, 2008; Butler et al., 1998; Butler & Harper, 1994; Butler et al., 2002; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Ellison, Burdette, & Bradford Wilcox, 2010; Fincham, Beach, Lambert, Stillman, & Braithwaite, 2008; Fincham, Lambert, & Beach, 2010; Gardner, Butler, & Seedall, 2008; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Lambert, Fincham, LaVallee, & Brantley, 2012; Lambert, Fincham, & Stanley, 2012; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

Forgiveness

Attachment and forgiveness have recently been related in a developing body of research. Theorists have found a correlation between attachment security and increased forgiveness (Burnette, Taylor, Worthington, & Forsyth, 2007; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Lawler-Row, Younger, Piferi, & Jones, 2006; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Slav, 2006; Wang, 2008; Webb, Call, Chickering, Colburn, & Heisler, 2006). Research also demonstrated

the correlation between God attachment security through prayer and interpersonal forgiveness (Butler et al., 1998, 2002; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Foster, 1992; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Lambert, Finchman, Stillman, Graham, & Beach, 2010; Lawler-Row, 2010; Leach & Lark; 2004; Maltby, Lewis, & Day, 2008; McMinn et al., 2008; Oman et al., 2008; Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013; Wuthnow, 2000). In fact, Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, Hill, and Delaney (2009) found that unforgiveness was positively correlated with both avoidant God attachment and anxious God attachment, suggesting a link between forgiveness, attachment, and relational spirituality. Within this same body of research, forgiveness was defined as an intrapersonal process of regulating negative emotions that may or may not eventuate in reconciliation (Butler et al., 1998; Butler et al., 2002). Subsequently, this self-regulatory ability encourages one to relate pro-socially to the offender (McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), increasing attachment security between adults (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Thus, the tendency to forgive partially mediates the relationship between adult attachment and relationship satisfaction (Braithwaite, Selby, & Fincham, 2011; Butler et al., 1998; Butler & Harper, 1994; Butler et al., 2002; Fenell, 1993; Fincham, 2000; Fincham et al., 2006; Fincham et al., 2002; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Gardner, Butler, & Seedall, 2008; Gordon, 2003; Kachadourian et al., 2004; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough & Worthington, 1997; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005; Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990).

While the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction has been investigated (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Myers, 2006; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008), only two studies have probed the interplay between

relationship satisfaction, romantic attachment and God attachment (Dumont, 2009; Straub, 2009). Straub analyzed data obtained at an Evangelical university during the first few weeks of classes in the fall of 2006. Using a cross-sectional design, the purpose of his study was to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction, romantic attachment and God attachment. A hierarchal multiple regression analysis found that God attachment added a significant amount of unique variance for relationship satisfaction after accounting for the effects of romantic attachment.

Dumont (2009) conducted a similar study analyzing the relationship between God attachment, relationship satisfaction, and adult child of an alcoholic (ACOA) status in a sample of evangelical graduate counseling students. Data from 267 participants was analyzed utilizing ANOVA, ANCOVA, and multiple regression. Results indicated that secure God attachment correlated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction in the ACOA and the non-ACOA groups, even after controlling for the effects of romantic attachment.

However, Straub's (2009) participants were mostly non-married, and Dumont's (2009) focus was on ACOA status and parental alcohol use. Consequently, this study sought to analyze the connection between God attachment, adult romantic attachment, and relationship satisfaction in a married, non-pathological population. Additionally, no study had attempted to partially explain how God attachment mediates the relationship between adult attachment and relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, this present study investigated the relationship between prayer, forgiveness, God attachment, and relationship satisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction within married Christian adults. Specifically, this present study intended to assess if prayer and forgiveness partially mediate the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction.

Research Questions

As a result of this current dearth in research regarding God attachment and relationship satisfaction in Christian married individuals, two research questions were examined:

1. Does God attachment partially mediate the relationship between adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction in Christian married individuals?
2. Does prayer and forgiveness partially mediate the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction?

Delimitations

This study was limited to a sample group of married adults who professed to be evangelical Christians. Limiting the study to evangelical Christians was an important step. Beck and McDonald (2004) stated, "one prerequisite for an attachment bond to exist in a faith would be that the believer experiences God as 'personal'" (p. 101). Evangelical Christians were more likely to meet this criterion as they conceive of their relationship with God as intimate. It was also vital to limit the current study to married individuals due to the fact that similar studies have examined these constructs utilizing

single adults in dating relationships (Straub, 2009). Consequently, marital status and religious beliefs functioned as the only delimitations within the study. However, due to these delimitations the findings may not be generalized to dating couples or individuals that do not share the same worldview as the participants.

Limitations and Assumptions

Several limitations of this study must be considered. This study utilized self-report instruments, which depended on the honesty and integrity of sample responses. Dependence on self-report instruments for the measurement of both dependent and independent variables may have caused concerns regarding the statistical conclusions. Kazdin (2003) stated that when using only self-report measures one must consider that "responses to items can be greatly influenced by the wording, format, and order of appearance of the items" (p. 373) and that "there is a possibility of bias and distortion on the part of the subjects" (p. 373). As a result, this must be considered when reviewing the results of the study. Second, the selection of participants added to the study's limitations. The researcher utilized a sample of convenience by contacting ministerial associates throughout the state of Texas, but predominately in the Austin, Texas area. Subsequently, the homogeneity of the participants' race and denominational affiliations should be considered when reviewing the results. Third, the method used to obtain the data added to the study's limitations. Survey Monkey, an online survey platform, was used to collect the data. This eliminated those with no Internet access, those technologically illiterate, those with visual impairments as well as individuals disinterested in an electronic survey format. Fourth, the statistical analysis used to

scrutinize the data added to the study's limitations. Two hierarchical regressions were used to find a correlation between the variables, not an underlying causal mechanism. Finally, the instruments provided results at only one point in time. Consequently, a longitudinal study is preferable; additional assessments at various times would provide depth to the data received.

Terms and Definitions

In an effort to present what is being examined in this study with more precision, the following terms are operationally defined:

Attachment is a psychological bond between an individual and an attachment figure, based on four distinct functions: safe haven, proximity seeking, separation anxiety, and secure base (Bowlby, 1969). For this study there were two dimensions that underlay attachment classification: avoidance of intimacy and anxiety about abandonment (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Safe haven is defined as the reliability of the attachment figure to provide support and relief during times of stress, illness or threat of separation (Ainsworth, 1991; Bowlby, 1969).

Proximity seeking refers to an individual seeking physical closeness to an attachment figure, particularly when under real or perceived distress (Bowlby, 1969; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Separation anxiety is defined by the intense feeling of distress at the real or perceived separation of an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969).

Secure base refers to the real or perceived availability of the attachment figure by the individual. This attachment function allows the individual to explore other relationships and behaviors in a safe environment (Bowlby, 1969).

Secure attachment is characterized by individuals able to explore their environment and seek close proximity to attachment figures when real or perceived danger occurs (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main & Solomon, 1990). These individuals are comfortable with intimacy and autonomy (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Anxious attachment is characterized by individuals who struggle with anger towards the attachment figure and an eagerness to be comforted by her (Belsky et al., 1996). These individuals have difficulty with sharing feelings and tend to cling with threats of real or perceived abandonment (Ainsworth et al., 1978); they tend to be preoccupied with relationships (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Avoidant attachment is characterized by individuals who are most comfortable being alone. They do not believe attachment figures will be available or responsive during times of proximity seeking (Belsky et al., 1996; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). They are dismissing of intimacy (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Fearful attachment occurs when individuals exhibit behaviors that are unpredictable to any attachment behavior (Belsky et al., 1996; Main, 1996). These individuals are fearful of intimacy and socially avoidant (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

Abandonment occurs when an attachment figure does not move towards the individual after proximity seeking (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

God attachment is conceptualized as God fulfilling the functions of a substitute attachment figure (Kirkpatrick 1992, 1999). This construct recognizes the classic fourfold typology of secure, anxious, fearful, or avoidant attachment (Bartholomew, 1990). However, it was assessed using the attachment dimensions of avoidance of intimacy and anxiety about abandonment (Beck & McDonald, 2004). It was assessed using the Attachment to God Inventory (AGI). The AGI defined avoidance of intimacy with God as a need for self-reliance, a difficulty with depending on God, and an unwillingness to be emotionally intimate with God (Beck & McDonald, 2004). Anxiety over abandonment involves fear of potential abandonment by God, anger protests seen in resentment at God's lack of perceived affection, jealousy over God's seemingly differential intimacy with others, anxiety over one's lovability in God's eyes, and a preoccupation with one's relationship with God (Beck & McDonald, 2004).

Romantic adult attachment is a psychological bond between adults in a romantic relationship that may take 1-2 years to fully develop (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). It was assessed using the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships questionnaire (ECR-R) (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). The ECR-R uses two attachment dimensions: avoidance of intimacy and anxiety about abandonment (Brennan et al., 1998). Avoidance of intimacy is conceptualized as a need for self-reliance, a difficulty with depending on others, and an unwillingness to be emotionally intimate with a significant other (Brennan et al., 1998). Anxiety over abandonment involves fear of potential abandonment by a significant other, anger protests seen in resentment at another's lack of perceived affection, jealousy over a close partner's seemingly differential intimacy with others,

anxiety over one's lovability, and a preoccupation with one's relationship with a significant other (Brennan et al., 1998).

Prayer is either an affect regulation strategy that seeks to obtain felt security during distress through engaging the sacred as a safe haven, or it is a form of non-distress proximity seeking that nurtures and maintains one's relationship to the sacred (Bell, 2009; Byrd & Boe, 2001; Granqvist, 2005; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011). It was assessed using the Multidimensional Prayer Inventory (MPI). The MPI defined prayer by types: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and reception (Laird, Snyder, Rapoff, & Green, 2004). Adoration focuses on the worship and praise of God, confession involves prayer in which shortcomings are acknowledged, thanksgiving involves expressions of gratitude, supplication taps requests for God's intervention, and reception is described as a type of prayer in which one more passively awaits divine wisdom and guidance (Laird et al., 2004).

Forgiveness is the adoption of a more positive motivational stance towards a transgressor after a wrongdoing (Fincham et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2010; McCullough et al., 1997). It was assessed using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) (McCullough et al., 1998). The TRIM consisted of items reflecting three dimensions: revenge, avoidance and forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997). Consequently, forgiveness will be defined as an adoption of a more positive motivational stance towards a transgressor and the subsequent abandonment of the inclination towards revenge and avoidance of the transgressor.

Significance of the Study

It was hoped that suggesting why God attachment might mediate the relationship between adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction would add to an already evolving area of research. Practically speaking, it was anticipated that this study can assist followers of Christ in knowing how to deepen their relationship with their spouse and more importantly with their Creator. This study can have significant implications that assist individuals in developing satisfying marital relationships. This research has the capacity to also expand the field's understanding of God attachment. By examining prayer and forgiveness in the context of attachment to God and relationship satisfaction, this study offers a unique perspective into the variables that partially explain how one's relationship with God influences relationship satisfaction. This study has grave implications for the Christian institution of marriage. It offers practical application for the marital relationship by suggesting Christian behaviors that aid in the galvanization of the marital dyad. At the point of the study, there was no research linking God attachment to relationship satisfaction in married individuals. There was also no research that had attempted to explain the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Much research surrounds relationship satisfaction and attachment (Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Klohnen & Bera, 1998). This area of study demonstrated the connection between adult interpersonal attachment and relationship satisfaction, specifically adult romantic attachments influencing relationship satisfaction through

secure bonds (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Heavey, Shenk, & Christensen, 1994). Attachment research also suggested that religion can be an attachment process where God serves as a substitute attachment figure (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). This attachment substitution, if secure, is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Straub, 2009). In fact, Straub (2009) and Dumont (2009) suggested a correlation between God attachment and relationship satisfaction, even after controlling for adult romantic attachment.

With this idea of God attachment influencing relationship satisfaction in mind, research has demonstrated that prayer assists in establishing and nurturing a relationship with the sacred; prayer appears to function as an affiliation system behavior to strengthen felt security between the individual and God (Bell, 2009; Byrd & Boe, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002), and this felt relational security between God and the individual, through prayer, amplifies one's capacity to forgive (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Oman et al., 2008). Increased forgiveness in turn enhances adult attachment security (Burnette et al., 2007; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Lawler-Row et al., 2006; Mikulincer et al., 2006; Wang, 2008; Webb et al., 2006) and relationship satisfaction (Fenell, 1993; Fincham et al., 2006; Fincham et al., 2002; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Kachadourian et al., 2004), demonstrating a reliable connection between God attachment, adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction (Kirkpatrick, 1999; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). While this reliable connection exists there was no research measuring the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction, mediated by prayer and forgiveness.

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Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two develops a review of the relevant literature. Findings and results will be exampled with emphasis given to the main variables God attachment, prayer, forgiveness and relationship satisfaction. Based upon the findings of this literature review, it is proposed that there exists a need for a partial explanation of the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction. It is proposed that this study and research in this area will be valuable and beneficial.

Chapter Three proposes and outlines procedures and analysis for carrying out the experimental procedures. Participant selection and methods taken to secure study validity will be clarified and rationale presented.

Chapter Four outlines the purpose and procedures of the study once more. It also presents information collected from the study participants. Demographic information is discussed, and results analyzed in relationship to the hypotheses and research questions.

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the study and conclusions will be developed from obtained results. The contribution of the study will be explored and recommendations given for further research in the field. The limitations and concerns will be discussed and assessed within this final chapter as well.

Chapter Summary

This chapter developed a brief explanation of the various studies involving the main variables of relationship satisfaction, adult attachment, God attachment, prayer and forgiveness. After considering these variables a background of the problem was given. This section gave a partial examination of the various variables; it also provided rationale

for this current study by examining the lack of research involved in explaining the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction.

Diverse aspects of the current study were developed next. The delimitations, limitations and assumptions were provided, and key terms and definitions were operationalized. The significance of the study, research questions and the study's conceptual framework were given. Finally, an explanation of the remaining chapters was provided.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter One explicated the significance of examining the relationship between adult romantic attachment, God attachment, and relationship satisfaction in a married population. It also unfolded the idea that prayer and forgiveness relate to both God attachment and relationship satisfaction, through increasing felt adult attachment security. This chapter provides a review of relevant literature. First, the dependent variable, relationship satisfaction, is examined. This variable is described using two distinct categories: interpersonal and intrapersonal variables. Next, attachment theory is elucidated. More specifically, a link is made between the research on how attachment beliefs are displayed in adult romantic relationships and how these relate to adult relationship satisfaction. Then, there are empirical studies discussed that explain how attachment theory has been applied to an individual's relationship with God. Finally, prayer and forgiveness are described using research that connects these variables to both attachment to God and relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is paramount and can facilitate quality romantic relationships and increase one's overall life contentment (Diener, Gohm, Suh, & Oishi, 2000; Dush & Amato, 2005; Lee, Seccombe, & Shehan, 1991). Consequently, relationship dissatisfaction appears to contribute to a lack of relationship quality, decreased life contentment, and can have a negative impact on one's quality of life

(Bookwala, 2005; Hawkins & Booth, 2005). In this section of the review, studies

suggested that both relationship satisfaction and dissatisfaction affects the individual.

Both interpersonal and intrapersonal variables of relationship satisfaction are examined,

and a consistent link is found between relationship satisfaction and attachment theory.

Relationship Satisfaction Defined

While there is research that supports relationship satisfaction, there is no agreed

upon definition of relationship satisfaction. However, two researchers have conceived of

definitions that fully conceptualize the complexity of the construct. Straub (2009)

asserter that relationship satisfaction is a gauge for how well the relationship is operating,

the degree to which romantic love exists, the level of satisfaction that is experienced and

the risk of the relationship ending. However, Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew (1998) suggested

that relationship satisfaction indicates the affect experienced in a relationship and is

influenced by the extent to which a partner fulfills the other's most important needs.

Thus, relationship satisfaction can be defined as an affective gauge, influenced by the

fulfillment of partner needs that communicates how well the relationship is operating.

Due to the fact that no consensus exists on what constitutes relationship satisfaction the

construct has been teased into a plethora of different variables. The literature placed

these variables in two distinct categories.

There are two main categories within relationship satisfaction: interpersonal and

intrapersonal (Straub, 2009). Interpersonal interactions such as verbal communications,

emotions, tone and nonverbal cues are found to be the most significant ways of

predicating relationship satisfaction (Gottman, 2003). Intrapersonal variables such as

perceptions, attitudes, and attributions about the relationship are also strong predictors of relationship satisfaction (Karney et al., 1994).

Interpersonal Variables

Interpersonal variables have been shown to contribute to relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Choi & Marks, 2008; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Gottman, 1993, 1994a, 1994b; Gottman et al., 1998; Gottman & Levenson, 1985; Halford & Bodenmann, 2013; Heavey et al., 1994; Levenson & Gottman, 1983; Williamson et al., 2012; Williamson et al., 2013). Gottman and Krokoff (1989) used a structured setting to observe couple's interpersonal interactions. They observed verbal communications, emotions, tone and nonverbal cues in which the couple's words were being delivered. They found that interpersonal variables were the most significant way of predicting satisfaction and happiness within marriage (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). These researchers also demonstrated that couples who influence the interactions in a positive direction, rather than in a negative direction, stay married (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

Other research supported these claims. Karney & Bradbury (1997) scrutinized sixty newlywed couples that completed measures of neuroticism, were observed during a marital interaction, and provided reports of marital satisfaction every 6 months for 4 years. Their findings suggested that observed behavior of spousal interactions predicts changes in marital satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). However, even though the study is a longitudinal design, the research is correlational and alternative explanations must be considered (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). For instance, without data on marital interaction changes over time it is impossible to rule out the hypothesis that spouses'

behaviors are products of marital satisfaction rather than causes (see Bradbury & Karney, 1993 as cited in Karney & Bradbury, 1997).

Bradley et al. (2011) evaluated a psychoeducational intervention designed to bolster relationships and reduce conflict in low-income, situationally violent couples. One hundred fifteen couples were randomly assigned to a treatment or no-treatment control group; couples detailed relationship satisfaction, use of healthy relationship skills, conflict, and relationship status/dissolution at two time points (pre- and post-intervention) (Bradley et al., 2011). The results suggested that couples who learned positive relationship skills increased their relationship satisfaction (Bradley et al., 2011).

Donnellan et al. (2007) analyzed 337 participant couples from the Family Transitions Project. The participants completed a comprehensive personality questionnaire and several scales measuring relationship behaviors and satisfaction (Donnellan et al., 2007). The study demonstrated that negative emotionality and communal positive emotionality are related to both self- and partner reports of relationship satisfaction, and that these associations are substantially mediated by negative relationship interactions (Donnellan et al., 2007). In other words, negative relationship interactions partially explain the relationship between relationship emotionality and relationship satisfaction.

Davis and Oathout (1987) studied 264 heterosexual student couples at Eastern Illinois University. There was a mixture of married couples, engaged couples and those that were dating one another exclusively (Davis & Oathout). Through analyzing data from self-report questionnaires the researchers found that empathetic behavior positively influences a partner's response and increases relationship satisfaction through felt care

(Davis & Oathout, 1987). The opposite is also true; hostile responses have been found to decrease marital satisfaction (Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995). Newton and Kiecolt-Glaser examined the association between hostility and longitudinal changes in marital quality using 53 newlywed couples in their first marriage and without children. In light of this study, one can observe both positive and negative couple interactions and predict positive and negative changes in marital satisfaction. However, both of these studies suggested interpreting their suggestions with caution, citing other influences on behavior other than the ones used within the study (Davis & Oathout, 1987; Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995). While interpersonal variables are shown to contribute to relationship satisfaction and dissatisfaction, intrapersonal characteristics can impact interpersonal variables within relationship.

Intrapersonal Variables

Intrapersonal partner characteristics include perceptions, attitudes, personality and attributions about the relationship, and these features reliably contribute to a couple's level of relationship satisfaction (Adams, 1946; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Barelds, 2005; Ben-Naim, Hirschberger, Ein-Dor, & Mikulincer, 2013; Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Cohen et al., 2012; Davis & Oathout, 1987; Decuyper et al., 2012; Donnellan, Conger, & Bryant, 2004; Erol & Orth, 2012; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Franzoi et al., 1985; Hill, 2009; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Karney et al., 1994; Kelly & Conley, 1987; LeBel & Campbell, 2009; Lehnart & Neyer, 2006; Malouff et al., 2010; Orth, 2013; Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000).

Dyrenforth et al. (2010) analyzed three large, nationally representative samples of married couples to ascertain the relative importance of three types of personality effects on relationship and life satisfaction: actor effects, partner effects, and similarity effects. Actor effect is defined as the individual's traits associated with his or her own relationship satisfaction; the partner effect is defined as the interpersonal consequences of one's personality, and the similarity effect examined the effect of couple personality similarity on overall couple relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). The study found that actor effect accounted for approximately 6% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, the partner effects accounted between 1-3% of variance in relationship satisfaction, and couple similarity consistently explained less than .5% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. In other words, one's personality affects both the individual's and the partner's relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). However, the similarity between personalities does not create variance. In fact, Gottman and Krokoff (1989) found that personality similarities between couples are a weak predictor of relationship satisfaction; as a result, the researchers demonstrated that the partner's perception of the similarity greatly affects relationship satisfaction.

Also, an individual's attitudes and perceptions affect relationship satisfaction. For example, Hendrick and Hendrick (1991) demonstrated that one's attitude toward love influences satisfaction in romantic relationships. These researchers administered a questionnaire to a sample of 424 university undergraduate students and found that one's love attitude is an important consideration when attempting to account for a couple's relationship satisfaction (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1991). The study was limited due to

homogeneity of the sample, the use of individuals rather than the couple dyad, and the use of college students rather than adults. These issues minimized its generalizability.

Cohen et al. (2012) examined links between two facets of empathy - empathetic accuracy and perceived empathic effort - and one's own and one's partner's relationship satisfaction. Findings suggested that the perception of a partner's empathic effort is uniquely informative in understanding how partners may derive relationship satisfaction; consequently, heightening partners' perceptions of each other's empathic effort provides opportunities for improving satisfaction (Cohen et al., 2012). Therefore, positive perceptions, attitudes and attributions given to the current relationship and its future contribute to relationship satisfaction. Research maintained the presence of other satisfaction effects.

Satisfaction Effects

The link between marital quality and health has been shown by numerous studies over the past few decades (e.g. Kiecolt-Glaser, Glaser, Cacioppo, & Malarkey, 1998). For example, Proulx, Helms and Buehler (2007) analyzed the effects of 93 studies with the average weighted effect size $r = .37$ for cross-sectional and $r = .25$ for longitudinal effects; they generalized their definition of personal well-being to include various indicators such as self-esteem, physical health, global happiness, and life satisfaction. The results suggested that higher levels of positive marital quality are associated with more optimal levels of personal well-being (Proulx et al., 2007). Their results, however, indicated several moderating variables between marital quality and personal well-being: gender, marital duration, source of measurement, data collection year, and dependent

variable (Proulx et al., 2007). Subsequently, the longitudinal effects of this study were more likely to be uncovered, and the researchers suggested that future research should utilize standard measurement and marital length homogeneity (Proulx et al., 2007). Other studies seemed to support Proulx et al.'s (2007) findings (Glenn & Weaver, 1981; Riehl-Emde, Thomas, & Willi, 2003; Voss, Markiewicz, & Doyle, 1999).

In addition to Proulx et al. (2007), Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, and Needham (2006) used a growth curve model to analyze information found in the Americans' Changing Lives (ACL) panel survey (House, 1986 as cited in Umberson et al., 2006). Using three waves of data over an 8-year period starting in 1986, these researchers analyzed 1,049 individuals who were continuously married and found that marital strain accelerates the typical decline in self-rated health (Umberson et al., 2006). Consequently, this study demonstrated that relationship satisfaction can contribute to overall health. However, this study did not adequately determine whether marital strain contributes to decline in self-rated health or whether a decline in self-rated health contributes to marital strain; therefore, future research should examine the effects of declining health on marital strain (Umberson et al., 2007). Research also demonstrated the presence of dissatisfaction effects as well.

Dissatisfaction Effects

Sprecher (1999) suggested that diminished relationship satisfaction leads to divorce. Others have demonstrated a positive correlation between decreased marital satisfaction and increased divorce rates (Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001; Huston, Niehuis, & Smith, 2001; Kurdeck,

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1999). While increased divorce rates appear to be a byproduct of decreased relationship satisfaction, research developed other possible repercussions of relationship dissatisfaction.

For instance, the literature revealed a correlation between dissatisfaction and mental health issues (Beach et al., 2003; Fincham et al., 1997; McLeod, 1994; Whisman, 1999). For example, Choi and Marks (2008) studied three waves of data from the National Survey of Families and Households (N= 1,832); the researchers examined persons aged 45 or older that were continually married to the same spouse, without children across three waves of data (T1, 1987-1988; T2, 1992-1994; T3, 2001-2002). They found that marital conflict directly led to increases in depression and functional impairment.

Whisman, Sheldon, and Goering (2000) sought to evaluate the association between nine Axis I psychiatric disorders and quality of relationship. They examined married participants and their relationships with spouse, relatives, and friends; after controlling for the quality of other social relationships, not getting along with one's spouse was related to six disorders, with the strongest associations found for Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Major Depression, and Panic (Whisman et al., 2000). The results indicated that the association between marital quality and psychiatric disorders is not an artifact of general social dissatisfaction, and that the association is significant for a variety of mental disorders (Whisman et al., 2000). Whisman (2007) evaluated the connections between marital distress and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed.; DSM-IV) Axis I psychiatric disorders; he conducted a United States population-based survey of married individuals with no upper age exclusionary criteria

(N= 2,213). Whisman found that marital distress is associated with broad-band classifications of anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders and all narrow-band classifications of specific disorders except for panic disorder. The strongest associations were found between marital distress and Bipolar Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorders, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Whisman, 2007). However, Whisman did not examine other variables that could account for the association; therefore, he urged caution in interpreting these results.

In addition, several theorists have revealed that dissatisfaction in romantic relationships has a negative impact on one's physical well-being (Bookwala, 2005; Hawkins & Booth, 2005). One study presented growth curve evidence from a national longitudinal survey to illustrate that marital strain accelerates the typical decline in self-rated health that occurs over time and that this adverse effect is greater at older ages (Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, & Needham, 2006). It seems that marital strain has a cumulative effect on health over time. Sandberg, Miller, Harper, Robila, and Davey (2009) analyzed 536 intact couples in long term marriages and found that men in dissatisfying marriages are more likely to utilize health care services.

This research demonstrated a clear correlation between intrapersonal characteristics, interpersonal interactions and one's level of relationship satisfaction. The research also suggested that relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction can have a negative or positive impact on the individual. The attachment relationship functions as the link between the interpersonal and intrapersonal variables of relationship satisfaction (Straub, 2009). This is due to the fact that early relational experiences influence intrapersonal process such as beliefs about one's self, and this partially explains how

these beliefs might later affect interpersonal interactions with others (Straub, 2009).

Research also proposed that one's attachment style influences relationship satisfaction through impacting both interpersonal interactions and intrapersonal characteristics (Dumont, 2009; Straub, 2009). Therefore, attachment theory provides a partial explanation for why interpersonal processes and intrapersonal characteristics heavily influence relationship satisfaction.

Attachment

The relationship between infant and caregiver is the focus of what Bowlby (1969) termed attachment theory. Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and Ainsworth et al. (1978) developed a theory of attachment out of a growing body of research on children deprived of families, observations of mother-child dyads, and examinations of the behavioral responses of children to separation and reunion. This theory is concerned with the bond that develops between child and caretaker and the consequences this has for the child's budding self-concept and developing view of the social world (Ainsworth, 1973, 1985; Ainsworth et al., 1978; Belsky, Campbell, Cohn, & Moore, 1996; Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982, 1988; Brennan, Shaver, & Tobey, 1991; Bretherton, 1985; Cassidy, 1988, 1999; Collins & Read, 1990; Contreras, Kerns, Weimer, Gentzler, & Tomich, 2000; Cox, Owen, Henderson, & Margand, 1992; Kerns et al., 2007; Main & Solomon, 1986, 1990).

Attachment theory stipulates that infants develop a biosocial behavioral system that seeks to maintain close proximity to the primary caregiver (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990); the behavioral system is characterized by a structured design of infant gestures such as calling, cueing, clinging, and crying and the subsequent adult response (Bowlby,

1980). This interaction provides safety, comfort, and a secure base for the infant to explore his environment, and it's this process that is termed attachment (Bowlby, 1980).

Consequently, attachment is a psychological bond developed between infant and caregiver (Bowlby, 1969). This bond is triggered by two conditions that activate the attachment behavioral system which indicate stress and danger. The first condition occurs when the child experiences pain, hunger or illness; the second condition is that of any real or perceived threat or unsafe stimuli in the surrounding environment (Bowlby). Attachment researchers suggested that the goal of the attachment system is not simply physical proximity but to maintain felt security (Bischof, 1975; Bretherton, 1985; Sroufe & Watters, 1977), and this felt security greatly relies upon the response of the caregiver in times of distress.

Caregiver Response

This felt security greatly depends upon a caregiver's sensitivity to the infant. Whipple, Bernier, and Mageau (2011) sought to improve the prediction of infant attachment by assessing maternal autonomy-support during infant exploration. Seventy-one dyads participated in two home visits; maternal sensitivity was assessed when the infants were 12 months old, and maternal autonomy-support and infant attachment were assessed at 15 months (Whipple et al., 2011). The study suggested that autonomy-support explained an additional portion of the variance in attachment (Whipple et al., 2011). In other words, maternal caregiver behavior is vital in the context of child exploration.

In a related study, Higley and Dozier (2009) sought to observe the associations between mother-infant nighttime interactions and mother-infant attachment when infants were 12 months old. Forty-four mother-infant pairs participated, and for three consecutive nights babies, observed in their cribs, had nighttime interactions after awakening (Higley & Dozier, 2009). Secure dyads had mothers that generally picked up and soothed infants when they fussed or cried after awakening (Higley & Dozier, 2009).

Tharner et al. (2013) observed associations of disorganized attachment and maternal depressive symptoms with infant autonomic functioning in 450 infant-mother dyads. It was determined that disorganized infants were more vulnerable to the effect of maternal postnatal depressive symptoms (Tharner et al., 2013). Taking the above studies into account, one can conclude that both positive and negative caregiver interactions impact the infant attachment system. This further supports a caregiver's role in the infant attachment system and his or her internal working models (IWMs).

Internal Working Models

The caregivers' response to the child's gesture for closeness influences the infant's development of Internal Working Models (IWMs) of the self and others (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby (1973, 1980, 1988) demonstrated that IWMs control the overall attachment system and function as higher-order control processes assisting in an individual's environmental adaptation. Main et al. (1985) developed the idea that IWMs are a set of conscious and unconscious rules that organize attachment experiences and help an individual evaluate new information and incorporate it with existing mental representations.

Through continued interaction with the caregiver, a child develops IWMs containing beliefs and expectations about whether the caretaker is someone who is caring and responsive, and also whether the self is worthy of care and attention (Collins & Read, 1990). Those who most easily seek and accept support from their caregiver are considered securely attached and are more likely to have received sensitive and responsive caregiving than insecure infants; over time, these children display a variety of socio-emotional advantages over insecure infants (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). For instance, secure individuals draw on their positive attachment-related knowledge to process information in a positively biased schematic fashion; in contrast, individuals who possess insecure IWMs will either process relational information through a negative lens or dismiss the information if it is likely to lead to psychological pain (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011). Research also demonstrated that in older children and adults, an individual's representations of social relationships are related to the individual's differences in the security of attachment (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). In other words, research supported the idea that IWMs guide later relationships outside the context of the family (Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000; Dinero, Conger, Shaver, Widaman, & Larsen-Rife, 2011; Main et al., 1985).

To demonstrate these working models, Johnson et al. (2010) conducted three visual habituation studies using abstract animations to test the claim that infants' attachment behavior in the Strange Situation (Ainsworth et al., 1978) corresponds to their expectations about caregiver-infant interactions. The researchers tested each infant's attachment style using the strange situation, and the infant participants were also placed in front of abstract animation to see how they responded to various infant-caregiver

interactions on the screen (Johnson et al., 2010). The participant's attachment style was used to compare and contrast his or her reaction to the abstract animation to see any correlation between the two. Johnson et al. (2010) suggested that securely attached infants expected the animated infants to seek comfort from caregivers, and they also expected the animated caregivers to provide comfort; resistant infants expected the animated infants to seek comfort and the animated caregiver to withhold comfort, and the avoidant infants expected the animated infants to avoid seeking comfort and for the animated caregiver to withhold comfort. These findings support an IWM in humans and how they might inform an infant's expectations in interpersonal interactions. Similar to infantile IWMs, adults have working models that inform their interpersonal interactions.

Adult Attachment

Comparable to the infant-caregiver attachment, adult attachments can provide safety, comfort, and a secure base (Ainsworth, 1985, 1991; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998; Collins & Read, 1990; Domingue & Mollen, 2009; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Fraley et al., 2000; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Heavey et al., 1994; Levy & Davis, 1988; Madey & Rodgers, 2009; Main & Goldwyn, 1998; Main et al., 1985; Marchand, 2004; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Mondor, McDuff, Lussier, & Wright, 2011; Olderbak & Figueredo, 2009; Pepping & Halford, 2012; Roberts & Pistole, 2009; Saavedra, Chapman, & Rogge, 2010; Selcuk, Zayas, & Hazan, 2010; Shaver & Hazan, 1993; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992;

Timm & Keiley, 2011). In fact, Bowlby (1973, 1979, 1988) hypothesized that attachment related interactions will guide behaviors throughout the lifespan.

Weiss (1982) theorized that the attachment features of infant-caregiver bonds apply to most marital and committed non-marital romantic relationships. Consequently, a child's IWMs are then carried forward into new relationships where they guide expectations, perception, and behavior (Bowlby, 1973). Therefore, working models provide a "cross-age continuity" in attachment style and are paramount in understanding the role that early relationships have in determining adult relationships (Collins & Read, 1990, p. 645). For example, Collins, Ford, Guichard, and Allard (2006) conducted two studies that examined the link between working models of attachment and social construal processes in romantic relationships. Specifically, these researchers saw that research had provided evidence for attachment-style differences in attributions for partner transgressions; in other words, one's attachment style influences the way an individual explains negative events (Collins et al., 2006). However, Collins et al. (2006) desired to account for possible chronic factors that covary with attachment style, mainly depression, neuroticism, and low self-esteem. After controlling for the significant effects of negative affectivity, attachment anxiety was significantly associated with pessimistic attributions, individuals low in anxiety and avoidance were most likely to endorse the relationship-enhancing explanations for their partner's transgressions (Collins et al., 2006). This demonstrated that one's IWMs learned in childhood impact one's adult relationships, even after controlling for various negative emotionality. Since Bowlby's hypothesis, research has continued to support this claim; namely, the literature maintains similarities in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions between infant-caregiver

attachments and adult attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1993; Shaver et al., 1988; Simpson & Rholes, 1998; Weiss, 1982).

Dinero et al. (2011) tested the expectation that adult attachment styles are derived from early social experiences and throughout the life span. These researchers examined the association between the quality of observed interactions in the family of origin during adolescence and self-reported romantic attachment style and romantic relationship behaviors in adulthood (Dinero et al., 2011). Family and romantic relationship interactions were rated by trained observers from video recordings of structured conversation tasks; attachment style was assessed with items from the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994 as cited in Dinero et al.). They demonstrated that observational ratings of sensitivity and warmth within interactions were positively correlated with attachment security (Dinero et al., 2011). Their findings support the importance of close relationships in the development of adult romantic attachment security (Dinero et al., 2011). This study maintained the idea that attachment in childhood correlates with attachment in adulthood. Nevertheless, in this study the earliest assessment of participant interaction with family members occurred at age 15; therefore, the study cannot establish the extent to which family dynamics change over time and manipulate later romantic interactions and attachment style (Dinero et al., 2011).

Additional studies have confirmed this finding. For instance, in a longitudinal study of 193 young adults and their partners (85 men, 108 women; $M = 20.7$ years old), Conger et al. (2000) sought to find the interactional processes in the family of origin that predicted adult interpersonal skills in romantic relationships. The researchers desired to

discover whether or not early attachments in one's family of origin predicted attachment behaviors in adulthood. Extensive information was collected on these individuals and their families regarding marital, parent-child, and sibling relationships when the participants were in 7th grade; 8 years later these same participants, either in continuing relationships or new relationships, were interviewed along with their partner (Conger et al., 2000). Their results showed that nurturant-involved parenting in the family of origin predicted behaviors in the adult child toward a romantic partner that were warm, supportive, and low in hostility (Conger et al., 2000). Consequently, in many ways adult attachment styles mirror childhood attachment relationships (see also: Amato & Booth, 2001; Noftle & Shaver, 2006; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003; Whitton et al., 2008).

One paramount caveat that should be noted is that not every relationship formed later in life is an attachment relationship. Bowlby (1979) stated, "Attachment behavior is directed towards one or a few specific individuals, usually in clear order of preference" (p. 130). Researchers demonstrated that attachment styles are exhibited in relation to significant persons in one's life (Klohnen, Weller, Luo, & Choe, 2005; Overall, Fletcher, & Friesen, 2003; Pierce & Lydon, 2001). As a result, attachments similar to parental attachment can be formed with romantic partners, a close friend, a counselor, or even God (Kirkpatrick, 1992, Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002).

Adult romantic attachment. Conceptually, adult attachment has been understood within the context of romantic love (Bartholomew, 1990; Brennan et al., 1998; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999; Levy & Davis, 1988; Marchand, 2004; Mikulincer & Shaver,

2003; Shaver & Brennan, 1992; Shaver & Hazan, 1993; Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992; Weiss, 1982, 1986, 1991). For example, Hazan and Shaver's work suggested that the biosocial process of affectional bonds formed earlier in life between human infants and their parents also transpired between adult lovers. The researchers studied infancy attachment styles in adult lovers by conducting two studies. First, Hazan and Shaver (1993) analyzed 620 questionnaires based on previous adult-love measures and extrapolations from the literature on infant-caregiver attachment. Second, due to some limitations of the first study, Hazan and Shaver (1993) provided 108 undergraduates with the same questionnaire; the researchers found that the prevalence of attachment styles is roughly the same in adulthood as infancy.

Similarly, Simpson (1990) found that adult attachment styles influence romantic relationship, thus continuing to support this correlation. This investigation examined the relationship between secure, anxious and avoidant attachment styles of romantic relationships in a longitudinal study. One hundred and forty-four dating couples were given a survey that measured attachment style, interdependence, commitment, trust, satisfaction, and frequently of emotion. The data reveals that for both men and women, the secure attachment style is associated with greater interdependence, commitment, trust and satisfaction than were the anxious and avoidant attachments. In fact, the anxious and avoidant styles are associated with less frequent positive emotions and more frequent negative emotions. To maintain consistency with previous research, this study conceptualizes adult attachment within the context of adult romantic relationships. While

research has consistently demonstrated a correlation between childhood and adult attachment, researchers have also conceptualized different categories of adult attachment.

Categories of Adult Attachment

Adult attachment was originally regarded as three categories: secure, avoidant, and anxious. Those categorized as secure are comfortable with closeness and dependency and are more likely to trust romantic partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Avoidant adults are less likely to trust romantic partners, and subsequently, less comfortable with closeness and dependency; anxious adults are more likely to fall in love quickly and experience intense feelings of insecurity with their romantic partner (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Bartholomew (1990) contended that Hazan and Shaver's (1987) avoidant pattern conflated two theoretically different forms of avoidance; they argued that some individuals – those fearfully avoidant – adopt an avoidant orientation toward attachment relationships to prevent rejection or hurt by their partners. She also suggested that dismissing individuals adopt an avoidant orientation as a way to maintain a defensive sense of self-reliance and independence (Bartholomew, 1990). Therefore, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) viewed attachment patterns in four distinct categories: secure, anxious (or preoccupied), dismissing and fearful. It was proposed that those scoring low on anxiety have a more favorable view of self and those scoring high on anxiety are worried about their own worthiness, leading them to be concerned about abandonment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). People with high avoidance have negative views of

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other's reliability and trustworthiness; while those with low scores of avoidance are characterized by people who hold more favorable views of others and are more comfortable with approaching and relying on another in times of need (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

With this typological view of attachment in mind, Brennan et al. (1998) argued that two dimensions underlay most attachment classification models: avoidance of intimacy and anxiety about abandonment. These two dimensions can be intersected resulting in four quadrants that relate to Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) four attachment styles. The secure attachment style scores low on both anxiety and avoidance, the preoccupied individual scores low on avoidance and high on anxiety, the avoidant person scores high on avoidance and low on anxiety, and a fearful person scores high on both anxiety and avoidance (Brennan et al., 1998). Consequently, this two dimensional model can be dichotomized to generate the classic fourfold typology of secure, anxious, avoidant (dismissing), and fearful attachment (Bartholomew, 1990). For the purposes of this study both the two dimensional model and the fourfold typological view were utilized.

Adult Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

Research robustly demonstrated that romantic attachment styles influence relationship satisfaction (Clark et al., 2010; Collins & Read, 1990; Egeci & Gencoz, 2006, 2011; Feeney, 1999; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Fournier et al., 2011; Fuenfhausen & Cashwell, 2013; Givertz et al., 2013; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Heavey et al., 1994; Ho et al., 2013; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Juhl et al., 2012; Karantzas et al., 2013;

Lawrence et al., 1998; Levy & Davis, 1988; Madey & Rodgers, 2009; Mondor et al., 2011; Olderbak & Figueredo, 2009; Pepping & Halford, 2012; Roberts & Pistole, 2009; Saavedra et al., 2010; Selcuk et al., 2010; Shi, 2003; Simpson, 1990; Timm & Keiley, 2011). Clearly, the more a couple securely attaches to one another the more relationship satisfaction is reported by the dyad. This is due to the fact that secure adult attachments offer love, care and support, all necessary ingredients for satisfactory relationships (Cann et al., 2008). Consequently, securely attached individuals report significantly greater relationship satisfaction (Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1998). Individuals with low avoidance tend to have high relationship satisfaction and relationships built on trust (Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994), because couples with low levels of anxiety over abandonment and comfort with closeness demonstrate more relationship satisfaction even after controlling for gender roles, self-esteem, and romantic beliefs (Jones & Cunningham, 1996).

Subsequently, secure individuals in relationship with a secure partner show greater relationship satisfaction, experience closeness with partner, perceive less conflict in the relationship, practice more adaptive communication skills, have faith in their partner and perceive their partner to be more dependable and predictable (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Levy & Davis, 1988; Simpson, 1990). On the other hand, those with avoidant and preoccupied attachment styles, or those with parents that exhibited avoidance and preoccupation, report less satisfaction and more ambivalence about the relationship (Collins & Read, 1990; Simpson, 1990).

One way attachment might influence satisfaction in relationship is by improving conflict resolution skills. Domingue and Mollen (2009) explored the connection between adult attachment styles and communication patterns during conflict. Specifically, they

examined how the combination of both partners' attachment styles related to self-reported conflict communication patterns (Dominque & Mollen, 2009). Secure-secure couples report the most mutually constructive communication, while the insecure-insecure couples report the most demand-withdraw and mutual avoidance and withholding communication (Domingue & Mollen, 2009). Similarly, Pistole (1989) reported that securely attached couples demonstrate higher relationship satisfaction and are more likely to use a mutually beneficial conflict strategy. Cohesion and the use of compromise are reported as greater for secure couples, while anxious/ambivalent couples are more likely to oblige the partner's wishes (Pistole, 1989). Conflict is a normal occurrence in any relationship and securely attached individuals appear to handle the stress of conflict in a more adaptive manner, thus contributing to higher rates of relationship satisfaction.

Another way attachment influences satisfaction is by increasing the giving of benefits to and from spouses. Clark et al. (2010) examined the connection between the giving of spousal support and relationship satisfaction, in the context of attachment styles, and the researchers found that when a communal norm based giving structure is established the couple reports more relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, a couple that establishes an exchange giving norm, where partners give in order to get, is seen as not ideal because the welfare of each person was not promoted as needs and desires arose (Clark et al., 2010). Clark et al. (2010) discovered that securely attached individuals establish a "norm based giving structure" in marriage with more success and equanimity across time than insecure individuals (p. 1). Appropriately, it appears that secure

attachments allow individuals to unselfishly give without an expectation of getting on a more consistent basis.

Interestingly, one's attachment style also appears to influence a partner's relationship satisfaction. Guerrero, Farinelli, and McEwan (2009) investigated associations among a partner's relational satisfaction and the other partner's style of attachment and emotional communication. Findings show that participants report more relational satisfaction when their partners score high in security and low in dismissiveness and preoccupation. Participants were less satisfied in relationships with preoccupied partners who report expressing anger using destructive communication and with dismissive partners who report using detached emotional communication. Participants are satisfied with secure partners who report using prosocial emotional communication. Accordingly, there appears to be overwhelming evidence that an individual's attachment style within a romantic relationship predicts relationship satisfaction.

First, this section demonstrated a reliable correlation between relationship satisfaction and attachment research. Next, the research exhibited a dependable connection between infant attachment and adult romantic attachment. Although the previous research invariably had limitations, the body of knowledge explained in this section served as a foundation for this current study. The relationships found in this section are pivotal to the purpose of this study, because research also reveals an association between human attachment and attachment to God.

God Attachment

The previous section provided research evidence supporting the conception of attachment and its relation to marriage satisfaction. This section presents literature on God attachment, which relates to this study as well. Researchers theorized that an individual's personal relationship with God shows evidence of attachment characteristics (Beck & McDonald, 2004, Birgegard & Granqvist, 2004; Cicirelli, 2004; Eckert & Kimball, 2003; Granqvist, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2012; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999, 2000; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004, 2008; Granqvist, Mikulincer, Gewirtz, & Shaver, 2012; Granqvist et al., 2010; Hood et al., 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 1999, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, 1992; Mahoney et al., 2001; McDonald et al., 2005; Pargament, 1997; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Simpson, 2002; Spilka et al., 2003; Tamayo & Desjardins, 1976).

Kirkpatrick (1992, 1999) was the first to hypothesize religion as an attachment process. Two hypotheses (correspondence and compensation) were proposed concerning the relationship of parental attachment and a person's later relationship with God (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Initially proposed as rival hypotheses, Kirkpatrick (2005) suggested that both are needed, but under different conditions, to explain the data. In fact, Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2004) found that religious conversions that were gradual were related to relatively secure attachments, in keeping with correspondence theory, and that sudden conversions were associated with an insecure attachment history, consistent with the predictions of the compensation hypothesis. Further research supported the idea that individuals develop multiple attachment relationships, and that one of those relationships can be with a nonphysical

being (Sim & Loh, 2003). God serves as an attachment relationship in the sense that one views God as a safe haven and secure base, and there is ensuing anxiety over loss or separation from God (Straub, 2009).

Correspondence Theory

Research demonstrated that both correspondence and compensation hypotheses assist in explaining the multifaceted nature of attachment to God (Reinert, Edwards, & Hendrix, 2009). Subsequently, a firm understanding of both theories aids in comprehending the complex nuances of this construct. Correspondence hypothesis suggests that the early parent-child attachment IWMs will be similarly reflected in a person's subsequent attachments, including attachment with God (Reinert et al., 2009). Hence, if attachment to a caregiver is secure, attachment with God will also be secure, and if the parental attachment is insecure, the relationship with God will similarly be insecure (Reinert et al., 2009). For example, McDonald et al. (2005) utilized the Attachment to God Inventory (AGI) to compare parent-child attachment and attachment to God among a college population. Comparison of the AGI with parent-child attachment measures supported a correspondence between working models of parents and God (McDonald et al., 2005). That is to say, if someone had an anxious attachment style in one domain they will tend to manifest this style in other domains as well.

Interestingly, while the correspondence hypothesis is supported among individuals who report a secure attachment to a parental figure, it is not supported among those that report an insecure attachment (Granqvist, 2002; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Therefore, Granqvist (1998, 2002) and Granqvist and Hagekull (1999) proposed a two-

level correspondence approach to account for the data (as cited by Reinert, Edwards, & Hendrix, 2009). The first level involves socialization in the early parent-child relationship that accounts for later adult patterns of religiosity; if the bond is secure the child will usually adopt either religious or non-religious views depending upon the orientation of the parent (Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). On the other hand, insecure attachments do not provide the necessary basis for this socialization; at the second level of correspondence, there is a mental model correspondence between self-and-other IWMs and God that affects how one views God (Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). He can be viewed as punishing, forgiving, harsh, and/or caring (Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999).

Compensation Theory

In contrast, the compensation hypothesis suggested that a person's relationship with God functions to meet affective needs created by an insecure attachment to parents (Reinert et al., 2009). This theory states that God is a substitute attachment figure that provides security and comfort, affecting the IWMs of the insecure person, that the person lacks (Kirkpatrick 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Granqvist (2005) found that individuals with an insecure attachment to their parents tend to engage God to cope, particularly when the parent was not very religious. This is also demonstrated in a study by Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990), who found that 44% of participants who identify themselves as having an avoidant attachment with their mother claimed to have a sudden religious conversion experience. Consistent with this finding, Ullman (1982)

demonstrated that a significant percentage of people with sudden religious conversions report unhappy childhoods and difficult relationships with parents.

Therefore, while both correspondence and compensation hypotheses are involved in the interworking of God attachment, the compensation form of religiosity may have its limits (Reinert et al., 2009). Birgegard and Granqvist (2004) observed that when they stimulated abandonment feelings by subliminally suggesting that mother or God had left, individuals responded with proximity seeking, but did so in a way that depended on their history of attachment. Participants with a more secure history turned to God, while the insecure individuals turned away from Him.

Research revealed the foundation to one's attachment to God is found in both the correspondence and compensation theory (Kirkpatrick, 1992). An individual's attachment to God can have its genesis in either mirroring one's attachment to caregivers or using God as a substitution to meet emotional needs that went unmet in early childhood. Research in the past two sections highlighted the importance of one's relationship with God; this relationship is so significant that it has the ability to influence one's relationship satisfaction. Subsequently, this study sought to partially explain why this influence takes place. Explicating this section further, one finds two functions of God: safe haven and secure base.

Safe Haven Function

Functionally, an individual's relationship with God can be conceptualized in two ways: a safe haven during times of distress, and a secure base with which to explore. First, in times of distress persons of faith seek closeness to God in ways similar to that of

a child who seeks proximity to the caregiver (Kirkpatrick, 1999; Pargament, 1997); it is argued that even the imagery and language used in the Judeo-Christian faith is representative of attachment relationships. For example, coping with life stressors is made easier by speaking of Jesus being "by one's side," "holding one's hand," or "holding one in His arms" (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, p. 319). Therefore, people seek God in times of stress (Granqvist, 2005). Grieving persons tend to increase their faith and religious devotion during times of loss (Loveland, 1968): soldiers pray more frequently in combat (Allport, 1950; Stouffer, 1949), times of death and divorce (Parkes, 1972), fears associated with illness (Johnson & Spilka, 1991), daily hassles (Spilka et al., 2003), emotional crises (James, 1902/2002), relationship problems (Ullman, 1982), and other negative events (Hood et al., 1996) have been found as stressful activators that create proximity seeking between the religious individual and God. Research also demonstrated the claim that sudden religious conversions are more likely to occur during times of severe distress and crisis (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Pargament, 1997). Compellingly, studies suggested that to increase God-related thoughts, appraisal of threat does not require conscious processing (Birgegard & Granqvist, 2004).

Secure Base Function

Second, God can be utilized as a secure base with which to explore. Studies advocated that religious commitment and intrinsic religious orientation are positively correlated with a sense of internal locus of control (Kahoe, 1974; Strickland & Shaffer, 1971), more active problem solving skills (Pargament et al., 1979), a sense of personal competence (Ventis, 1995), and a more hopeful outlook on the future (Myers, 1992).

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Intrinsic religiousness is also correlated with two forms of mental health: freedom from worry and guilt, and a sense of personal competence and control (Batson et al., 1993). For example, Pollner (1989) found that divine relationships predicted psychological well-being. The study used pooled data from the 1983 and 1984 General Social Survey (GSS) (Davis & Smith, 1986 as cited in Pollner, 1989). The GSS contained items exploring religious behavior, belief, images of God, as well as various items of well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction. Similarly, Kirkpatrick et al. (1999) had 184 undergraduate students complete a questionnaire that measured loneliness, social support, and quality of relationships; the researchers found that even after controlling for measures of interpersonal social support, belief in having a personal relationship with God predicted reduced loneliness. These studies suggested that one's relationship with God has the power to positively influence psychological well-being.

Resultantly, if there is decreased loneliness, increased psychological well-being, freedom from worry and guilt, and a sense of competence and control, exploration is more likely to occur. For example, Beck (2006) conducted a study to determine if God might provide a secure base for theological exploration. He examined 117 undergraduate students who completed measures of attachment to God, Quest religious motives, and Christian orthodoxy (Beck, 2006). Beck demonstrated that participants who saw God as a secure base were more engaged in theological exploration and were more tolerant of Christian faiths different from their own. These same individuals reported more peace and less distress during their spiritual journey (Beck, 2006). It appears that, not only does attachment to God assist the individual in times of distress, it promotes security and peace, creating a secure base to explore one's theology and subsequent environment.

Research put forward a consistent link between God attachment and adult romantic relationship (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Psychologically, the need for safety develops as an individual ages (Simpson, 2002). Instead of needing physical proximity in times of distress, the adult needs a maintained felt security; this felt security is defined as the psychological belief that an object of attachment will stay a secure base in times of distress (Simpson, 2002; Sroufe & Watters, 1977). Research has encouraged that felt security in adult relationships can be experienced using God as a substitute attachment figure when a romantic partner is unsafe (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002).

God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

While research continues to maintain that religion influences one's relationship quality/satisfaction (Dumont, 2009; Dumont, Jenkins, Hinson, Sibcy, 2012; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Mahoney et al., 2001; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Myers, 2006; Schottenbauer et al., 2006; Straub, 2009; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008), only two studies have specifically examined the interaction between God attachment and relationship satisfaction, after controlling for adult attachment (Dumont, 2009; Straub, 2009). Straub found that the two dimensions of both God attachment and romantic attachment were significantly (inversely) correlated with relationship satisfaction. God attachment accounted for unique variance on relationship satisfaction after controlling for romantic attachment (Straub, 2009). Secondly, Dumont (2009) suggested that secure attachment correlates with higher levels of relationship satisfaction in the ACOA and the non-ACOA groups, even after controlling for the effects of romantic attachment. That is, an individual's attachment to God influences

one's relationship satisfaction uniquely, even after controlling for the individual's adult attachment style.

God attachment literature revealed that one can mirror caregiver attachment when relating to God; the research also suggested that God can be used to provide emotional support that was lacking in negative caregiver interactions. In attachment language, God can be used as either a secure base to explore one's surroundings during times of non-distress, or He can be used as a safe haven during times of distress. Both the secure base and safe haven God attachment functionality are paramount when considering relationship satisfaction, and it is this relationship that was explored in this study. In the next section prayer will be developed as a way of engaging the sacred to connect to these two functions.

Prayer

Research indicated that through the psychological framework of attachment, prayer engages the sacred as a safe haven during times of distress, and facilitates secure base exploration on behalf of the individual (Byrd & Boe, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). In fact, it has been said that prayer lies at the intersection of religion and psychology (Hanek, Olson, & McAdams, 2011). Prayer is the vital construct that facilitates one's attachment to God. This is due to the fact that practices of prayer and meditation connect people to the ultimate source of their religious and spiritual inspirations (James, 1902/1982; Watts, 2001), and at the same time, prayer often reflects an individual's core psychological needs and concerns (Brown,

1994; Francis & Evans, 1995). Prayer allows individuals to connect with divine Hope, even in the midst of grave circumstances.

Prayer Defined

Prayer is either an affect regulation strategy that seeks to obtain felt security during distress through engaging the sacred as a safe haven, or it is a form of non-distress proximity seeking that nurtures and maintains one's relationship to the sacred (Bell, 2009; Byrd & Boe, 2001; Granqvist, 2005; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011). For the purpose of this study, prayer was defined by type: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and reception (Laird et al., 2004). Adoration focuses on the worship and praise of God, confession involves prayer in which shortcomings are acknowledged, thanksgiving involves expressions of gratitude, supplication taps requests for God's intervention, and reception is described as a type of prayer in which one more passively awaits divine wisdom and guidance (Laird et al., 2004).

Research on the psychology of prayer highlights the development of prayer in children, the role of prayer in counseling, and the effects of prayer on coping, mental health, and life quality (Dezutter et al., 2011; Finney & Malony, 1985; Francis & Astley, 2000; Masters & Spielmans, 2007; O'Brien, 1982; Poloma & Pendleton, 1989; Spilka, 2005; Watts, 2001; Whittington & Scher, 2010). A consistent finding in this literature was that people who engage in higher levels of prayer tend to enjoy higher levels of both psychological and physical well-being, compared to those that rarely pray (Hanek et al., 2011). Spilka (2005) wrote that prayer "is a very significant aid in coping with life" (p. 372), implying that prayer is used to manage unforeseen circumstances.

Literature developed the idea that prayer can facilitate prosocial thoughts and behaviors within individuals. In fact, Francis and Astley (2000) demonstrated that higher levels of prayer are associated with traits suggestive of sociality and agreeableness. In a nationally representative adult survey, Wuthnow (2000) suggested that those who regularly prayed with others in religious groups tended to report this helped them forgive and heal broken relationships. Interestingly, Barnes et al. (2004) revealed that 62% of Americans reported using some type of alternative medicine, and the two most commonly utilized alternative treatments in the United States were prayer for self and prayer for others. As a result, it can be seen that prayer is a highly utilized form of attachment to God.

Prayer and God Attachment

Attachment has developed into a prominent theory for explaining an individual's relationship with the sacred (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Within the attachment framework, prayer is utilized to engage the sacred as a safe haven during times of distress and a secure base from which to explore (Beck, 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Byrd & Boe, 2001; Dein & Pargament, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). This attachment, however, necessitates that the deity is personal. For instance, James (1902/1959) described prayer as a form of spiritual "intercourse" (p. 352) as persons relate to their sense of the divine. This intercourse implies a personal relationship with the deity. Also, Granqvist and Hagekull (2001) conducted a study where 193 adolescents and young adults from the Christian youth

organization of the Lutheran Church of Sweden completed a questionnaire that measured attachment and New Age religiousness. The study demonstrated that New Age spiritual orientation tends to be related to emotionally based religiosity, to insecure parental attachment and to a dismissing avoidant adult attachment style (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2001). In other words, impersonal spiritual orientations might relate to insecure attachment styles, meaning that secure attachments are difficult with impersonal ideas of God. This finding is significant because it partially explains why a monotheistic deity is needed; God must be perceived as personal to form an attachment bond.

In an empirical study that examined the relationship between prayer and adult attachment, Byrd and Boe (2001) found support for the safe haven and secure base functions of prayer. Both the safe haven and secure base function seem to regulate distance and closeness in one's relationship to God, moving closer to deity during times of distress and moving away from God to explore during times of non-distress (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011). Byrd and Boe (2001) analyzed 166 students at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. The researchers administered a questionnaire that measured attachment, early church attendance, stress, and prayer. The study demonstrated that avoidant adults (i.e., those who distance in response to distress) are less likely to practice intimate forms of spiritual prayer (Byrd & Boe, 2001). The study also suggested that anxiously attached adults engaged in petitionary prayer most often, suggesting that help-seeking prayer may serve as a safe haven function for those adults (Byrd & Boe, 2001). As a result of this personal attachment to God, individuals have a foundational cornerstone to seek in distress or distance from in non-distress.

Safe haven function. Research continued to support the idea that people turn to God through prayer (Spilka et al., 2003). One reason individuals do this is to seek security in times of distress. In fact, the most likely religious response in distressing situations is prayer (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975; Bradshaw & Ellison, 2010; Dezutter, Wachholtz, & Corveleyn , 2011), suggesting that private prayer may function as attachment behavior (Kirkpatrick). Research continued to reflect this suggestion that prayer is a common method of coping with serious physical illnesses and injuries (Kirkpatrick; O'Brien, 1982). Also, in times of emotional distress, it has been found that people turn to prayer on a more consistent basis than they do church (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975).

Accordingly, prayer can be used as an "affect regulation strategy" used to gain security in God (Granqvist, 2005, p. 37). Butler and Harper (1994) conceptualized this affect regulation strategy with a couple dyad as a divine triangle. They theorized that a triangulation in the couple-deity relationship can have a healing effect in times of distress (Butler & Harper, 1994). This idea of affect regulation through connection with a deity has found empirical support (Butler et al., 1998; Butler et al., 2002; Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; McMinn et al., 2008). For example, Butler et al. (2002) studied prayer by religious spouses applied to 10 different dependent variables: phenomenological relationship with deity, experience of emotional validation, experience of mindfulness and accountability, de-escalation of negativity, contempt, and hostility, reduction of emotional reactivity, relationship and partner orientation and behavior, unbiased perspective and partner empathy, self-change focus as compared to partner-change, couple responsibility for reconciliation and problem solving, and incremental coaching

(Butler et al., 1998 as cited in Butler et al., 2002). The study used a survey design to investigate the dynamics of prayer and found that spouses noted relationship softening, healing perspective, and perception of change responsibility as significant effects associated with prayer experience (Butler et al., 2002). It comforts an individual during times of suffering to seek a secure God; humans need this type of attachment to cope with many of life's moments. Alternatively, when one is not distressed, God can also serve as a secure base and allow the individual to explore his or her environment with confidence.

Secure base function. Prayer may also serve as a secure base function of exploration (Beck, 2006; Byrd & Boe, 2001). Byrd and Boe (2001) found that avoidance was negatively associated with more intimate types of prayer while controlling for anxiety, religious background, current level of stress, gender, age, and several interaction terms. Consequently, it can be said that non-avoidant individuals tend to participate in more intimate types of prayer. One possible explanation for this is that it could reflect the secure base function of attachment (Byrd & Boe, 2001). It is possible that non-avoidant individuals, those that find comfort in closeness, want to "touch base" before engaging in "exploratory" behavior (Byrd & Boe, 2001, p. 20). Similarly, Beck (2006) suggested that individuals who saw God as a secure base were more likely to engage in exploration. He went on to say that one way individuals connect to God as a secure base is through prayer (Beck, 2006).

Prayer and Relationship Satisfaction

Research indicated that prayer, as a means of engaging the sacred either in times of distress or peace, influences one's relationship satisfaction (Beach et al., 2008; Butler et al., 2002; Dollahite & Lambert, 2007; Dollahite & Marks, 2009; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Ellison et al., 2010; Fincham et al., 2008; Fincham et al., 2010; Gardner et al., 2008; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006, 2008; Lambert, Fincham, Braithwaite, Graham, & Beach, 2009; Lambert et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2010; Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Mahoney, 2010).

For religious couples, God is invoked through prayer, and this divine experience may more regularly and significantly influence interactions than anyone else, including family members (Butler & Harper, 1994). Butler et al. (2002) sampled a geographically diverse group of 217 spouses and found that relationship softening, healing perspective, and perception or experience of change responsibility were all significant effects associated with prayer experiences.

Lambert et al. (2012) conducted three studies that examined the relationship between prayer, unity and trust. Study 1 demonstrated that praying for one's partner predicts objective ratings of trust (Lambert et al., 2012). Study 2 found a significant relationship between prayer with a partner and relationship trust, mediated by couple unity (Lambert et al., 2012). Finally, study 3 examined the relationship documented in a 4-week, experimental study (Lambert et al., 2012). Individuals either prayed with and for their partner twice a week for 4 weeks, or they were assigned to a positive interaction condition, where they discussed positive news stories for the same span of time (Lambert et al., 2012). The prayer condition participants report significantly more unity and trust

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for their partner than those within the control group; relational unity is again the mediation between prayer and trust (Lambert et al., 2012).

Similarly, Fincham et al. (2008) conducted three studies that examined the role of prayer for one's partner and its effect on relationship satisfaction. Study 1 found that prayer for the partner predicted later relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2008). Study 2 demonstrated that prayer specifically for the partner, not just prayer in general, accounted for unique variance in satisfaction beyond what is contributed by positive and negative dyadic behavior (Fincham et al., 2008). Finally, study 3 found that increased commitment mediated the effect of prayer for the partner on relationship satisfaction. These results are consistent with the idea that prayer for one's partner influences commitment and subsequent relationship satisfaction.

Additionally, Butler et al. (1998, 2002) found that, when involved in marital conflict, partners that engaged in a couple-deity system through prayer experienced an enhanced sense of emotional self-validation and partner empathy, mindfulness and personal responsibility for relationship reconciliation and problem-solving, and incremental coaching from the deity. God attachment through prayer can also help the couple to consider the needs of the partner, be more loving, resolve conflict and treat the other with more respect (Dudley & Kosinski, 1990). Overall, prayer seems to aid the couple in handling marital conflict (Lambert & Dollahite), facilitate more prosocial behaviors, and contributes to more relationship satisfaction (Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Fincham et al., 2008).

This section demonstrated that prayer can be used to engage one's attachment to God through safe haven during distress or a secure base during times of non-distress.

This section also revealed a correlation between prayer and marital satisfaction. Previous sections divulged a connection between God attachment and relationship satisfaction. Consequently, this study sought to partially explain the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction through the lens of prayer. Additionally, to effectively study God attachment, relationship satisfaction and prayer, one must account for the construct of forgiveness.

Forgiveness

Research also suggested that one way in which prayer assists couples in relationship satisfaction is through increasing forgiveness (Butler et al., 1998; Butler & Harper, 1994; Butler et al., 2002; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Gardner et al., 2008; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Lawler-Row, 2010; Leach & Lark, 2004; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McMinn et al., 2008; Oman et al., 2008; Vasiliauskas, & McMinn, 2013; Wuthnow, 2000). For example, Lambert et al. (2010) demonstrated that individuals who pray for their romantic partner show an increased willingness to forgive their partner. Lambert et al. (2010) conducted two studies. First, the researchers administered a questionnaire that measured gratitude, prayer frequency, and religiosity; next, 26 participants were asked to go to a private room where they were instructed to say a prayer for the well-being of their romantic partner (Lambert et al., 2010). Twenty-six other participants were assigned to a room where they were asked to describe their romantic partner's physical attributes; following this manipulation, both sets of participants completed an assessment on forgiveness (Lambert et al., 2010). Results indicated that the prayer-for-partner group had higher forgiveness

scores. Second, Lambert et al. (2010) sought to rule out some alternative hypotheses not addressed in the first study by introducing rigorous control conditions. Additionally, even after controlling for alternative hypotheses, the study still suggests prayer-for-partner increases forgiveness of partner (Lambert et al., 2010).

This process of forgiveness is conceptualized as change where one becomes less motivated to think, feel and behave negatively in regard to the offender (Fincham et al., 2006). It is an altruistic gift in the sense that it is not something to which the offender is entitled (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Worthington, 2001). It is a cancellation of debt on behalf of the offended party (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Forgiveness is thought of as having both intrapersonal and interpersonal elements, having a "prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context" (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000, p. 9).

Forgiveness Defined

Throughout the years there have been many different definitions of forgiveness (Butler et al., 1998; Butler et al., 2002; Fincham et al., 2006; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Graham & Clark, 2006; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Lambert et al., 2010; McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 1997; Mikulincer, 2007; Mikulincer et al., 2006; Wang, 2008). With that said, there is a consensus around the idea that forgiveness is a motivational change in which negative response tendencies toward the transgressor decrease (McCullough et al., 1998). Alternatively, Braithwaite et al. (2011) stated that decreased negative motivation alone is insufficient for complete relational repair due to the fact that it implies a position of

neutrality on the part of the offended and not a positive stance towards the partner. Consequently, increased positive motivation toward a transgressor has been theorized as an added component of forgiveness in close relationship (Braithwaite et al., 2011). Evidence for this more positive motivational stance has begun to grow (Fincham, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2002, 2007; Paleari et al., 2009). McCullough (2000) conceptualized forgiveness as both a positive and negative motivational stance. According to McCullough, a motivation towards benevolence must be active to create the psychological state of forgiveness. Second, McCullough demonstrated that forgiveness is pro-social. He stated that forgiveness can be personally costly in order to contribute to the welfare of the other individual. This is due to the fact that forgiveness promotes relationship harmony. In other words, the pro-social move towards the offender requires a decrease in negative motivation towards the other. In that event, forgiveness promotes a reduction in negative responses and also an increased positive stance toward the transgressor (Braithwaite et al., 2011).

Forgiveness and Relationship Satisfaction

Due to the fact that relationships transgress (Graham & Clark, 2006) and responses to transgression are often vindictive (Finkel et al., 2002), forgiveness is necessary for lasting relationships (Braithwaite et al., 2011; Fenell, 1993; Fincham, 2000; Fincham et al., 2008; Fincham et al., 2006; Fincham et al., 2002; Gordon, 2003; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Paleari et al., 2005; Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990). Worthington (1994) believed that forgiveness is the cornerstone of successful marriages; forgiveness can help couples deal with existing difficulties and

prevent the emergence of future problems (Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990). It is not surprising then that forgiveness has been shown to predict relationship satisfaction (Fincham, 2000; Fincham et al., 2006; Fincham et al., 2002; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Paleari et al., 2003). There is some evidence that marital quality predicts forgiveness (Paleari et al., 2003), and that trait forgiveness predicts later marital satisfaction (Vaughan, 2001); it also appears that forgiveness-based interventions may boost marital satisfaction (Alvaro, 2001; Sells, Giordano, & King, 2002).

Fincham (2009) stated that the ability to forgive one's partner may be a vital factor in sustaining healthy romantic relationships. In fact, Fincham et al. (2006) suggested that forgiveness predicts sustained relationship satisfaction in the face of partner transgressions. Allemand, Amberg, Zimprich, and Fincham (2007) examined the association of forgiveness traits within personality and relationship satisfaction during episodes of transgression. One hundred and eighty participants in romantic relationships answered questions about forgiving the most serious transgressions (Allemand et al., 2007). They found that both trait forgiveness (personality traits that lend themselves to forgiveness) and relationship satisfaction were related to forgiveness of the transgression; interestingly, trait forgiveness and episodic forgiveness were positively related at relatively higher levels of relationship satisfaction, whereas they were negatively related at lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Allemand et al., 2007). These results suggested that the more an individual forgives, the more relationship satisfaction he or she experiences, and the more relationship satisfaction, the more an individual forgives.

Kachadourin et al. (2004) examined the tendency to forgive in romantic relationships. The researchers conducted a study that investigated the hypothesis that the

tendency to forgive mediates the association between attachment models of self and other and relationship satisfaction in dating and marital relationships (Kachadourin et al., 2004). They performed a study by first administering measures of forgiveness, attachment security, and relationship satisfaction to 184 undergraduate students. After analyzing the data the results demonstrated that the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of other and satisfaction for dating couples, while those in marital relationships, the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of self and satisfaction (Kachadourin et al., 2004). These studies reflected that a person's tendency to forgive partially explains the relationship between one's attachment leanings and relationship satisfaction. With the connection between prayer, forgiveness and relationship satisfaction in mind, it is not surprising to find a consistent link between attachment and forgiveness.

Forgiveness and Attachment

The intersection of attachment and the construct of forgiveness have merited significant research attention in recent years (Burnette et al., 2007; Davidson, 2000; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Lawler-Row et al., 2006; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 1997; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Mikulincer et al., 2006; Wang, 2008; Webb et al., 2006). For example, Lawler-Row et al. (2006) examined 108 undergraduate students. Participants were instructed to think of a time when he or she was hurt or betrayed by a parent, friend or romantic partner (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). Then participants were either given a questionnaire packet and sent home or led into an interview room (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). Those led into the interview room were

instrumented with a blood pressure cuff. The interviewed participants were, again, asked to recall and describe their betrayal experience, heart rate and blood pressure readings were taken throughout the procedure (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). After the interview, the participants were given the same questionnaire the other participants received (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). Results indicated securely attached young adults reported more trait forgiveness and greater state forgiveness (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). Additionally, insecurely attached individuals reported a greater desire to avoid the offender after the event (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). The researchers concluded that "attachment theory provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding the processes of forgiveness" (Lawler-Row et al., 2006, p. 499). Gassin and Lengel (2013) conducted two studies that investigated the relationship between two attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and forgiveness in the context of bereavement. The results of the study suggested that attachment avoidance was a more reliable predictor of forgiveness of the deceased (Gassin & Lengel, 2013).

Vuncannon (2006) suggested that attachment may be a link to forgiveness due to one's assumptions about conflict and empathy for the offender. He examined the link between attachment style, forgiveness, commitment level, and IWMs in romantic couples (Vuncannon, 2006). Using a sample of 279 participants, Vuncannon found that anxiety and avoidant attachment styles were both correlated with avoidance of transgressor, revenge, and subsequent lack of forgiveness. The correlations between anxiety and avoidance of transgressor and revenge were slightly but not significantly larger than those with attachment avoidance. The research indicated that anxious and avoidantly attached individuals may find it more difficult to forgive. Yaben (2009) also assessed the

relationship between attachment security and forgiveness of former partners. Attachment security scores were related moderately, positively, and significantly to forgiveness; the study also demonstrated that security of attachment remained a predictor of both forgiveness items in regression equations controlling for other factors.

Forgiveness and attachment to God. Regarding forgiveness and attachment to God, Davis, Hook, and Worthington (2008) studied 180 Christian participants who completed measures of attachment to God, religious coping, the degree to which a transgression is viewed as a desecration, and forgiveness. Results from the study indicated that anxious or avoidant attachment to God predict reduced forgiveness, and this relationship was fully mediated by religious coping and viewing the transgression as more of a desecration (Davis et al., 2008).

Hall et al. (2009) conducted a study that analyzed the data from 483 undergraduate students. Each participant filled out a questionnaire that measured attachment style, indicators of implicit spiritual functioning, and indicators of explicit spiritual functioning. Hall et al. demonstrated that unforgiveness was positively correlated with both avoidant God attachment and anxious God attachment, suggesting a link between forgiveness, attachment, and relational spirituality.

This section demonstrated that forgiveness is a motivational change in which negative response tendencies toward the transgressor decrease. Forgiveness literature suggested a correlation between forgiveness and prayer, forgiveness and marital satisfaction, and forgiveness and God attachment. Nevertheless, no study to date had examined the interaction between God attachment, prayer, forgiveness and relationship

satisfaction. To address this gap, this study sought to initially establish a partial

mediation of adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction using God

attachment. If this relationship is established, this study sought to partially explain the

relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction by using the spiritual

and interpersonal behaviors of prayer and forgiveness.

Chapter Summary

Relationship satisfaction has been extensively researched using an array of

significant relational factors (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Bradbury & Karney, 1993;

Gottman, 1993; Karney & Bradbury, 1995, 1997; Karney et al., 1994). The literature has

evolved into measuring relationship satisfaction in two interconnected categories:

interpersonal processes and intrapersonal constructs (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Davis &

Oathout, 1987; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Franzoi et al., 1985; Geist & Gilbert, 1996;

Hendrick & Hendrick, 1991; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Karney et al. 1994; Newton &

Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995). Within this body of relationship literature, theorists have

spotlighted the significance of attachment theory (Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Klohnen

& Bera, 1998). Consequently, there are studies that suggested attachment beliefs utilized

within adult romantic relationships influence relationship satisfaction (Bartholomew &

Horowitz, 1991; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Heavey et al.,

1994; Lawrence et al., 1998; Levy & Davis, 1988; Simpson, 1990).

Using these same attachment beliefs, researchers have demonstrated a connection

with an individual's relationship with God (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Rowatt &

Kirkpatrick, 2002). Theorists have also found a moderate link between God attachment

and adult romantic attachment (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). This association suggests that God attachment may buffer relationship satisfaction through emotion regulation (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

This God attachment and relationship satisfaction alliance might be partially explained by two constructs: prayer and forgiveness. Studies have proposed that prayer can become a means of engaging the sacred as a safe haven during times of distress or it can be used as a secure base from which to safely explore (Byrd & Boe, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1999; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002), and this engaging of the sacred facilitates the interpersonal work of forgiveness (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Oman et al., 2008). Therefore, research has suggested that engaging the sacred through prayer and working towards forgiveness within marriage aids in positive relational qualities and relationship satisfaction (Fenell, 1993; Fincham et al., 2006; Fincham et al., 2002; Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Kachadourian et al., 2004).

While the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction has been investigated (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Myers, 2006; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008), only two studies have probed the interplay between relationship satisfaction, romantic attachment and God attachment (Dumont, 2009; Straub, 2009). Straub analyzed data ascertained at an Evangelical university during the first few weeks of classes in the fall of 2006. Using a cross-sectional design, the purpose of his study was to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction, romantic attachment and God attachment. A hierarchal multiple regression analysis found that God attachment adds a significant amount of unique variance for relationship satisfaction after accounting for the effects of romantic attachment.

Dumont (2009) conducted a similar study analyzing the relationship between God attachment, relationship satisfaction, and adult child of an alcoholic (ACOA) status in a sample of evangelical graduate counseling students. Data from 267 participants was analyzed utilizing ANOVA, ANCOVA, and multiple regression. Due to Dumont's research including many married participants, similar to the present study, a further explanation of the results is in order. It was determined that Romantic Attachment-Avoidance and Romantic Attachment-Anxious were significantly negatively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction; the research also demonstrated that there was no difference in levels of God Attachment between the ACOA and non-ACOA groups. It was discovered that although the effect of ACOA status and God Attachment-Avoidance did not correlate significantly with Relationship Satisfaction, the effect of God Attachment-Anxious was significant. Studying the ACOA participants, Dumont used an ANCOVA to adjust for Romantic Attachment style and demonstrated that the main effect of God Attachment style was statistically significant while the main effect of ACOA status was not. In addition, there was no interaction between ACOA status and God Attachment style; this provides more evidence that the change in Relationship Satisfaction correlates primarily with God Attachment Style in the ACOA population. Using these same ACOA participants, Dumont conducted a hierarchical regression. This revealed that God attachment accounted for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for Romantic Attachment. This step also found that the degree of ACOA status on Relationship Satisfaction does not have unique influence above and beyond Romantic Attachment. Regarding specifically the ACOA participants, Dumont's (2009) study, along with Straub (2009), provided more

confirmation that God Attachment accounts for a statistically significant effect on Relationship Satisfaction, even after controlling for Romantic Attachment styles.

Interestingly, Dumont (2009) conducted two more hierarchal regression, one with the non-ACOA participants and one with the entire ACOA and non-ACOA population. In both models, while the entire models provide statistically significant variance, neither God Attachment nor the degree of ACOA status accounted for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for Romantic Attachment. In other words, it appears that unlike an ACOA, non-ACOAs' attachment to God does not significantly influence Relationship Satisfaction above and beyond one's Relationship Attachment style.

Since Straub's (2009) participants were mostly non-married and Dumont's (2009) focus was on ACOA status and parental alcohol use, this study sought to analyze the connection between God attachment, adult romantic attachment, and relationship satisfaction in a married, non-parental alcohol use population. And while Dumont (2009) did study non-ACOA individuals, 39% of the participants had considered that either of their parents ever had a drinking problem and 38.2% reported that they did consider that either of their parents may have had an alcohol problem. Consequently, even though a participant did not meet enough criteria to be considered ACOA within the study (64%), he or she could have been in the 38% of participants that reported considering one or both of their parents as having had an alcohol problem. Therefore, the pervasive focus of parental alcohol use in Dumont's work created a unique dynamic that generated difficulty when attempting to generalize the findings to non-alcoholic relationships. Additionally, no study had attempted to partially explain how God attachment mediates the relationship

between adult attachment and relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, this present study investigated the relationship between prayer, forgiveness, God attachment, and relationship satisfaction.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The previous chapter clarified that the empirical literature supported the

correlation of adult romantic attachment, God attachment, prayer and forgiveness, and

relationship satisfaction (Dumont, 2009; Dumont et al., 2012; Jankowski & Sandage,

2011; Straub, 2009). Based on this assumption, it was proposed that a secure attachment

with God will correlate with higher amounts of relationship satisfaction. It was also

hypothesized that prayer and forgiveness will partially explain the above phenomenon.

This investigation was important because it contributes to an evolving body of research,

and it has practical application for Christian marriages.

This chapter presents methods by which the aforementioned research questions

were studied. An explanation of the research design, research questions and hypotheses,

selection of participants, measures, procedures, processing and analysis, and ethical

issues follow.

Research Design

This study was a cross-sectional design (Kazdin, 2003). The measures

administered and subsequent data obtained occurred at one specific place in time. The

dependent variable was relationship satisfaction, and scores for this variable were

obtained using the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSAT) (Burns, 1993). The

independent variable scores were attained through the administration of the Revised

Experiences in Close Relationships survey (ECR-R) (Fraley et al., 2000), Attachment to

God Inventory (AGI) (Beck & McDonald, 2004), Multidimensional Prayer Inventory (MPI) (Laird et al., 2004), and the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) (McCullough et al., 1998).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Two research questions were examined. First, does God attachment partially mediate the relationship between adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction in married individuals? It was theorized that God attachment would partially mediate the relationship between adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction. Consequently, the null hypothesis stated that God attachment would not mediate the relationship between adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction.

Second, does prayer and forgiveness partially mediate the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction? It was theorized that prayer and forgiveness would partially mediate the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis stated that prayer and forgiveness would not mediate the relationship between God attachment and relationship satisfaction.

Selection of Participants

It was determined that 175 participants were needed for the study (Cohen, 1988). Recruitment was focused on Christian married individuals. Participants were acquired through primarily soliciting various churches throughout Austin, Texas. Participants were also recruited from other geographical locations in Texas. A letter of recruitment was read by the investigator as well as by any other recruiter (see Appendix C).

Interested participants were asked for their email address in order to send the informed consent form (see Appendix A), demographic portion of the survey (see Appendix B), and the study measures (see Appendices D-H).

Inclusion Criteria

First, participants were to be currently married. Straub (2009) noted that more research is needed to investigate God attachment's relationship to satisfaction within a married demographic.

Second, while Dumont (2009) and Dumont et al. (2012) studied God attachment's mediation of relationship satisfaction in a predominantly married population, the focus of that particular study was on individuals affected by parental alcohol use. This created a unique dynamic that limits the generalization of the findings. Consequently, this study did not adhere to this focus and allowed for participation regardless of parental alcohol use.

Third, participants were self-identified as a follower of Christ. Beck and McDonald (2004) explained that the idea of God attachment requires a felt personal relationship with God. As a result, most God attachment research had involved monotheism and the personal qualities of their theistic pursuit (Beck & McDonald, 2004).

Instrumentation

In an effort to increase external validity, participants completed a background demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B), which included descriptive information such as gender, age, and race/ethnicity, and requested data on family history assessing for

information on personal religious background, family of origin, and recent family losses. Participants were also asked for their personal/family's mental health history.

Relationship Satisfaction

Two main categories within relationship satisfaction have been described as interpersonal and intrapersonal (Straub, 2009). Interpersonal interactions such as verbal communications, emotions, tone and nonverbal cues were found to be the most significant way of predicating relationship satisfaction (Gottman, 2003). Intrapersonal variables such as perceptions, attitudes, and attributions about the relationship were also strong predictors of relationship satisfaction (Karney et al., 1994). Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSAT) (Burns, 1993). This reliable and internally consistent scale (Burns, 1993) uses a 13-item scale (α = .97). For the purpose of this study, the brief 7-item version was used (α = .94). The RSAT scores also showed a high correlation with scores on the Lock-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale r = .80 (Burns & Sayers, 1988), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale r = .89 (Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994), and Norton's Quality of Marriage Index r = .91 (Heyman et al., 1994).

The 7-item version measures relationship satisfaction and dissatisfaction in seven areas using a Likert scale ranging from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 6 (very satisfied). Total scores on the instrument range between 0 and 42. There is a simple scoring procedure, the higher the score the more satisfied the individual is in the relationship.

Adult Romantic Attachment

Similar to the infant-caregiver attachment, adult attachments can provide safety, comfort and a secure base (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Heavey et al., 1994). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) conceptualized adult attachment as four categories: secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful; these four adult attachment styles are defined using two dimensions in romantic relationships: anxiety and avoidance. Adult romantic attachment was assessed using the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships questionnaire (ECR-R) (Fraley et al., 2000). It is a self-report survey measure of adult attachment containing 36 Likert type items, half of which examine attachment anxiety and the other half attachment avoidance. This scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The instrument measures participants on two dimensions that underlie adult attachment organization, avoidance and anxiety. The Avoidance and Anxiety scales consist of 18 items each. The Avoidance scale measures discomfort with closeness and intimacy in relationships, and the Anxiety scale examines fear of rejection and abandonment.

In 1996, ECR was designed using a compilation of items from every published, and some non-published, adult attachment interviews (Brennan et al., 1998). Researchers studied the 323-item instrument on a population of 1,086 college students and used factor analysis to analyze. Brennan et al. (1998) found two primary factors, anxiety and avoidance, accounted for 62.8% of the variance. This research found four categories that paralleled Bartholomew's (1991) four categories of attachment. The secure attachment style scores low on both anxiety and avoidance, the preoccupied individual scores low on

avoidance and high on anxiety, the avoidant person scores high on avoidance and low on anxiety, and a fearful person scores high on both anxiety and avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Fraley et al. (2000) attempted to provide a more accurate and reliable measure of adult attachment. They developed the Revised Experiences in Close Relationship (ECR-R) questionnaire which was based on the reanalysis of the comprehensive 323 item dataset previously collected by Brennan et al. (1998). This revised version has a shared variance in repeated measures of both anxiety and avoidance of 90% (Fraley et al., 2000). Sibley and Liu (2004) reported that the ECR-R anxiety and avoidance sub-scales are largely consistent with previous research (Brennan et al., 1998; Fraley et al., 2000) and comprise dimensions with high internal reliability ($\alpha = .94$; $\alpha = .93$ respectively).

God Attachment

God attachment was operationalized and investigated using the Attachment to God Inventory (AGI) (Beck & McDonald, 2004). Based on the ECR, the AGI measures avoidance and anxiety as they relate to a person's relationship with God. Beck and McDonald (2004) found good factor structure and construct validity. Anxiety and avoidance on the AGI were found to have significant correlation with each other and both adult attachment anxiety and adult attachment avoidance. The avoidance scale ($\alpha = .86$) showed internal consistency and this was associated with 15.4% of the total variance, while the anxiety dimension (a = .82) accounted for 17.9% of total variance.

The AGI uses statements that explain an individual's relationship with God using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The assessment

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measures an individual on two dimensions: avoidance and anxiety. The Avoidance and Anxiety scales consist of 14 items each. The Anxiety scale assesses fear of rejection and abandonment by God, while the Avoidance scale measures the level of discomfort with closeness and dependence on God. The researchers found that the secure attachment style scores low on both anxiety and avoidance, the preoccupied individual scores low on avoidance and high on anxiety, the avoidant person scores high on avoidance and low on anxiety, and a fearful person scores high on both anxiety and avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

While developing the AGI, Beck and McDonald (2004) administered the AGI and ECR to 118 undergraduate and graduate students at an Evangelical university. The study demonstrated that subscales for anxiety and avoidance significantly correlated with subscales scores for anxiety and avoidance on the ECR. The AGI demonstrates good internal consistency for the Anxiety subscales (alpha= .80) and the Avoidance subscale (alpha= .84) (Beck & McDonald, 2004).

Prayer

Prayer was measured using the Multidimensional Prayer Inventory (MPI) (Laird et al., 2004). With acceptable convergent validity and discriminant utility, the MPI 21-item scale also showed internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$). The 21-item scale assesses occurrence, weekly frequency, daily frequency, duration, type (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, reception), and level of faith in the effects of prayer. Adoration is a prayer in which the focus is on the worship and praise of God, without reference to needs (Laird et al., 2004); confession involves prayer where faults, misdeeds,

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or shortcomings are acknowledged (Laird et al., 2004); thanksgiving involves expressions of gratitude for life circumstances (Laird et al., 2004); supplication involves requests for God's intervention in specific life events for oneself or others (Laird et al., 2004). Reception prayer will also be used to describe a type of prayer in which one passively awaits divine wisdom, understanding, or guidance (Laird et al., 2004). Statements are measured on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 8 (all of the time).

Forgiveness

Forgiveness was assessed using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) (McCullough et al., 1998). The TRIM consists of items reflecting two dimensions: revenge and avoidance (McCullough et al., 1998), both of which are posited to underlie forgiveness. Revenge is seen as feelings of righteous indignation desiring to see harm come to the offender, while avoidance is conceptualized as feelings of hurt that correspond to a motivation to avoid personal and psychological contact with the offender (McCullough et al., 1998). The 12-item scale shows internal consistency for both the Avoidance subscale ($\alpha = .86$) and the Revenge subscale ($\alpha = .90$; McCullough et al., 1998). Statements are measured on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

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Research Procedures

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After receiving approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB), 175 participants were recruited. Participants were solicited through protestant churches.

All persons who indicated interest in the study were emailed a link to Survey Monkey. Participants first read the informed consent (see Appendix A) that described the study and participant's rights, stated that participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any point. Secondly, they were presented demographic-related questions (see Appendix B). After signing the informed consent and providing demographic information, participants were presented with the measures in the following order: Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSAT) (Burns, 1993), the Revised Experience in Close Relationship survey (ECR-R) (Fraley et al., 2000), Attachment to God Inventory (AGI) (Beck & McDonald, 2004), Multidimensional Prayer Inventory (MPI) (Laird, et al., 2004), and the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) (McCullough et al., 1998). It was assumed that it would take the average person 20 minutes to complete the full assessment. The link was available for 2 months, and it was password protected so that only those who met the criteria could access it.

Data Processing and Analysis

As previously discussed, the study used a cross-sectional design with follow up analysis. In an effort to increase external validity, demographic data was also analyzed. The measures were available for 2 months. Solicitation continued to occur throughout that time frame to maximize the number of participants.

Obtaining Data

It was determined that 175 participants were needed for this study. Recruitment was focused on Christian married individuals. Participants were acquired through

soliciting various churches throughout Austin, Texas. An additional effort was made to ascertain participants from other geographical locations in Texas. Interested participants were asked for their email address. An email provided a link to the research survey. Once on the website, the interested participants were asked to read and agree to an informed consent, fill out a basic demographic questionnaire, and then complete the assessment measures. The survey results were transferred to an excel spreadsheet, and from there entered into SPSS (version 22). Throughout this process the data was encrypted to ensure confidentiality.

Statistical Analysis

Once in SPSS (version 22), two mediation analyses were conducted. First, two zero-order correlations arranged in a correlation matrix were used to examine the relationship between all five variables. After examining the correlations, two hierarchal regressions were used to examine the two research questions. The first hierarchal regression was used to examine whether God attachment adds unique variance on relationship satisfaction after accounting for romantic attachment. To assure a conservative measurement, romantic attachment was entered first followed by God attachment. The first R^2 measured whether romantic attachment accounts for significant variance on relationship satisfaction. The second R^2 identified the unique variance accounted for by God attachment after controlling for romantic attachment.

The second research question was addressed using a second hierarchal regression. This statistical procedure was used to examine whether prayer and forgiveness add unique variance on relationship satisfaction after accounting for God attachment. To again

assure a conservative measurement, God attachment was entered first followed by prayer and forgiveness. The first R^2 measured whether God attachment accounts for significant variance on relationship satisfaction, and the second R^2 identified the unique variance accounted for by prayer and forgiveness after controlling for God attachment. The interaction effect between prayer and forgiveness was also considered.

Ethical Considerations

It was assumed that the procedures listed above were minimally evasive and presented little mental or physical risk for the participant. The possibility of risk was explained to all potential candidates via the Informed Consent (see Appendix A). Contact information for local mental health practitioners were emailed to all participants along with the link to the informed consent and survey. Individuals were encouraged to seek professional help if psychological or emotional damage occurred due to participation.

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained through several procedural tasks. The Informed Consent provided participants with information regarding the purpose, procedural tasks involved, the assurance of confidentiality, the voluntary nature, and contact information for the study.

Confidentiality was also ensured via data encryption software. This provided a higher level of security that prevented unauthorized access. All data was accessible only to the researcher, and will be destroyed three years following the completion of the dissertation. The participants did not provide any identifying demographic information (i.e., name, address, phone numbers, etc.).

In accordance with university requirements, the researcher applied for permission to conduct the study via the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the procedures that were be implemented in this study. The purpose of this study was to explore the interplay between God attachment and relationship satisfaction by analyzing the variables of prayer and forgiveness. Selection and recruitment of participants, assessments and analysis tools were developed along with the procedures for processing the data and evaluating the results. Ethical concerns, specifically the maintenance of confidentiality, were also discussed. It was the intent of this study to provide information that can be utilized to improve marital relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the complex relationship between five constructs: Relationship Satisfaction, Romantic Attachment, God Attachment, Prayer, and Forgiveness. More specifically, this investigation aimed to determine whether God Attachment accounted for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment. Secondarily, the study examined whether Prayer and Forgiveness accounted for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of God Attachment. There were two research questions the study sought to answer. First, does God Attachment account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment? Secondly, does Prayer and Forgiveness account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of God Attachment? This study used a sample of 219 married Evangelical adults who were administered measures of Relationship Satisfaction, Romantic Attachment, God Attachment, Prayer and Forgiveness. Complete data were available for 148 participants (research question one) and 139 participants (research question two).

Summary of Research Design

The first research question was examined using a zero-order correlation and hierarchal multiple regression, where Romantic Attachment variables were entered first followed by data on God Attachment. This provided the most conservative strategy

because it analyzed the relationship between God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment (Kazdin, 2003).

The second research question was examined using a zero-order correlation and hierarchal multiple regression, where God Attachment variables were entered first followed by data on Prayer and Forgiveness. This provided the most conservative strategy because it analyzed the relationship between Prayer, Forgiveness and Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of God Attachment (Kazdin, 2003).

Summary of Results

This section discusses the demographic information of the sample. It also restates both research questions, hypotheses, and provides analyses and results.

Demographics

A total of 100 husbands and 118 wives gave consent to complete the survey. In considering the ages of the participants, 30 participants were in their 20s, 73 in their 30s, 46 in their 40s, 37 in their 50s, and 31 individuals were 60 years old or older. The mean age of the participants was 43.49 and the standard deviation was 14.49. There were 200 Caucasian participants, 6 Hispanic, 5 African American, 3 Asian, and 4 "Other" participants. Regarding number of children, 176 (80.8%) of the participants had at least one child. Of those, 114 had at least two children, 45 at least three, 17 had four, and 5 had five or more children. See Table 4.1 below for an overview of the demographic frequencies.

Table 4.1

Demographic Frequencies of the Sample

Demographic	Type	*n*	Percentage
Sex	Male	100	45.9%
	Female	118	54.1%
Age	20s	30	13.8%
	30s	73	33.6%
	40s	46	21.2%
	50s	37	17.1%
	60+	31	14.3%
Race	Caucasian	200	91.7%
	Hispanic	6	2.8%
	African American	5	2.3%
	Asian	3	1.4%
	Other	4	1.8%
Number of	0	42	19.3%
Children	1	62	28.4%
	2	69	31.7%
	3	28	12.8%
	4	12	5.5%
	5+	5	2.3%

Salvation	Childhood Decision	81	37.4%
Experience	Rededication	43	19.6%
	Gradual Process,	20	9.1%
	Adulthood		
	Decision, or		
	Occurred after		
	Dramatic Life		
	Event		
Family of Origin	Parents Married	151	68.9%
Structure	and Living		
	Together	6	2.7%
	Parents Separated	28	12.8%
	Parents Divorced		
Step Parents	Presence of Step	21	9.6%
	Mother		
	Presence of Step	16	7.3%
	Father		
Significant Loss	Deceased Father	70	32.1%
	Deceased Mother	49	22.5%
	No Significant Loss	94	42.9%

A total of 215 claimed to be Born Again Christians; the mean Age of Salvation was 15.42, and the median age was 13.00. There was 37.4% of the participants that

believed that they made a decision to follow Jesus during their childhood, 19.6%

acknowledged a rededication experience that marked their salvation, and 9.1% of the

participants reported their personal salvation was a gradual process that happened over

time, a decision that was made as an adult, or it occurred after a dramatic life changing

event(s). Out of those that reported a rededication occurred, the mean age was 22.86.

Out of the 218 participants, 151 (68.9%) reported that in their family of origin

their parents were married and lived together. Six individuals communicated that their

parents were separated, and 28 participants had divorced parents. If parental divorce did

occur, the average age was 11.75. Out of the 28 participants that had divorced parents,

21 had fathers that remarried (average age of remarriage was 16.76), and 16 had mothers

that remarried (average age of maternal remarriage was 16.18).

Regarding significant loss for the participants, 70 individuals claimed to have

deceased fathers, and 28.6% of these reported that this death had a very strong effect on

them. Forty-nine participants reported having a deceased mother, and 7.3%

communicated that this death had a very strong effect on them. However, 94 (42.9%) of

participants had not experienced the passing of any significant family member.

Research Question One

Does God Attachment account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction

after controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment? It was hypothesized that God

Attachment would account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after

controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment.

This first research question was addressed using a zero-order correlation arranged in a correlation matrix displaying Relationship Satisfaction and its relationship to God Attachment and Romantic Attachment. Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated using SPSS (version 22) to determine the degree and direction of the linear relationships between Relationship Satisfaction and the dimensions of God Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance) and Romantic Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance) (IBM Corporation, 2013). The anxiety dimension reflects the negative beliefs about one's self-worth and ability to be loved. High avoidance scores communicate negative beliefs about the reliability, accessibility, and trustworthiness of one's partner or God. A one-tailed test with an alpha level of 0.001 was used to determine whether a nonzero correlation existed. See Table 4.2 below for an overview of the correlation matrix.

Correlations for relationship satisfaction. It was hypothesized that God Attachment would account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction. In examining the correlation table, Romantic Avoidance ($r = .552, p < .001$) was significantly positively correlated to Relationship Satisfaction, and Romantic Anxiety ($r = -.503, p < .001$) was significantly negatively correlated to Relationship Satisfaction. God Anxiety ($r = -.328, p < .001$) and God Avoidance ($r = -.093, p < .001$) were negatively correlated to Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 4.2

Correlation of Relationship Satisfaction with Measures of Romantic Attachment and God Attachment

	R SAT	R ANX	R AVD	G ANX	G AVD
R SAT	1	-.503	.552	-.328	-.093
R ANX	-.503	1	-.267	.542	.213
R AVD	.552	-.267	1	-.089	.172
G ANX	-.328	.542	-.089	1	.342
G AVD	-.093	.213	.172	.342	1

Note. R SAT = Romantic Satisfaction; R ANX = Romantic Anxiety; R AVD = Romantic Avoidance; G ANX = God Anxiety; G AVD = God Avoidance
$p < .001$

Variance associated with relationship satisfaction. A hierarchal regression was conducted to determine if God Attachment adds any unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction after statistically controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment. Romantic Attachment variables were entered first followed by the God Attachment data. This was the most conservative strategy because it analyzed the relationship between God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment. The first R^2 generated by this method addressed whether Romantic Anxiety and Romantic Avoidance accounted for significant variance on Relationship Satisfaction. The second R^2 identified the amount of total variance accounted for by God Attachment. The change in R^2 within the second model revealed the unique variance accounted for by God Attachment after controlling for Romantic Attachment. Results are shown in Table 4.3 below.

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In the regression, Relationship Satisfaction was regressed onto the two dimensions of Romantic Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance). This revealed that these variables accounted for forty-four percent of unique variance ($R^2 = .441$, $p < .000$, $F = 57.294$). The second regression regressed Relationship Satisfaction onto the two dimensions of God Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance) while accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment. The entire model accounted for 45% of variance ($R^2 = .456$, $p = .159$, $F = 1.860$), with God Attachment accounting for one percent of unique variance ($\Delta R^2 = .014$). Consequently, God Attachment did not significantly predict Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. In other words, one's attachment to God did not appear to significantly modify marital satisfaction above and beyond one's romantic attachment style.

Research Question Two

Do Prayer and Forgiveness account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of God Attachment? It was hypothesized that Prayer and Forgiveness would account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment.

Table 4.3

Hierarchal Regression Predicting the Unique Variance on Relationship Satisfaction

	Variables	R^2	ΔR^2	F Change
Step 1	R AVD,	.441	.441	57.294
	R ANX			
Step 2	G AVD,	.456	.014	1.860
	G ANX			

Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

Examining the Beta weights (see Table 4.4 below) revealed that neither God Anxiety (β = -.092, t = -1.199) nor God Avoidance (β = -.077, t = -1.134) were unique contributors to the model, even though they both correlated with Relationship Satisfaction. However, both Romantic Anxiety (β = -.311, t = -4.065) and Romantic Avoidance (β = .475, t 7.192) were statistically significant predictors.

The second research question was addressed using a zero-order correlation arranged in a correlation matrix displaying Relationship Satisfaction and its relationship to Prayer (Adoration, Supplication, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Reception), Forgiveness (Avoidance and Revenge), and God Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance). Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated using SPSS (version 22) to determine the degree and direction of the linear relationships between Relationship Satisfaction, the five types of

Table 4.4

Hierarchal Regression Analysis Predicting the Unique Variance on Relationship Satisfaction after Accounting for Romantic Attachment

	β	t	p
R ANX	-.311	-4.065	.000
R AVD	.475	7.192	.000
G ANX	-.092	-1.199	.232
G AVD	-.077	-1.134	.259

Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

prayer, both Forgiveness categories, and both dimensions of God Attachment. A one-tailed test with an alpha level of 0.001 was used to determine whether a nonzero correlation existed. See Table 4.5 below for an overview of the correlation matrix.

Correlations for relationship satisfaction. It was hypothesized that Prayer and Forgiveness would account for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of God Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction. In examining the correlation table, God Anxiety ($r = -.310, p < .001$) was the only significant correlation to Relationship Satisfaction with more than minimal strength within the matrix. God Avoidance ($r = -.113, p < .001$), Adoration ($r = .115, p < .001$), Supplication ($r = .094, p < .001$), Confession ($r = -.063, p<.001$), Thanksgiving ($r = .165, p < .001$), Reception ($r = .142, p < .001$), Forgiveness Avoidance ($r = -.072, p < .001$), and Forgiveness Revenge ($r = -.162, p < .001$) also significantly correlated to Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 4.5

Correlation of Relationship Satisfaction with Measures of God Attachment, Prayer and Forgiveness

	RS	AVD	ANX	A	S	C	T	R	FAV	FRE
RS	1	-.113	-.310	.115	.094	-.063	.165	.142	-.072	-.162
AVD	-.113	1	.388	.112	.007	.181	.170	.185	.093	.108
ANX	-.310	.388	1	-.326	-.067	-.097	-.198	-.335	.113	.354
A	.115	.112	-.326	1	.285	.536	.635	.707	-.161	-.169
S	.094	.007	-.067	.285	1	.433	.540	.257	-.167	-.133
C	-.063	.181	-.097	.536	.433	1	.515	.483	-.078	-.058
T	.165	.170	-.198	.635	.540	.515	1	.570	-.085	-.226
R	.142	.185	-.335	.707	.257	.483	.570	1	-.112	-.206
FAV	-.072	.093	.113	-.161	-.167	-.078	-.085	-.112	1	.352
FRE	-.162	.108	.354	-.169	-.133	-.058	-.229	-.206	.352	1

Note. RS = Relationship Satisfaction; AVD = God Avoidance; ANX = God Anxiety; A = Adoration; S = Supplication; C = Confession; T = Thanksgiving; R = Reception; FAV = Forgiveness Avoidance; FRE = Forgiveness Revenge
$p < .001$

Variance associated with relationship satisfaction. A hierarchal regression was conducted to determine if Prayer and Forgiveness added unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction after statistically controlling for the effects of God Attachment. God Attachment variables were entered first followed by the Prayer and Forgiveness data. This was the most conservative strategy because it analyzed the relationship between Prayer, Forgiveness, and Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of God

Attachment. The first R^2 generated by this method addressed whether God Anxiety and Avoidance accounted for significant variance on Relationship Satisfaction. The second R^2 within the second model revealed the unique variance accounted for by Prayer and Forgiveness after controlling for God Attachment. Results are shown below in Table 4.6.

In the regression, Relationship Satisfaction was regressed onto the two dimensions of God Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance). This revealed that these variables accounted for almost 10% of unique variance ($R^2 = .096$, $p = .001$, $F = 7.218$). The second regression applied Relationship Satisfaction onto the various types of Prayer while accounting for the effects of God Attachment. This revealed 14% variance ($R^2 = .141$, $p = .240$, $F = 1.370$), with Prayer accounting for 4% of unique variance ($\Delta R^2 = .045$). The third regression applied Relationship Satisfaction onto the two dimensions of Forgiveness while accounting for the effects of God Attachment and Prayer. The entire model accounted for 14% of variance ($R^2 = .142$, $p = .926$, $F = .077$), with Forgiveness accounting for less than 1% of unique variance ($\Delta R^2 = .001$). Consequently, Prayer and Forgiveness did not significantly predict Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of God Attachment. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. In other words, one's prayer and forgiveness patterns did not appear to significantly modify marital satisfaction above and beyond one's attachment to God.

Table 4.6

Hierarchal Regression Predicting the Unique Variance on Relationship Satisfaction

	Variables	R^2	ΔR^2	F Change
Step 1	ANX, AVD	.096	.096	7.218
Step 2	S, A, C, R, T	.141	.045	1.370
Step 3	FAV, FRE	.142	.001	.077

Note. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

Examining the Beta weights (see Table 4.7 below) revealed that God Anxiety (β = -.277, t = -2.641) and Confession (β = -.219, t = -2.066) were statistically significant predictors. However, God Avoidance (β = .002, t = .019), Adoration (β = -.031, t = -.230), Supplication (β = .067, t = .653), Thanksgiving (β = .167, t = 1.312), Reception (β = .058, t = .468), Forgiveness Avoidance (β = -.026, t = -.290), and Forgiveness Revenge (β = -.014, t = -.150) were not statistically significant predictors of Relationship Satisfaction. This suggested that individuals experience less Relationship Satisfaction with the more anxiety one has in God Attachment and with higher rates of Confessional Prayer. Conversely, lower rates of God Anxiety and Confessional Prayer seemed to result in more Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 4.7

Hierarchal Regression Analysis Predicting the Unique Variance on Relationship Satisfaction after Accounting for God Attachment

	β	t	p
AVD	.002	.019	.985
ANX	-.277	-2.641	.009
A	-.031	-.230	.819
S	.067	.653	.515
C	-.219	-2.066	.041
T	.167	1.312	.192
R	.058	.468	.641
FAVD	-.026	-.290	.773
FRE	-.014	-.150	.881

Note. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction

Statistical Insignificance

Due to the violation of statistical assumptions and subsequent lack of statistical significance, variables were transformed to reflect more normal distributions (Warner, 2012). After the variables were transformed zero-order correlations and hierarchal regressions were performed to answer the research questions using data that did not violate the normal distribution assumption. This data transformation did not result in statistically significant results.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction within married Christian Adults. Specifically, this present study intended to assess if Prayer and Forgiveness partially mediates the relationship between God Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction. Participants provided demographic information which was evaluated to assess group homogeneity and completed assessments. These assessment responses yielded scores that were analyzed through the use of hierarchical regressions. The analyses yielded variable correlations and suggested that Romantic Attachment provided significant variance on Relationship Satisfaction. However, the null hypothesis was supported for both research questions, due to God Attachment, Prayer and Forgiveness not providing significant variance on Relationship Satisfaction.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether God Attachment accounted for unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment in married Evangelicals. Even though a unique variance was not found, Prayer and Forgiveness were examined to determine if they accounted for the unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after controlling for the effects of God Attachment.

In this chapter a discussion of both research questions is outlined. Next, a comparison to similar research is examined. The importance of Romantic Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction is highlighted, and possible interpretations for the lack of statistical significance is explained. Finally, limitations, considerations for future research, implications for both Christian marriages and counseling, and a conclusion of the study are developed.

Summary of Results

This section will provide a summary of the research results. A brief description of the participants is developed followed by an explanation of both research questions.

Participants

This study used a sample of 219 married Evangelical adults who were administered measures of Relationship Satisfaction, Romantic Attachment, God

Attachment, Prayer and Forgiveness. Complete data were available for 148 participants (research question one) and 139 participants (research question two). A total of 100 husbands and 118 wives gave consent to complete the survey. In considering the ages of the participants, 30 participants are in their 20s, 73 in their 30s, 46 in their 40s, 37 in their 50s, and 31 individuals are 60 years old or older. The mean age of the participants was 43.49, and the standard deviation was 14.49. There were 200 Caucasian participants, 6 Hispanic, 5 African American, 3 Asian, and 4 "Other" participants. Finally, a total of 215 claimed to be Born Again Christians; the mean Age of Salvation was 15.42, and the median age was 13.00.

Research Question One

A correlation matrix revealed that both dimensions of Romantic Attachment were significantly correlated with Relationship Satisfaction, interestingly Romantic Attachment Avoidance was inversely correlated. This finding was inconsistent with other research that showed individuals who scored high on both Romantic Attachment Anxiety and Romantic Attachment Avoidance also reported less Relationship Satisfaction (Collins & Read, 1990; Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002; Simpson, 1990). In addition, Relationship Anxiety was positively correlated with God Attachment Anxiety, but Relationship Avoidance was not correlated with God Attachment Avoidance. The correlation matrix also exposed that God Attachment Anxiety was negatively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction and that God Attachment Avoidance was not significantly correlated (see Table 4.2).

A hierarchal multiple regression analysis then found that God Attachment does not add a significant amount of unique variance for Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment. This finding did not support the researcher's hypothesis regarding the influence of God Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction (see Table 4.3); thus, the null hypothesis was supported. Romantic Anxiety and Avoidance accounted for 44% percent of unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction with the entire model accounting for just 45% of variance. Contrary to the hypothesis, God Attachment was found to account for 1% of unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction. Only Romantic Anxiety and Romantic Avoidance were found to be significant predictors of Relationship Satisfaction (see Table 4.4).

Comparison to similar research. Straub (2009) analyzed data obtained at an Evangelical university during the first few weeks of classes in the fall of 2006. Using a cross-sectional design, the purpose of his study was to examine the relationship between Relationship Satisfaction, Romantic Attachment and God Attachment. A hierarchal multiple regression analysis found that God Attachment adds a significant amount of unique variance for Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of Romantic Attachment. Straub's discovery was inconsistent with the findings of this current study.

Dumont (2009) conducted a similar study analyzing the relationship between God Attachment, Relationship Satisfaction, and Adult Child of an Alcoholic (ACOA) status in a sample of evangelical graduate counseling students. Data from 267 married and non-married participants was analyzed utilizing ANOVA, ANCOVA, and multiple regression. Studying only ACOA participants, Dumont used an ANCOVA to adjust for Romantic

Attachment style and demonstrated that the main effect of God Attachment style was statistically significant while the main effect of ACOA status was not. This suggested that the change in Relationship Satisfaction correlates primarily with God Attachment style in the ACOA population. Using these same ACOA participants, Dumont conducted a hierarchical regression revealing that God Attachment accounted for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for Romantic Attachment. In other words, Dumont's ACOA participants, along with Straub's (2009) non-ACOA, non-married participants, provide confirmation that God Attachment can account for a statistically significant effect on Relationship Satisfaction, even after controlling for Romantic Attachment styles. Again, this is incompatible with the findings of the current study.

Interestingly, Dumont (2009) conducted two more hierarchal regressions, one with the non-ACOA participants and one with the entire ACOA and non-ACOA population combined. In both regressions, while the entire model provided statistically significant variance, neither God Attachment nor the degree of ACOA status accounted for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for Romantic Attachment. Specifically, it appeared that unlike an ACOA, non-ACOAs' attachment to God did not significantly influence Relationship Satisfaction above and beyond one's Romantic Attachment style. These findings are equivalent to the discovery in the present study.

Research Question Two

A correlation matrix revealed that God Anxiety was the only significant correlation to Relationship Satisfaction within the matrix; interestingly, God Avoidance was not correlated with Relationship Satisfaction (see Table 4.5). This finding was inconsistent with Straub (2009) that suggested God Avoidance also correlates with Relationship Satisfaction. Second, Adoration, Supplication, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Reception were not significantly correlated (see Table 4.5). This was also incompatible with research that suggested prayer positively influences Relationship Satisfaction (Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Fincham et al., 2008). Finally, Forgiveness Avoidance and Forgiveness Revenge were not significantly correlated to Relationship Satisfaction (see Table 4.5). This seemed to also conflict with research that demonstrated forgiveness patterns within marriage positively correlate with Relationship Satisfaction (Fincham, 2000; Fincham et al., 2006; Fincham et al., 2002).

A hierarchal regression was conducted to determine if Prayer and Forgiveness add unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction after statistically controlling for the effects of God Attachment. This regression found that Prayer and Forgiveness did not add a significant amount of unique variance for Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for the effects of God Attachment. This finding did not support the researcher's hypothesis regarding the influence of Prayer and Forgiveness on Relationship Satisfaction (see Table 4.6). God Attachment (Anxiety and Avoidance) accounted for almost 10% of unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction with Prayer accounting for 4% of variance and, Forgiveness only accounting for .01% of variance. Unlike the hypothesis, Prayer and Forgiveness patterns were found to account for 4% of unique variance on Relationship

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Satisfaction. Fascinatingly, this finding conflicts with previous research that suggests Prayer and Forgiveness patterns significantly influence Relationship Satisfaction (Jankowski & Sandage, 2011; Lawler-Row, 2010; McCullough et al., 1998). Only God Anxiety and Confession were statistically significant but negatively correlated predictors (see Table 4.7).

Discussion and Recommendations

This section provides further discussion and recommendations for future research. The influence of Romantic Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction will be described. Potential methodological and theoretical explanations for the lack of statistical significance are developed, study limitations, and suggestions for future research is highlighted. Finally, conclusions and implications for Christian marriages are revealed.

Importance of Romantic Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction

Research robustly demonstrated that Romantic Attachment styles influence Relationship Satisfaction (Collins & Read, 1990; Egeci & Gencoz, 2006, 2011; Feeney, 1999; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990; Ho et al., 2013; Timm & Keiley, 2011). Clearly, the more a couple securely attaches to one another the more Relationship Satisfaction was reported by the dyad. This was due to the fact that secure adult attachments, in a correspondence or compensatory fashion, offer love, care and support, all necessary ingredients for satisfactory relationships (Cann et al., 2008).

Consequently, securely attached individuals reported significantly greater Relationship Satisfaction (Keelan et al., 1998). In the present study, this was

demonstrated by Romantic Attachment accounting for 44% of variance on Relationship Satisfaction. This suggested that Romantic Attachment style is a strong predictor of Relationship Satisfaction.

Positive Correlation between Romantic Avoidance and Relationship Satisfaction

One of the more interesting findings was the positive correlation between Romantic Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction. This finding suggested the more one romantically avoids the higher rates of Relationship Satisfaction. This contradicted previous research that suggested one should be less satisfied in relationship when Romantic Avoidance is high (Dumont, 2009; Straub, 2009). This might be related to the fact that relationally dismissive individuals tend to have access to only the left side of their brain when their attachment system is activated (Siegel, Gottman, & Gottman, 2014). This means that while they are relationally dissatisfied, they might present satisfied, even though their Central Nervous System is being disturbed (Siegel et al., 2014). These avoidant individuals struggle to find value or awareness of this dissatisfied experience (Greenspan, 1998). This dynamic might partially explain this contradictory finding.

Interpretations of the Lack of Statistical Significance

While Romantic Attachment proved to account for unique variance, no other variable in this current study accounted for significant variance. This was an interesting finding. Potential explanations for the lack of statistical significant are described below.

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Potential Methodological Explanations

      This section includes possible methodological factors that might have contributed to a lack of statistical significance. Information regarding potential sample and procedural factors are developed below.

      Sample factors. The current sample mean on the Relationship Satisfaction Scale was Moderately Satisfied at 36.3, the second highest satisfaction category. It appears that such a high group satisfaction level might have contributed to the lack of appropriate couple distress, subsequent lack of attachment activation, and possibly contributed to a lack of statistical significance. Religious groups are notorious for portraying themselves in a positive light thus creating a ceiling effect and a lack of variance (Ellison, 1983). This might have contributed to the skewed data. Second, Dumont's (2009) findings suggested that neither God Attachment nor the degree of ACOA status accounted for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in Relationship Satisfaction after accounting for Romantic Attachment. In other words, it appears that unlike an ACOA where God Attachment did account for unique variance over and above Romantic Attachment, non-ACOAs' attachment to God did not significantly influence Relationship Satisfaction above and beyond one's Relationship Attachment style. Therefore, it appears that individual or couple distress does contribute to God Attachment's unique variance. This current study was primarily non-distressed, satisfied couples.

      Procedural factors. Bowlby (1982) conceptualized attachment as a system that must be activated. In other words, to garner an accurate view of one's attachment style,

distress must occur. This theory is supported in studies of infants and young children (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Cummings, 1980). However, only a few studies have attempted to test this attachment activation assumption in adults (Rholes, Simpson, & Grich-Stevens, 1998; Simpson et al., 1992). One study examined Bowlby's premise about attachment activation by looking at differences between threat and nonthreat conditions in the cognitive accessibility of thoughts about attachment figures (Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002). This study suggested that unlike the neutral context, the threat context automatically activates the attachment system (Mikulincer et al., 2002). Accordingly, when threatened (even if only unconsciously) the adult mind turns automatically to representations of attachment figures; presumably, this often results in actually searching for the attachment figure and increases physical and/or psychological proximity to him/her (Mikulincer et al., 2002). Consequently, to gain an accurate view of the adult attachment system one needs attachment-system activation.

This is true in a religious context as well. Birgegard and Granqvist (2004) stated that studies based on self-report assessments are vulnerable to response biases such as social desirability and impression management. Subsequently, activation of the attachment system is paramount when studying religious attachment (Birgegard & Granqvist, 2004). This current study utilized self-assessment attachment measures and did not effectively activate the attachment system, and this might have contributed to a lack of statistically significant results.

Dumont (2009) found that Social Desirability did not correlate with Relationship Satisfaction. Consequently, the construct was removed and not included as a covariate in the study. Subsequently, in this current study Social Desirability was not assessed. As a

result, the use of self-report measures could have contributed to a lack of statistical significance as participants may have reported what they perceived to be socially desirable responses (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Potential Theoretical Explanations

This section includes possible theoretical factors that might have contributed to a lack of statistical significance. Information regarding potential construct overlap between Romantic Attachment and God Attachment, and God Attachment and Prayer is below.

God and romantic attachment. There is potential that God Attachment did not account for higher amounts of unique variance due to strong interrelationship that exists between Romantic Attachment and God Attachment (Kirkpatrick, 1997, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, 1992). This might provide reasons why Romantic Attachment absorbed a significant amount of unique variance in this study as the first variable entered in the hierarchical regression.

Also, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) theorized two hypotheses to explain the relationship between individual caregiver attachment and attachment to God: correspondence and compensatory hypotheses. First, the correspondence hypothesis stated that an individual's caregiver attachment correlates with or complements the individual's attachment to God (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, 1992). Second, the compensatory hypothesis stated that an individual attempts to compensate for an insecure relationship with caregiver with a secure relationship with God (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, 1992).

Additionally, Fraley (2002) studied attachment stability from infancy to adulthood. Specifically, he analyzed two perspectives: prototype and revisionist. First, the prototype perspective states that representations of early experiences are retained over time and continue to play an influential role in attachment behavior throughout the life course (Fraley, 2002). Second, the revisionist perspective holds that early representations are subject to modification on the basis of new experiences and may or may not reflect patterns of attachment later in life (Fraley, 2002). Fraley found that while there is some degree of overlap between attachment security in romantic and parental domains, there is not a strong support for the existence of prototype-like processes. In other words, it is possible for romantic relationships to compensate for early parental insecure attachments.

Accordingly, it is possible that in this present study one's Romantic Attachment style accounted for both correspondence/prototype and compensatory/revisionist processes, leaving little room for God Attachment to fulfill these needs. Since an individual is engaged in prototype or revisionist processes with his or her spouse it is difficult for correspondence or compensatory God Attachment to account for unique variance on Relationship Satisfaction.

God attachment and prayer. Studies suggested that there are several means available for individuals to establish a proximity to God (Kirkpatrick, 1999). Situations include loss through death and divorce, emotional crises, and relationship problems, all of which are likely to activate the attachment system (Bowlby, 1969, Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000, 2002; Ullman, 1982). In situations such as these, the most likely religious response is to pray rather than to visit church (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). This suggested that

private prayer may function as a religious analog to attachment (Kirkpatrick, 1999). Consequently, there appears to be construct overlap that might have occurred in this study between God attachment and prayer, and this might explain prayer's lack of significant variance.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

Several limitations of this study must be considered. This study utilized non-attachment activation self-report instruments, which depend on the honesty and integrity of sample responses. Dependence on self-report instruments for the measurement of both dependent and independent variables may cause concerns regarding the statistical conclusions. According to Kazdin (2003), when using only self-report measures one must consider that "responses to items can be greatly influenced by the wording, format, and order of appearance of the items" and that "there is a possibility of bias and distortion on the part of the subjects" (p. 373). As a result, future studies need to focus on activating the attachment system to gain a more accurate depiction of attachment styles. This can be accomplished by creating threat/nonthreat situations through the use of word primes that stimulate the attachment activation (Mikulincer et al., 2002). Studies should also incorporate mechanisms that measure Central Nervous System responses so that an accurate reading of attachment system response is garnered (Siegel et al., 2014).

Second, the selection of participants added to the study's limitations. The researcher utilized a sample of convenience by contacting ministerial associates throughout the state of Texas, but predominately in the Austin, Texas area. Specifically, this affected the lack of ethnic diversity. For example, there were 200 Caucasian

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participants, 6 Hispanic, 5 African American, 3 Asian, and 4 "Other" participants. While Attachment has been studied within an African American population (Montague, Magai, Consedine, & Gillespie, 2003), the majority of research, to include this study, focused primarily on Caucasian participants. Subsequently, the homogeneity of the participant's race should be considered when reviewing and interpreting the results. As a result, future studies should focus on Attachment's effect on Relationship Satisfaction in varying ethnic populations.

Third, the method used to obtain the data adds to the study's limitations. Survey Monkey, an online survey platform, was used to collect the data. This eliminated those with no Internet access, those technologically illiterate, the visually impaired as well as individuals disinterested in an electronic survey format. As a result, future studies should utilize both online and paper assessment measures.

Fourth, the instruments provided results at only one point in time. Consequently, a longitudinal study is preferable; additional assessments at various times would provide depth to the data received. Finally, Dumont (2009) suggested that God used as a substitute attachment figure for Adult Children of Alcoholics proved to provide significant variance on Relationship Satisfaction in an adult, married population after controlling for the effects of Romantic Attachment. The focus of this present study on non-distressed participants was an apparent limitation. Consequently, future studies should spotlight participants with various past or present psychosocial stressors.

Implication for Christian Marriage

In Genesis 2:18 God stipulated that it was not good for the man to be alone. Consequently, in Genesis 2:22 He created for Adam a helper in Eve. It is this partnership that the idea of marriage was birthed; two becoming one sharpening each other in order to become more Christ-like. It appears that while God can serve as a substitute attachment figure for insecurely attached individuals even to the point of transitioning to secure attachment, Romantic Attachment style is stronger than God Attachment style in predicting Relationship Satisfaction between two human beings. In other words, this study suggested that how one attaches to their spouse is a stronger predictor of marital satisfaction than how that same individual attaches to God. This finding supported Dumont's (2009) non-ACOA population but contradicted Dumont's ACOA population and Straub's (2009) study.

This finding suggested that one's attachment to their spouse is paramount when considering the individual's Relationship Satisfaction. That is to say, when in the midst of marital distress it is not enough to rely on one's attachment to God to increase Relationship Satisfaction. This study implied that a spouse will more positively affect his or her Relationship Satisfaction if he or she will work towards positively affecting the Romantic Attachment bond. This can be accomplished through service, reconciliation and emotional support between spouses that serves to increase a more secure romantic attachment and thus Relationship Satisfaction (Bradly et al., 2011; Malouff et al., 2014; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2013). This type of human partnership seems to parallel Paul's idea of mutual submission found in Ephesians 5.

Implication for Christian Counseling

The fact that Romantic Attachment as a stronger predictor of Relationship Satisfaction than God Attachment has implications for Christian counseling as well. It appears that the counseling profession must work to reconcile spouses to each other, building secure attachment bonds between the couple dyad. This is due to the fact that secure adult attachments more significantly offer love, care and support, all necessary ingredients for satisfactory relationships (Cann et al., 2008). Consequently, securely attached individuals report significantly greater relationship satisfaction (Keelan, et al., 1998). This current study proposed that Christian counselors should work towards creating more secure attachment bonds to increase a couple's Relationship Satisfaction. This can be accomplished through empirically supported behavioral techniques (Gottman, Ryan, Swanson, & Swanson, 2005; Madhyastha, Hamaker, & Gottman, 2011; Shapiro & Gottman, 2005) as well as Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT) (Greenman & Johnson, 2013; Johnson & Greenberg, 1985; Tilley & Palmer, 2013).

One way counselors may positively affect Romantic Attachments might be to seek to improve the couple's conflict resolution skills. Domingue and Mollen (2009) explored the connection between adult attachment styles and communication patterns during conflict. Specifically, they examined how the combination of both partners' attachment styles related to self-reported conflict communication patterns (Dominque & Mollen, 2009). Secure-secure couples report the most mutually constructive communication, while the insecure-insecure couples reported the most demand-withdraw and mutual avoidance and withholding communication (Domingue & Mollen, 2009). Similarly, Pistole (1989) reported that securely attached couples demonstrate higher

relationship satisfaction and are more likely to use a mutually beneficial conflict strategy. Cohesion and the use of compromise were reported as greater for secure couples, while anxious/ambivalent couples are more likely to oblige the partner's wishes (Pistole). Conflict is a normal occurrence in any relationship but securely attached couples seem to produce more productive communication patterns and more productive communication patterns appear to produce more securely attached couples, thus contributing to higher rates of relationship satisfaction.

Another way counseling could positively affect attachment security and influence satisfaction is by increasing the giving of benefits to and from spouses. Clark et al. (2010) examined the connection between the giving of spousal support and relationship satisfaction in the context of attachment styles, and the researchers found that when a communal norm-based giving structure is established the couple reports more relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, a couple that establishes an exchange giving norm, where partners give in order to get, is seen as not ideal because the welfare of each person was not promoted as needs and desires arose (Clark et al., 2010). Clark et al. discovered that securely attached individuals establish a "norm-based giving structure" in marriage with more success and equanimity across time than insecure individuals (p. 1). Appropriately, it appears that secure attachments allow individuals to unselfishly give without an expectation of getting on a more consistent basis, and counseling can assist couples in accomplishing these tasks.

Finally, while the above behavioral techniques to increase a couple's Romantic Attachment and subsequent Relationship Satisfaction have empirical support, Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT) is regarded as an effective treatment as

well (Greenman & Johnson, 2013; Johnson & Greenberg, 1985; Tilley & Palmer, 2013). EFCT draws attention to the significance of emotion and emotional communication between couples; its focus is on emotions as a powerful and often necessary agent of change, rather than the cause of marital distress (Johnson, 2004). Consequently, it seeks to increase a couple's Romantic Attachment bond and subsequent Relationship Satisfaction. MacIntosh and Johnson (2008) suggested that couples reported clinically significant increases in mean relationship satisfaction after participating in EFCT. In fact, Halchuk, Makinen and Johnson (2010) found that distressed couples who received treatment using the Attachment Injury Resolution Model based in Emotionally Focused Therapy not only saw significant improvement in relationship distress, but the results were maintained in a 3-year follow-up. As a result, EFCT can be an effective tool for any Christian counselor in attempting to heal attachment related wounds within the marriage relationship.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented a brief summary of the study results, discussing the participant demographics first. Next, the chapter put forth the findings for both research questions. It also compared the findings to similar research. Chapter Five also explained the essential element of Romantic Attachment on Relationship Satisfaction, as well as explained potential methodological and theoretical explanations for the lack of statistical significance. Next, the chapter developed several study limitations and provided considerations for future research. Finally, implications for Christian marriage and Christian counseling were described.

Study Conclusion

This study extended the current research regarding the relationship between God Attachment, Romantic Attachment, Relationship Satisfaction, Prayer, and Forgiveness. The study found that in the sample population Romantic Anxiety and God Anxiety were negatively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction. In addition, it found that God Attachment does not add unique variance to Relationship Satisfaction above and beyond that which is accounted for by Romantic Attachment. This finding did not support the first hypothesis. Moreover, the study found that in the sample population God Anxiety negatively correlated with Relationship Satisfaction. In addition, it found that Prayer and Forgiveness did not add unique variance to Relationship Satisfaction above and beyond that which is accounted for by God Attachment. This finding did not support the second hypothesis.

These findings regarding Romantic Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction are valuable in that they indicate the paramount role a person's attachment to their spouse plays when it comes to marital satisfaction, even over and above how a Christian attaches to God. The primary application for this study attempts to help Christian couples understand the vital nature of how one attaches to their spouse. Marriages thrive on healthy attachment connections, and whether one enters marriage with a secure attachment or not, it is critical that a person work towards secure marital attachments that facilitate marital satisfaction. This study presented an opportunity for Christian couples to produce secure Romantic Attachments and subsequent Relationship Satisfaction in an effort to honor and glorify the Creator of the institution of marriage.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM
The Relationship of Prayer and Forgiveness to God Attachment, Romantic Attachment, and Relationship Satisfaction in Christian Married Adults: A Mediation Study

Investigator: Joshua Myers, M.A., LPC
Liberty University
Center for Counseling and Family Studies

You are invited to participate in a research study on how prayer and forgiveness affects relationship satisfaction in marriage. You are invited to be a possible participant because you are a married, Evangelical adult. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Joshua Myers, M.A., LPC, a doctoral candidate in the Center for Counseling and Family Studies Department at Liberty University is conducting this study.

Background Information

As part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Professional Counseling at Liberty University, I must carry out a research study. The study is concerned with why one's secure relationship with God facilitates more relationship satisfaction.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to provide your own computer and working internet connection. You will be given a survey monkey link to follow via email. Once at the site you will complete a demographic questionnaire as well as five brief assessment measures that examine: romantic attachment, God attachment, prayer, forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction. This procedure should take approximately 20 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. The risks are no more than you will encounter in everyday life. In answering any or all of the questions associated with the measures there might be psychological risk involved. If you choose to participate in this study and you believe that psychological or emotional injury has occurred I encourage you to seek assistance from a mental health profession. For referral(s), please see the contacts within the body of the email.

There are also benefits associated with participating in this study; however, there are no direct benefits to the participant. It is hoped that suggesting why God attachment might mediate the relationship between adult romantic attachment and relationship satisfaction will add to an already evolving area of research. Practically speaking, it is anticipated that this study will assist followers of Christ in knowing how to deepen their relationship with their spouse and more importantly with their Creator. This study can have significant implications that assist individuals in developing satisfying marital relationships. By participating in this study you are assisting other believers, as well as yourself, in knowing how to love God and love other people more effectively.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for this study.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept anonymous and private. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Publications from this research study will only report on statistical information and no personal information will be cited.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained through several procedural tasks. Confidentiality will be ensured via data encryption software. This will provide a higher level of security that prevents unauthorized access. All data will be accessible only to the researcher, and will be destroyed three years following the completion of the dissertation. The participants will not provide any identifying demographic information (i.e., name, address, phone numbers, etc). In accordance with university requirements, the researcher has applied for permission to conduct the study via the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Voluntary Nature of the Study

All participation is voluntary. You have the option of withdrawing at any point. If you decide to withdraw after you've given information, please let me know in writing and ask to have your data destroyed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University.

Contacts and Questions

The research conducting this study is Joshua Myers, M.A., LPC. Please feel free to ask questions at any time during the course of this study. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Joshua Myers at (512) 331-2700 ext. 2 or jmyers5@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional

Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study:

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender ___ Male ___ Female
2. Age _____.
3. Ethnicity: ___ Caucasian ___ Hispanic ___ African American ___ Asian Other
4. Children: *Gender and date of birth only*
   a. Male/Female
      DOB_____.
   c. Male/Female
      DOB_____.
   b. Male/Female
      DOB_____.
   d. Male/Female
      DOB_____.
5. Do you consider yourself a born again Christian?
   a. If YES, at what age did this conversion occur?
   b. If YES, select ONE statement that best describes your born again experience:
      i. ___ I cannot recall the distinct moment when I made a commitment to follow God. It was a gradual process where I became increasingly committed to God.
      ii. ___ I can recall as a child making a decision to follow God, and since that time have grown closer to him.
      iii. ___ There was a very distinct period when I decided to commit my life to God, which was a sudden, dramatic life changing experience.
      iv. ___ I can recall as a child making a decision to follow God, but later made a distinct decision to rededicate my life to God.
   c. If you select #4 (rededication), answer the following:
      i. What age were you when you rededicated your life? _____.
      ii. Which best describes your rededication (select ONE):
         1. ___ Rededication occurred during a crisis in your life.
         2. ___ Rededication was an outgrowth of a gradual process that came about over time.
6. If you consider yourself a born again Christian, what denominational affiliation do you have?_____.

FAMILY HISTORY

1. Do you currently have any of the following (select ALL that apply):
   a. __ ADHD
   d. __ Depression
   b. __ Anxiety
   e. __ Bipolar
   c. __ Suicide
   f. __ Mental Health Issues

2. Does anyone in your family have a history of the following (select ALL that apply):
   a. __ADHD   d. __Depression
   b. __Anxiety   e. __Bipolar
   c. __Suicide   f. __Mental Health Issues
3. Which ONE of the following descriptions best describes the family you grew up in?
   a.   Parents never married
   b.   Parents married, living together
   c.   Parents separated
   d.   Parents divorced
         i. Please answer the following if you selected "d" above:
            1. Your age at time of divorce _____.
            2. Father remarried? Your age at time of remarriage_____.
            3. Mother remarried? Your age at time of remarriage_____.

Use the following scale when answering question 3:

1	2	3	4	5
No Effect	Mild Effect	Moderate	Strong Effect	Very Strong Effect

4. Have any of the following people in your life passed away (select ALL that apply)?
   a. __Father: Your age at the time he passed away _____.
                           Effect of loss:_____.

   b. __Mather: Your age at the time he passed away _____.
                           Effect of loss:_____.

   c. __Step Father: Your age at the time he passed away _____.
                           Effect of loss:_____.

   d. __Step Mather: Your age at the time he passed away _____.
                           Effect of loss:_____.

   e. __Brother: Your age at the time he passed away _____.
                           Effect of loss:_____.

   f. __Sister: Your age at the time he passed away _____.

Effect of
loss:_____.

g. ___Spouse: Your age at the time he passed away _____.
Effect of
loss:_____.

LETTER OF RECRUITMENT

Date: [State the date]

Dear Church Family:

As a graduate student in the Center for Counseling and Family Studies at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Professional Counseling. The purpose of my research is to assess why one's secure relationship with God facilitates more relationship satisfaction in marriage, and I am writing to invite you to participate in this study.

You are invited to be a possible participant because you are married and an Evangelical adult. If you are 18 years of age or older and are willing to participate you will be asked to provide your own computer and working internet connection. You will be sent a link via email to complete the survey. Once at the site you will read and consent to your participation. You will then complete a demographic questionnaire as well as five brief assessment measures that examine: romantic attachment, God attachment, prayer, forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction. This procedure should take approximately 20 minutes. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

To participate please provide your minister or church staff member a valid email address. I will send you an email this week with a link that you will follow to the brief survey.

A consent document will be placed at the beginning of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. You will click on the "agree" button at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the document and would like to take part in the survey.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (512) 331-2700 ext. 2 or jmyers5@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Joshua Myers, M.A., LPC
Principle Investigator

APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Date: [Date]

Dear Prospective Participant,

I'm excited that you chose to learn more about this opportunity. Please follow the link below:

[link]

Once on the website you will find an informed consent document that you must read and agree to before moving on to the study. After agreeing to participate in the study you will be directed to a demographic survey that you will complete. Finally, you will fill out the five assessment measures. The whole process should take around 20 minutes.

If you have any questions you may contact me at (512) 331-2700 ext. 2 or jmyers5@timothycenter.com.

Sincerely,

Joshua Myers, M.A., LPC
Principle Investigator