

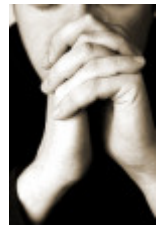


Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Healthy Attachment to God

Dr Maureen Miner from the School of Psychology is exploring the importance of a psychological attachment to God in improving or maintaining good mental health, through a Templeton Oxford Mini-Grant from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the United States.



'The study will use "attachment theory" – a theory from developmental psychology which examines how cognitive-emotional bonds develop between infants and caregivers, and their implications for subsequent relationships and psychological health' says Dr Miner. 'Infant-parent interactions allow infants to develop internal models of how the world works, provide a set of beliefs and expectations about themselves and others, and form a framework of expectations that shape future relationships in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. It is well established that good attachment secures psychologically healthy children and adults, whereas insecure attachment may result in depression and anxiety, and inability to form healthy relationships with others. The relationship between a person and God has also been conceptualised as an attachment relationship, and there is some evidence that secure attachment to God is positively related to good psychological health. This study will examine this theory of attachment to God in further detail, concentrating on a large group of Christian adults.'

Using previously collected data from an extensive questionnaire to 600 Christian adults, Dr Miner and a PhD graduate will look at personal attributes such as age and gender, religious themes such as denomination, religious upbringing and images of God, and different types of attachment relationships, including attachment to God and attachment to human figures. Outcomes such as, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and the presence of psychological symptoms such as depression and anxiety will also be assessed. The researchers will use statistical modelling to indicate whether a relationship between attachment to God and psychological health outcomes exists, independently of any other effects from age, gender, religiosity or adult attachment style.

This project could have important consequences for the use of attachment theory in clinical psychology by giving practitioners another tool in the assessment of mental disorders amongst religious people. It could point to ways of revitalising religious practices and therefore contribute to psychological and spiritual health. It will also contribute both to scholarly theological debate and discussions by lay-people on the positive aspects of Christian life and faith.

Project Title: The effect of attachment relationship with God upon psychological health

Funding has been set at: \$4,966

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