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RELATIONAL PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING:
A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF
RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY AND GRIEF

by

JOEL A. JUECKSTOCK

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2016

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LUTHER SEMINARY

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

PH.D. THESIS

Title of Thesis: Relational Pastoral Care and Counseling: A Practical Theological Exploration of Relational Spirituality and Grief

Author: Joel A. Jueckstock

Thesis committee: ______________________________ ____________

Thesis Adviser Date

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ABSTRACT

Relational Pastoral Care and Counseling: A Practical Theological Exploration of Relational Spirituality and Grief

by

Joel A. Jueckstock

What is the relationship between relational spirituality and grief? This dissertation pursues this question by employing a practical theological method for practitioners of pastoral care and counseling when tending to unique grief experiences. Grief is understood in terms of contemporary bereavement science. Relational spirituality is developed as an interdisciplinary, interpretive lens with the capacity to describe how individuals relate to the sacred in light of four dimensions: human-human, human-God, God-human, and inner Trinitarian. The outworking of these dimensions suggests a relational approach to interdisciplinary dialogue. Applying relational spirituality to individuals' unique grief experiences produces a *process* of care for tending to grief experiences. This exemplifies how relational spirituality is an explicitly relational, interdisciplinary paradigm that creates transformational dialogue applicable to a breadth of human needs.

Chapter One tends to the complexity of integrating contemporary bereavement science with pastoral care and counseling by describing how this dissertation is guided by Richard Osmer's four tasks of practical theology: descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic. Also, the Chalcedonian Pattern of Logic is extended in order to propose a relational approach to interdisciplinary dialogue. Chapter Two represents the interpretive task, as it is based on psychological literature that describes the history and trends in grief research, highlighting resilience as the hallmark of contemporary

bereavements science. Chapters Three and Four engage in the normative task by developing relational spirituality in each of its four dimensions. Concepts used to develop these include attachment theory, interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB), *analogia spiritus*, *imago Dei*, Trinitarian relationality, and the immanent-economic distinction. Each of these concepts highlights normative relational patterns that lead to thriving in human life, particularly in light of specific virtues. Normativity is also suggested in terms of what it is not, namely suffering. The descriptive-empirical task occurs in Chapters Five and Six, which includes an in-depth, qualitative exploration of individuals' unique grief experiences. Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation with a thorough explanation of research findings and development of pragmatic guidelines, as described in the process of care. It is hoped that relational spirituality not only serves practitioners with a descriptive paradigm to creatively elicit dialogue and co-create life-giving narratives with others and God.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For Kyle and Audrey, whose abundance of life and flourishing inspire me daily.

The completion of this project is a highlight resulting from many years of rigorous study and spiritual formation, for which I extend my heartfelt gratitude to loving family, supportive friends, and wise mentors. First and foremost, I thank my gracious and loving wife, who has been a loyal partner and supported my dreams since their inception. Without her, this would not have been possible. I also thank many mentors, as your unwavering commitment and support in my learning process continues to stimulate passion, creativity, and precision in my learning process. Special thanks goes to Dr. Carla Dahl, who first initiated this process by asking integrative questions I did not fully grasp the meaning of as a young seminarian, and continuously challenges me to rise to new occasions, both personally and professionally. Thanks are extended to Dr. Theresa Latini, as she wielded me into a polished practical theologian. I must also thank a host of faithful friends and dialogue partners, especially Kyle Vlach, who listened to my first substantive theological inklings and continues to do so faithfully. Most of all, I thank God for inspiring this process and sustaining me to see it through.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iv

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS viii

1. INTRODUCTION 1

Relational Spirituality 4
Practical Theology: A Relational, Interdisciplinary Framework 6
A Primer on Practical Theology 7
Interdisciplinarity in Practical Theology: Toward a Relational Approach 11
Method of Correlation 12
Mutual Critical Method of Correlation 14
Transversal Rationality 16
Chalcedonian Pattern of Logic 18
Toward a Relational Approach to Interdisciplinary Dialogue 19
Conclusion 24

2. HISTORY AND TRENDS IN GRIEF RESEARCH 27

Psychoanalysis and Grief 28
Following Freud 31
Complicated Grief 34
Stages of Grief 36
Resilience after Loss 40
Chronic Grief 41
Recovery 43
Resilience 43
Everyday Resilience 47
Hardiness 48
Maladaptive Resilience 49
Positive Emotion and Laughter 51
Generativity and Authentic Happiness 53
Conclusion 54

3. RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY: HUMAN-TO-HUMAN AND HUMAN-TO-GOD

DIMENSIONS 57

Human-Human Dimension 58
Attachment Theory 59
Secure Attachment 62
Insecure Attachment 63

A Lifetime of Implications: Internal Working Models of Attachment .64
Attachment and Psychopathology 70
Interpersonal Neurobiology..73
Memory and Emotion 75
Neural Integration, Constructing Narrative, and Resilience 80
Cultivating Empathy, Compassion, and Resilience 83
Human-God Dimension...88
Attachment to God 89
Compensation and Correspondence 91
Virtues and Spiritual Pathology: Implications of Attachment to God 93
Conclusion 97

4. RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY: GOD-HUMAN AND INNER TRINITARIAN

DIMENSIONS 99

God-Human Dimension...102
The Holy Spirit, Transformation, and Relational Virtues: Tracing Historical Perspectives 103
Analogia Spiritus and Spiritual Transformation 111
Analogia Spiritus, *Imago Dei*, and Virtues 118
An Evolving Doctrine: Interpretations of *Imago Dei* 119
A New Vision of Embodied Self: Living Out Virtues.......................127
God's Co-creative Agency and the Internal Life of God 129
Inner Trinitarian Dimension 130
The Differentiated Unity of the Trinity 131
The Immanent-Economic Distinction: The Impact of God's Agency 136
Conclusion 141

5. DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK: RESEARCH DESIGN AND

METHODLOGY 143

Research Question 144
Research Design 146

6. DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS 155

Demographic Data 155
Initial Analysis and Findings 158
Summary and Implications 183

7. RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY, GRIEF, AND THE PROCESS OF CARE 184

Relational Spirituality and Grief 185
Grief in the Human-Human Dimension 186
Grief in the Human-God Dimension 189

Grief in the God-Human Dimension 192
Grief in the Inner Trinitarian Dimension 194
The Process of Caring for the Bereaved 196
A New Vision of Attending: Claiming a Substantive View of Presence ... 197
Attending with Relational Spirituality 201
Attending to Grief with Relational Spirituality 204
Conclusion 213
Summary and Key Findings 213
Future Directions 216

APPENDIX A 219

APPENDIX B 221

APPENDIX C 233

APPENDIX D 236

APPENDIX E 240

Protocol Guidelines 240
Interview Protocol 240

BIBLIOGRAPHY 247

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables

Table 1. Model of Attachment. 67

Table 2. Demographic Data. 156

Table 3. *In Vivo* Codes/Themes. 160

Table 4. *In Vivo* Codes/Themes Frequencies. 161

Table 5. *In Vivo* Codes/Themes Crosstabulations. 164

Table 6. Common Grief Responses. 207

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

After several days in the pediatric intensive care unit, Jill, Greg, and Andrea's physician made the difficult decision to stop providing aggressive, life-sustaining care, as Andrea had experienced brain death secondary to meningitis. Andrea was a normally healthy seven year-old up until this hospitalization, which was a result of contracting a rare virus from lake water at her family's cabin. No one expected something so routine and benign to the naked eye would lead to death, especially over the course of a few short days. Nonetheless, Jill and Greg's worst nightmare was a reality.

Andrea would be survived by her parents, siblings, and a host of extended family, who gathered at the bedside to say goodbyes prior to the compassionate extubation. The weight of their grief was palpable, as their words were stifled by many challenging emotions. I presented the family with an opportunity to be active participants in the meaning-making process by sharing a memory of Andrea. First Grandpa spoke, and then everyone else followed his lead, even the little children. They spoke beautifully of Andrea's joyful smile, generous heart, love and care for others, and the many fun times they shared together. The family shed tears, released bursts of laughter, and everything in-between. Andrea was remembered well that night, and I am certain she always will be.

As a pastor and chaplain, I have journeyed with countless individuals and families at the onset or in the midst of tremendous grief, and moments characterized by grief are representative of a majority of pastoral care and counseling encounters. This is because a

person will inevitably encounter some type of grief or loss in a lifetime, whether we would like to acknowledge it or not. Grief does not discriminate against age, ethnicity, culture, or religious beliefs, and grief comes in many different forms, ranging from the most traumatic, unimaginable circumstances like the death of a child to more easily anticipated, yet equally life-altering experiences of loss, like the selling of a home after 50 years of residence. Grief is a universal experience and it is often at the center of existential crises and human suffering.

Consequently, grief has received a great deal of attention from theorists and researchers throughout the past one-hundred-fifty years. Many of the seminal developments in grief literature, however, have undergone radical reconsideration within the past twenty years as a result of new empirical findings. Perhaps the best example of this is the research and writing of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, whose work asserts that people pass through five distinct stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.[1] These stages of grief resonated with many and have become common language through an expanse of clinical and self-help literature emerging from it. However, work like Kübler-Ross' is now being reconsidered as a result of contemporary research.

George Bonanno, psychologist and researcher, is radically challenging the norms embedded within the ways grief has been conceptualized for decades. Rather than oversimplifying grief and conceiving of it in stages or as a depression-like experience as earlier researchers, Bonanno asserts there are three common responses to significant

[1] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2005); Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1969).

losses, which are descriptive of a longer-term process that is defined retroactively depending on how the individual responds: (1) chronic grief, where the pain of loss overwhelms people to the point where they are not able to return to daily tasks; (2) recovery, where people suffer acutely, but slowly put their lives back together; and, (3) resilience, people have an ability to fully experience loss and continue to carry on without seeming to miss a beat.[2] While the language of chronic grief is new to the work of Bonanno, it is important to note that grief has largely been characterized in self-help literature as a type of pain and suffering that inhibits a return to daily life. In contrast, resilience is the hallmark of Bonanno's work, particularly because he asserts the majority of people who experience grief have an innate capacity to grieve well and re-engage in daily life without experiencing the long-term symptoms of chronic grief. Resilience, therefore, is a significant resource of many individuals and it is worthy of greater understanding at the onset or in the midst of grief experiences. While this development in grief research holds significant implications for all helping professionals, contemporary grief research has not yet been brought into conversation with the disciplines of pastoral care and counseling.[3]

In this project, therefore, I build upon Bonanno's research, exploring emerging themes within individuals' unique stories of grief through the lens of relational spirituality, a conceptual paradigm that offers significant insights into the psychological and spiritual components of grief. In order to accomplish this purpose, I will trace the

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[2] George A. Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life after Loss* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009).

[3] Kenneth R. Mitchell and Herbert Anderson, *All Our Losses, All Our Grief: Resources for Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983); H. Norman Wright, *Helping Those in Grief: A Guide to Help Care for Others* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2011); Danny Goddard, *Pastoral Care in Times of Death and Dying* (Kansas City, Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 2013).

history of grief theory and research while highlighting a variety of paradigm shifts that color the ways in which grief is conceptualized by most people, and demonstrate that the human capacity to be resilient is remarkably common. Then, I will argue for relational spirituality as an interdisciplinary paradigm that has the capacity to illuminate normative and pathological spiritual and religious expression, which has implications for one's capacity to demonstrate resilience at the onset or in the midst of grief experiences. While the primary purpose of this study is to examine emerging themes within individuals' unique stories of grief through the lens of relational spirituality, it will also be argued that relational spirituality provides the practitioner of pastoral care and counseling with an explicitly relational, interdisciplinary paradigm that creates a unique framework for transformational dialogue.

Relational Spirituality

The notion of relational spirituality will serve as the unifying motif of this dissertation and provide an interdisciplinary framework comprised of attachment theory, interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB), *analogia spiritus*, *imago Dei*, Trinitarian relationality, and the immanent-economic distinction in the Trinity. A thoughtful description of these concepts will articulate dimensions of relational spirituality, particularly the human-human (the relationships people share with each other), human-God (the relationship people perceive to share with God), God-human (the relationship God establishes and shares with humanity), and the inner Trinitarian (the relationship

God shares with God's self) dimensions, while providing a basis for acknowledging the potential of transformation in relationships.[4]

My understanding of relational spirituality is primarily derived from the work of Leron Shults and Steven Sandage, who define relational spirituality as "ways of relating to the sacred."[5] It is important to note the descriptive tone of this definition, especially since it does not prescribe precisely who or what the sacred is or how it should be related to. Shults and Sandage define spirituality in light of its etymological root, "'*spiritus*,' which means 'breath' or 'life,'" while also maintaining that spirituality includes social, cultural, cognitive, affective, behavioral, neurobiological, and existential dimensions.[6] These dimensions influence a person's relational spirituality, which involves a dialectical relationship between the sacred (something that transcends the self) and the profane (something entirely natural or pseudoreal).[7] According to Shults and Sandage, this dialectical relationship implies a choice, occurs in the context of human development, and perpetuates individual differences in spirituality that fluctuate over time. Therefore, relational spirituality seeks to *describe* the way in which our own human agency is engaged in the relational dialectic between the sacred and profane by the use of the various dimensions of spirituality, which are broadly representative of psychology and theology.

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[4] The human-God and God-human dimensions differ in terms of agency and perception. That is, the human-God dimension pertains to the ways in which people perceive and experience God's relationality whereas the God-human dimension is centered on God's relational disposition toward humanity.

[5] F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

[6] Ibid., 155-158.

[7] Ibid., 157.

While Shults and Sandage do well to emphasize the theological dimensions of "breath" and "life" as well as a nuanced view of spirituality in light of the particularity of context, the broad representative dimensions of relational spirituality's intersections—namely, psychological and theological—are not particularly clear, which has implications for both the way in which relationality is conceived as well as the ordering of disciplines. In this regard, my understanding of relational spirituality diverges from that of Shults and Sandage, as it begins with a clear interdisciplinary focus. The purpose of this is twofold: to further articulate the relationship between theology and psychology, especially in light of the distinctive and collaborative natures of these disciplines, and to add conceptual clarity to the dimensions of relational spirituality. In order to carry out these purposes, however, it is important to consider how the intersection of grief and relational spirituality is considered from the vantage point of practical theology.

Practical Theology: A Relational, Interdisciplinary Framework

Given the prevalence and significance—emotional and spiritual—of grief, it is not surprising that a plethora of resources regarding grief exist, including both self-help and research-based approaches. While these resources have likely been helpful for many people, a majority generalize grief and subtly assume that there are universal approaches to dealing with grief, even if a person fits a specific demographic target (i.e., men, women, spiritual, Christian, etc.). This dissertation will make a unique contribution to helping professionals and the discipline of pastoral care and counseling—both in terms of theory and practice—by approaching individuals' unique experiences of grief through the lenses of contemporary grief research and relational spirituality.

The integration of grief and relational spirituality will offer pragmatic implications for practitioners of pastoral care and counseling, thereby making this dissertation an exercise in practical theological reflection. The purpose of such reflection is to highlight the *process* of generating pragmatic guidelines in moments of caring for those who are experiencing grief. Furthermore, practical theological reflection honors the particularity of grief and avoids the lofty and grandiose undertaking of identifying universal, "one-size-fits-all" solutions to grief. In order to carry out these purposes, this dissertation must be grounded in a method of practical theological reflection which delineates interdisciplinary issues with integrity. That is, the integration of multiple disciplines must honor the similarities and differences of one another while also creating opportunities to arrive at new, transformational theoretical insights.

A Primer on Practical Theology

Practical theology underwent new developments beginning in the mid-1980's.[8] In general terms, practical theology is concerned with the relationship between the theory and practice of ministry, and it encompasses the disciplines of pastoral theology and pastoral care as well as sub-specialties like pastoral counseling, preaching, Christian education, and spiritual direction. At the outset of her dissertation, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, Theresa Latini concisely summarizes the discipline of practical theology by highlighting specific areas of disciplinary concern that have been addressed, which include: "1) the clerical paradigm; 2) disconnection between the academy and the

[8] Practical theology was first introduced by in Friedrich Schleiermacher, James O. Duke, and Howard W. Stone, *Christian Caring: Selections from Practical Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988). While practical theology remained an important topic of conversation for more than one-hundred years, it was not until the 1980's that practical theology regained widespread interest.

church; 3) a split between theory and practice; 4) detachment from the public realm; 4) reduction of practical theology to applied dogmatics or biblical studies; 6) loss of theological identity; and, 7) captivity to alien noetic frameworks."[9] These issues have resulted in a tremendous response from practical theologians, who have produced various models of practical theology[10] and interdisciplinary models[11] to guide practical theological interpretation.

Richard Osmer, a prominent practical theologian, has proposed a consensus model of practical theological interpretation and analysis.[12] Osmer's model of practical theological interpretation is employed for the purposes of this dissertation as it provides four concrete tasks that guide this research: descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic. It is important to note that these operations do not exist in a linear or prescribed fashion for Osmer; rather, the consensus model advocates for a more fluid, transactional utilization of the tasks. In fact, Osmer describes practical theological reflection as "spiral" in that the practical theologian often benefits from moving through or revisiting the tasks as needed in order to discover new insights.[13] Thus, a defining attribute of the consensus model is that each task is representative of a part in relation to a

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[9] Theresa F. Latini, "From Community to Communio: A Practical Theology of Small Group Ministry" (2005).

[10] Some examples include: Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986); Thomas John Hastings, *Practical Theology and the One Body of Christ: Toward a Missional-Ecumenical Model*, Studies in Practical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007).

[11] Since interdisciplinary dialogue is at the heart of the dissertation, several models will be critically evaluated.

[12] Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).

[13] Ibid., 11.

whole, though each part makes its own distinct contribution in relation to the others and can be used in any order.

The descriptive-empirical task is rooted in the question, "What is going on?" This question is concerned with "Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts."[14] Understanding the focal points of practical theological reflection necessitates a continuum of attending, which is characterized by informal, semiformal, and formal attending for Osmer. Whether it is through informal attending by reflecting on everyday life, semiformal attending with some method or structure, or formal attending through empirical research, practical theological interpretation requires observation and reflection, or as Osmer puts it, attending. This dissertation is concerned with the most formal aspects of attending through empirical research.

In the interpretive task, Osmer suggests drawing upon the arts and sciences in order to answer the question "Why is this going on?" According to Osmer, doing so allows one "to better understand and explain why patterns and dynamics are occurring."[15] In using the terms "arts" and "sciences," Osmer is referring to use of other disciplines like psychology, sociology, and philosophy in order to develop in-depth understanding, or what other practical theologians have called a "thick" description. These disciplines

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[14] Ibid., 4. Osmer uses the terms *episodes*, *situations*, and *contexts* to define focal points of practical theological reflection. He writes, "An *episode* is an incident or event that emerges from the flow of everyday life and evokes explicit attention and reflection. It occurs in a single setting over a short period of time….A *situation* is the broader and longer pattern of events, relationships, and circumstances in which an episode occurs. It is often best understood in the form of a narrative in which a particular incident is located within a larger story….A *context* is composed of the social and natural systems in which a situation unfolds. A system is a network of interacting and interconnected parts that give rise to properties belonging as a whole, not to the parts." See page 12 for more detail.

[15] Ibid., 11.

and the theories within them are not to be used flippantly. Instead, Osmer asserts the practical theologian must possess a "sagely wisdom" that empowers perspicacity in the tension that is created through a discipline's theoretical assumptions and wisdom traditions themselves, like those of the Hebrew scriptures, which fosters morality and discernment. In other words, the arts and sciences offer unique perspectives in the interpretive task, but these do not encompass how an episode, situation, or context would be interpreted theologically.

The normative task asks the question "What ought to be going on?," not only to provide a framework for how episodes, situations, or contexts may be interpreted theologically, but also with the intent to "construct ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from 'good practice.'"[16] Like the other three tasks, the normative task has the potential to operate independent of the others, yet the expression of one's ethical and theological commitments in the normative task also influences practical theological interpretation as a whole. This is best evidenced by particular dialogue partners (i.e., theologians, philosophers, etc.) or an interdisciplinary framework one might rely upon. It is important to note that the issue of interdisciplinary dialogue[17] must be handled by the practical theologian in the normative task for two reasons: 1) interdisciplinary frameworks have the potential to guide the process of practical theological interpretation; and, 2) it is an opportunity cultivate clarity about one's dialogue partners, and how, if at all, precedence is given to a particular discipline.

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[16] Ibid., 4.

[17] Ibid., 163-164. Here, the term "interdisciplinary dialogue" is used to highlight the intersection of two fields of inquiry. Osmer also employs the term to describe conversations focused on perspectives within a single field. Intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary dialogue are distinct from multidisciplinary and metadisciplinary dialogue for Osmer, as the former serves the purpose of bringing a number of fields into conversation simultaneously while the latter is concerned about the nature of a discipline as a whole.

The pragmatic task is primarily concerned with the question "How might we respond?" In order to answer this question, Osmer asserts specific strategies of action must be identified and enacted by the transformational servant leader. That is, leaders must be willing to risk uncertainty, to seek to empower others, and to develop substantial relationships in order to instill "deep change," which is characterized by individual, group, and systemic change.[18] The pragmatic task, therefore, takes on a unique shape in comparison to the others as it is only fully enacted through leadership of people. This requires great relational intuition as strategies of action may evolve organically, as they are brought to particular episodes, situations, and contexts. The pragmatic task must carefully tend to particularities.

Interdisciplinarity in Practical Theology: Toward a Relational Approach

Not only does exploring the intersection of grief and relational spirituality necessitate a method of practical theological interpretation, but it also raises the issue of how interdisciplinary issues will be handled. That is, disciplines and concepts ought to clearly relate to one another consistently and in ways that maintain the integrity of each discipline. Contemporary grief research and the paradigm of relational spirituality can be located within the disciplines of psychology and theology in their most general terms. Whereas contemporary grief research is a product of a long history of psychological

[18] Ibid., 196-207. Of note, Shults and Sandage write of a similar type of change, though they refer to this is as "second-order change." Their description of second-order change offers greater clarity and depth of insight when compared to Osmer's because of its origins in family system's theory. According to Shults and Sandage, second-order change is distinct from first order change as it "changes coping strategies and ways of relating to the system altogether." This is different from first-order change, which is primarily focused on altering behaviors. See Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*.

discourse and research, relational spirituality is an emerging, interdisciplinary concept that involves the integration of psychology and theology.[19]

The complexity of this conversation necessitates an interdisciplinary framework in order to integrate and maintain a differentiated identity amongst the disciplines and supporting concepts. Thus, it will be shown that the Chalcedonian Pattern of Logic, otherwise known as the transformational model,[20] exists in distinction to various models of interdisciplinary dialogue. It maintains a sense of differentiation between disciplines, properly orders disciplines, and allows them to be brought into a dynamic conversation, all while honoring the potential for divine agency. Furthermore, the Chalcedonian pattern illuminates some ideal contours of relationality while also creating movement toward a relational conceptualization of practical theological interpretation. In order to demonstrate the efficacy of the Chalcedonian pattern, other approaches to interdisciplinarity must first be critically evaluated, including the method of correlation, mutual critical method of correlation, transversal rationality, and the Chalcedonian pattern.

Method of Correlation

At the outset of *Systematic Theology*, Paul Tillich puts forth a method of correlation, which represents a prominent theme expressed throughout his theology. That is, Tillich argues theology ought to be "answering" in the sense that it relate "questions

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[19] Steven J. Sandage and F. LeRon Shults, "Relational Spirituality and Transformation: A Relational Integration Model," *Journal of Psychology & Christianity* 26, no. 3 (2007): 186-206; Steven J. Sandage and Ian Williamson, "Relational Spirituality and Dispositional Forgiveness: A Structural Equations Model," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 38, no. 4 (2010): 255-266; Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*.

[20] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 168.

and answers," "situation and message," and "human existence and divine manifestation."[21] Each of these categories serves as the basis for his method of correlation in that questions must always correlate to answers, a situation to its message, and human existence as well as divine manifestation. Tillich's method of correlation holds moments of inquiry, as human existence poses questions to divine manifestation.[22] Tillich's method of correlation has a uni-directional quality whereby divine manifestation does not pose questions to human existence and only suggests answers.

Tillich's method of correlation is exemplified in a well-known work, *The Courage to Be*, where he seeks to address the fundamental issue of the human condition, namely, finitude, which he refers to as "non-being."[23] This is best characterized by universal experience of existential crises, such as threats of "death, meaninglessness, and condemnation."[24] Tillich goes on to argue that non-being can only be rooted out when perfect self-affirmation is discovered. However, the human condition is not capable of perfect self-affirmation independent of the divine. Tillich identifies this as "being," and it is only through the acceptance of our acceptance into divine care that being can root out non-being. For Tillich, this is the "courage to be." [25] With respect to Tillich's method of correlation, non-being poses the pertinent questions related to existential threats upon being, and it is through the acceptance of being that these threats are rooted out, which allows one to experience a more whole sense of life.

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[21] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

[22] Ibid., 59-56.

[23] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 34.

A fundamental issue with the method of correlation is that it lacks clarity between the employment of disciplines and their supporting concepts. For instance, Tillich's work is littered with an understanding of the human that is deeply rooted in psychological inquiry. While psychology adds a depth of insight that theology can not, Tillich fails to differentiate between psychology and theology, as psychology poses questions upon theology, thereby creating what is called a *tertium quid* (literally, a third thing).[26] Here, psychology and theology are merged into a hybrid discipline that loses sight of the fundamental premises and distinctive attributes each field of inquiry is rooted within. This is especially problematic in that the potential divine agency is limited when confused with modes of inquiry like psychology.

Mutual Critical Method of Correlation

In light of the *tertium quid* Tillich creates, Don Browning via David Tracey[27] develops a mutual critical method of correlation that creates a moment of inquiry characterized by bi-directionality, as opposed to Tillich's uni-directionality. The bi-directionality of Browning's model allows various disciplines like psychology and theology to pose questions upon one another. This concept was developed out of Browning's understanding of practical reason, which functions as the core of his practical theological argument.

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[26] James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 37. See also, Theresa F. Latini, "Grief-Work in Light of the Cross: Illustrating Transformational Interdisciplinarity," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 37 (2009): 87-95.

[27] See "Foundations of Practical Theology" in Don S. Browning, *Practical Theology*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983); David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981).

In *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Browning describes practical reason as a process by which one comes to understand reality, which is a product of the ways in which narratives are encountered and interpreted. New experiences must be interpreted and integrated into the ongoing construction of a broader narrative that comprises one's understanding of reality. Browning suggests that practical reason is comprised of inner and outer dimensions, which represent the narratives emerging from experiences related to one's own environmental situation (i.e., experiences that are external to the self) and narratives that are inherited (i.e., by one's early relationships and religious experiences) respectively.[28] Both the inner and outer dimensions are guided by five validity claims that emerge from practical philosophy and provide a framework for interpreting narratives.[29] Practical philosophy, therefore, mediates between disciplines, like psychology and theology. When a narrative is constructed through practical reason, Browning argues it has the potential to guide life and practice.

Practical reason supports a mutually critical method of correlation because it is founded on the premise that narratives are also subject to interpretations. Interpretations emerge as a result of a bi-directional relationship between disciplines. Thus, the elements comprising the inner envelope of practical reason are subject to the same kind of interpretation as an environmental influence, which equates disciplines and places greater

[28] Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*.

[29] Ibid., 105-109. Browning's five validity claims include: visional, obligational, tendency-need, environmental-social, and rule-rule. The obligational and tendency-need validity claims refer to the inner envelope of practical reason, as they refer specifically to the narrative one has inherited and how it informs what the individual needs for survival. The visional, environmental-social, and rule-role dimension serve the purpose of reflecting the outer envelope of practical reason. A prime example of the function of practical reason is what Browning calls an "ethic of mutual regard," which is akin to the golden-rule. This is indicative of the rule-role dimension.

emphasis on human interpretation, thereby leaving no room for divine agency.[30] It is insufficient to interpret narratives that deal with metaphysical and/or existential questions outside the realm of theology. Theology has the greatest capacity to interpret these types of narratives. Therefore, Browning's approach presents a significant interdisciplinary issue in that no consideration is given to the ordering of disciplines.

Transversal Rationality

The transversal model of interdisciplinarity is employed by Wentzel van Huyssteen in order to highlight the ways in which human intelligibility is enhanced as disciplines converse and network with other fields of inquiry. That is, transversal rationality, like the mutually critical method of correlation, understands disciplines as existing in a dynamic and fluid relationship, particularly in moments of inquiry where there is convergence or divergence between one or more disciplines. This is distinct from Browning's approach because it heightens the equity of disciplines even more, as the nuances of specific convergences and divergences are understood within the context of the question at hand, not the disciplines as a whole. Implicit in the transversal model, therefore, is the understanding that various fields of inquiry have, in a few unique situations, the same potential to respond to situations, episodes, and contexts, despite the fact that questions emerge from a particular point of view.

Perhaps the best example of transversal rationality is found in Van Huyssteen's work *Alone in the World*, where he argues for a postfoundationalist approach to understanding human uniqueness and intelligibility from the perspectives of theology and

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[30] Don S. Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies: A Critical Conversation in the Theology of Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987). Browning equates disciplines and places greater emphasis on human interpretation by arguing modern psychologies and theology hold the same potential to describe and order religious thought.

evolutionary science. In using the term "postfoundationalist," he is referring to the replacement of modern forms of rationality or disciplinary inquiry that seek to create concrete and secure foundations of knowledge with a full-fledged embracing of postmodern thought, which acknowledges the significance of contextuality and personal experience while also encouraging a breadth of inquiry outside (i.e., cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, etc.) of one's own domain (i.e., professional guilds, communities, cultures, etc.).[31] Van Huyssteen examines the backdrop of arguments for human distinctiveness related to the notion of *imago Dei*, which he brings into conversation with the epistemology of evolutionary biology as well as paleoanthropology. While no significant scientific claims can be made about the notion of human uniqueness and intelligibility at the conclusion of this work, Van Huyssteen makes the case that interdisciplinary dialogue ought to be considered by theologians when constructing theological arguments such as *imago Dei*, where disciplines outside of theology may contribute to the conversation. While evolutionary biology brings clarity to the origins of *imago Dei*, evolutionary biology does not have the capacity to address the issue of human distinctiveness in light of *imago Dei*. Contrary to Van Huysteen's argument, this suggests not all disciplines stand on equal ground, nor do they have the same capacity to inform one another. Recognizing the distinction between theology and other disciplines leaves room for moments of divine agency in moments of inquiry.

[31] J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?: Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 10-24.

Chalcedonian Pattern of Logic

Issues of interdisciplinarity can also be construed with the Chalcedonian Pattern of Logic. This concept was developed by James Loder and Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger independently of one another, though they both begin from the starting of Karl Barth's interpretation of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, where the relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ were explicated once more.[32] Barth's analysis of the council illustrates that the divine and human natures of Jesus are fundamentally distinct, yet must exist in relationship to one another in order for Christ to be both fully human and fully divine.[33] Thus, Barth uses Chalcedonian terms to suggest that the divine and human natures of Christ exist with the characteristic of an "indissoluble differentiation" while maintaining an "inseparable unity." Even though both these characteristics exist in relationship to one another by representing two seemingly divergent polarities, Barth adds to this dynamic by suggesting that the divine and human natures of Christ exist with an "asymmetrical ordering." By this he means Christ's divinity takes precedence over his humanity because it is only by the divinity that the divine and human natures of Christ can exist in relationship together.

While Loder and Hunsinger make similar arguments, Hunsinger's approach to the issues of asymmetry and precedence provide greater conceptual clarity. For Hunsinger,

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[32] The divine and human natures of Jesus were first explained by Leontius of Byzantium, who argued the for the enhypostatic union the Godhead and manhood of Jesus would result in neither Godhead or manhood, thus Leontius maintains that Jesus was fully divine *and* fully human. For a summary of his argument see, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 136-137.

[33] See James Loder, "Normativity in Context in Practical Theology: The Interdisciplinary Issue," in Friedrich Schweitzer and J. A. van der Ven, eds., *Practical Theology: International Perspectives*, vol. 34, Erfahrung Und Theologie (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1999); Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995); Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*. It is also important to note that Osmer provides the title of "Chalcedonian Pattern of Logic" in his "consensus model" for practical theology. Osmer, *Practical Theology*.

theology is given "logical precedence" over psychology, which she illustrates by following Barthian conception of salvation and healing.[34] That is, salvation has logical priority over healing, as healing points towards salvation, thereby making healing logically subsequent to salvation. In the same way, the discipline of theology is logically prior to psychology, as psychology points toward theology, whose concepts are "logically prior to and independent of psychological categories with respect to their significance."[35] While theology ought to be given precedence as a discipline, the notion of precedence must be treated carefully. Theology's precedence is not derived from the assumption that it has ontological priority over other disciplines, since both theology and psychology are human disciplines—theology is an interpretation of revelation. Rather, precedence is given to theology, as it offers the greatest capacity to address the deepest existential issues the human faces (i.e., grief) by creating opportunity for divine agency. Opportunities for divine agency are created when one attends first and foremost to the co-creative work of the Divine in an ongoing process, rather than other important disciplines (i.e., psychology), which have the potential to elucidate the process. In this work, the notion of co-creation necessarily involves human agency, but originates from and ultimately depends on divine agency, which is logically prior.

Toward a Relational Approach to Interdisciplinary Dialogue

A primer on practical theology and various approaches to interdisciplinary dialogue have been critically evaluated to locate this dissertation on the vast landscape of

[34] Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 67. Here, Hunsinger argues salvation and healing exist in a differentiated unity, as they occur together, yet remain distinct. This is because the divine power to forgive sins conceptually occurs prior to the act of healing; thereby suggesting healing is a sign of forgiveness.

[35] Ibid., 69.

practical theological interpretation and demonstrate the efficacy of the Chalcedonian logic. A careful examination of the dynamics at work within this approach holds the potential to outline the dimensions of relational spirituality—namely, the human-human, human-God, God-human, and inner Trinitarian dimensions—can be described via interdisciplinary dialogue. For the purposes of this argument, it is important to describe the ways in which the Chalcedonian pattern delineates the use of theology and psychology in order to support the development of relational spirituality. Tending to the relationship between psychology and theology in this regard also supports movement toward conceptualizing a relational approach to practical theological interpretation.

The Chalcedonian pattern holds several implications for the way in which psychology and theology contribute to the development of relational spirituality. First, an inseparable unity binds psychology and theology in this dissertation because both disciplines have the potential to interpret one another and the ways in which a person relates to the sacred, whether it is static or changing. In other words, theology offers insight into the discipline of psychology and vice versa. At its baseline, an inseparable unity provides for a greater depth of insight because psychology and theology are in conversation with one another.

Psychology and theology also share an indissoluble differentiation in this research because each discipline is fundamentally distinct from the other in light of their respective etymology, terminology, and focus, thereby causing them to understand relationality and spirituality differently. A noteworthy implication of this pertains to the fact that the theoretical elements that comprise this dissertation will not always seek to describe all dimensions of the relational spirituality—this is at the heart of indissoluble

differentiation. For instance, the God-human relationship cannot be described by attachment theory, as the etiology and development of attachment theory is concerned only with the human-human and human-God relationships.

Finally, this research maintains an indestructible order in the outlining of each dimension of relational spirituality. This is because God is the center of theological reflection, and theology is more comprehensive in its ability to describe reality as we understand it.[36] God cannot be reduced to psychology, nor can psychology be expanded to theology. This means, for example, that theology must be given precedence when describing the God-human relationship, as God's perception of the relationship shared with humanity begins with a divine predisposition toward welcoming, whereas humanity's relational predisposition toward God is fallen and does not exemplify the same ideals.

Thus, the Chalcedonian pattern stands in distinction from other approaches to Christian interdisciplinarity as a result of its capacity to look towards interdisciplinary dialogue as opportunities to glean transformational insights while also maintaining the integrity of disciplines. Doing so creates a unique kind of differentiation between disciplines and models an ideal conceptualization of relationality, which can be conceptualized in the analogy of a shared relationship that acknowledges an "I" and a

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[36] It will be asserted later that the relational spirituality employed in this dissertation will rely heavily upon attachment and IPNB. Attachment styles, whether discussed theoretically or as *in vivo* codes/themes, are not meant to describe God's self or the way God relates to people. Rather, attachment describes particular qualities of relationships in ways that theology can not. The same is also true of IPNB, which is a way of understanding how particular understandings of God are mediated, not God's true identity. These descriptive disciplines maintain the inseparable unity, indissoluble differentiation, and indestructible order of theology and psychology by pointing to theology for the clearest articulation of God's identity.

"you" as well as a "you" and "I."[37] Here, the "I" and the "you" are representative of disciplines engaged in practical theological interpretation. The "I" and "you" in a relationship understand that both the "I" and the "you" are essential for the creation and maintenance of a relationship while also acknowledging that the "I" is fundamentally distinct from the "you" and vice versa. The exception, of course, to this analogy rests in the God-human and inner Trinitarian relationships, which, according to the Chalcedonian pattern, gives precedence to the divine since it established the relationship.

Differentiation and freedom are two key characteristics within the analogous relationship between the "I" and the "you" that support the notion of a relational approach to practical theological interpretation. A clear sense of differentiation must exist between the "I" and the "you" and vice versa, otherwise there will inevitably be disciplinary confusion. The best example of this is the method of correlation, as it converges the "you" and "I" into a relationship that lacks a clear sense of boundary, thereby perpetuating the dysfunction of a *tertium quid*, like attempting to employ psychological inquiry to fully address the existential crises of death, meaninglessness, and condemnation, which must also rely upon theological reflection (i.e., being) to root out nonbeing. Furthermore, it must be noted that the equality produced between the "I"

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[37] While the re-appropriation of this analogy to the discipline of practical theology is my own, I am indebted to Søren Kierkegaard for providing the theoretical basis for it. Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self*, Mcgill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas 19 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ Pr, 1995); Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for the Upbuilding and Awakening*, edited by and trans., Edna H. Hong, and Howard V. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); James E. Loder, "Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self," review of *Come, Arnold B. Kierkegaard as Humanist, Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.*, *Theology Today* 54 (1997). Here, Loder illustrates five aspects of the self in Kierkegaard's thought: "(1) The self is a relation. (2) The self is a relation that relates to itself. (3) The self, as a relation that relates to itself, is established by another (*et Andet*), and in relating to itself, relates to this other. (4) The self, as a relation, fails to relate to itself and fails to relate to the other and so finds itself in a dual relation of despair. (5) The self finds this despair completely rooted out (healed) when the self rests transparently in the power that established it."

and the “you” and the “you” and the “I” in the mutually critical method of correlational and the transversal model lacks a sense of differentiation. That is, what makes the “I” and the “you” distinct in every particularity minimizes the individuals to a point of degradation. In other words, allowing two distinct disciplines to be in conversation without adopting each other’s views has the potential to generate new lines of inquiry not previously imagined. Differentiation, therefore, pertains to allowing distinct identities or disciplinary premises to exist together without forcing impossible integration.

Freedom, on the other hand, is paradoxical in the sense that one might encounter transformational insights by acknowledging the divine, which is beyond both the “I,” the “you,” and the relationship they share. In other words, the divine, who established the relationship between the “I” and the “you,” is ultimately the source of freedom, and freedom can only be attained by recognizing the one who established the relationship. Likewise, this is crucial from the perspective of any discipline or the relationship it may share with another discipline as it is the source of divine agency. Within the realm of interdisciplinary dialogue, it is only through the recognition of divine agency that any potential for transformation can exist because recognizing a need for that which is beyond the self opens one up to potential freedom of the divine, especially as it pertains to interdisciplinary dialogue. No single disciplinary perspective possesses all of the answers, and it is only through the co-creative work of God that life’s greatest mysteries can take on a new sense of meaning. Therefore, the potential for transformation rests in relationship between the “I” and the “you” when it is introduced to a third entity which is beyond the relationship itself, thereby adding the co-creative work of the divine to the relationship.

Conclusion

Just as a relational approach to interdisciplinary dialogue models the relational ideals of differentiation and freedom, so too does the relationship between the tasks of practical theological interpretation in Osmer's approach. This is because each of the four tasks has the potential to function independently of one another—even though any given task may beg questions of another task in no particular order—thereby perpetuating the process of practical theological exploration. Therefore, it is essential to provide a rough overview of the way in which each of the four tasks will function throughout this dissertation, which ultimately operates within a relational framework of practical theological exploration. This also models a relational approach to pastoral care and counseling that is grounded in interdisciplinary norms and focused on the process of generating pragmatic guidelines for tending to grief experiences.

The interpretive task will be carried out in Chapter Two by providing a thorough description of the history and trends in grief research. The history and trends of grief research is widespread, but its most significant tenets have been proposed by Sigmund Freud, Helena Duetsch and Eric Lindemann, Elizabeth Kèubler-Ross, and George Bonanno, who has given the notion of resilience special attention. Each of these theorists have added to the conceptualization of grief in significant ways, though none of them have sought to engage theology in order to conceptualize grief in light of relationality and spirituality.

The normative task will be carried out in chapters three and four in order to develop the interdisciplinary concept of relational spirituality. In Chapter Three, relational spirituality will be developed from the discipline of psychology with the

support of attachment theory and IPNB. Then, in Chapter Four, relational spirituality will be developed from a theological vantage point with the concepts of *analogia spiritus*, *imago Dei*, Trinitarian relationality, and the immanent-economic distinction. Each of these concepts will be discussed in light the Chalcedonian pattern in order to develop relational spirituality, a normative perspective of relationality. While the focus of the normative task is to provide a framework for better understanding grief in light of relational spirituality, the subtext of this argument is centered on developing relational spirituality as a theoretical and incarnational approach to pastoral care and counseling.

The descriptive-empirical task begins in Chapter Five and is extended in Chapter Six. Chapter Five begins by delineating the qualitative, narrative inquiry research design, which has been constructed in order to explore individuals' unique experiences of grief through online questionnaires and telephone interviews. The purpose of this is to gain a better understanding of how experiences of grief are impacting the ways in which individuals relate to the sacred. Chapter Six extends the descriptive-empirical task with data analysis in order to identify significant *in vivo* codes/themes from the narratives of research participants.

Finally, Chapter Seven is representative of the pragmatic task, and concludes this dissertation by employing relational spirituality as an interpretive lens to conceptualize individuals' grief experiences. Here, relevant themes from this practical theological exploration will be integrated in order to generate pragmatic guidelines for tending to grief. These guidelines are described as a process of care, which involves theological and psychological acumen alongside a new vision of attending. Of note, attention will be paid to caring for individuals at the onset of their grief experience as well as individuals who

are encountered further along in their journey of grief. Ultimately, the premise behind the whole of this project is to better equip practical theologians, ministers, and seminarians with a greater capacity to care for the particularities of an individual's grief.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY AND TRENDS IN GRIEF RESEARCH

Since the concept of grief is at the core of this practical theological exploration, the history and trends of grief research must be explored in order to answer the question "Why is this going on?" This question is representative of the interpretive task of practical theology, and it is of utmost importance to this work, as the history and trends of grief research has not previously taken spirituality into account. Therefore, a clear description of grief from a psychological perspective provides the essential context for a practical theological exploration that seeks to articulate the relationship of grief and relational spirituality.

Grief can be a confusing experience, as a plethora of self-help literature suggests uniform ways of grieving, and many of the cultural messages bereaved people receive—unconsciously or consciously—hold sentiments of "getting over it" or "moving on." These, however, are myths, and contemporary grief research is revealing that most people have an innate capacity to demonstrate resilience by leaning into the difficult feelings of loss and experiencing a wide range of emotions while also remembering the relational bonds that have been formed. This is resilience, and, from the perspective of contemporary grief research, it is primarily about not being completely overwhelmed or in a paralytic state of shock by the feelings of interpersonal loss, whether it is at the onset of loss or a bit later in the grief process.

Resilience is the hallmark of contemporary grief research, and it is radically altering the norms embedded within the ways grief has been conceptualized for decades. In order to fully understand the evolution and implications of contemporary grief research, it is necessary to provide an overview of the history and trends in grief research for two reasons: 1) the long and expansive history of grief research reveals misconceptions that particular reactions to loss are pathological or sequential while also normalizing the nature of loss and what it means to experience healing, especially as it pertains to the notion of resilience; and, 2) a close examination of resilience illustrates the importance of, and highlights the human capacity to, thrive after loss and trauma.

Psychoanalysis and Grief

Sigmund Freud published "Mourning and Melancholia," one of the first arguments for grief, in a 1917 newspaper by suggesting that bereaved people are longing for something that has been lost. He uses the term "mourning" (*Trauer*) to describe "the affect of grief and its outward manifestation."[1] Mourning emerges when one experiences the painful loss of a loved one, as the bond that had been formed with "an object of love" is now consciously lost.[2] For Freud, mourning was considered a universal, not a pathological, experience following interpersonal loss. Melancholia, on the other hand, diverges from mourning in that it is considered disordered since it relates to an unconscious loss of an object of love.[3] In other words, melancholia is primarily about knowing *whom* one has lost, but not *what* one has lost in him/her. This results in a

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[1] See Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2008).

[2] Ibid., 245.

[3] Ibid., 247.

profound painful dejection, self-limitation to all activity, and a decreased sense of self-regard. Both mourning and melancholia are representative of losing an object of love in Freud's view, but the qualitative difference between the two is in the internal work resulting from melancholia.[4]

The internal work of melancholia is particularly difficult as it thrusts the ego into a confused and conflicted state. Freud is, of course, most well-known for developing a structural model of the psyche, which includes the id, superego, and ego. In general terms, the id is the source of a person's unconscious, instinctual drives—including emotional energy referred to as the libido—whereas the superego plays a critical and moralizing role when interpreting personal experiences. The ego relates to the id and super-ego by mediating between the two, and it is what is most often used to present a realistic, socialized (i.e., less-primitive) sense of self in relationship to others. The ego is not invincible, and it is disrupted by melancholia, as it transforms object-loss into ego-loss due to the conflict that emerges between the ego and loved object that was lost.[5] Freud goes on to hypothesize this may be a result of a strong fixation on the loved object or an inability to resist the loved object, thereby causing the ego to consume the self's libidinal energy. This results in a "regression" of the ego that leads to a confused and conflicted state, the key characteristic of melancholia. In this way, the pathological etiology of melancholia is reinforced in Freud's view.

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[4] Ibid., 245. Here, Freud employs the term "work" in order to describe the conscious process of recalling each memory of the lost object. This results in the detachment of memories from the libido and a free and uninhibited ego.

[5] Ibid., 249.

In an astute summary of his work, Bonanno notes that Freud intentionally chose the metaphor of work to describe both mourning and melancholia, which suggests intentionality is required to break the bond with the lost object and discover a way to move forward.[6] However, the work of melancholia remains a complicated, deeply painful task, as the bereaved are engaged in an ongoing struggle with *whom* one has lost. The work of mourning diverges from that of melancholia, as it results in a moment of cathexis that enables one to expend libidinal energy in order to review the memories that bind the libido to the lost object.[7] Individuals who can not engage in this work were assumed to be pathological, and he suggested some type of delayed grief response. For Freud, the work of grief, therefore, requires intentionality and focus in order to reclaim the libido, and appropriately mediate the ego once again.

Despite the fact that Freud admitted to constructing a theoretical approach to mourning somewhat casually,[8] his reputation as a psychoanalytic giant significantly influenced the ways in which grief would be conceptualized for many years, as evidenced by three key insights. First, the qualitative differences between mourning and melancholia illustrate Freud's understanding that people deal with grief differently, some with more difficulty than others. Second, Freud identifies mourning and melancholia as work that one must do with great intentionality. Not only do people commonly acknowledge grief as work that requires intentionality, but there is also a plethora of self-help literature that subtly suggests grief is work by employing active verbs in titles or

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[6] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 21.

[7] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 256.

[8] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 22.

titles with supplementary workbooks.[9] Finally, Freud accurately depicts the work of grief as being centered on the recollecting of memories. As astute and forward thinking as the notion of remembering for the sake of healing was, contemporary research suggests this is misguided. Brain science suggests that remembering actually makes memories easier to recall, which would strengthen the relational bonds with the lost object—the opposite effect Freud advocated for. Nonetheless, this was an impactful view, and Freud's fingerprints remained on understandings of grief for many years to come.

Following Freud

Helena Deutsch and Eric Lindemann were two key psychologists who followed Freud's footsteps in grief research. Deutsch noted that a variety of individuals grieved differently and even demonstrated an absence of grief, as reactions to loss of a beloved object may contrast the way in which the psychoanalytic tradition previously conceptualized loss.[10] Deutsch attributes the absence of grief to a phenomenon previously hypothesized to appear in children after the death of a loved one. That is, children were often considered to lack intellectual capacity that allowed them to grasp the reality of death, especially when the formation of object relationships was inadequate.[11] In other words, Deutsch believed interpersonal loss created a tremendous emotional chasm that prevented individuals from fully grasping the reality of their loss. The proposed etiology of absent grief, therefore, is consistent with the broader psychoanalytic movement

[9] A few of the most profound examples include Mary Kelly Perschy, *Helping Teens Work through Grief*, Second ed. (New York, NY: Brenner-Routledge, 2004); Fran Zamore and Ester A. Leutenberg, *Grief Work: Healing from Loss*, edited by Carlene Sippola (Duluth, MN: Whole Person Associates, 2008).

[10] Helena Deutsch, "Absence of Grief," in *Essential Papers on Object Loss*, ed. Rita V. Frankiel (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1994).

[11] Ibid., 224.

because it is primarily a result of infantile anxiety that mobilizes defense mechanisms to protect the ego, thereby keeping the ego from the very strenuous demands of coping with grief.

While Deutsch is clear to state the absence of grief is a very real phenomenon, she also notes, "The process of mourning as a reaction to the real loss of a loved person must be carried to completion."[12] This is of significance as prolonged absent grief, according to Deutsch, allows a painful affect to flourish until libidinal or aggressive energy ceases to linger, which does not bring any resolution or healing. Thus, carrying mourning to completion requires self-awareness to unearth buried emotions. The way in which completion was sought out for Deutsch is not as prescriptive as Freud's proposal, however, as a significant undercurrent of her argument suggests that grief is manifest uniquely and must be dealt with individually because it can play a role in the formation of one's personality in the long-term.

Lindemann, in contrast to Deutsch and Freud, saw bereavement as a correctable medical problem and avoided psychological theories.[13] Lindemann conducted substantial research to determine that grief had the potential to linger, and he proposed that acute grief is a "definite syndrome" that may be "delayed," "exaggerated" or "absent."[14] Bereaved individuals who express delayed, exaggerated, or absent grief are accountable to their grief reaction as the appropriate grief work was not done. A lack of grief work is evidenced by acute grief, which is "remarkably uniform in its symptomatology," and can

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[12] Ibid., 230.

[13] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 19-20.

[14] Erich Lindemann, "Symptamatology and Management of Acute Grief," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 5, no. 3 (1951): 19.

be characterized by "sensations of somatic distress occurring in waves lasting from twenty minutes to an hour at a time, a feeling of tightness in the throat, choking with shortness of breath, need for sighing, an empty feeling in the abdomen, lack of muscular power, and intense subjective distress described as tension or mental pain."[15] In Lindemann's view, individuals have a tendency to avoid situations that elicit or exacerbate these physical symptoms, thereby causing a delayed, exaggerated, or absent grief. This is why Lindemann understands bereavement as "the sudden cessation of social interaction," a mere response, conscious or unconscious, to manage physical symptoms.[16]

The contributions of Deutsch and Lindemann are of great significance as they first introduced the notions of delayed, exaggerated, and absent grief, all of which extended the Freudian notion that bereavement includes a pathological element. This notion lasted throughout the majority of the twentieth century, as even the most notable psychological figures understood the absence of grief as disordered. For example, Bonanno astutely points out that John Bowlby "described the 'prolonged absence of conscious grieving' as a type of disordered mourning."[17] Furthermore, the notions of delayed, exaggerated, or absent grief reaffirm several Freudian conceptualizations of grief, such as: the reality that people deal with grief differently and experience symptoms in varying degrees, including the pathological; the notion of grief work; and, that potential for recovery or healing exists. These conceptualizations of grief further concretized preexisting notions of grief, which are inconsistent with contemporary research.

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[15] Ibid., 20.

[16] Ibid., 19.

[17] George A. Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive after Extremely Adversive Events?," *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (2004): 20-28; John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 3. Loss.* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1980).

Complicated Grief

Consistent with the notion of pathological grief, complicated grief emerged as a general category for understanding extreme grief reactions approximately thirty years ago. However, it has been considered a minority category; only about 10-20 percent of bereaved individuals were found to exhibit complicated grief reactions.[18] This research is indicative of trends that emerged previously whereby the symptomatology of grief was often noted in terms of extremes, which created the need for therapeutic interventions from helping professionals.[19] Individuals may have continued to seek recovery from grief even if they showed no signs of improvement in a clinical setting. This trend—in light of new insights into complicated grief reactions—is largely a result of the way in which grief literature sought to normalize grief responses, as some themes embedded within this literature promote pathological understandings of grief. Thus, complicated grief is best conceived of as pathological, though it is only representative of a minority group.

While it has been difficult to define complicated grief in terms of symptomatology, the notion of complicated grief has gained some traction, so as to propose a separate diagnostic entry for it in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). Some researchers have found it to be difficult to distinguish complicated grief from other disorders, like major depression.[20] The primary reason complicated grief is not identified

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[18] Andreas Maercker et al., “Prediction of Complicated Grief by Positive and Negative Themes in Narratives,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 54, no. 8 (1998): 1117-1136. This study indicates approximately 20 percent of bereaved persons suffer from complicated grief, whereas Bonanno, “Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience,” 23., indicates about 10-15 percent of individuals experience complicated grief.

[19] Beverly Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1983).

[20] Maercker et al., “Prediction of Complicated Grief by Positive and Negative Themes in Narratives.”

as a unique entity is the lack of a concrete definition. Researchers have pursued more concrete, multidimensional definitions of complicated grief, such as: "grief-specific emotional states; self-evaluative concerns (e.g., schemas); coping strategies; attachment behaviors; and changes in status, self-concept, and representations of the partner."[21] Symptoms, therefore, may include avoidance, numbness, and/or related to recurring or unintended recollections over a prolonged period of time. Most recently, the DSM-V removed an exclusion that previously existed in the DSM-IV in order to prevent clinicians from diagnosing depressive syndromes in the context of bereavement.[22] It has been found, however, that bereavement-related depression is not different from major depressive episodes, and it is equally genetically influenced, most likely where there is personal family history.[23] Therefore, complicated grief is not considered pathological from a diagnostic point of view; rather, grief may activate underlying tendencies and/or syndromes that are diagnosable.

Given the severe emotional and psychological toll of complicated grief, it is essential to understand how these reactions may occur, infrequent as they may be. One study employed a narrative coding system to investigate thematic parameters of complicated grief among participants who recently experienced the loss of a spouse.[24]

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[21] Ibid. See also Mardi J. Horowitz, George A. Bonanno, and Are Holen, "Pathological Grief: Diagnosis and Explanation," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 55 (1993): 260-273.

[22] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-V-Tr*, 5th ed. (Washington DC: Amer Psychiatric Pub Incorporated, 2013), s.v. "depressive syndromes".

[23] Sidney Zisook et al., "The Bereavement Exclusion and Dsm-5," *Depression and Anxiety*, no. 29 (2012).

[24] Maercker et al., "Prediction of Complicated Grief by Positive and Negative Themes in Narratives," 1117.

Interviews occurred at six months and fourteen months post-loss, and it was found that complicated and normal grievers had the same range of negative thoughts, feelings, and ideas with regard to affectivity within the time frame of the interviews. However, complicated and normal grievers differed in conveying positive themes, which suggests that low positive affectivity and high negative affectivity are both associated with depression and anxiety symptoms.[25] All of this is to say that prolonged negative themes and/or a lack of positive themes may be indicative of complicated grief reactions post-loss, and these individuals may benefit from focused, therapeutic interventions more than others.

Stages of Grief

Perhaps the most common conceptualization of grief is a stage or phase view. While the research of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross popularized this movement about the same time complicated grief emerged as a category, the notion of describing grief in stages or phases with particular features had been proposed in a variety of ways by many different scholars.[26] The most notable of these is John Bowlby, whose ideas about grief emerged after the basic tenets of attachment theory were outlined.[27] Attachment theory will be described in great detail later in this dissertation, as the specifics of it are beyond the scope of a focus on the history of grief. It suffices to say, however, that Bowlby argues

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[25] Ibid., 1132.

[26] See John Archer, *The Nature of Grief: The Evolution and Psychology of Reactions to Loss* (London: Brunner-Routledge, 1999), 24. Here, he provides a comprehensive list of scholars that have proposed grief in terms of stages or phases that includes.

[27] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1. Attachment* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1969); John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and Anger* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973); Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*.

attachments are derived from an inherent, biological need for safety and security early in life. These attachments are typically sought from certain individuals, usually primary caregiver. Whether secure or insecure attachments are developed, the affectional bonds formed have a potential to endure throughout one's lifetime. Bowlby argues grief naturally ensues if these bonds are broken or needs go unmet as an evolutionary means to coping with loss. While Bowlby studied many creatures' response to loss, he identified what is most unique about the human response to loss, which he characterizes as phases. These phases of grief first included protest, despair, and detachment, and an initial phase was later added to include numbness and disbelief. The development of these phases was influential for many scholars, including Kübler-Ross and William J. Worden.

Kübler-Ross' book, *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and Their Own Families*, is a product of her qualitative research with patients dying of terminal illness, and it resulted in the development of five unique stages of grief.[28] It is important to note Kübler-Ross' original intent in conducting the interviews that support this book emerged from a desire to understand more about the psychological impact of dying, not grief. This is most clearly evidenced by the subtitle of *On Death and Dying*, yet what first emerged as the "stages of dying" later became misappropriated and popularized as the "stages of grief" in the 1970's. In fact, these stages became so popular that most people, including nearly all helping professionals, have learned to recite the five stages by memory: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.[29] However, the truth remains that the initial thesis of this book was

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[28] Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*.

[29] Ibid.

obscured, and Kübler-Ross' later works did not add clarity to the conversation she initiated. Despite becoming so widely-known, the impact of Kübler-Ross' stages of grief has presented more challenges than opportunities when it comes to understanding grief.

The greatest challenge Kübler-Ross' work presents is related to the assumption that grievers move through five distinct stages of grief. *On Death and Dying* is "an attempt to summarize what we have learned from our dying patients in terms of coping mechanisms at the time of a terminal illness,"[30] yet Kübler-Ross does not explicate precisely how perceived understandings of coping mechanisms are transferred into five distinct stages. It is important to note these stages are presented sequentially, as they have been given a numerical value. In addition, she is clear to state, "the stages do not replace each other but can exist next to each other and overlap at times."[31] While Kübler-Ross later acknowledged the confusion of the stages and refuted the notion that people must pass through all five stages in sequence, her argument that the stages are tools to better understand what people "may" be feeling discredits the significance of the stages as a whole.[32] This course correction was too late, however, as Kübler-Ross' proposal for the stages of grief had already been infused in nursing and counseling programs nation-wide. Thus, Kübler-Ross' work complicated the context of understanding grief.

The phase or stage approach was also reimagined by three scholars, William J. Worden, Beverly Raphael, and Colin Parkes, independently of one another.[33] While each

[30] Ibid., 33.

[31] Ibid., 236.

[32] Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, 7.

[33] Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement*; William J. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company,

argument is unique, there is a common denominator amongst these approaches, namely the incorporation of Bowlby's phases into their own proposal. Worden's proposal, however, will be focused on here, particularly because of its great influence amongst counselors, which is a result of its conceptual clarity and applicability to helping professionals.

In his work *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, Worden uses Bowlby's four phases to support the delineation of specific clinical interventions.[34] Worden describes the "the four tasks of mourning," yet he does so with greater conceptual clarity than Bowlby, especially as it relates to clinical conversations. Worden's first phase emphasizes the need to move from protest or denial to acceptance. It is important to note that Worden emphasizes acceptance in terms of allowing the reality to fully enter one's consciousness without being "selective" or forgetful."[35] The second phase is to work through the pain of grief, which mirrors Bowlby's proposal in the sense that it is necessary to fully experience the pain of the loss.[36] Worden's third phase is centered on adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing. The purpose of this is to adjust to the loss of previously established norms as they relate to the acquisition of new roles skills and skills, like learning to manage finances all over again.[37] Finally, one must emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life. The act of relocating, according

LLC, 2009); Colin Parkes, "Risk Factors in Bereavement: Implications for the Prevention and Treatment of Pathologic Grief," *Psychiatric Annals* 20, no. 6 (1990): 308-313.

[34] Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*.

[35] Ibid., 11-12.

[36] Ibid., 13.

[37] Ibid., 15.

to Worden, is distinct from withdrawal, as one can hold onto memories and emotions while also learning to develop a new relationship with them.[38]

While the stage or phase approach to understanding grief has been popularized and had some positive impact, namely the normalization of grief responses, its primary challenge is problematic. That is, the notion of stages ultimately conveys a linear progression through specific emotional states, regardless of how fluid one might argue a phase or stage is. However, a stage or phase approach to grief does not honor the particularities of an individual's story from its inception. Thus, a stage or phase approach may be helpful in conceptualizing interpersonal loss in broad terms, but it simply does not honor the uniqueness of a person's response to loss and the way he or she may be adjusting to it.

Resilience after Loss

Since research revealed only a minority percentage of bereaved individuals suffered from complicated grief reactions, it was logical to begin considering how the majority responds to loss. In this way, Bonanno's more recent work counteracts much of what has previously been asserted, namely the notions of grief work and the assumption that grief responses can be generalized and located in categories, stages, or phases.[39] It is important to note this is a distinct point of divergence from the theory of Kübler-Ross, as Bonanno's work begins with the assumption that a grief response is as unique as the individual expressing it. Contemporary bereavement science does, however, build upon categorical approaches to grief responses in an attempt to normalize grief responses,

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[38] Ibid., 17.

[39] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*.

which moves away from an emphasis on rare, pathological grief responses toward a focus on a more common, innate ability to adjust and be resilient after loss, trauma, and other adverse life events. These categories include chronic grief, recovery, and resilience.

Chronic Grief

Chronic grief is best characterized by the notion that the pain of loss is too overwhelming for an individual to resume tasks and activities that once characterized daily life. While only about 15 percent of individuals are likely to endure some type of prolonged grief reaction, chronic grief has the potential to be devastating, as it can last for years.[40] This occurs most frequently when sadness transitions from a persistent feeling that evokes empathy from others to a malicious and chaotic personal experience, which causes individuals to become lost in themselves, withdrawn from the world, bogged down in endless preoccupations, and left with an insatiable desire to have the deceased person back again.[41] Chronic grief is centered on yearning and futile ruminating while searching for the lost loved one.

Bonanno goes on to note that dispositions akin to this kind of ruminating are not associated with other depressive states (i.e., feeling of worthlessness, fatigue, inability to concentrate, diminished interested or pleasure in activities, abnormal sleep patterns), as they have no object of loss. That is, a fixation on recovering who or what was lost has a tendency to create unique attachments with the lost object that would have otherwise never occurred. Attachments normally serve the purpose of bringing safety and comfort, but attachments with a lost object only create painful feelings, as these attachments will

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[40] Ibid. See also Bonanno, “Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience.”

[41] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 96-97.

not go away since the lost object has already been lost. Thus, chronic grief is distinct from other types of depression as it is entirely preoccupied with finding the lost loved one. In this way, chronic grief is similar but distinct from complicated grief in that symptoms endure for a prolonged period of time in addition to the fact that there is little to no emphasis on the pathological prevalence of depression.

While no single treatment stands out as the premier intervention for chronic grief, several responses have shown promising results.[42] One characteristic of these treatments is exposure, which is accomplished by evoking narrative about life since the person died, even as the most distressing aspects of life stand out. The helping professional is to assist the individual in understanding what is most distressing or disturbing about the loss. Another important treatment is to foster resilience by helping people to think forward via goal setting so that they develop new relationships and have some sense of activity in their lifestyle. This, however, is often a challenge as individuals with chronic grief tend to demonstrate a deficit of coping flexibility, especially an inability to engage in processes aimed at moving forward beyond the stressor event.[43] In short, chronic or long-term grief responses are often the result of fixations centered on the lost object, and it is essential for chronic grievers to be forward thinking in their ability to identify new relationships and rhythms in daily life.

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[42] Ibid., 110.

[43] Charles L. Burton et al., "Coping Flexibility and Complicated Grief: A Comparison of American and Chinese Samples," *Depression and Anxiety*, no. 29 (2012): 16-22.

Recovery

Recovery is best characterized as a blend between chronic grief and resilience. Bonanno describes recovering individuals best: "They suffer acutely but then slowly pick up the pieces and begin putting their lives back together."[44] This is because recovery is a trajectory in which normal functioning temporarily gives way to a threshold and sub-threshold of depressive symptoms for several months before returning to a pre-event level. When depressive symptoms are manifest in recovering individuals, they may be difficult to decipher from chronic grievers initially, but the frequency and severity of the symptoms tend to decrease approximately six to twelve months following the loss.[45] While the notion that individuals can recover from significant losses may seem obvious to some, what is most interesting about this category is the fact that there is no clearly identified treatment method that facilitates this process of healing.[46] Individuals recovered better on their own terms rather than with the support of specific grief therapies.

Resilience

Resilience is the hallmark of contemporary bereavement science. Resilience is used to describe the majority of individuals after loss who "experience transient perturbations in normal functioning (i.e., several weeks of sporadic preoccupation or restless sleep) but generally exhibit a stable trajectory of healthy functioning across time,

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[44] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*.

[45] Ibid., 6.

[46] Robert A. Neimeyer, "Searching for the Meaning of Meaning: Grief Therapy and the Process of Reconstruction," *Death Studies*, no. 24 (2000): 541-558.

as well as the capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions."[47] In other words, the pain and anguish of grief may still be palpable for some, yet most people will reestablish a sense of equilibrium and resume a productive life.[48] Within the context of resilience, grief reactions are not evaluated as negative; rather, they are a natural component of the human experience that helps us accept and accommodate loss. It is important to note, however, that resilience does not imply forgetting or "closure," because many people hold onto significant memories and emotions (i.e., sadness)—these do not indicate pathology, as they are typical components of grieving that promote healthy adjustment after loss.

Resilience must also not be confused with an absence of grief responses. While absent grief was once thought to be pathological, just as resilience was thought to be rare, research findings that indicate resilience is commonplace are generating a new way of thinking about grief and loss. In two ground breaking studies, Camille Wortman and Roxanne Silver highlighted that there no is there evidence to support the notion that the absence of distress during bereavement is pathological or that it results in delayed grief. Nor is there empirical data to suggest that depression inevitably follows loss.[49] A more recent survey asserts 65 percent of bereavement researchers and clinical experts note that absent grief is derived from "denial" or "inhibition and that it is maladaptive."[50] This, however, is cause for question according to Bonanno, as several studies suggest most

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[47] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 21.

[48] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*.

[49] Camille B. Wortman and Roxane Cohen Silver, "The Myths of Coping with Loss," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 57, no. 3 (1989): 349-357.

[50] Warwick Middleton et al., "An International Perspective on Bereavement Related Concepts," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, no. 27 (1993): 457-463.

conjugally bereaved individuals did not show even mild dysphoria.[51] The absence of symptoms is, therefore, not indicative of pathological grief, but it does suggest that a more robust understanding of resilience is essential.

Perhaps the strongest case for resilience (in relationship to complicated grief, chronic grief, and recovery) is exhibited in a study where conjugal bereavement research was conducted prior to and up to eighteen months after loss.[52] Of all Bonanno's research, this study is perhaps most significant in comparison to others, as it examined individuals' grief responses in light of several trajectories: common grief, chronic grief, chronic depression, improvement during bereavement, and resilience. This study revealed multiple findings of great significance related to regarding resilience:

> First, chronic grief reactions (15.6%) could be distinguished from enduring, chronic depression (7.8%). Second, chronic grievers could be distinguished from other participants with low preloss depression by their elevated depression and grief symptoms at 6 months of bereavement….Third, the most frequent bereavement pattern was not the so-called common pattern of elevated depression that gradually declines over time (10.7%), but rather the stable, low depression or resilient pattern (45.9%). Fourth, a sizable minority of respondents (10.2%) exhibited a pattern that had long been suggested in the literature but not yet documented in a prospective study: high preloss depression followed by improvement during bereavement. Fifth, there was no clear evidence for a delayed grief pattern, thus adding to the growing number of studies that have explicitly assessed but not found evidence for delayed grief.[53]

In this study, the resilient pattern represents a majority, and it illustrates the way in which resilience is characterized by stable, low levels of depression, thereby

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[51] George A. Bonanno, et al., "Resilience to Loss and Chronic Grief: A Prospective Study from Preloss to 18-Months Postloss," *Journal of Personality and Social Pyschology* 83, no. 5 (2002): 1151.

[52] Ibid. It is important to note that this study employs the categories of chronic grief and chronic depression as separate entities of what is more accurately categorized as complicated grief. The present study outlines several areas of convergence between bereavement symptoms and bereavement-related depression, and ultimately argues chronic depression and chronic grief reactions are indistinguishable, as most bereavement data is often collected retrospectively.

[53] Ibid., 1160.

suggesting resilience is best characterized as a healthy expression of normal grief responses. In other words, those who experience resilience after loss do not resume life as if nothing ever happened; rather, they experience a range of emotions like sadness while learning to adjust to life after loss. The notion of recovery is similar in this regard, particularly as a result of elevated sadness that improves over time. Stable, low levels of depression stand in contradistinction to enduring chronic depression as well as preloss depression. All in all, these findings contribute greatly to the prevailing understanding of resilience after loss.

The notion of resilience also extends into the realm of trauma, violence, and other life-threatening events, which suggests that most people have the capacity to be resilient. While grief and trauma symptoms are qualitatively different, it is important to note that the general trajectory of an individual's response to trauma is remarkably similar to those who are bereaved.[54] Consider that the majority of people experience some type of traumatic event in a lifetime,[55] yet only a minority of individuals exhibits chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms.[56] These findings are consistent with another study done in New York City following the September 11th attacks. The surveyed sample (n = 2,752) had zero or one PTSD symptom, thereby allowing resilience to be observed in a remarkable 65.1 percent of people, even after having a friend or relative killed, losing

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[54] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 24; George A. Bonanno, "Resilience in the Face of Potential Trauma," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 14, no. 3 (2005): 135-138.

[55] Fran H. Norris, "Epidemiology of Trauma: Frequency and Impact of Different Potentially Traumatic Events on Different Demographic Groups," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 60, no. 3 (1992): 409-418. This study empirically reveals that 69 percent of 1,000 people surveyed experienced a traumatic event in their lifetime, and 21 percent of these people experienced another traumatic event within the past 12 months.

[56] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 24.

possessions and/or employment, and observing the attacks first-hand.[57] Resilience, however, is also more than an absence of PTSD, as individuals on a resilient trajectory have the capacity to demonstrate "flexibility in appraisal, coping, and emotion regulation processes."[58] Of note, this type of flexibility and adaptability tends to be more readily available to individuals who experience isolated, one-time events, as opposed to repeated exposures over a long period of time, where adaptation may take longer periods of time.[59] Thus, loss and trauma may be linked from the perspective of resilience, and, while a direct correlation between grief issues and trauma may not always exist for an individual, it is worthwhile to note that traumatic events have a strong potential to cause grief, loss, and life transition.

Everyday Resilience

When we become aware of a significant loss or trauma in the life of another person, it is not uncommon to consider how the individuals who are most impacted are able to survive, move on, or return to their daily life. The simple answer is, resilience. Yet, the way in which resilience is manifest in individuals remains unclear. In the same way Bonanno asserts that no two people experience grief identically, research has also revealed no two people exhibit resilience identically. That is, there is no single resilient "type," and resilience has the potential to become manifest in unexpected or unusual

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[57] George A. Bonanno et al., "Psychological Resilience after Disaster: New York City in the Aftermath of the September 11th Terroist Attack," *Psychological Science* 17, no. 3 (2006): 181-186.

[58] Maren Westphal and George A. Bonanno, "Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience to Trauma: Different Sides of the Same Coin or Different Coins?," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 56, no. 3 (2007): 417-427.

[59] Bonanno, "Resilience in the Face of Potential Trauma," 137.

ways.[60] While this complicates establishing how resilience is manifest in individuals, there are specific behaviors and attributes resilient people tend to exhibit in every-day life as well as in the days following significant losses or traumatic life events. These behaviors and attributes include: hardy personalities, maladaptive coping techniques, and expressions of positive emotion and laughter, as well as demonstrating generativity.

Hardiness

While the personality trait of hardiness has not traditionally been examined within the context of death and bereavement, the hardy personality has been identified as an expression of resilience.[61] Suzanne Kobasa first introduced the notion of hardiness in a study focused on the effects of stressful life events and subsequent onset of illness, which revealed different personality features in individuals who faced stressful life events and did not become ill in comparison to individuals who did become ill.[62] The difference for those that did not become ill has become known as a hardy personality, as Kobasa believed hardiness individuals reflect three things: "(a) believe that they can control or influence events they experience (control), (b) possess the ability to become significantly involved in or committed to the activities in their lives (commitment), and (c) view the experience of change as an exciting challenge that can lead to subsequent

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[60] Ibid., 135.

[61] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 25; K. A. Wallace, Toni L. Bisconti, and C.S. Bergeman, "The Mediational Effect of Hardiness on Social Support and Optimal Outcoes in Later Life," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 23, no. 4 (2001): 267-279; Mark Waysman, Joseph Schwarzwald, and Zahava Solomon, "Hardiness: An Examination of Its Relationship with Positive and Negative Long Term Changes Following Trauma," *Journal of Tramatic Stress* 14, no. 3 (2001): 531-548.

[62] Suzanne C. Kobasa, "Stressful Life Events, Personality, and Health: An Inquiry into Hardiness," *Journal of Personality and Social Pyschology* 37, no. 1 (1979): 1-11.

development."[63] This mindset empowers individuals to be resilient through stress management, to cope with change, and to take full advantage of social support, which can be enhanced if the full potential to mediate hardiness can be better understood.[64] Findings related to hardiness have also been replicated in the context of trauma, suggesting that hardy individuals exposed to traumatic events are less likely to suffer from long-term negative effects and more likely to highlight the significance of assessing resources.[65] All in all, hardy individuals are well suited to be resilient by leveraging a mindset of control, commitment, and challenge, all of which foster resilience in extraordinary and ordinary circumstances.

Maladaptive Resilience

A growing body of research suggests two coping strategies that were once thought to be maladaptive actually hold some benefits for the bereaved. The first is self-enhancement, which is best characterized by individuals who tend to think highly of themselves and have unrealistic understandings of their limitations. Self-enhancers are people who tend to think well of themselves when approaching a new or challenging task. Despite the fact that self-enhancers tend to score higher in within the arena of narcissism and evoke negative feelings in others,[66] their positive view of the self can

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[63] Laura L. Matthews and Heather L. Servaty-Seib, "Hardiness and Grief in a Sample of Bereaved College Students," *Death Studies*, no. 31 (2007): 184.

[64] Wallace, Bisconti, and Bergeman, "The Mediational Effect of Hardiness on Social Support and Optimal Outcoes in Later Life," 277. This is a particularly significant study in terms of hardiness, as it sets the mediation of hardiness apart from other means of social support in noting its potential. Processes for leveraging all the benefits of hardiness, however, have not yet been delineated qualitatively or quantitatively.

[65] Waysman, Schwarzwald, and Solomon, "Hardiness."

[66] Delroy L. Paulhus, "Interpersonal and Intrapsychic Adaptiveness of Trait Self-Enhancement: A Mixed Blessing? ," *Journal of Personality and Social Pyschology* 74, no. 5 (1998): 1197-1208.

promote personal well-being.[67] This is also true following loss and trauma, according to Bonanno's research, as self-enhancers who survived the Bosnian civil war and the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center were better adjusted to life after loss and trauma.[68] It can be concluded, therefore, that overly positive feelings about the self may promote some degree of individual well-being, though the costs of exhibiting narcissistic tendencies in one's daily life might outweigh the positive benefits for some individuals.

Repressive coping is the second seemingly maladaptive coping strategy that reveals some positive and negative outcomes when dealing with grief. Unlike self-enhancement and hardiness, which relate to cognitive processes, repressive coping deals with emotional processes (i.e., emotional dissociation), whereby individuals avoid unpleasant thoughts, emotions, and memories.[69] There is also substantial research to suggest that repressive coping strategies help individuals experience minimal stress in the short and long-terms following adverse life-events.[70] However, the costs of such coping are evident, as "emotional dissociation is generally viewed as maladaptive and may be

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[67] Anthony G. Greenwald, "The Totalitarian Ego: Fabrication and Revision of Personal History " *American Psychologist* 35, no. 7 (1980). Shelley E. Taylor and Jonathon D. Brown, "Illusion and Well-Being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health," *Psychological Bulletin* 103, no. 2 (1988). See also Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 25.

[68] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 25-26.

[69] Ibid., 26; George A. Bonanno and Nigel P. Field, "Examining the Delayed Grief Hypothesis across 5 Years of Bereavement," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 5 (2001): 798-816; George A. Bonanno et al., "When Avoiding Unpleasant Emotions Might Not Be Such a Bad Thing: Verbal-Autonomic Response Dissociation and Midlife Conjugal Bereavement," *Journal of Personality and Social Pyschology* 69, no. 5 (1995): 975-989.

[70] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 26; Daniel A. Weinberger, Gary E. Schwartz, and Richard J. Davidson, "Low-Anxious, High-Anxious, and Repressive Coping Styles: Psychometric Patterns and Behavioral and Physiological Responses to Stress," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 88, no. 4 (1979): 369-380.

associated with long term health costs."[71] Physical health costs may include general psychosomatic illnesses as well as neoplastic disease, or an abnormal growth or division of cells (i.e., tumors).[72] Like self-enhancement, repressive coping strategies show some negatives and positives, though the negative physiological implications of repression seem to outweigh the positives over the long-term. Therefore, repressors and self-enhancers may cope well with significant life events in addition to the stressors of daily life, but the notion of maladaptive coping strategies and their potential for negative consequences holds true. While the term "maladaptive" would suggest self-enhancement and repressive coping are ambiguous, the positive implications of each pertain specifically resilience that is at least partially disconnected from supportive, caring relationships, which is a primary source of resilience for many people.

Positive Emotion and Laughter

Genuine demonstrations of positive emotion and laughter are indicative of resilience in everyday life as well as after loss and trauma. While positive emotion in the midst of challenging circumstances was once thought to be some type of avoidance or denial,[73] it has become clear in recent decades that authentic positive emotion has the potential to emerge under any circumstances, even the unimaginable. Authentic expressions of positive emotion are not only a natural component of bereavement and trauma, but they may also have a positive impact on the way in which a person grieves.

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[71] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 26.

[72] George A. Bonanno and Jerome L. Singer, "Repressive Personality Style: Theoretical and Methodological Implications for Health and Pathology," in *Depression and Dissociation: Implications for Personality Theory, Psychopathology, and Health*, ed. Jerome L. Singer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 435-470.

[73] Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*.

Several studies have made clear that positive emotions can enhance resilience by reducing distress following adverse events, quieting or undoing negative emotion, and enhancing supportive relationships within one's social environment.[74] Whether it is in the midst of extraordinary pain or everyday life, expressions of positive emotion and laughter hold the potential to foster resilience.

Furthermore, authentic expressions of positive emotion and laughter can foster resilience in individuals and groups. In fact, positive emotion and laughter actually has the potential to be "contagious" as contractions of orbicularis oculi muscles work to create Duchenne expressions, which allow feelings to spread throughout groups and enhance feelings of inclusivity, helpfulness, and cooperation.[75] Studies have also demonstrated that individuals who show a lot of Duchenne expressions have a higher quality of relationships, including marriage, and tend to be more successful in life.[76] Duchenne expressions create shared experiences amongst groups through the neurological activity amongst mirror neurons, a unique brain cell that has the capacity to respond equally to actions and emotions of other people. In fact, the ways in which Duchenne expressions and mirror neurons work together is the basis for empathy and comprehending the emotional state of another person.

Duchenne expressions and mirror neurons foster resilience by allowing people to understand the emotional state of each other. Consider a funeral or memorial service, for example. It is certainly not uncommon to feel the weight of many challenging emotions,

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[74] Bonanno, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience," 26; Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*; George A. Bonanno et al., "Predicting the Willingness to Disclose Childhood Sexual Abuse from Measures of Repressive Coping and Dissociative Tendencies," *Childhood Maltreatment* 8, no. 4 (2003): 302-318.

[75] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 37.

[76] Ibid., 38.

but it is also commonplace to notice smiles when the bereaved speak of their loss. This is not inappropriate; rather, these expressions are adaptive, as they provide reprieve from the tremendous weight of sadness and comfort others who are present to the bereaved.[77] Positive emotions and laughter can be shared amongst groups, thereby enhancing the resilience of the whole, whether in the context of bereavement or everyday life.

Generativity and Authentic Happiness

There are no clear links between resilience, grief, and generativity in the grief research, yet generative action is not uncommon for individuals who demonstrate the capacity to be resilient or recover from grief. That is, many people derive a sense of healing and hope from living with a generative spirit. While current grief research lacks in this regard, the burgeoning discipline of positive psychology, which is centered on enhancing individuals' character strengths, as opposed to correcting the pathological, has positively correlated resilience and generativity.[78] A prime example of generativity is expressing authentic gratitude, which has the potential to deepen relationships via creation of emotional bonds. Positive psychologist Marty Seligman studied gratitude and happiness in great detail, and he unearthed a positive correlation between the two, which suggests authentic expressions of gratitude increase happiness and decrease depressive

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[77] Ibid., 39.

[78] George E. Vaillant, *Aging Well: Surprising Guideposts to a Happier Life* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, 2002). This emphasis on generativity is also consistent with Erik Erickson's seventh developmental stage. See G. Michael Leffel, "Who Cares? Generativity and the Moral Emotions, Part 1, Advancing the Psychology of Ultimate Concerns," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 36, no. 3 (2008): 161-181; Richard Stevens, *Erik Erikson: An Introduction* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

symptoms.[79] In this way, generativity produces authentic happiness which enhances resilience.

One of the reasons generativity produces happiness and resilience is related to the fact that it creates positive emotional bonds with others. One qualitative research project endorsed by the Lilly Foundation set out to identify sources of purpose and meaning as it relates to individual Christians' sense of vocation, or calling in the world.[80] In one of these studies, without prompting, the majority of interviewees correlated a sense of purpose and meaning with significant relationships, even in periods of grief, loss, or transition.[81] What is most interesting about this finding is not necessarily that relationships were a source of purpose and meaning; rather, it was the way in which individuals engaged in these relationships with a generative, loving, and caring spirit that enhanced their sense of purpose and meaning in daily life. In other words, the way in which people develop positive emotional bonds in relationships has the capacity to increase purpose and meaning, making it easier to manage the stressors of daily life, including significant losses or traumatic events.

Conclusion

Conceptualizations of grief have transitioned from pathological to normal, "grief work" to resilience after loss, and stages of grief to everyday resilience. Each of these

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[79] Martin E.P. Seligman et al., "Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions," *American Psychologist* 60, no. 5 (2005): 410-421; Martin E.P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002).

[80] Darrell L. Guder, Eileen D. Crowley, and Theresa F. Latini, "Christians' Callings in the World," *New Theology Review* 24, no. 4 (2011): 6-16.

[81] Theresa F. Latini, "The Work of Love: Toward a Practical Theology of Vocation," *New Theology Review* 24, no. 4 (2011): 28-35.

paradigm shifts characterizes the new science of bereavement and validates the emotional responses embedded within the stories of individuals. That is, responses to grief, loss, and life transition are always unique to the individual, yet it is clear that a majority of people have an inherent capacity to demonstrate resilience after loss, which often emerges in a search for purpose and meaning. This phenomenon is as natural for the human spirit as grief is, so it should come as no surprise that, even amidst the most horrific circumstances, humans have the capacity to be resilient by leveraging a hardy personality, employing maladaptive coping techniques, sharing expressions of positive emotion and laughter, and demonstrating generativity as well as authentic happiness.

While much can be said about the new science of bereavement and resilience from theoretical and empirical perspectives, one of the best ways to conclude this discussion of grief and capture the essence of resilience is through personal narrative. The story of Viktor Emil Frankl is a tremendous story about resilience after a series of traumatic events and losses. Frankl, a neurologist by trade and a Holocaust survivor, published a best-selling book entitled *Man's Search for Meaning*.[82] Here, Frankl shares his experiences of living in a concentration camp and learning to find meaning in the most despicable circumstances. He was later freed from the concentration camp and drew upon his life experiences to develop a form of therapy based on existential analysis. He models resilience well after tremendous grief, loss, and life transition in writing:

> An active life serves the purpose of giving man the opportunity to realize values in creative work, while a passive life of enjoyment affords him the opportunity to obtain fulfillment in experiencing beauty, art, or nature. But there is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but on possibility of high moral behavior: namely, in man's attitude to his existence, an existence restricted by external forces. A creative life and a life

[82] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006).

of enjoyment are banned to him. But not only creativeness and enjoyment are meaningful. If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete.

The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-perseveration he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of it or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not.[83]

[83] Ibid., 67.

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY:

HUMAN-TO-HUMAN AND HUMAN-TO-GOD DIMENSIONS

This chapter commences the normative task of practical theology in order to answer the question "What ought to be going on?" Normativity is described within relational spirituality, which is an interdisciplinary concept that is rooted in the reality that relationships are at the center of life. That is, people are continuously relating to others, environments, and the Divine, and the specific qualities that characterize relationships are derived from the ways individuals learn to relate throughout their lives. Relational spirituality is not prescriptive in the sense that it seeks to evaluate a relationship to someone or something as positive, negative, or anything in-between; rather, relational spirituality is descriptive, as it is focused on describing the particularities of any given relationship, which may result in thriving or suffering in human life. Relational spirituality, therefore, describes normativity in ways of relating that lead to thriving in human life and by describing what is not normative, specifically ways of relating that lead to suffering.

Even though it is not possible to generate truly objective standards concerning how individuals should relate, psychology and theology each hold a tremendous potential to provide a normative framework for relating, as each discipline upholds relational ideals that create opportunity for thriving relationships. Likewise, psychology and theology also have the capacity to highlight the ways in which the human condition is

inescapably finite. It is, therefore, advantageous to describe relational spirituality in terms of psychology and theology while employing the polarities of thriving and suffering in human life, as the presentation of these extremes highlights a continuum that relational tendencies rest upon. Here, thriving pertains to the manifestation of virtues, which, in psychological terms, govern the process of strengthening and repairing relationships,[1] whereas suffering refers to the absence of virtues, thereby resulting in disordered and disruptive relationships. The purpose of this chapter is to present relational spirituality from a psychological perspective and outline the contours of the human-human and human-God perspectives.

Human-Human Dimension

The human-human dimension of relational spirituality is concerned with describing relationships people share with one another. Here, the psychological perspectives of attachment theory and IPNB will be employed in order to describe what it means to experience thriving and suffering in human life. Attachment theory and IPNB serve this purpose well, as they provide foundational concepts for describing the complexities of human relationship, beginning in childhood and lasting into adulthood. The human-human dimension of relational spirituality argues that attachment styles impact individuals' capacity to manage anxiety, self-soothe, and be resilient in the face of critical life events, including grief. Relationality, therefore, influences the capacity of people to manage relationships and difficult life events.

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[1] Don E. Davis et al., "Humility and the Development and Repair of Social Bonds: Two Longitudinal Studies," *Self and Identity* 12 (2013): 58-77.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory serves this dissertation well as it provides the basic building blocks for understanding relationality from a psychological point of view. Psychology also supports the human-human and human-God dimensions of relational spirituality with attachment styles, which describe ways of relating in terms of in clearly delineated categories. Attachment theory was birthed out of the psychoanalytic school of psychology. Psychoanalytic psychology, according to Pamela Cooper-White, is a vital resource for therapists and counselors because it calls attention to the patient's early childhood and the impact it has on unconscious, intersubjective relationships where healing can be found.[2] Attachment theory emerged out of psychoanalytic psychology via object relations theory. Both object relations and attachment theory have made significant contributions in articulating the nature of human relationships, and it is important to note their fundamental points of divergence in order to gain a thorough understanding of attachment theory.

Freud developed the concept of the ego as a way to "explain the psychological agent that comes into conflict with the unconscious instinctual drives."[3] Melanie Klein, a student of Freud, diverged from Freud by emphasizing the role of human relationships in the unconscious, and she frequently described infant-mother relationships. This served as the beginning of object relations theory, which basically asserts that we are social beings

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[2] Pamela Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007).

[3] Daniel J. Price, *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

and that when our needs are met inconsistently, trust is broken.[4] Object relations theory uses the structures of the unconscious to describe the derivatives of an individual's personality and interpersonal relationships, which are represented by the internalization of early object-relationships.[5] These relationships develop because the ego, or the center of a person's personality, seeks relationship immediately after birth. In this way, relationships are an instinctual component of human life.

Like object relations theory, attachment theory emerged from the psychoanalytic school of psychology, though it differs in significant ways. Attachment theory primarily seeks to articulate the drive that bonds two persons in relationship. Consequently, object relations theory and attachment theory are fundamentally distinct, but attachment theory has relied upon the object relations perspective that early object relationships are foundational and formed early in life, like attachment styles. An individual's attachment style can usually be linked to the relationship an individual shared with a caregiver, although it may also be applied when considering relations to others later in life. Thus, attachment theory provides the necessary framework for thinking about human relations beyond childhood.

John Bowlby developed the foundational aspects of attachment theory out of his experiences in working with children during and after World War II. Bowlby was a student of Klein, and he also studied the relationship children shared with their caregivers. However, Bowlby diverged from his psychoanalytic predecessors by

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[4] For a collection of object relations' foundational works see, D.W. Winnicott, *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* (London: Brunner/Mazel, 1992).

[5] "Object Relations Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development* (2006), 327-328.

exploring both the healthy and the pathological aspects of attachment. By employing the term "attachment," Bowlby describes the emotional experience and subsequent behaviors of children depending upon their proximity to caregivers and their social encounters with them.[6] Bowlby's earliest research observed hospitalized children who were separated from their parents, which eventually led to the identification of three distinct responses from the children.[7] The children tended to demonstrate protest, despair, or detachment, and often could not be soothed by their caregiver.[8] Bowlby's three-volume seminal work *Attachment and Loss* emerged out of this experiment years later, and it played a vital role in articulating the basic tenets of attachment theory.[9]

Mary Ainsworth, a student of Bowlby's, extended his understanding of the relationship between the proximity of caregivers and behaviors by introducing the concept of a "secure base" from which a child can explore.[10] A secure base provides the child a safe and trustworthy foundation to return to when finished exploring. Eventually, this led to the articulation of four basic criteria for describing an attachment bond with a caregiver: maintaining proximity to the caregiver, viewing the attachment figure as a secure base for explorative behavior, considering the attachment figure as providing a

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[6] Jude Cassidy, "The Nature of the Child's Ties," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1999), 8.

[7] James Robertson and John Bowlby, "Responses of Young Children to Separation from Their Mothers.," *Courier of the International Children's Center* 2 (160): 131-140. See also, Inge Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth " *Developmental Psychology* 28, no. 5 (1992): 759-775.

[8] Melissa M. Kelley, "Loss through the Lens of Attachment to God," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 11 (2009): 90.

[9] Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*.

[10] Cassidy, "The Nature of the Child's Ties," 8.

safe environment, and experiencing anxiety when removed from the attachment figure, which may lead to grief if the attachment figure is lost.[11] Ainsworth extrapolated these descriptors of the attachment relationship into various styles of attachment, which may be exhibited throughout the lifetime.

Secure Attachment

In its most general terms, attachment theory is characterized by three attachment styles, one of which is secure attachment. According to clinical psychologist Robert Karen, secure attachment is generally viewed as a "source of emotional health, giving a child the confidence that someone will be there for him and thus the capacity to form satisfying relationships with others."[12] Securely attached individuals typically have their needs met early in life via good object-relationships, and these individuals are generally able to trust their experience of the world as a good place. As a result, secure attachments are characterized by a sense of confidence, safety, and distress when the care-giver is removed. Even when distress is at its highest, Ainsworth notes that securely attached individuals have the capacity to self-soothe, as they are trusting that a care-giver will return. It should also be noted that securely attached children may be identified by engaging in imaginative play and being more opposed to clean-up time in comparison to insecurely attached children. All in all, securely attached individuals experience caregivers that are more present, physically and emotionally, and this provides

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[11] Mary Ainsworth, "Attachment across the Life Span," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, no. 61 (1985): 792-812.

[12] Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached: Unfolding the Mystery of the Infant-Mother Bond and Its Impact on Later Life* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1994), 6.

individuals with the skills to develop relationships and to cope with anxiety as well as loss more effectively.

Insecure Attachment

If secure attachment provides a firm foundation for emotional health, then it is logical that insecure attachment can "reverberate through the child's life in the form of lowered self-esteem, impaired relationships, inability to seek help or seek it in an effective way, and distorted character."[13] Individuals who are insecurely attached in relationships often show signs of relational anxiety. That is, the emotional state of insecurely attached individuals is not steady when relating to others, and they often limit their self-confidence and ability to explore on their own.

Insecure attachment is delineated into three categories: ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized attachment. Ambivalent attachment may be characterized by children who are distressed by separations from caregivers and eagerly desire them back even though caregivers are resisted upon their return.[14] Ambivalently attached individuals have mixed feelings about their caregivers and are indifferent about separations from them. Avoidant attachment is best characterized by an attitude of indifference, especially as it relates to sharing or expressing emotions. These individuals tend to treat strangers and care-givers the same way. Avoidant attachment may also be characterized by anger, withdrawal, hostility, and discontentment. Ainsworth interestingly noted these emotions are also evidenced by higher heart rates than those who are securely attached. [15] This indifference,

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 150.

[15] Ibid., 300.

however, is a result of anger and an attitude of withdrawal, which indicates that they prefer to be left on their own. Thus, avoidant attachment has the potential to create hostile or discontent feelings. Later, a disorganized style of attachment was also introduced. It is best described as reflecting a variety of attributes from any other attachment style. These individuals tend to be relationally anxious as well.

A Lifetime of Implications: Internal Working Models of Attachment

While Bowlby's contribution to attachment theory primarily centered on infancy and early childhood, he argued that individuals develop an attachment behavioral system. He hypothesized this system had life-long implications like developing personal, social, and affect regulatory skills,[16] as it was generated by the actual proximity, emotional sensitivity, and responsiveness of the attachment figure. Since then, attachment researchers have emphasized internal, mental representations of attachment figures called "internal working models." Internal working models are of utmost importance as research has focused on self-construction and self-representations, which hold critical implications about an adult's capacity to understand themselves as cared for, valued, and supported while also having the capacity to cope with difficult circumstances independently or in relationships. In short, internal working models are useful in understanding an individual's potential to self-soothe amidst adverse experiences later in life.

Internal working models of attachment are at the core of describing attachment throughout the lifetime, as internal working models may be described as the organization of early attachment experiences. However, early childhood experiences do not

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[16] Steven Rholes, Jeffry A. Simpson, *Adult Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Implications* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2004), 16.

necessarily correlate directly to attachment relationships later in life.[17] Internal working models are better described as contemporaneous, which means attachment styles are dependent upon moderational and mediational influences, like the social contexts in which attachment relationships are formed.[18] At the same time, the immediacy of the social context does not completely negate previously organized memories and beliefs about attachment relationships. Thus, internal working models are a synthesis of four components: 1) memories of attachment-related experience; 2) beliefs, attitudes, and expectations about self and others in relation to attachment processes; 3) attachment related goals and needs; and 4) strategies and plans associated with achieving attachment goals.[19] Each of these components comprises internal working models, which influences the ways in which individuals relate throughout the lifetime.

Research demonstrates that styles of attachment have an impact on the individual's capacity to regulate their own affect. Since securely attached individuals tend to have a positive view of themselves as competent and valued, they are more likely to experience increases in their perception of subjective well-being, self-esteem, and develop positive perceptions of others. This is the result of a learned ability to trust a secure base because attachment figures provided proximity even after an anxiety provoking moment, thereby enhancing the individual's willingness to leave the proximity

[17] Inge Bretherton and Kristine A. Munholland, "Internal Working Models in Attachment Relationships: Elaborating a Central Construct in Attachment Theory," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2008), 102.

[18] Jay Belsky and R. M. Pasco Fearon, "Precursors of Attachment Security," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2008).

[19] Nancy L. Collins and Stephen J. Read, "Cognitive Representations of Attachment: The Structure and Function of Working Models," in *Advances in Personal Relationships*, ed. Kim Bartholomew and Daniel Perlman (London: J. Kingsley Publishers, 1994), 53-90.

of a secure base for the sake of exploration. On the other hand, insecurely attached individuals tend to be apprehensive about the good intentions of others, and they are doubtful about the effectiveness of proximity seeking, which may be painful and distressing.[20] Affect regulation, therefore, primarily occurs within the constraints of seeking or not seeking an attachment figure in childhood, and a similar process of affect regulation occurs in adulthood.

Like children, adults' attachment systems are activated in anxiety producing or distressing situations. However, adult attachment diverges from children in that research has mainly focused on attachment style rather than attachment patterns (i.e., secure, insecure, avoidant, ambivalent). Attachment style is best conceptualized by a pattern of relational expectations that are based on a history of interactions in attachment figures that result in the manifestation of distinct relational patterns. In this way, attachment patterns play a critical role in attachment styles as early attachment experiences influence an individual's view of self and others. Adult attachment styles have been conceptualized in a four-fold model of attachment styles, including secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing styles that are based on an individual's view of the self and the other.

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[20] Rholes, *Adult Attachment*, 162.

Table 1. Model of Attachment.[21]

		Model of Self (Dependence)	
		Positive (Low)	**Negative** (High)
Model of Other (Avoidance)	**Positive** (Low)	Cell I **Secure** Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy	Cell II **Preoccupied** Preoccupied with relationships
	Negative (High)	Cell IV **Dismissing** Dismissing of intimacy counter-dependent	Cell III **Fearful** Fearful of intimacy socially avoidant

This table illustrates the manifestation of attachment styles as it relates to dependency—otherwise known as anxiety—and avoidance, which are the two most basic types of adult attachment styles.[22] Avoidance is represented on the vertical axis, and it is best summarized by self-reliance, staunch independence, and emotional separation or cutoff from others. On the other hand, dependency is on the horizontal axis, and it is characterized by an insatiable desire for closeness, uncontrollable anxiety or concern, and/or worry about relationships, all of which results in relational over-functioning. While both avoidance and anxiety are illustrative of attachment insecurity, individuals

[21] Adapted from Kim Bartholomew and Leonard M. Horowitz, "Attachment Styles among Young Adults: A Test of a Four-Category Model," *Journal of Personality and Social Pyschology* 61, no. 2 (1991): 227.

[22] Rholes, *Adult Attachment*, 163.

who tend to exhibit these characteristics may be identified as insecurely attached, whereas an absence of these characteristics demonstrates attachment security.

Whether an individual's attachment style is primarily secure or insecure, it is inevitable that attachment systems will be activated throughout the lifetime. Mary Main, attachment theorist, was the first to note activation of primary and secondary conditional attachment strategies, which are, by definition, "equal in terms of adaptive value in those conditions in which they are required." [23] Jude Cassidy and R. Rogers Kobak have extended this argument to include two types of secondary attachment strategies, hyperactivation and deactivation of the attachment system. Hyperactivation of the attachment system is primarily about minimizing distance from attachment figures and seeking proximity to ensure support via controlling and angry responses whereas deactivation is primarily about self-reliance, as one's physical and emotional distance from the attachment figure is maximized.[24] Primary and secondary attachment strategies are largely unconscious, and the way in which an individual experiences an attachment figure has a direct correlation to their own ensuing behaviors.

In addition, the reactivation of attachment systems and the accessibility of secure attachment figures have been found to enhance self-representations. Self-representations are, in essence, mental constructs that comprise one's own self-image in ways that are

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[23] Mary Main, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Attachment Organization: Recent Studies, Changing Methodologies, and the Concept of Conditional Strategies," *Human Development* 33 (1990): 56. According to Main, primary and secondary strategies are similar in that they are context sensitive, meaning an individual is attuned to the external environment and internal conditions that result in activation of attachment systems. These strategies diverge, as primary strategies are manifest in behavioral patterns comprised of initiating and terminating behaviors whereas secondary strategies serve the purpose of manipulating or minimizing behaviors to appease the attachment system.

[24] Jude Cassidy and Rogers Kobak, "Avoidance and Its Relation to Other Defensive Processes," in *Clinical Implications of Attachment* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1988), 330-323.

interconnected with attachment related experiences. A history of experiencing secure attachment figures may empower an individual to develop security enhancing self-representations whereby dependency on security-enhancing attachment figures is no longer necessary when attachment systems are activated.[25] Thus, the capacity to self-soothe may extend beyond seeking external attachment figures to also include reliance upon one's own self-representations.

The notion of self-representations is best exemplified in adult attachment as influenced by romantic relationships, which is one of the most widely researched aspects of adult attachment. Heinz Kohut was the first theorist to introduce the notion that individuals may go through a process called transmuting internalization, which involves learning to identify with significant others.[26] This process may be defined as "the internalization of regulatory functions that were originally performed by a significant other, with the individual gradually acquiring the capacity to perform these functions autonomously."[27] In other words, the self may receive and integrate some attributes of her/his significant other and obtain a positive self-representation with an increased capacity to self-soothe and regulate emotions more effectively. Thus, the theory of transmuting internalization is consistent with the development of one's own security-enhancing self-representations, as both have the potential to decrease dependence on external attachment figures when security-enhancing self-representations are experienced.

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[25] Rholes, *Adult Attachment*, 167.

[26] Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 50. Heinz Kohut, *Restoration of the Self* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 4.

[27] Rholes, *Adult Attachment*, 179.

While attachment styles and strategies evolve throughout the lifetime, the fact remains that individuals inherently seek attachment figures for emotional comfort and stability, especially when anxiety rises and attachment systems are activated. Consequently, one may experience more or less self-reliance or dependence on an attachment figure as well as positive or negative changes in perception of one's own self when engaged in relationship with an attachment figure. This dynamic process needs no evaluation. That is, the manifestation of any attachment style must not be evaluated on the basis of "good or bad," "healthy or unhealthy," or "right or wrong," as a variety of attachment styles and emotional responses tend to manifest in people at one point or another, especially since attachment styles evolve throughout the lifetime and are dependent upon external and internal influences. Therefore, a close examination of attachment styles throughout the lifetime offers invaluable insight into the ways in which individuals function in relationships.

Attachment and Psychopathology

While attachment styles themselves ought not to be evaluated on the basis of health or well-being, it is essential to highlight the implications of insecure attachment as it relates to psychopathology. Bowlby was the first to hypothesize the link between attachment styles and psychopathology. He did so by employing the metaphor of a branching railway line, which suggests all infants move out from a metropolis and encounter different junctions of relational experiences that ultimately result in radically different outcomes, just as different rail lines transport to different locations.[28] This metaphor serves the purpose of illustrating the individual's natural inclination to seek out

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[28] Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 364-366.

secure attachment relationships in order to have needs met. When needs are not being met, particularly as a result of caregiver unavailability, insecurely attached individuals are unable to learn self-soothing techniques to help manage anxiety that naturally emerges from external and internal threats (i.e., unrealistic expectations of caregivers, limited access to their own feelings, etc.). This has the potential to result in psychopathology.

Since Bowlby, it has been well documented that insecure attachment during infancy shares a positive correlation with poor peer relations, anger, and poor behavioral self-control during the preschool years and beyond.[29] These are significant findings, as attachment theory previously focused solely on normative development, and it has not been until recently that the relationship between a child's closest relationships and forms of behavioral disorder have been explored.[30] However, behavioral disorders can not be linked directly to a series of concrete events or influences; rather, the prevalence of specific types of behavioral disorders are dependent upon the context in which an individual is immersed. The more risk factors one experiences in her/his context, the more likely she/he will live into a pathological way of relating. It is, therefore, essential to outline these risk factors, as the details of a tremendous breadth of disorders extends beyond the scope of this chapter.[31]

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[29] Michelle DeKlyen and Mark T. Greenberg, "Attachment and Pscyhopathology in Childhood," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude and Phillip R. Shaver Cassidy (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2008), 637-665.

[30] Ibid., 638.

[31] For a detailed explanation of psychopathology and how it relates to various attachment styles, consult Mary K Dozier, Chase Stovall-McClough, and Kathleen E. Albus, "Attachment and Psychopathology in Adulthood," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude and Phillip R. Shaver Cassidy (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2008), 719-744.

It is crucial to note the ways in which attachment styles have the potential to influence childhood psychopathology, which has implications throughout the lifetime. Researchers Michelle Deklyen and Mark Greenberg have asserted that risk factors for childhood disorders ought to be guided by a series of general conclusions. These assertions refute the notion that a single risk factor will result in pathology, as pathology suggests there are multiple pathways to and from a disorder, whether they are personal, contextual, or environmental.[32] For example, an insecure attachment itself will not necessarily lead to pathology, though variable factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status may increase one's risk. However, one's risk may be decreased by protective factors like secure attachment to parents[33] and healthy relationships with peers.[34] In this way, risk factors must be considered within the context and developmental period in which they are observed, as one's exposure to risk factors is dependent upon the broader context in which they are experienced.[35] Finally, it is important to note that specific risk factors do not necessarily increase the likelihood of pathology, but multiple, co-occurring risks lead to a higher likelihood of pathology if one's negative self-representations are not resolved.[36] All of this suggests the presence or absence of psychopathology in childhood must not be simplistically attributed to the prevalence of

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[32] DeKlyen and Greenberg, "Attachment and Pscyhopathology in Childhood," 638.

[33] Roger Kobak et al., "Attachment, Stress, and Psychopathology: A Developmental Pathways Model," in *Developmental Psychopathology: Theory and Methods*, ed. Dante Cicchetti and Donald J. Cohen (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 361.

[34] Jeffrey G. Parker et al., "Peer Relationships, Child Development, and Adjustment: A Developmental Psychopathology Perspective," in *Deveopmental Psychopathology*, ed. Dante Cicchetti and Donald J. Cohen (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006), 419-493.

[35] DeKlyen and Greenberg, "Attachment and Pscyhopathology in Childhood," 638.

[36] Ibid. See also, Dozier, Stovall-McClough, and Albus, "Attachment and Psychopathology in Adulthood," 718-719.

risk and protective factors; the qualities of individual's attachment relationships must also be considered within the broader context in which they are experienced.

The notion that psychopathology, whether absent or already underlying an individual's way of relating, can emerge as a result of attachment styles is illustrative of the tremendously formative power of relationships. Attachment theory is undergirded by the notion that early experiences of caregivers have a bearing on the way individuals relate throughout the lifetime. While attachment theory once stood alone in its unique regard for caregiver relationships early in life, a growing body of research known as interpersonal neurobiology is providing additional explanation as to why attachment relationships are influential throughout the lifetime.

Interpersonal Neurobiology

IPNB is a useful discipline when coupled with attachment theory because it also has the potential to describe the human-human dimension of relational spirituality, particularly the emotional elements of relationships and their lasting effects. Daniel Siegel and Louis Cozolino have pioneered the discipline of IPNB, though each of them has taken a slightly different approach. Cozolino is primarily focused on the analogy of the social brain and discusses "the way we attach, grow, and interconnect throughout life," whereas Siegel places more direct emphasis on the human mind by identifying and describing the functional flow of information across time. Both of these perspectives offer valuable insights into IPNB, but Andrea Hollingsworth presents a more compelling definition of discipline as a whole. She conveys that IPNB's purpose is to articulate "human experience and the dynamics of change across the lifespan by focusing on ways

in which human beings are formed and transformed through relationships."[37] Perhaps the most important aspect of IPNB that is within this definition is the brain's capacity to change and be transformed through relationships while connecting with one another. IPNB relies upon attachment theory to describe this connection, and the relationship between these disciplines provides a logical point of convergence for this research as it describes the unique connection humans share in relationship to one another. Thus, an exploration of IPNB will further articulate the human-human dimension, specifically the dynamic implications of relationships throughout the lifetime.

IPNB relies heavily on brain research in order to articulate how we attach and grow while developing and sustaining interconnected relationships.[38] A basic presupposition, therefore, is that a distinction exists between the human mind and human brain. The human mind emerges from patterns in the flow of energy within the biological brain, whereas the brain has the capacity to be shaped by external experiences, thereby impacting the entire nervous system.[39] This means the brain undergoes physiological changes whereby neural interconnections are made, and these changes have a lasting effect on the ways in which individuals relate throughout the lifetime. Neural interconnections are associated with "increased capacities to balance emotion, construct coherent life narratives, experience self-awareness, respond adaptively to stress, form meaningful relationships with others, regulate the body, and respond empathically to

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[37] Andrea Hollingsworth, "Implications of Interpesonal Neurobiology for a Spirituality of Compassion," *Zygon* 43 (2008): 838.

[38] Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology (New York, NY: Norton, 2006), 19.

[39] Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1999), 2.

others."[40] In short, people are predisposed to behave in relationships based upon previous life experiences, and IPNB provides a biological basis for the concept of internal working models of attachment. However, people are not bound by relational patterns, as the notion of neural integration also posits that the human brain possesses a remarkable capacity to change and grow over the life span.

Memory and Emotion

The development of the brain is inextricably linked to memory and emotion. According to Siegel, "memory is the way past events affect future function."[41] The past can affect future function because the brain has a unique capacity to encode memories through a complex web of neural interconnections known as neural pathways. Neural pathways are a series of synaptic connections that resemble an elaborate roadmap for memories, emotions, and physical abilities, which allow human functions to be repeated. Neural pathways provide a physiological web of connections that direct the functional flow of energy received from experiences through the brain in order to elicit information, and new neural pathways are generated when one encounters original experiences. Neural pathways can be solidified and fire more consistently when experiences are recreated, hence the necessity of practice when honing fine motor skills in athletic events, for example. The activation of neural pathways creates and emotional and physical responses.

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[40] Hollingsworth, "Implications of Interpesonal Neurobiology for a Spirituality of Compassion," 843-844.

[41] Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 24.

Emotional and physical responses derived from the firing of neural pathways are stored as memory. “The increased probability of firing a similar pattern [of neural pathways] is how the network ‘remembers,’” Siegel argues, and the initial impact of a memory on the brain is referred to as an *engram*, which is a complex form of memory that may include multiple senses.[42] Information can be retained by the brain when the probability of adjusting neuronal firing in the future is increased, and the retrieval of memories is an attempt to activate the neural connections associated with a previous experience.[43] It is important to note the significance of individual experience in the development of memories, because no person creates representations and recalls them in exactly the same way, even if two people experience the same event. Furthermore, the way in which an individual feels about an event has the potential to impact emotions that are associated with the memory, and emotions can be felt again when the memory is recalled. Personal experiences are truly unique, as no two people will recall the same event in exactly the same way, and past experiences impact how the brain will respond to future events.

Two distinct types of memory are formed as the brain develops throughout infancy, and these are known as *implicit* and *explicit memory*. Implicit memory is developed from personal experiences that are not easily recollected, and remain largely unconscious. That is, implicit memories stem from behavioral, perceptual and emotional experiences, though the responses learned from implicit memories are not directly related

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[42] Ibid., 24-27.

[43] Ibid., 25-26.

to a past experience in its entirety.[44] Implicit memories are representative of learned responses, such as an infant associating tickling with excitement and laughter, not necessarily recalling previous experiences of being tickled. The function of implicit memory, therefore, serves the mind by generating models, or ways of responding to stimuli in the world, that help us to determine what is next. Siegel describes this characteristic of the brain as an "anticipation machine," which allows us to remember the future with "prospective memory."[45] The human brain has a remarkable capacity to predict what will come next, and responses to new experiences have the potential to be dictated by past experiences.

The implications of implicit memory are significant, especially when considered within the context of internal working models of attachment. For example, consider the ways in which internal working models of attachment influence one's capacity to one's regulate emotions. Individuals who are securely attached likely have a positive view of themselves as competent and valued because they possess a learned ability to trust a secure base has been established, thereby increasing their capacity to manage anxiety and self-soothe. Even though individuals may not recall many experiences with their caregivers with whom a secure attachment was developed, the presence of their caregivers is all that is required to activate implicit memories, which causes feelings associated with the secure attachment to be heightened. The same may be true of individuals who are insecurely attached, though they may likely experience relational anxiety and apprehensions about the intentions of their caregivers. Thus, implicit

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[44] Ibid., 29. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 128.

[45] Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 30-31.

memories are the basis for internal working models of attachment, which can be activated by something as simple as the presence of another person.

Explicit memories, on the other hand, involve a clear recollection of time, space, and facts, all of which help orient individuals to the world and their experiences.[46] Explicit memories are comprised of two basic categories, episodic and semantic. Semantic memory is primarily centered on the recollection of facts and is associated with noetic consciousness, whereas episodic memory is across time and in physical space and is associated with autonoetic consciousness. While autonoetic consciousness is a more complex form of memory, children at the age of three and a half years are typically well underway developing it. Siegel argues this awareness may be heightened when communication is prevalent in attachment relationships, thereby potentially enhancing the recollection of stored memories.[47]

Storing explicit memories for recollection involves focused attention on the memory for the short or long term. When the brain consciously thinks about something for longer periods of time, explicit memories can be transformed from a short-term, working memory into a long-term memory. It is important to note the active recollection of explicit memories is done in conjunction with implicit memory.[48] Implicit memory offers insights into relational models and emotions within the context of explicit memory recollection. For example, a counselee may be active in the process of recalling memories with an insecure attachment figure who was primarily a physically and emotionally

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[46] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 127-128. Daniel Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2012), 30-2.

[47] Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 36.

[48] Ibid., 46.

absent alcoholic. While this dynamic is the source of an insecure attachment that stirs up a host of negative feelings (i.e., resentment, bitterness, etc.), the prevailing dynamic of the family system that enables the behavior may create incongruence in the counselee's recollection of explicit memory. That is, one might demonstrate negative emotions while describing the attachment figure's good qualities. Implicit and explicit memories function alongside one another and play a vital role in recollecting emotional experiences.

Emotions are central to memory formation, and this has a bearing on internal working models of attachment. The brain tends to store "emotionally charged value-laden" memories more effectively.[49] This concept supports the integrative work of implicit and explicit memory formation, as specific, explicit events do not necessarily need to be stored in their entirety in order for the prevailing emotions associated with the experience to impact an individual's attachment models. The brain is capable of prioritizing memories based upon the emotional impact of events because more regions of the brain and synapses are involved in emotionally charged experiences, which results in increased neural plasticity.[50] In other words, emotionally charged experiences derived from attachment relationships impact memory formation. Cozolino illustrates this by making the point that individuals with secure attachments tend to construct coherent life narratives in which memories are more readily available, whereas avoidant and ambivalently attached individuals are both shown to have poor memory with dismissive caregivers, which may result in an inability to regulate verbal output respectively.[51] Of

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[49] Ibid., 48.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 141-148.

note, disorganized attachment patterns may likely produce incoherent life narratives and a generally chaotic emotional state.[52] All in all, memory, emotion, and internal working models of attachment are inextricably linked.

Neural Integration, Constructing Narrative, and Resilience

Connecting neural pathways illustrates how the brain grows and develops in interpersonal relationships, yet the full manifestation of the developing mind's relational implications is evidenced in the formation of narrative. The formation of narrative is a function of a broader process Siegel and Cozolino refer to as neural integration and neural network integration respectively. Neural integration refers to the ways in different anatomical regions of the brain work together via the creation of neural pathways in order to organize functions and perform high level functions, such as the representation and formation of a sense of self.[53] Both Siegel and Cozolino highlight neural integration as an essential element to the formation of narrative, which involves bringing together conscious memory, knowledge, sensations, feelings, and behaviors so that individuals can discover themselves in relationship to others. The processes of neural integration and the formation of narrative enhance the capacity of people to understand one's self in relationship to another and influence resilience or vulnerability.

Neural integration impacts the individual's sense of well-being later in life, as it functions to generate a coherent sense of self based upon previous life experiences. A sense of self is directly related to previous attachment relationships. For example,

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[52] Ibid., 146.

[53] Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 301-302. See also, Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 303.

individuals who are securely attached tend to construct coherent life narratives with ease, as they are capable of expressing troubles that emerged in life and able to identify possible solutions.[54] This is because they have an increased capacity to reflect upon difficult situations and mindfully engage in problem solving. In contrast, insecurely attached individuals are likely to develop incoherent narratives, which are characterized by "incongruity, fragmentation, and restricted flow of information,"[55] thereby limiting one's capacity to formulate a sense of self. The processes of narrative formation and developing a sense of self are influenced by attachment relationships.

While attachment relationships hold the potential to influence the mind's capacity to develop a sense of self via narrative formation, one's perception of self is also not dictated by attachment relationships. In fact, the brain possesses a remarkable capacity to change and grow throughout the life time, and this phenomenon is known as *neural plasticity*. Neural plasticity refers to the physiological capacity of the brain to develop neural pathways when new experiences are encountered, which means people can adopt new ways of relating despite previous experiences. The implications of neural plasticity are profound when considering the formation of narrative and a developing sense of self, as research suggests the construction of life narrative may become more coherent when supportive or therapeutic relationships are experienced.[56] In this case, the plasticity of the brain is evidenced by its potential to integrate various functions of the brain when new

[54] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*, 305-306.

[55] Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 305.

[56] Ibid., 313.

neural pathways are generated. Neural plasticity, therefore, highlights the brain's remarkable capacity to change, grow, and integrate throughout the lifetime.

The concepts of forming memory, emotion, narrative formation, and neural plasticity are significant within the context of relational spirituality and grief, as the mind has a tremendous capacity to be influenced by experiences and adapt to change, which provides a neurological and psychological basis for resilience. This is because one's capacity to recall past experiences, integrate neural functions, and form a coherent narrative ultimately increases one's capacity to adapt to adverse experiences and to problem solve, whereas incoherent narrative may be an indicator of vulnerability.[57] Siegel writes:

> Attachment relationships may therefore serve as catalysts of risk or resilience, to the extent that they facilitate the flow of inauthentic versus authentic states within interactions with others. We can propose that *insecure attachments confer vulnerability because they fail to offer children interpersonal experiences that foster an integrative self-organizational process*. Later relationships with peers and teachers can also make a difference; interpersonal influences on the self-states that emerge to adapt to social contexts directly shape mental health. Though early attachment experiences have been shown to have a direct influence on social competence, sense of autonomy, ego resilience, and peer acceptance, it seems clear that dyadic relationships beyond those with early caregivers may continue to influence the development of regulatory capacities. As Cicchetti and Rogosch have noted, resilience is not a trait or some fixed achievement, but is an emergent state function dependent upon self-organizational processes and continued interdependence within social connections.[58]

Perhaps one of the most profound implications of this research is the notion that resilience and vulnerability are at least partially dependent upon environmental influences and significant relationships. Since supportive and therapeutic relationships may result in improved capacity to construct a coherent narrative, it may be hypothesized that

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 314.

supportive, relational connections may also positively impact one’s capacity to be resilient in the face of adversity, such as grief.

Cultivating Empathy, Compassion, and Resilience

The disciplines of IPNB and the broader discipline of neuroscience have unearthed a breadth of research that describes neurological influences of relational connectedness, especially as it relates to implications of cultivating empathy and compassion, two virtues that are necessary components of supportive and therapeutic relationships. This research is predicated on Cozolino’s thesis that changes occurring within the human brain results from supportive and engaging relationships, and research suggests that virtues like empathy and compassion may be produced with intentionality as new neural pathways are generated. As a result, resilience may be hypothesized as a byproduct of empathetic and compassionate relational connectedness, and, on the other hand, vulnerability may be a result of lacking empathy and compassion. The neurological basis for compassion and empathy stems from the notion that people have an inherent drive to experience shared reality by understanding others’ perceptions. While it has already been argued that no two individual’s recall shared memories in precisely the same way, the brain is capable of comprehending the inner states of others. Psychological scientists, Gerald Echterhoff, Tory Higgins, and John Levins have proposed a four-fold model of experiencing shared reality:

> shared reality involves a (subjectively perceived) commonality of individuals’ inner states (not just observable behaviors); that shared reality is about some target referent; that for a shared reality to occur, the commonality of inner states

> must be appropriately motivated; and that shared reality involves the experience of a successful connection other people's inner states.[59]

This model is significant, as it explains the mirroring function of the human brain in relationship to others and shared experiences. It is, however, important to note that people's capacity to share reality does not necessarily equate to corresponding experiences, even though a breadth of research clearly suggests corresponding states of mind are derived from an inner neurological activation that triggers a specific action or emotion.[60] In other words, people have the capacity to understand the experiences of others without having experienced precisely the same reality. The neurological functions of the brain also make it possible to share emotional experience through mirror neurons. IPNB has identified mirror neurons as a critical, organizing mechanism of the brain, as their purposes range in complexity from imitation to fostering intersubjective relational experiences.[61] The imitating function of the brain is dependent upon the type of mirror neurons that fire. Strictly congruent mirror neurons "fire during observation of exactly the same action they code motorically."[62] Consider the image of a five-month-old infant sitting at the dinner table with older children and adults. Despite having never chewed food prior to this experience, the infant's mirror neurons are activated when others are observed chewing food, and this results in the baby learning how to contract muscles of

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[59] Gerald Echterhoff, E. Tory Higgins, and John M. Levine, "Shared Reality: Experiencing Commonality with Others' Inner States About the World," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4, no. 5 (2009): 496.

[60] Ibid., 512.

[61] Vittorio Gallese, "The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manifold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity," *Psychopathology* 36 (2003): 171. Here, Gallese takes posits the mirror functioning of the brain may also provide an etiology for psychopathology, like schizophrenia, when resonance with others is lacking in such a way that it prevents one from learning to be attuned to others.

[62] Marco Iacoboni, "Imitation, Emathy, and Mirror Neurons," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009): 660.

mastication. This occurs because physical actions and perceptions share a common neurological structure.[63] Like the development of physical abilities, mirror neurons also support the introduction and sharing of emotions. Broadly congruent mirror neurons, on the other hand, "fire during observation of an action achieving the same goal or logically related to the action they code motorically."[64] These mirror neurons highlight the reality that not all human experience is reflective, as behaviors may be flexible in response to others, thereby enhancing intersubjectivity in relationships. In fact, it has previously been argued that broadly congruent mirror neurons are ideal for cooperative behavior among people.[65] Mirror neurons enhance human development and relationship by creating capacity for imitation.

Imitation is also a vital function of mirror neurons, as it provides an origin for empathy. Research suggests that imitation is largely automatic, which leads the individual being imitated to like the other more and be more empathetic (i.e., feeling what other people feel).[66] Not only does empathy make it possible for people to generate shared representations, but it also accounts for intersubjective experience without losing sight of whose feelings belong to whom.[67] The neuroscientific underpinnings of empathy include shared neural representations, self-awareness, mental flexibility, and emotion

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[63] Ibid., 656.

[64] Ibid., 660.

[65] Roger D. Newman-Norlund et al., "The Mirror Neuron System Is More Active During Complementary Compared with Imitative Action," *Nature Nueroscience* 10, no. 7 (2007): 817-818.

[66] Iacoboni, "Imitation, Emathy, and Mirror Neurons," 658-659.

[67] Jean Decety and Meghan Meyer, "From Emotion Resonance to Empathic Understanding: A Social Developmental Neuroscience Account," *Development and Psychopathology* 20 (2008): 1053-1080; Jean Decety and Philip L. Jackson, "The Functional Architecture of Human Empathy," *Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience Reviews* 3, no. 2 (2004): 71-100. Gallese, "The Roots of Empathy."

regulation.[68] Deficits in developmental experiences related to empathy may lead to psychopathology, such as schizophrenia.[69] Empathy, therefore, is a key component of human development because it supports sharing and learning emotions.

Empathy also provides a basis for interpersonal and intrapersonal attunement. This is because empathy results in an increased capacity to respond to other people's emotional states more compassionately.[70] Hollingsworth astutely notes that when the brain experiences the empathy of another it becomes interpersonally attuned to the other, and this sparks neuroplastic processes that that can enhance well-being as well as increase capacity to share in the emotional states of others.[71] On the other hand, intrapersonal attunement involves mindfully noticing, respecting, and loving oneself while consciously experiencing oneself as an observer without judgment.[72] Interpersonal and intrapersonal attunement are essentially the result of a mirroring process that deepens one's capacity for empathy, and, the more often these neural pathways fire, the more deeply and intuitively the individual will empathize with others. Empathy, therefore, is a key ingredient in being drawn into the narratives of others, and, the more closely attuned individuals can become to others' experiences, the more likely one will be compassionate, which is best defined as "being empathically connected with others in

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[68] Decety and Jackson, "The Functional Architecture of Human Empathy."

[69] Ibid. Gallese, "The Roots of Empathy."

[70] Iacoboni, "Imitation, Emathy, and Mirror Neurons," 659.

[71] Hollingsworth, "Implications of Interpesonal Neurobiology for a Spirituality of Compassion," 850.

[72] Ibid., 851.

their suffering and taking action to ease their distress."[73] Therefore, frequent firing of neural pathways associated with empathy leads to increased compassion for oneself and others.

The implications of experiencing empathy and compassion are significant, as they may be hypothesized to increase well-being and resilience for three reasons. First, it has already been argued that resilience is closely linked to one's sense of well-being. Since well-being may be enhanced via experiences of empathy, whether giving or receiving, it is logical to suggest that empathy may lead to increased resilience. Second, research has demonstrated that more coherent narratives can be constructed with the help of supportive and therapeutic relationships, and these relationships are typically characterized by some degree of empathy. The more coherent one's narrative is, the more likely one will adapt to adverse experiences and problem solve. Finally, a fascinating study has also revealed that self-compassion minimizes people's reactions to negative events,[74] a finding that is consistent with the notion that intrapersonal attunement may lead to increased resilience. This is because mindfully observing oneself in relation to external events replaces negative, concerning thoughts with a freedom to respond creatively without hasty evaluations. All in all, experiences of empathy and compassion may be attributed to higher levels of resilience.

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[73] Ibid., 839.

[74] Mark R. Leary et al., "Self-Compassion and Reactions to Unpleasant Self-Relevant Events: The Implications of Treating Oneself Kindly," *Personality Processes and Individual Differences* 92, no. 5 (2007): 887-904.

Human-God Dimension

Another burgeoning area of research within the domain of attachment theory pertains to perceived attachment to God, which is consistent with the human-God dimension of relational spirituality, as it ascribes specific relational qualities of an individual's orientation toward God.[75] In maintaining alignment with the Chalcedonian pattern, it will be argued that attachment to God is a psychosocial interpretation (i.e., primary caregiver relationships, internal objects, etc.) of an individuals' relationship to God. Finitude inhibits the human capacity to fully comprehend the attachment that God secures with humanity as a result God's agency. Thus, attachment to God seeks to describe individuals' understanding of God and their God images.

Pehr Granqvist and Lee Kirkpatrick provide a foundational exploration of attachment to God from a psychological perspective based on two rationales. First, they note a recent Gallop poll that indicated a majority of people identify with a "relationship to God." Second, they argue religious belief and behavior can be meaningfully and usefully understood in light of attachment dynamics.[76] This is possible because God—as described by a variety of religious traditions or ways of conceiving a supernatural being—is an attachment figure, and this relationship is often described as loving by writers of psychology of religion.[77] People rely upon a variety of God images in their

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[75] Lee A. Kirkpatrick, *Attachment Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005). See also, Lee A. Kirkpatrick, "An Attachment-Theory Approach to the Pscyhology of Religion," *The International Journal for the Pscyhology of Religion* 2, no. 1 (1992): 3-28.

[76] Peter Granqvist and Lee A. Kirkpatrick, "Attachment and Religious Representations and Behavior," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2008), 907. The authors cite that just over 50% of surveyed individuals identify with a relationship to God, which was disproportionately higher than other alternatives.

[77] Ibid., 907-908.

religious practices, and these images can be conceptualized with Ainsworth's criteria for attachment relationships, particularly seeking and maintaining close proximity, seeing God as a safe haven, viewing God as a secure base, and initiating responses to separation and loss. Attachment theory, therefore, provides a descriptive framework for conceptualizing the human-God relationship in terms of relational thriving and suffering, which is comprised of virtues that result in thriving and spiritual pathology respectively.

Attachment to God

Just as attachment theory was preceded by psychoanalytic psychology and object relations theory, the notion of attachment to God was preceded by psychoanalytic and object relations concepts of God images. While Freud was amongst the first to speak of God as an exalted father figure,[78] Ana Maria Rizutto, in her groundbreaking work *The Birth of the Living God*, pioneers a fresh perspective in arguing for an individual's private image of God in primary objects. Rizutto views belief in God as an observable psychological fact, and she does well to acknowledge the ways in which psychology and theology coalesce while maintaining a psychological perspective.[79] Individuals' primary image of God has psychological and theological influences, though they are not often consciously differentiated. Rizzutto argues that God-images are largely derived from one's first relationships. Perceived experiences of primary objects influence the way God is imagined, whether positively or negatively, and a culmination of lived experiences generates capacity for people to construct images of God by piecing together previous

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[78] Ibid., 908.

[79] Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 145.

experiences.[80] The transitional object of God is developed as a result of relational intersubjectivity and perceptions of God-images that are derived from attachment relationships. God-images ultimately provide a sense of equilibrium for individuals to differentiate themself from others while leaning to function in society.

At the heart of attaching to God is the relationship's defining attributes (i.e., proximity, secure base, haven of safety, and separation anxiety). This is especially true within the context of loss and separation, as Granqvist and Kirkpatrick note, the effects of separation and loss are twofold, which includes an activation of attachment systems that ultimately increase religious attachment behaviors, such as prayer, and that bereaved or separated individuals may identify God as a substitute or replacement attachment figure to replace lost interpersonal attachment.[81] These findings highlight a movement toward proximity seeking and the (re)establishment of a secure base within a haven of safety. Of course, not all individuals are predisposed to perceive their experience God in the same way, and communion with God may not be felt, as traumatic events and losses have the potential to trigger avoidant and anxious behaviors (i.e., fearful, dismissive, what some may regard as antisocial, etc.). Therefore, understanding the lived experiences of

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[80] Ana-Maria Rizutto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979). Rizutto explains her research of 10 men and 10 women who were interviewed without their knowledge of being studied. A variety of questions related to their family life, religious experiences, and understandings of God were posed, and this led Rizutto to make several significant observations about unconscious assumptions and re-workings of God images; first, God is a special object, set apart from the other primary objects one may have based upon an individual's own sanctity; second, God's meaning is intensified in the life of the individuals she studied; third, the primary object was like others in that it was located everywhere, both inside and outside of the individual where it can be influenced; fourth, the development of a God-image is a creative process that occurs within the mind, though it is also a product of one's culture, the external influences of one's relationships or religious experiences; and, finally, a person's image of God influenced the way their own sense of self is influenced, especially as it relates to the self in relationship to the world around them. For instance, a more positive, loving view of God likely allows one to have a better view of one's own self.

[81] Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, "Attachment and Religious Representations and Behavior," 911.

attaching to God and religious behavior must account for attachment theory's defining attributes.

Compensation and Correspondence

In contrast to an object relations perspective, the notion of attaching to God is derived from lived experiences and attachment relationships. Attaching to God, therefore, is not simply a perception, emotional bond, or belief about God; rather, it is the culmination of specific relational qualities adopted from internal working models of attachment. While no two people attach to God in precisely the same way, Kirkpatrick employs the correspondence and compensation hypotheses to describe the attachment bonds individuals have with God. The correspondence hypothesis suggests that one's relationship to God will correspond to relational patterns that defined early attachment patterns, especially within highly religious familial contexts, as they tend to support ongoing, secure attachments to God.[82] Richard Beck and Angie McDonald have unearthed an interesting body of empirical evidence that is largely supportive of the correspondence hypothesis, especially as it relates to working models of parents and God. That is, individuals who come from homes that are largely unspiritual or "emotionally cold" tend to demonstrate higher levels of avoidance of intimacy in their relationship to God (i.e., avoidant, fearful, etc.), and "overprotective, rigid, or authoritarian homes" were found to have higher levels of "avoidance of intimacy and anxiety over lovability in

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[82] Ibid. See also, Richard Beck and Angie McDonald, "Attachment to God: The Attachment to God Inventory, Tests of Working Model Correspondence, and an Exploration of Faith Group Differences," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 32, no. 2 (2004): 92-103. Pehr Granqvist, "Religousness and Perceived Childhood Attachment: On the Question of Compensation or Correspondence," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 2 (1998): 350-367.

relationship to God" (i.e., disorganized, fearful, etc.).[83] Therefore, it can be hypothesized that care-givers who experience God with a sense of trust, security, and safety may demonstrate religious behaviors consistent with secure attachment to God.

The compensation hypothesis asserts an attachment style to God is the result of an unconscious desire to compensate for care-giver or contemporaneous (i.e., romantic relationships) attachment deficits. Where an individual experienced an avoidant or ambivalent attachment style, a God image may fulfill the longing for a secure attachment style, thereby resulting in an increase in religious behaviors, especially within insecure populations.[84] Interestingly, research has also demonstrated that insecure respondents who had experienced low parental religiousness were also more likely to perceive themselves as having a close relationship to God, holding more theistic beliefs, and demonstrate higher levels of religious change in adulthood.[85] In addition to insecure childhood attachments and contemporaneous attachments, this may be particularly useful application for understanding the way one relates to God in moments of crises.[86] An attachment to God may, for example, help fulfill emotional needs lacking after a loved one dies, as the individual previously fulfilled this void. All in all, empirical evidence prevails in support of both the correspondence and compensation hypotheses, and each may offer insight into the ways in which one attaches to God while serving as a

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[83] Richard Beck et al., "Attachment to God and Parents: Testing Correspondence Vs. Compensation Hypotheses," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24, no. 1 (2005): 21-28.

[84] Granqvist, "Religousness and Perceived Childhood Attachment."

[85] Ibid.

[86] Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, "Attachment and Religious Representations and Behavior," 917-920.

corrective or reparative function.[87] More importantly, however, the compensation and correspondence hypotheses both demonstrate the significant influence of lived experiences when attaching to God.

While the defining attributes of attachment and the notions of compensation and correspondence offer conceptual clarity in articulating attachment styles and their formation, they also pose some significant issues. For example, the provision of a secure base from which one can explore is not particularly clear since God is often conceived of as omnipresent. If God is always present, in what ways does someone explore? Beck pursues this enigma by conducting a study that defines a secure base and exploration in terms of a willingness to explore theological paradigms. His findings suggest the more securely people are attached to God, the more likely they are to explore various theological paradigms and be more tolerant of religions different from their own, even while embracing their own core religious doctrines.[88] It is, therefore, important to recognize that attachments to God may be influenced by an individual's environmental factors and theological assumptions, like omnipresence.

Virtues and Spiritual Pathology: Implications of Attachment to God

Since lived experiences influence perceived attachments to God, it is important to consider the implications in daily life, especially as it relates to thriving and suffering in human daily life. Here, thriving and suffering are conceptualized in terms of virtues and spiritual pathology that result from attachment styles, particularly when attachment

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[87] Cynthia N. Kimball et al., "Attachment to God a Qualitative Exploration of Emerging Adults' Spiritual Relationship with God," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 41, no. 3 (2013): 175-188.

[88] Richard Beck, "God as a Secure Base: Attachment to God and Theological Exploration," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 34, no. 2 (2006): 125-132.

systems are activated. In the most general terms, the activation of secure attachment styles to God result in demonstrations of virtues whereas insecure attachment styles to God correlate with relational vices and spiritual pathology.

Attachment to God is consistent with the defining attributes of attachment theory, as concepts like proximity seeking and developing a secure base for exploration align with religious behaviors. For example, many religious traditions employ prayer as a means of connection and communication with God, and prayer has been conceptualized as a safe haven function.[89] Kevin Byrd and AnnDrea Boe explored various types of prayer in relationship to attachment styles, and their findings indicate more intimate prayer, like colloquial and meditative prayers, are negatively correlated with attachment avoidance, whereas petitionary, help-seeking prayers are only positively correlated with anxious attachment.[90] Consequently, more intimate forms of prayer that have been associated with secure attachment, and less intimate, help-seeking forms of prayer—especially in the absence of other types of prayer—are associated with insecure attachments. Thus, secure and insecure attachments to God may be evaluated on the basis of prayer styles, and there is a great potential to better understand how other religious behaviors exhibit attachments to God.

A body of research suggests secure attachment to God results in increased capacity to cultivate virtues and demonstrate a healthy disposition in relationships. Sandage and Williamson employed preferred prayer styles as indicative of attachment

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[89] Kirkpatrick, *Attachment Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion*.

[90] Kevin R. Byrd and AnnDrea Boe, "The Correspondence between Attachment Dimensions and Prayer in College Students," *The International Journal for the Pscyhology of Religion* 11, no. 1 (2001): 9-24.

styles to explore the relationship between relational spirituality and dispositional forgiveness, and they found that prayers characterized by gratitude to be positively correlated with securely attached forms of prayer and dispositional forgiveness.[91] Secure attachment via meditative prayer has also been linked to a more hopeful disposition in general as well as a positive view of other relationships.[92] In a different study, Jankowski and Sandage identified a statistically significant negative correlation between exploration and humility, which suggests the safe haven and secure base functions of attachment to God are associated with spiritual stability and dispositional humility, which offers accurate self-appraisal, low self-focus (an orientation toward others), and increased capacity for emotional self-regulation.[93] In this way, it is not surprising that other research suggests secure attachments to God may decrease distress over time and lower stress, whereas anxious attachments may exacerbate stress.[94] One possible explanation for this is the relationship between attachment and hope, a virtue that may offer individuals a more resilient disposition in the face of adversity. Hope is central to the development of a secure attachment to God when understood from a psychological perspective, and high levels of hope are positively correlated with secure attachments to God.[95] The opposite is true of low levels of hope, which are positively correlated with

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[91] Sandage and Williamson, "Relational Spirituality and Dispositional Forgiveness," 255-266.

[92] Peter J. Jankowski and Steven J. Sandage, "Meditative Prayer, Hope, Adult Attachment and Forgiveness: A Proposed Model," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 3, no. 2 (2011): 115-131.

[93] Peter J. Jankowski and Steven J. Sandage, "Attachment to God and Humility: Indirect Effect and Conditional Effects Models," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 42, no. 1 (2014): 70-82.

[94] Christopher G. Ellison et al., "Attachment to God, Stressful Life Events, and Changes in Psychological Distress," *Review of Religious Research* 53, no. 4 (2012): 493-511.

[95] Ibid.

insecure attachments to God.[96] In summary, this body of research links gratitude, dispositional forgiveness, humility, and relationship satisfaction, lower levels of stress, and hope as a relational dispositions or virtues resulting from secure attachments to God.[97]

An emerging, parallel body of research also suggests spiritual pathology is inconsistent with virtues associated with secure attachment. While specific types of attachment have not yet been empirically validated in relationship to spiritual pathology, the notion of spiritual pathology seems to share a relationship with attachment to God on the basis of dispositional forgiveness. In a fascinating study, Sandage and Crabtree explored the relationship between spiritual pathology and religious coping as predictors of forgiveness, which has been positively associated with measures of religious commitment, religiosity, church attendance, and spiritual well-being as well as various means of religious coping.[98] This research astutely avoids the operationalization of spirituality in ways that are merely positive, and the outcome allows Sandage and Crabtree to assess both the positive and negative components of spirituality, including spiritual pathology, as defined by spiritual instability and spiritual grandiosity (i.e.,

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[96] Melissa E. Houser and Ronald D. Welch, "Hope, Religious Behaviors, and Attachment to God: A Trinitarian Perspective," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 41, no. 4 (2013): 281-297.

[97] The virtues of humility, gratitude, and forgiveness have been associated with a secure base in another study. See Carissa Dwiwardani et al., "Virtues Develop from a Secure Base: Attachment and Resilience as Predictors of Humility, Gratitude, and Forgiveness," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 42, no. 1 (2014): 83-90. It is important to note, however, that attachment *and* ego resilience were found to be predictors of humility, gratitude, and forgiveness after controlling for religiosity. This study suggests attachment and resilience play a role in the development of virtues.

[98] Steven J. Sandage and Sarah Crabtree, "Spiritual Pathology and Religious Coping as Predictors of Forgiveness," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 14, no. 7 (2012): 693. See also, Steven J. Sandage and Peter J. Jankowski, "Forgiveness, Spiritual Instability, Mental Health Symptoms and Well-Being: Mediator Effects of Differentation of Self," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 2, no. 3 (2010): 168-180.

narcissism).[99] It is important to note that spiritual grandiosity, as noted by the authors, exists on a continuum ranging from healthy ego strength to manic episodes, which may fluctuate between idealization and defense mechanisms to avoid shameful, depressive lows.[100] Their findings demonstrate both forms of spiritual pathology were uncorrelated with one another and are predictive of dispositional forgiveness (i.e., spiritual instability often leads away from dispositional forgiveness, whereas a positive relationship between religious coping and interpersonal forgiveness was demonstrated).[101] The relationship between these variables suggests low levels of religious coping and spiritual grandiosity exist apart from one another in their sample and are not consistent with dispositional forgiveness, a virtue associated with secure attachment. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that evidence of spiritual pathology is inconsistent with secure attachment to God just as evidence of virtues may be consistent with secure attachment to God.

Conclusion

Attachment to God results from environmental factors and lived experiences. That is, lived experiences do not exist in isolation from one another, as the culmination of relational experiences occurs through the processes of neural integration and narrative formation, which ultimately have the potential to influence attachment styles. Since the discipline of IPNB is yet to present research pertaining to attachment to God, integrating the neurobiological concepts of IPNB with attachment to God must be done cautiously.

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[99] Sandage and Crabtree, “Spiritual Pathology and Religious Coping as Predictors of Forgiveness,” 698.

[100] Ibid., 703.

[101] Ibid., 701-704. The finding of the negative relationship between spiritual instability and dispositional forgiveness was first identified here, Sandage and Jankowski, “Forgiveness, Spiritual Instability, Mental Health Symptoms and Well-Being.”

However, evidence for the evolution of attachment relationships throughout the lifetime is quite compelling, and neural pathways, memories, neural integration, and narrative formation all support this process, thereby highlighting the interdependence of people in relationship to God. In other words, previously developed attachment styles and experiences within contemporaneous attachment relationships, including relationships to God, have a bearing on the individual's capacity to manage anxiety, self-soothe, and be resilient in the face of critical life events, including grief. Relationality, therefore, as described by the human-human and human-God dimensions of relational spirituality via attachment theory and IPNB, not only influences the ways in which relationships with people and God develop and reverberate throughout the lifetime, but it also influences the capacity of people to manage relationships and difficult life events. It is, however, important to note these aspects of relational spirituality merely describe individuals' relational interdependence and orientations toward relationships. This diverges from the God-human and inner Trinitarian dimensions of relational spirituality, which are representative of the source of relationality without relational interdependence. For more on this, sources of relationality must also be considered from a theological perspective.

CHAPTER 4

RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY:

GOD-HUMAN AND INNER TRINITARIAN DIMENSIONS

This chapter extends the normative move of practical theology by providing a descriptive framework for relationality in theological terms. Its chief concern is articulating relational spirituality from the God-human and inner Trinitarian dimensions, as it moves toward answering a core question: How ought God's ideal relational orientation towards humanity and God's self via Trinity influence relational spirituality, especially amidst tragic circumstances such as grief? Relational spirituality, when explored in normative, theological terms, diverges from the previous chapter regarding the psychological components of relational spirituality, as the God-human and inner Trinitarian dimensions of relational spirituality are primarily characterized by the impact of God's relational ideals that support thriving in human life. This ideology is rooted in the assumption that relationality is derived from that which is beyond the self and is perfectly manifest in the Triune God. While these relational ideals are not directly analogous to all of human life, the human spirit has the potential to experience the ministry of the Triune God. God initiates and maintains relationship with humanity in ways have the potential to shape an individual's relational spirituality.

The task of constructing a normative understanding of God's relationality can only be described from the human vantage point—theology is a human interpretation of

revelation (i.e., God's relationship to humanity throughout history). Since it is only through exercise of theological reflection that it is possible to address the relationality of God, the discipline of theology is given precedence. Here, precedence refers specifically to the "asymmetrical" relation of theology to psychology, as theology and psychology are logically independent of one another, even though they also maintain an "indissoluble differentiation" and "inseparable unity."[1] The notion of precedence is most significant, as descriptions of God-human dimension of relational spirituality do not exist apart from humanity—God continues to relate to humanity. While the inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality may be described solely in terms of Trinity, the ministry of Triune God has extended relationship to humanity since our creation. Therefore, a normative exploration of God's relational orientations necessarily involves, as Loder puts it, working from above and below simultaneously.[2] The "view from below" pertains to perspective of science and human experience, whereas the "view from above" pertains to the human perspective of God's self-revelation.[3] In this practical theological exploration, working from above involves describing the theological elements of God's self as Trinity, thereby making it possible to describe what is theological about relational spirituality, which is a view from below. The task of working from above and below is

[1] Loder, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: The Interdisciplinary Issue," in Schweitzer and Ven, *Practical Theology: International Perspectives*, 365. See also, Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*, 37. In addition, one may also consult Hunsinger, who, independent from Loder, constructed an interdisciplinary method based on the nature of Jesus as determined by the Council of Chalcedon. See Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 65-68. Here, Hunsinger clearly articulates the notion of precedence, which accounts for the use of both psychology and theology with great conceptual clarity.

[2] Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*, 13-14.

[3] Ibid., 4-15.

also illustrative of God's transforming relationality, as this process of theological reflection holds the potential to shape one's relational spirituality.

A normative, theological approach to relational spirituality begins with the task of working from above and below in order to describe the God-human dimension of relational spirituality. The God-human dimension is concerned with God's relational orientation towards humanity. The concepts of *analogia spiritus* and *imago Dei* are employed in order to describe the Spirit of God and the many ways in which the Spirit's agency holds the capacity to transform the human spirit, particularly through inspiration of virtues. Then, perspectives describing the dynamic relationality of the Trinity will be employed in order to articulate the inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality. The inner Trinitarian dimension is concerned with God's relational orientations towards God's self and implications for human life. The outward impact of God's agency is always consistent with the inward essence of God's character, thereby highlighting the significance of the differentiated unity of God and the immanent-economic distinction. Thus, it will be argued relational spirituality is upheld by the God- human and inner Trinitarian dimensions, as these dimensions convey the significance of God's relationality and orientation toward humanity while also pointing to the implications for relational spirituality. That is, it is the co-creative agency of the Divine that inspires virtues and uses them to bring about thriving in human life, even amidst tragic circumstances like grief.

It is important to note that a normative approach to relational spirituality does not seek to describe the breadth of God's character to all people in all circumstances; rather, it attempts to highlight God's engaging, dynamic relational orientations while also

avoiding overly simplistic, dualistic, and narrow ways of imagining God's relationality. The ministry of the Triune God has always emerged from God's self and commitment to relationship with humanity throughout history, as God faithfully reveals a compassionate and gracious disposition toward humanity in all circumstances, including moments of grief and suffering. For example, the biblical narrative reveals God as one who continuously demonstrates a willingness to move toward suffering and be in solidarity with those who experience grief and misery (Ex. 34:6-7; Is. 40-55; Job; Acts 16:22-26), including God's self as revealed in Jesus Christ (Mark 15:34). While many substantial images of God are revealed by these narratives (i.e., faithful, gracious, compassionate, etc.) in ways that minister to the human spirit amidst difficult circumstances, the chief concern of a normative understanding of relational spirituality is *how* God's relational orientations—as described by the God-human and inner Trinitarian dimensions of relational spirituality—impact individuals' relational spirituality, especially when dealing with issues of grief, loss, and transition. Thus, the present focus is on God's relationality as described by *analogia spiritus* and the ministry of the Triune God in order that the impact of God's agency may be conceptualized in light of relational spirituality.

God-Human Dimension

The God-human dimension of relational spirituality ought to begin with significant consideration of the Holy Spirit. Simply put, the mission of the Spirit is the mission of the Triune God, yet it is primarily the Spirit who is dynamically involved in the life of the Trinity, proceeding from and going in-between the Father and Son, as well the participant in the Trinity that is a primary mediator in carrying out God's purposes in the world today. Not only does the Spirit of God dwell among the people (Rev. 21:3), but

the Spirit also plays a vital role in supporting (Rom. 8:26) and transforming (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21) the human spirit. In this way, the Holy Spirit takes on tremendous significance in Christian theology, as the notion of life in the Spirit has been broadly interpreted and experienced—ranging from an "unexamined presupposition" to a "frenzied enthusiasm," sometimes causing a "subjective inebriation."[4] These polarities have a maleficent potential as the former perpetuates relational values that treat God as distant and disengaged, whereas the latter has a tendency to perpetuate dualistic ways of being in relationship with God. These ways of relating need to be reconsidered in light of historical understandings of the Spirit. Therefore, the task of exploring the God-human dimension of relational spirituality requires historical reflection on the Holy Spirit alongside a theological anthropology that includes self-understanding when interpreting agency of the Holy Spirit. This exploration illustrates transformational potentials of the Spirit in relationship to people as virtues are cultivated. While it is God that establishes relationship with humanity, a key focus of this discussion is the significance of the agency of the human spirit, which exists analogously to the Holy Spirit, who is in communion with human spirit and facilitates co-creative transformation.

The Holy Spirit, Transformation, and Relational Virtues: Tracing Historical Perspectives

Even before the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), theologians and apologists expressed the importance of the Spirit within their theological paradigms, and the sum of their work is representative of a broad pneumatological framework. This is in part due to

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[4] James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers and Howard Publishers, 1992), 21.

the fact that blurry distinctions were made between Christ and the Spirit, especially in relationship to threeness of God, which second-century theologians like Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus were trying to understand more fully by defining Spirit as God, Word, and Wisdom.[5] While much can be extrapolated about the relationship between God, Word, and Wisdom in their writings, what is most important to note is that Theophilus, like others, littered his work with descriptions of God's dynamic relationality of a unified God that has taken an active, relational interest in humanity since creation. While the Spirit was often mediated through hierarchy of the Church in order to support unity within the Church,[6] Veli-Matti Kärkäinen notes that what was believed about the Holy Spirit's active and dynamic relationship to humanity is what set it apart from other dominant worldviews (i.e., paganism, Gnosticism, etc.). Tatian, a second century apologist, exemplifies this best:

> For the soul does not preserve the spirit, but is preserved by it, and the light comprehends the darkness. The Logos, in truth, is the light of God, but the ignorant soul is darkness. On this account, if it continues solitary, it tends downwards towards matter, and dies with the flesh; but, if it enters into union with the Divine Spirit, it is no longer helpless, but ascends to the regions whither the Spirit guides it: for the dwelling-place of the spirit is above, but the origin of the soul is from beneath.[7]

In arguing for the mortality of human spirit's capacity to know the immortality of the Holy Spirit through a relational union, Tatian illustrates that even the earliest of Christian

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[5] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum*, trans. Roger M. Grant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger and Matthew Craig Steenberg (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012).

[6] Ignatius of Antioch, *The Letters*, trans. Alistair Stewart (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 178.

[7] Tatian, "Address to the Greeks," in Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *Holy Spirit and Salvation: The Sources of Christian Theology*, ed. Veli-Matti Kärkäinen (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 10.

theologians understood the soteriological significance of the human spirit's relationship to the Divine's. Soteriology was a primary way of conceptualizing spiritual transformation in the early church.

By the third century, views of the Holy Spirit were growing more robust in that they were taking into consideration new aspects of Christian spirituality, particularly in light of a potential to be in relationship to the Spirit via the Church, where transformation could occur. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus reflects on the Spirit of God being evidence of Church and vice versa, as he focuses on the Spirit's gift of grace in order that those who "partake" in it may be "nourished into life from the mother's breasts."[8] Comments like these were most fitting in Ireneaus' time, as signs and wonders of the Spirit were common in the church.[9] Not the least of these was the gift of healing, and, like other gifts, common practice involved mediating the gift of Spirit through the teacher or leader, but sometimes not before there was some evidence of teaching in a person's life. While miracles, signs, and wonders were used to assert the presence of the Spirit in the third century, reflections upon them also highlighted the significance of an emerging theological anthropology. The presence and gifts of the Spirit were in no need of validation or affirmation, as this was common knowledge; rather, the ways in which people experienced the Holy Spirit and were transformed was a key focus. The great apologist Tertullian writes in a *Treatise on the Soul* about a sister, who has had divine grace impressed upon her via revelation, which allows "experiences in the Spirit by

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[8] Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" in ibid., 11.

[9] Ibid., 12.

ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church."[10] Thus, even the earliest views of the Spirit took into consideration a dynamic, engaged, and active presence of God's work in the world through the Holy Spirit.

Conceptualizations of the Spirit's relationality continued to evolve throughout the Patristic era. While the Patristic era spans from approximately 100 A.D. to 500 A.D., the Council of Nicea serves as a significant marker of this period. It endorsed the employment of pneumatological canons by making a simple statement of affirmation in the Nicene Creed, "and [we believe] in the Holy Ghost." This set the tone for a new wave of considerations on the Holy Spirit. Cyril of Jerusalem and Athanasius were two leaders in this regard. Cyril's contributions were great, as his reflections on the Spirit's agency amidst the sacraments and salvation led to the development of Spirit Christology, in which he explores the relationship between Jesus' baptism and our own. The link between these, of course, is the Spirit's activity, who adopts the baptized as God's children just as God declared, "This is my son" (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).[11] Linking the Holy Spirit to the Spirit of Christ in this way made way for new emphases in Christian spirituality.

In the fourth century, Athanasius built upon the contributions of his predecessors by constructing the first doctrinal statement regarding the Spirit in the history of theology, *Letters to Serapion Concerning the Holy Spirit*. This was a direct response to the Tropici Christians, who did not confess the divinity of the Holy Spirit in the same

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[10] Tertullian, "A Treatise on the Soul," in ibid., 23.

[11] Cyril of Jerusalem, "Catechetical Lectures," in ibid., 39-40.

way as the Father or the Son.[12] In the letter, Athanasius responds by asserting the indivisibility of the Trinity alongside the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit. In a summary of his work, Kärkäinen notes Athanasius identified several illustrative terms from scripture to define the ministry of the Spirit, which include "'the Spirit of holiness and of renewal,' 'life-giving,' 'anointing,' and 'seal.'"[13] The employment of these terms is significant as they highlight the agency of the Spirit in the work of transformation through theosis, a process of renewal and unification with God and by God's graces that occurs within the inner workings of the human spirit.[14] In other words, the process by which the human spirit is transformed into the likeness of God is dependent upon God's agency. Thus, the evolution of conceptualizing the Spirit's relation to humanity rose to a new level in the Patristic era, as the relationship between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit introduces new conceptualizations of the Spirit's transformational potential.

Pneumatologies remained largely in line with the norms established by the Nicene Creed until the Reformation, when Martin Luther sought to reform the church by focusing on new doctrines like justification by faith alone and the priesthood of all believers, both of which were a contrast to the previously established loci of theological authority. While much can be written about Luther's use of the Spirit in theological reflection, perhaps Luther's most noteworthy contribution as it relates to the discussion at hand is the introduction of analogies of the Spirit. Luther describes the Spirit's ministry in passionate, life-giving terms, whereby the Spirit is named as one who, "Crieth, 'Abba,

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[12] Ibid., 44.

[13] Ibid., 46.

[14] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1980), 206.

Father,'" on our behalf.[15] Another example asserts the Spirit is analogous to an "eternal motion" that "moved" the Son, who has moved us, and he also suggests the Spirit is like a hen that broods her eggs to bring life through heat.[16] In both instances, Luther's analogies of the Spirit demonstrate a progression of thought regarding the centrality of the Spirit in the life-giving ministry of the Triune God with intimate descriptors. However, these analogies perpetuate a dualistic view of the Spirit's activity amongst humanity throughout history, as Luther does not consider how the human spirit's agency is involved.

John Calvin, one of Luther's contemporary reformers, diverged from Luther in some respects, yet he too emphasizes the life-giving ministry of the Spirit, as a primary objective of his reflections on the Holy Spirit is also to assert its divinity. In a commentary on Psalm 104:29, Calvin notes the ways in which "God sends forth his spirit," and makes it "ours" by giving it to us in order that "when we see the world daily decaying, and daily renewed, the life-giving power of the God is reflected to us herein as a mirror."[17] Calvin upholds the agency of humanity and argues the significance of this is related to the capacity of the individual's will to be renewed by the power of the Spirit. This means the human spirit and the Holy Spirit are utterly distinct, yet consistent in

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[15] Martin Luther, *A Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to Galatians* (1519), trans. Erasmus Middleton (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1980), 345.

[16] *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5* (1535), in *LW* 1:9.

[17] John Calvin, "Calvin's Commentaries: 93-119," in Kärkäinen, *The Holy Spirit and Salvation*, 168. Calvin also highlights the importance of spirituality and pneumatology through his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, where argues one function of the Holy Spirit is to effectuate salvific benefits of Christ in people, which ultimately unites people to Christ. This is point is made most clearly in his doctrine of the mystical faith-union of the believer with the Lord through the Spirit's communication with a person's spirituality. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 1536 ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975). See also, Paul Chung, "Calvin and the Holy Spirit: A Reconsideration in Light of Spirituality and Social Ethics," *Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 24, no. 1 (2002): 40-55.

Calvin's view. A key outcome of this view, as Loder astutely notes, is that the Holy Spirit serves as a critical link between Jesus and all of humanity in ways that eliminate an overly dualistic view of the divine-human relationship.[18] Thus, Calvin makes a case for the Spirit that draws greater attention to the significance its agency and involvement humanity by explicitly connecting Jesus to the Spirit.

Jürgen Moltmann is hailed as one of the most prominent theologians of the twentieth-century, and his contributions draw a new, unique kind of attention to the Spirit's agency as it relates to justice and peace. His views on justice, peace, and suffering are reflective of his experiences as a prisoner of war during World War II, which inspired theological creativity in ways that resonated with many people. In the *Spirit of Li*fe, a groundbreaking work on the Holy Spirit, Moltmann navigates the murky waters between a broad range of perspectives on the Spirit by arguing the presence and ministry of the Spirit is active and engaging. This is a contrast to those who constrain their personal experiences of the Spirit as a result of other modern influences, and it is a contrast to those who presume the work of the Spirit to be limited to religious life, particularly sacraments.[19] In fact, Moltmann goes so far as to highlight precisely who the Spirit is: He is the Spirit of "righteousness and justice" who can "be sensed in the pain of people without rights over their deprivations," and the Spirit speaks in the "guilty conscience" of people who commit violence.[20] The work of righteousness and justice is prevalent as the Spirit of God is the "presence of Christ," "atoning power," and "divine

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[18] Loder and Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move*, 28.

[19] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 2-3, 8-9.

[20] Ibid., 128.

love" that can be present to perpetrators and victims, support healing amidst self-destructive behaviors, and provides justification for life, the reason why the Spirit is the Spirit of life.[21] The life and ministry of the Spirit draws attention to the significance of personal and relational righteousness and justice as a result of the ways in which the ministry of Jesus is reflective of the pre-existent work of the Spirit.[22] Moltmann, therefore, argues that a major component of the Spirit's ministry is liberation for the marginalized and oppressed. To this end, Moltmann takes the human spirit's agency is taken into consideration.

While perspectives on the Holy Spirit have long been a centerpiece of Christian theology and spirituality, even a brief historical survey illustrates how understandings of the Spirit's agency and ministry have evolved over time. In the most general terms, perspectives of the Spirit have ranged from primarily being concerned with soteriological implications—resulting in what can be perceived as distant, depersonalized, and dualistic—to an active, engaged presence throughout the world and in relationships with the chief concerns bringing about justice and peace. A perspectival shift of this magnitude is noteworthy, as theologians and lay persons have come to understand the Spirit's ministry as one with many implications that extend beyond soteriological concerns by suggesting how the Spirit benefits human life in the present moment. Interestingly, the transitions from Luther to Calvin to Moltmann demonstrate growth in the understanding of the Spirit's agency in the God-human dimension of relational

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[21] Ibid., 142-143.

[22] Moltmann argues in great detail that the Spirit provides a logical point of connection between the Christ's presence and the ways in which his history is remembered. This is because the Spirit of God was active in determining the history of Christ from the beginning. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993), 73-77.

spirituality. That is, the ways in which relating to the Spirit is described from the sixteenth-century to the twentieth-century links the Spirit's ministry of soteriology to relational virtues like justice and peace for the benefit of all people.

While the Spirit's ministry has long been conceived of as relational, a focus on relational virtues opposes a subtle, yet deep-seeded dualism in relating to the Spirit. A consequence, according to Loder, of this dualism is a "fragmentation" with "disintegrating effects," such as producing privatized faith perspectives and keeping views of God detached from culture.[23] Concerns such as these generate ambiguity in the Spirit's purpose and activity in human relationships, thereby resulting in the emergence of misrelations. However, a holistic view of the Spirit's relationship to the human spirit gives consideration to the ways in which virtues (i.e., peace, justice, etc.) ultimately originate from the Spirit and support wholeness in human life (i.e., forgiveness, healing, moral order, etc.). Therefore, understanding the Spirit's agency within the context of God's relationship with humanity is vital to conceptualizing relational spirituality and thriving in human life. This is why the Spirit's agency and potential impact on human relationships colors much of the remaining discussion.

Analogia Spiritus and Spiritual Transformation

The transformational agency of the Spirit supersedes any human capacity to be transformed independent of God, and further explanation regarding the relationship of the human spirit to the Holy Spirit is required. Since spiritual transformation is primarily derived from God's agency, any attempt to describe it will likely fall short of comprehensive. However, one way of beginning to imagine the Spirit's transformational

[23] Loder and Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move*, 32.

agency is its relationship to the human spirit. Conceptualizing the human spirit from a relationally integrative perspective is a helpful starting point for this discussion, and it is central to the notion of relational spirituality. This approach accounts for the creativity of the Spirit and the human spirit while also avoiding dualistic temptations, like reducing the Spirit's presence and activity to descriptive polarities only pertaining to God, such as transcendence and immanence. Thus, it will be argued the human spirit is analogous, yet asymmetrically related to the Holy Spirit, which is the essence of *analogia spiritus*. The purpose of this discussion is to articulate how the Spirit's agency unleashes the potential of thriving in human life in ways that are otherwise not possible.

This argument follows Loder's line of thought in that the human spirit has a limited capacity to be self-critical in relation to the "most profound issues of human existence," and the human spirit, when aided by psychology and ordered according to the Chalcedonian pattern, seeks to understand itself in light of the *imago Dei*.[24] In this way, *analogia spiritus* is rooted in the similarity "that the human spirit is inherently creative, and the Holy Spirit works in human history as *Spiritus Creator*, where creativity is understood transformationally."[25] *Analogia spiritus* and transformation will be explored alongside a theology of *imago Dei*, a point at which the present argument diverges from Loder by outlining the details of how a theological discussion of the human spirit shares a dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit.

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[24] Ibid., 27.

[25] Ibid., 35. Of note, the term *analogia spiritus* first appeared in Josef Pietron, "Analogia Spiritus: Überlegungen Zu Einer Theorie Geistiger Schriftauslegung in Gegenwärtiger Predig" (Ph.D. Diss, Münster University, 1979). However, this dissertation more closely follows Loder's line of thought, as it seeks to articulate the dynamics of spiritual transformation.

The foundational assertion of *analogia Spiritus* is that a bi-polar relational unity exists between the Holy Spirit and human spirit, which is best evidenced by both cognitive and epistemological processes. Douglas Hofstadter, cognitive scientist, argues "strange loops" describe the paradoxical powers of self-reference in reality, and this phenomenon is visually illustrated by a Möbius band.[26] The Möbius band was first discovered by psychoneurologist Paul J. Möbius, who sought to model the uniform interconnectedness of neurological and psychological realities by twisting a one-sided band with one edge 180 degrees in order to make it appear as if it has more sides and edges. Hofstadter summarizes the illustrative potential of the Möbius band best:

> the explanations of "emergent" phenomena in our brains—for instance, ideas, hopes, images, analogies, and finally consciousness and free will—are based on a kind of Strange Loop, an interaction between levels in which the top level reaches back down toward the bottom level and influences it, while at the same time being itself determined by the bottom level….The self comes into being the moment it has the power to reflect itself.

The cognitive processes of self-awareness are of great importance to Loder because the self's capacity to reflect itself demonstrates a dynamic relational unity. This dynamic relational unity is consistent with Loder's epistemological starting point, which he draws from Michael Polanyi. Polanyi argued the knowing process is comprised of two divergent, unique ways of knowing that are mutually dependent upon one another. That is, focal awareness is focus of attention directly on a concept or thing that is apart from the self and experientially present, whereas tacit awareness is best described as background awareness. It is the culmination of focal awareness throughout the lifetime that becomes tacit awareness and ultimately impacts our formation and judgment

[26] Loder and Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move*, 40.

expressed in focal awareness.[27] The former impacts the latter and vice versa, and this illustrates the strange loop nicely, as it is the *relationship* between the two that defines this epistemology, not tacit or explicit awareness.[28] Therefore, a bi-polar relational unity, as exemplified by cognitive and epistemological processes, is focused on the sum of the parts that comprise the relationship.

The bi-polar relational unity evidenced in cognitive and epistemological processes are asymmetrically related to *analogia spiritus*. That is, *analogia spiritus* is fundamentally distinct from the described processes, though it shares an inseparable unity in that a bi-polar relational unity exists between the Holy Spirit and human spirit. That is, the human spirit is to the mind the self's capacity to search out the depths of being and seek relational integrity: as the Holy Spirit is to the Trinity God's capacity to always maintain relational integrity, seek out the wisdom of Christ, and invite the human spirit to share relationship.[29] The relational unity of *analogia spiritus*, therefore, is maintained by the agency of the Holy Spirit, which seeks to transform the human spirit in life-giving ways. According to Loder's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, the agency of the Holy Spirit transforms the human spirit into a "human agent for the divine reality," as the human spirit, if left solely to its own agency, will inevitably "actualize its inclination toward death by collapsing into some form of idolatry or dissipating into some form of anarchy."[30] Humanity, therefore, owes its existence to God, and is utterly dependent upon

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[27] Ibid., 42.

[28] Ibid., 46. Here, Loder supports this argument with the ideas of Niels Bohr, quantum physicist, who discovered "quantum objects will inevitably be divided between two polarities, wave and particle, what are mutually exclusive with respect to simultaneous observation."

[29] Ibid., 48.

[30] Ibid.

the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be in relationship with the Triune God in ways that enable the human spirit to be in communion with the Divine for sake of creative transformation.

Transformation, when conceived of from the perspective of a bi-polar relational unity between the Holy Spirit and human spirit, can be attributed to and occurs within the context of a shared, co-creative relationship. Here, co-creation refers to the ways in which the Holy Spirit's agency undergirds the human spirit. The Spirit of God establishes relationship with the human spirit, and its agency is essential for the human spirit to reflect and relate to itself in processes of spiritual transformation. Transformation has been described by theologians for centuries,[31] but a premier example is Loder's understanding of transformation, which occurs in five non-linear phases: first, "conflict" is a result of an experienced distortion in one's understanding of reality; second, conflict leads to "interlude for scanning," in which one lives into situation and gives thought and action to possible solutions; third, a "constructive act of the imagination" occurs that allows one to mindfully piece seemingly divergent perspectives into a new context; fourth, a "release" of energy previously held in tensions derived from the initial conflict occurs; and, finally, the individual moves into moments of "interpretation" where solutions are evaluated based on newfound connections and validation of intuitions,[32] and

[31] For a brief historical survey regarding how transformation has been conceived, see Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*, 25-28.

[32] James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 35-64. Loder also addresses the nature of transformation in other sources. While these sources are not incongruent with the five phases described above, *The Transforming Moment* is the premier explanation. This is because *The Logic of the Spirit* is largely dependent on the ways in which individuals develop throughout the lifetime according to Erik Erikson's theory of human development, thereby become more prescriptive and less free-flowing. A second example is James E. Loder, "Negation and Transformation: A Study in Theology and Human Development," in *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity*, ed. Christiane Brusselmans, et al., edited by Christiane Brusselmans (Morristown, NJ: Silver

they are significant because they address the inherently chaotic and destructive nature of the human spirit when it is not grounded in the Spirit of God. In other words, the human spirit will not likely move toward the phase of interpretation on its own accord; the co-creative ministry of the Spirit is necessary to introduce and integrate seemingly divergent understandings of reality. Not only does this explanation of transformation exemplify the asymmetrical ordering of *analogia spiritus*, but it is also illustrative of the inseparable unity that defines the *analogia spiritus* in terms of a co-creative relationship, which ultimately gives way to moments of transformation.

When understood from the perspective of *analogia spiritus*, spiritual transformation is utterly dependent upon the agency and grace of God. Not only is it God who initiates and upholds the outcomes of spiritual transformation, but it is also God who graciously invites the human spirit into processes of transformation. Viewing spiritual transformation as a divinely upheld process that occurs within the context of social, cultural, cognitive, affective, behavioral, neurobiological, and existential dimensions makes qualitative change more accessible to understanding, as it can be differentiated through the lenses of first-order and second-order change. First-order change refers to a change in behaviors; second-order change diverges and is more substantive in that it

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Burdette Company, 1980), 166-168. In this work, Loder addresses the ways in which transformation occurs in light of self-understanding and God's agency. He suggests transformation occurs in the context of four types of negation: first, "methodological negation articulates and preserves objectivity and refers primarily to the negation of subjective or egocentric distortions of presumably objective or universal truths"; second, "functional negation is negation of psychological functions, including both intrapsychic and interpersonal relationships"; third, "existential negation refers to the negation of one's own being"; and, finally, "transformational negation refers to the negation of negation such that a new integration emerges, establishing a gain over the original neglected state or condition." Even though Loder attempts to employ negation from a positive frame of reference (i.e., greater self-understanding creates awareness of need for divine agency), it is the notion of negation that limits the impact of human agency. Therefore, this dissertation primarily relies upon the five non-linear stages described above in order uphold conceptually clearer balance between human agency in self-knowing and the co-creative ministry of the Spirit.

results in a fundamental change in the system whereby relational qualities are redefined altogether.[33]

A prime example of second-order change is what Loder refers to as *Christomorphic transformation* in *The Logic of the Spirit*, where he argues Christomorphic transformation is the product of *analogia spiritus* and occurs within the context of human development, according to Erik Erikson's theory.[34] More specifically, virtues resulting from stage development such as generativity may be enhanced in human relationships by the spiritual presence of Christ, thereby creatively transforming generative relational experience into something even richer, namely *koinonia*.[35] It is important to note the distinction between generativity and *koinonia* in this example, as generativity can result from the human spirit's capacity to reflect, whereas *koinonia* is the result of the Spirit's co-creative agency to shape community amongst human spirits. Spiritual transformation, therefore, necessitates second-order change that can be conceptualized by examining relational qualities from below while also acknowledging the co-creative work of the Holy Spirit, which can introduce and integrate seemingly impossible ways of relating.

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[33] Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*, 18, 157.

[34] See Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*. See also Stevens, *Erik Erikson: An Introduction*. See also, Kenneth E. Kovacs, *The Relational Theology of James E. Loder: Encounter and Conviction* (New York, NY: Peter Lange, 2011), 154-158.

[35] For a detailed explanation of *koinonia*, see Theresa F. Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community: A Practical Theology of Small-Goup Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011).

Analogia Spiritus, *Imago Dei*, and Virtues

Even though the agency of the Spirit of God takes precedence in the work of spiritual transformation, the human spirit is essential to the relationship. It is the human spirit that undergoes transformation. The human spirit is asymmetrically related to the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit's agency occurs within the context of human life, which must be accounted for when conceptualizing spiritual transformation. Fully grasping the dynamic interplay of a bi-polar relational unity does not only involve an exploration of transformation from the perspective of the Holy Spirit's agency, but it must also account for the impact of the Holy Spirit's co-creative ministry to the human spirit in light of a substantive theological anthropology. The doctrine of *imago Dei* is a crucial starting point for this discussion, as the image of God in which human beings are created is relational. The bi-polar relational unity that comprises the God-human dimension of relational spirituality is tangibly manifest when individuals and communities embrace their likeness to God as an embodied self, the essence of *imago Dei*. Thus, *imago Dei* is representative of a dynamic interplay between divine and human agency because humanity's God-given purposes are carried out by individuals, yet upheld by divine grace. In this way, *imago Dei* displays the impact of *analogia spiritus*. One example of this is the inspiration of virtues that result in people thriving.

The notion of *imago Dei* has long been at the heart of Christian theology, and many treatises regarding the nature and condition of humans have been proposed. At its most basic level, however, the notion of likeness can be derived from the creation narrative, as people were created in the "image" of God, "according to our likeness," and given "dominion" over many aspects of the created order (Gen. 1:26). It is, however, the

nuances of "likeness" and "dominion" that have been articulated and debated throughout history, but it seems no understanding of humanity's likeness to God has gained more traction and misunderstanding than perspectives correlating the relationality of the Trinity to humanity. Here, it will be argued relationality is at the heart of *imago Dei*, and that the relationality of the Trinity is asymmetrically related to that of humanity. That is, a holistic conception of *imago Dei* not only includes the relationality of humanity, but it also accounts for the ways in which individuals can live into their potential by reflecting the character of God as embodied people. Expressing the nuances of *imago Dei* in this way requires a brief survey regarding how the doctrine has been recast throughout history, as a careful examination of this trajectory highlights a dynamic relationship between the agency of the Holy Spirit and humanity.

An Evolving Doctrine: Interpretations of *Imago Dei*

The doctrine of *imago Dei* has been understood broadly throughout history. In his work *Alone in the World?*, Wentzel Van Huyssteen seeks to recast *imago Dei* in light of anthropology and theology, and, in doing so, he provides four basic categories that describe the most common ways of conceptualizing *imago Dei*: substantive, functional, relational, and eschatological.[36] While each category is representative of a variety of theologians, all accommodate conceptual clarity in parsing a wide-ranging doctrine with a multiplicity of nuanced views.

First, substantive interpretations of *imago Dei* primarily refer to the human capacity to exercise reason, rationality, and intellect, and its etiology extends from the

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[36] Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?*, 126-128.

patristic era through modernity.[37] Van Huyssteen astutely notes theologians during the Patristic era often gave preference to males in terms of imaging God's likeness.[38] Irenaeus was amongst the first to correlate *imago Dei* to rationality and righteousness, and he implicitly made a distinction between "image," which he argues is an intellectual faculty essential to human nature, and "likeness," a volitional attribute of humanity lost in original sin.[39] Augustine extends the notion of humanity's likeness to God in terms of a capacity to think rationally, exercise reason, and develop intellect, and he takes this notion further by suggesting three attributions of the mind—memory, understanding and will—are reflective of the Trinity.[40] In this way, Augustine's influence was significant, as this view was a dominant understanding of *imago Dei* from the Patristic era to the Reformation.

Martin Luther and John Calvin each extend the substantive view in their own right. In addition to emphases on reason, rationality, and intellect, Luther emphasized the important role of memory, understanding of God's influence on human life, and the human will. Even though he argues the will of humanity is at the heart of *imago Dei*, he was cautious to describe this in such a way that humanity's capacity to sin could be correlated to God via the theme of likeness. In essence, his intention was to reveal the

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[37] Ibid., 126.

[38] Ibid., 126-128.

[39] F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 221. Shults highlights an important implication regarding Irenaeus' perspective of human nature. That is, human beings were not created to be perfect, but they were created with inherent orientation to the *Logos*.

[40] A prime example of this can be found in Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 292. Here, Augustine argues that human beings share likeness to God in order to "prove what your [God's] 'will is' (Rom. 12:2)." Proving God's will, however, is dependent upon being renewed in the newness of mind to a point of contemplating and understanding God's truth.

imperfect nature of humanity while also highlighting the good will that it can possess as a result of the ways in which humanity reflects God. Calvin diverges from Luther by highlighting the ways in which humanity possesses rationality, intelligence, and reason in order to pursue holiness. Calvin argues that Christ is revealed to humanity for the sake of illustrating a perfect and holy life. Even though perfect holiness is only embodied in Christ himself, it represents an ideal humanity ought to strive for. Like Patristic theologians, Calvin also supports a gendered view of *imago Dei* by subtly suggesting the potential of a woman is second to that of a man when it comes to holiness, as he maintains that Eve contributes to a new perpetuation of sin whereas Adam secondarily succumbs to his imperfect human nature. Therefore, Luther and Calvin extend the substantive view of *imago Dei* by emphasizing good will and holiness respectively.

Among modern theologians, Reinhold Niebuhr's existential view of *imago Dei* is more akin to the substantive view than any other theologian of his time, according to Noreen Herzfield.[41] Niebuhr's conception of *imago Dei* fits within the substantive view, as he equates humanity's capacity for self-reflection with self-transcendence, thereby making a distinction between humanity's creaturely finitude and self-transcendence as key components of *imago Dei*.[42] The implication of this development is significant, as it links humanity's capacity for self-reflection and self-transcendence to a longing for relationship with the Divine. For Niebuhr, however, *imago Dei* is always bound to self-awareness and self-transcendence, and it does not extend these attributes to include the

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[41] Noreen Herzfield, *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 16-18.

[42] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1: Human Nature (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 161. See also Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?*, 133.

relationship itself. Niebuhr's contributions to the doctrine of *imago Dei*, illustrate a progression of thought in history, though the substantive view may be critiqued on the basis of promoting an individualistic and dualistic view of the self that is entirely rational.[43] Furthermore, this critique extends beyond Niebuhr to all substantive views because each one limits the notion of likeness to reason, rationality, and intellect and does not encompass a holistic view of the self.

A second view of *imago Dei* is characterized as functional, which primarily refers to what humans do. The notion of doing is closely tied to the creation narrative and the blessing of dominion. In his commentary on Genesis, Gerhard Von Rad argues the earliest readers of the creation narrative would have understood their God-given, created purpose to be a sign, or emblem to maintain dominion on behalf of God.[44] Shults notes this is crucial to understanding functional views of *imago Dei* since a majority of theologians have correlated "image" and "likeness" to dominion. Contrary to Irenaeus' concern that "likeness" is lost in original sin, a functional view of *imago Dei* maintains that dominion is maintained by the created order of people and all other creatures just as God maintains dominion over people and all of creation. The historical and literary etiology of functional views offers good support, though the notion of dominion can become problematic when it is extrapolated further. Even though God can exercise dominion over creation, a functional view that resembles inequality amongst the created order does not adequately represent the self-giving, *agape*-driven themes of the biblical narrative.

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[43] Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, 235.

[44] Gerhard Van Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1972), 57-59.

Unlike substantive and functional views of *imago Dei*, the relational view is closely tied to developments in Trinitarian theology that occurred in the twentieth-century. Karl Barth was the first to articulate a relational approach to *imago Dei*, which emerges from his conceptualization of the divine relationality of the Trinity. Since the nuances of Trinitarian theology are beyond the scope of *imago Dei*, it suffices to say this view primarily stems from Barth's argument that the Trinity perfectly embodies relationality as one substance in three modes of being. Barth suggests the Trinitarian God perfectly reflects relationality within God's self through revelation, and he makes the assumption that *imago Dei* is meant for the same type of relationality.[45] While the Trinity provides an intriguing analogy for relationships, Van Huyssteen rightly highlights James Barr's critique of Barth on the basis of textual responsibility, as Trinitarian theology emerges from the whole of scripture, not particular instances, especially those that refer to the ways in which humanity images God or shares a likeness to God.[46] Barth's relational view, therefore, is exegetically problematic as an interpretation of the original or conventional sense.

A more compelling relational view of *imago Dei* belongs to Gerrit Berkouwer, who extends the conversation to argue that *analogia relationis* (i.e., humanity reflecting Trinity) is *analogia amoris*, as the notion of "image" refers to the ways in which people love each other.[47] In his work, *Creation and Fall*, Dietrich Bonheoffer highlights the significance of this:

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[45] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Iii/1*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 77.

[46] Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?*, 137.

[47] Gerrit Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 116. See also, Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?*, 138.

> The likeness, the analogy of man to God, is not *analogia entis* but *analogia relationis*. This means that even the relation between man and God is not part of man; it is not a capacity, a possibility, or a structure of his being but a given, set relationship: *justitia passiva*. And in this relation freedom is given….*Analogia relationis* is therefore the relation given by God himself and is analogy only in this relation given by God. The relation of creature with creature is a God-given relation because it exists in freedom and freedom originates from God.[48]

Here, Bonhoeffer argues *analogia relationis* can only be derived from the original, and in order for this to occur God the creator must will God's own freedom to be manifest in creation, thereby allowing people to experience relationship. Therefore, it is within the context of the relationship—not the relationship itself—that people may experience their God-given likeness in the form of freedom, which makes way for love.[49] The themes of freedom and love tie into the creation narrative in significant ways, and this has brought a newfound sense of clarity to understanding *imago Dei*. However, love only addresses the potential of human freedom, and it fails to encompass the broader work God invites finite people to participant in throughout history.

A holistic view of *imago Dei* includes many virtues, including love, that result from human freedom. In *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, Shults extends the notion of a relational interpretation of *imago Dei* to an eschatological view. Eschatological views of *imago Dei* are closely linked to the notion of exocentricity, which, according to Shults, refers to the future of the doctrine of God in terms of a definite future in which God's presence comes again to bring about a new creation.[50] In this way, descriptions of

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[48] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall; Temptation: Two Biblical Studies*, trans. John C. Fletcher (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1983), 41-42.

[49] Here, the influence of Barth on Bonhoeffer is significant, as Barth argues there is no freedom without love. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Ii/1*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 28.

[50] Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology*, 235.

the future of God are embedded within the theologies of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Moltmann. Shults goes on to note where Pannenberg emphasizes the notion of image in Christians that are naturally drawn outside themselves by Christ as a way of overcoming egocentric desires. Moltmann suggests the idea of image primarily pertains to that which people will become in eschatological termination and are called and upheld by divine grace to imitate Christ until then.[51] Exocentricity maintains an orientation to the future whereby the concept of image is understood in terms of a vocation to imitate Christ throughout the course of history. In this way, eschatological views encompass other views of *imago Dei*, as an understanding of the future that culminates in eschatological termination necessarily realizes the capacity of humans to become more proficient at imitating Christ over time. Image and likeness may only refer to a God-given potential of the past, and the fullness of image and likeness may be forthcoming as human history unfolds. Exocentricity, therefore, limits the potential of humanity to be in a state of imaging God in the here and now, especially since the day of eschatological termination is unknown.

All in all, the doctrine of *imago Dei* has evolved significantly throughout history, and this evolution has generated a variety of discrepancies. This is a direct result of the context from which these views emerged and attempts to link the notions of image and likeness to human life as pragmatically as possible. While it is possible, for example, to liken the intellectual, relational, or exocentric qualities of humanity's likeness to God, even a brief evaluation of these views highlights multiple challenges. However, the greatest issue with each of the above views is their *acontextual* and *intradisciplinary*

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[51] Ibid., 236-237.

origins, according to Van Huyssteen.[52] A focus on *imago Dei* that accounts for human uniqueness with theological and scientific relevance is crucial, and this calls for a more holistic understanding of *imago Dei*.

A holistic view of *imago Dei* must account for both humanity's image and purposes in the world throughout human history. Van Huyssteen presents a more holistic view by arguing for "embodied self."[53] In essence, an embodied self is attuned to God's intended purposes in creating people in God's own image by embodying God-given virtues like justice, mercy, peace, and love for the sake of reconciliation and liberation. While the embodied self perspective is similar to the eschatological view in this way, its uniqueness is the etiology of the human capacity to be an embodied self. That is, Van Huyssteen argues the language of "image" and "likeness" in ancient texts like Genesis primarily refers to the physical, not the spiritual, mental or ethical.[54] He, therefore, attributes the origins of embodied self to evolutionary processes, as people developed "self-awareness, religious awareness, and moral responsibility" throughout human history.[55] The evolutionary processes involved in the biological processes are not intended to discredit or minimize the theological origins of human uniqueness; rather, it is meant to enhance understandings of *imago Dei* by introducing an interdisciplinary perspective. In doing so, however, Van Huyssteen heightens the equity of disciplines in an attempt to describe the origins of human uniqueness, and he does not provide a

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[52] Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?*, 142-144.

[53] Ibid., 145.

[54] Ibid., 120.

[55] Ibid., 147.

substantive argument for the particular qualities of embodied self emerging in the context of daily life.

A New Vision of Embodied Self: Living Out Virtues

As an exploration of *analogia spiritus* demonstrates, the human spirit naturally seeks to understand itself in light of *imago Dei*, yet it is not sufficient to suggest that humanity can embody virtues on account of self, moral, and religious awareness alone. Outcomes (i.e., liberation and reconciliation) resulting from virtuous living are deeply embedded in the ministry of the Triune God. In other words, simply because humanity's "image" and "likeness" can lead to the embodiment of essential virtues does not suggest people will embody them. This does not imply the capacity to embody virtues has been lost on account of the fall. Instead, the repercussion of the fall limits humanity's capacity to embody the full potential of virtues independent from the co-creative ministry of the Holy Spirit. The embodied self necessarily involves the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. Here, a synergistic relationship emerges between the Holy Spirit, *analogia spiritus*, and *imago Dei*, as a holistic understanding of each presents significant implications for relational spirituality. While each of these remains unique in their etiology and key supporting concepts, it is insufficient to address matters of the Holy Spirit, *analogia spiritus*, and *imago Dei* entirely independent of one another when crafting a practical theology. This is because each of these comprises aspects of relational spirituality in daily life. That is, the Holy Spirit shares a bi-polar relational unity with the human spirit in part to draw out humanity's God-given image so that people can partner with the ministry of the Triune God and move towards thriving in human life.

People live in relationship with creation, and the qualities of the relationships people share are dependent upon the agency of both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. The Holy Spirit continuously invites humanity's God-given image to emerge more fully, especially the virtuous life. These invitations occur in the context of a shared relationship, which is where the image of God can be ideally manifest in people. In a discussion regarding Christian virtues, N.T. Wright, biblical scholar, offers the useful analogy of an angled mirror to illustrate this aspect of humanity's likeness to God.[56] Wright argues the emphasis of Paul's anthropological point of view is consistent with his view of the cosmos, specifically the differentiated unity of all things in eschatological termination. This termination, however, is not the end of life; rather, it is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4) in which all things are made new while maintaining a sense of differentiated unity.[57] While the new creation will only be fully present upon eschatological termination, Wright is clear to assert that glimpses of the new creation can emerge in the context of daily life, and it is humanity's vocation to participate in this reality. This is not accomplished by inspection or introspection, but by paying attention to God's call to worship and reflect God's glory and power in the world. Therefore, people, as image bearers of God, are to be angled mirrors that reflect creation's praises to God and God to the world. While the analogy of an angled mirror has the potential to harken back to a narrow understanding of *imago Dei* in the functional view, Wright's emphasis on explaining how people are to be angled mirrors offers a holistic perspective that is akin to the virtues emphasized in eschatological and embodied self views. However,

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[56] N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 243.

[57] Ibid., 224.

Wright diverges by strongly emphasizing the vocation of living like an angled mirror requires people to be "filled with the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19), which allows people to reflect and be part of the new creation God both today and in eschatological termination. A new vision of embodied self, therefore, encompasses a God-given image to live out virtues in their fullest potential when the human spirit is aided by the co-creative work of the Holy Spirit.

God's Co-creative Agency and the Internal Life of God

Careful explorations of the Holy Spirit, *analogia spiritus*, and *imago Dei* each demonstrate a shift in emphasis from functional, uni-directional views of God's agency and the image of God towards the manifestation and maximization of humanity's capacity to embody particular virtues. The co-creative work of the Holy Spirit and human spirit, therefore, are complexly related to the operationalizing of humanity's God-given image, as the vocation to embody the virtuous life reaches its potential when attuned to the ministry of the Triune God. In this way, individuals and communities can move towards thriving in human life even amidst difficult circumstances such as grief. For example, embracing the co-creative work of God may support the process of cultivating resilience after loss by identifying a sense of purpose, meaning, and gratitude, which may ultimately bring about a second-order spiritual transformation, whereby grief could be recast through the lens of a thankful spirit. Therefore, the God-human dimension of relational spirituality supports the transformation of the human spirit, though it must also be noted that God's impactful agency is closely tied to the internal life of God. The God-human and inner Trinitarian dimensions of relational spirituality are closely related to the extent that it is the agency of God that supports both.

Inner Trinitarian Dimension

The inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality pertains to God's dynamic relationship to God's self and activity throughout eternity. While this includes the immanent Trinity, it also includes a developed understanding of the economic Trinity. The "economic" has to do with God's *oeconomia*, that is to say, with the history of creation and salvation. The economic side of the doctrine is essential because the inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality is primarily concerned with God's agency as manifest in human history, which has implications for difficult human life experiences, such as grief. In this way, the inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality moves beyond the presupposition that God's relational ontology is analogous to human relationships, which perpetuates dualistic ways of imagining relational potentials and thriving in human life. The human capacity to mirror relational qualities of the Trinity is non-existent apart from the agency of God. The harmonious, self-giving differentiated unity of the Godhead, the Love of God, is what drives the manifestation of God's consistent agency in history. Therefore, it will be argued the immanent-economic distinction of the doctrine is of significance for relational spirituality, as it provides insight into the immanent Trinity via dramatic narrative coherence, and this supports thriving in human life, which is, in turn, supported by the economic Trinitarian roles in history. In order to demonstrate the impact of the Trinity on thriving in human life, the inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality will first consider the relational qualities that define the differentiated unity of the Trinity, which is dynamically involved in the unfolding of history. Then, the immanent-economic distinction will be highlighted in order to articulate the impact of God's agency through dramatic narrative coherence.

The inner Trinitarian dimension illustrates the impact of divine agency, which impacts relational spirituality by inspiring virtues that support thriving in human life.

The Differentiated Unity of the Trinity

While the doctrine of the Trinity is represented throughout the biblical narrative and has been the target of much debate throughout Church history, the resurgence of Trinitarian theology in the twentieth century significantly nuanced understandings of God's relational identity. Many theologians built upon a rich history of Trinitarian theology by emphasizing the dynamic relationality of the Godhead.[58] Theologians emphasized the themes of unity, threeness, communal nature of God, and God's activity in ways that help describe God's relationality from a Trinitarian perspective. Tracing the historical emphases on God's relationality illustrates a full picture of God's relational ontology, which is most accurately described as differentiated unity of the Triune God.

Karl Barth was amongst the first in modern times to emphasize the Trinity in a new way by placing it at the outset of his seminal work *Church Dogmatics*.[59] Barth's emphasis on the Trinity is rooted in the concept of revelation. He asserts, "God reveals

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[58] The doctrine of the Trinity developed throughout the course of church history as a way of defending orthodoxy and attempting to articulate the complexity of God's triune identity more clearly. Apologists like Ireneaus and Tertullian were amongst the first to begin articulating the nuances of the Trinity more clearly in response to Gnosticism. Ireneaus did so by emphasizing the *oikonomia* or "economy of salvation" while Tertullian augmented common understanding by suggesting the Trinity is *distincti non divisi* or "distinct, yet not divided." Others emphasized *homoiousios*, or "one substance of God." Later, the 3rd and 4th centuries brought about new debates as Arius asserted the Word is of creation, not coeternal with the Father. In order to annihilate this teaching, the Council of Nicea (325) gathered to solidify the way in which the Church would understand God, and the Nicene Creed clearly emphasizes the Triune nature of God as a way of guarding orthodoxy. For a more thorough explanation of the Trinity in historical perspectives, see Justo L. Gonzâlez, *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984); Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

[59] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 390. See also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004).

Himself as the Spirit, not as any spirit, but as the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and therefore the same one God, but the same one God in this way too, namely, in this unity, indeed, this self-disclosing unity."[60] In this way, the self-revealing nature of God through the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit characterizes the identity of God. While unity constitutes a vital characteristic of Trinity, the relatedness of God is also clear in the distinctions between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In a paraphrase of Barth's work, Eberhard Jüngel describes God's being in both the differentiation and unity of the Trinity.[61] The paradox of differentiation and unity is overcome in Barth through the notion of *perichoresis*, where each "mode of being" within the Trinity reciprocally participates in the other modes of being so that they are united.[62] For Barth, the unity of the Trinity is at the heart of the "unveiling" of God, thereby making way for the "self-impartation" of God.[63] God makes God's self known only through all three persons of the Trinity, not merely with one or two modes of being, and the wholeness of God is best understood through the creating, reconciling, and redeeming work of God, which is God's means of revelation.[64] It is God's freedom that is responsible for revealing God's self through the work of God in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Barth's

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[60] Barth, *Cd I/1*, 332.

[61] Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being Is in Becoming* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 26-31.

[62] Ibid., 32. It is important to note that Barth diverges from the traditional language of "personhood" within the Trinity in order to avoid falling into accusations of tritheism. The language of personhood is used to emphasize the unique roles of each identity of God and God's relationality. According to Barth, "modes of being" better describe the divine ways of being within the unity of God. For more on this see Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 71.

[63] Barth, *Cd I/1*, 363.

[64] Ibid., 371.

contribution to the resurgence of Trinitarian theology is best summarized by Roderick Leupp: "[T]here can be no gap between *who* God is in himself and *how* and *what* God reveals himself to be. The essence or the *who* of God may be ontologically *prior* to the *how* and *what*, because in a sense God simply *is* before God *acts* in salvation history."[65] In other words, the unity of God, as expressed in three distinct modes of being, is at the core of God's identity, thereby asserting the congruence of God's identity as revealed in Trinity. A key feature of Barth's appropriation of the Trinity is unity.

Jürgen Moltmann built upon Barth's foundation and made a considerable impact on contemporary understandings of the Trinity by emphasizing God's threeness. According to Ted Peters, Moltmann provides a significant framework for understanding the "relational unity in which the divine threeness is given priority."[66] Moltmann first articulated this in his work *Theology of Hope*, where he argues that the praxis of hope is not isolated to a revelatory event as described by Barth; rather, hope is rooted in the historical reality of Christ on the cross.[67] Moltmann takes up the issue of God's suffering and unity on the cross in *The Crucified God* with the assertion, "What happened on the cross was an event between God and God. It was a deep division in God himself, in so far as God abandoned God and contradicted himself, and at the same time a unity in God, in so far as God was at one with God and corresponded to himself."[68] Here, emphasizes the

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[65] Roderick T. Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns & Explorations* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 35.

[66] Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 103.

[67] See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

[68] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974), 244.

differentiation persons of the Trinity, and he can be criticized for verging on tri-theism. However, Moltmann is sure to highlight God's unity.[69] For Moltmann, *perichoresis* is at the center of God's unity. Miroslav Volf, a student of Moltmann, describes *perichoresis* more fully than Barth by highlighting the "indwelling," "mutually permeating," and "co-inherence" of God's three persons within one another.[70] *Perichoresis* is central to the identity of God in Trinity for Moltmann because it is the means by which salvation history is carried forth. Moltmann says it this way: "The economic Trinity completes and perfects itself to immanent Trinity when the history and experience of salvation are completed and perfected."[71] Hope is realized both through the Trinity's suffering on the cross as well as in the eschatological promise of God's reign.[72] Therefore, the threeness and unity of God in Moltmann's proposal is distinguishable from his predecessors because he emphasizes the unique relationality each person of the Trinity assumes throughout history, particularly in suffering.

The relationality of the Trinity is also developed by John Zizioulas, who correlates the communion of God's threeness to humanity. Zizioulas argues for an

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[69] Moltmann has been criticized as a tritheist as a result of the language he employs to differentiate the persons of the Trinity. For example, Moltmann writes, "The kingdom of God is therefore transferred from one divine subject to the other; and its form is changed in the process. So God's triunity precedes the divine lordship." See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 82. See also, Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1986), 183. However, a careful interpretation of Moltmann considers his use of the term *perichoresis*, which emphasizes triunity of the three dwelling together as one. This is an important nuance when describing, for example, how the Trinity is impacted by Christ's suffering, specifically with respect to its inner relationality.

[70] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Compnay, 1998), 208-213.

[71] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 161.

[72] For a full description of Moltmann's understanding of *perichoresis* and the eschatological promise of God, see Moltmann, *The Crucified God*.

ontology of communion that posits the necessity of relationality.[73] In other words, there needs to be a "communion, relation, and opening to the other," or a "going out of one's self."[74] This means that God or any other person does not maintain an authentic relational identity unless the person is in communion with others. According to Zizioulas, the locus of this communion is in the Trinity, and humanity reflects this communion, particularly within the life of the church. Regardless of where the relationality of the Trinity is expressed, Zizioulas' proposal suggests communion within the church is dependent upon God's communion with God's self and humanity.

The resurgence of Trinitarian theology presents a variety of theological perspectives emphasizing the particularities of God's unity, threeness, and communion, and it is only by noting the broad landscape of these perspectives that the breadth of God's relationality emerges with the characteristics of differentiation and unity. It is the mutual dependence upon the unity, threeness, and communion of God that constitutes divine relationality, thereby allowing God to commune with creation throughout history. This is best illustrated by Ted Peters' description of what transpired on the cross with respect to the Trinity. He notes divergence in the perspectives derived from Moltmann and Barth, and highlights their commonality. The Lutheran view is focused on the revelation of a "sublime" Godhead in a theology of the cross, whereas the Reformed view is focused on the sovereignty of God.[75] Not only does this highlight the continuity of seemingly divergent points of view, but it also highlights the agency of a differentiated,

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[73] John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

[74] Kärkäinen, *The Trinity*, 90.

[75] Ted Peters, *God: The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), 208-210.

yet unified Godhead in history, as it is the resurrection and sending of the Spirit that unites creation to Jesus Christ—not a particular view of what occurred within the Godhead throughout the crucifixion event. The differentiated unity of the Godhead supports and enables divine freedom while maintaining the mystery of God. It is, therefore, the dynamic interplay between differentiation and unity that constitutes God's relational ontology, which is consistent with God's redemptive purposes in human history.

The Immanent-Economic Distinction: The Impact of God's Agency

God's agency in history is reflective of the inner life of God, as God's action is derived from God's character, which means the immanent-economic distinction of the doctrine of the Trinity is intricately related to the differentiated unity of God. The immanent Trinity refers to who God is in God's self, whereas the economic Trinity pertains to God's revelation of self in history. To assert that there is a distinction between the two does not mean there are two different Trinities; rather, the distinction reflects how God's agency in history is reflective of God's self, and what the internal life of God has to do with history. The mysterious inner working of God's differentiated unity is evidenced by the economic Trinity, which is the starting point for understanding the immanent Trinity from a human perspective. While the immanent-economic distinction is a peculiar aspect of the life of God, the distinction's meaning is manifest in the dramatic coherence of history that solidifies God's differentiated unity in the anticipation of eschatological termination.

Even though God had previously been imagined in terms of *oikonomia* (economy), *distincti non divisi* (distinct, yet not divided), and *homoiousios* (of a similar

substance), Karl Rahner sought to clarify the employment of these terms by famously arguing, "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity," which has become widely known as *Rahner's rule*.[76] Not only does this suggest that God is actively present throughout salvation history, but it also presupposes that the God of history is the God humanity encounters today. Rahner goes on to submit that it is the relationality of the three unique persons that makes it possible for God to freely exist and communicate with God's self and humanity.[77] The influence of Barth can be noted in Rahner's work, as he describes the freedom of God within the Trinity both immanently and throughout history, where the relationality of God communicates with humanity. Here, the differentiated unity of God is most apparent, as it is the threeness of God that engages in history with unity and purpose.

The differentiated unity of the Godhead is central to the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, as this phenomenon is central to the mysterious inner workings of God. While Rahner's rule has been interpreted broadly by many theologians, his own student, Catherine LaCugna, makes very little distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity. She argues classical Trinitarian theologies are typically "from above," as their chief concerns are statements about the internal life of God, or *in se* (interrelatedness of divine persons, processions, and relations), which ultimately disconnects the Godhead from soteriology.[78] This is essential for LaCugna because any understanding of the interrelatedness of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that is

[76] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970), 22.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 6.

disconnected from other aspects of life renders the Trinity useless. Thus, LaCugna maintains an essential unity between *oikonomia* and *theologia* in which the communion of persons of the Trinity is ultimately responsible soteriology, and this has implications for Christian life and worship.[79] This is a doxological approach, and it offers important points of integrating God's personhood and daily life, which avoids a dualistic approach that focuses solely on the characteristics of the immanent Trinity. However, the doxological quality of LaCugna's approach problematically leads to a merging of the immanent and economic Trinities to a point of no distinction. This is because what has historically been experienced as the economic Trinity is presumed to be the essence of the immanent Trinity, thereby minimizing the mystery of God's self-revelation.

Moltmann also asserts there is one Trinity, and he furthers the conversation by noting that God's salvific agency must correspond to doxological responses, which means God can not contradict God's self. For example, it is impossible to suggest that Christ was crucified apart from the Father and the Spirit; rather, Christ's crucifixion was an event that occurred within the life of the Trinity, impacting each person and the sum of the whole. This is precisely why Moltmann very clearly argues, "Statements about the immanent Trinity must not contradict statements about the economic Trinity. Statements about the economic Trinity must correspond to doxological statements about the immanent Trinity."[80] Moltmann's employment of the term, "correspond," is an important point of divergence from LaCugna. Corresponding also conveys resemblance in response without presuming a more precise doxological iteration is essential, thereby allowing

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[79] Ibid., 319-321.

[80] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 154.

some mystery within the immanent-economic distinction. This distinction primarily refers to differentiating God from the world, particularly as the agency of the economic Trinity is perceived throughout history. Moltmann, however, argues that a distinction between God and world is insufficient to describe the immanent and economic Trinity since the world has the potential to impose the limitations of human experience on God, like LaCugna's doxological approach.[81] Thus, the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity lies only within perceptions of God as Trinity.

More precisely, the locus of the immanent-economic distinction for Moltmann is the historical event of cross, where the self-giving love of God was evidenced by the Father giving up the Son through the power of the Spirit. The physical manifestation of Christ's death on the cross highlights the "inwardness" and "outwardness" of God's agency, as God outwardly creates salvation while inwardly suffering immense pain.[82] The primary implication of this notion is that the actions of God in history affect the nature of God, which supports the process of the economic Trinity moving toward perfection in eschatological termination, when "everything is 'in God' and 'God is in all.'"[83] While mutual dependence of the immanent and economic sides of our understanding of the Trinity is clearly outlined in Moltmann's approach, the notion that the inner life of the Trinity is linked to history and its consummation employs a process view of God that detracts from God's immutability in light of the immanent-economic

[81] Ibid., 160.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 161.

distinction. God is responsive to human responses to divine action.[84] Thus, a more nuanced view of God's consistent agency in history and within the life of the Trinity is essential to develop the differentiated unity of the immanent and economic Trinity.

The differentiated unity of the Godhead is manifest in the immanent-economic distinction. This notion is rooted in the idea that the economic Trinity is always supported and guided by the immanent Trinity. Wolfhart Pannenberg expands this idea in response to Moltmann's process and panentheistic tendencies when describing the immanent-economic distinction by asserting that Christ is not the beginning of Trinitarian revelation; instead, Pannenberg argues the eternal essence of God is Trinity and this is revealed throughout history, thereby supporting the unity of the immanent and economic Trinity.[85] The essence of Pannenberg's approach, therefore, is that the content of God's activity in history (i.e., creation, incarnation, cross, resurrection) is a reflection of God's immutability that will be revealed in the eschaton. The economic Trinity is not so deeply removed from the immanent Trinity that God is not impacted by the events of human history.

An important quality of God's agency is evident in the immanent-economic distinction. The immanent-economic distinction illustrates the differentiated unity of the Triune God, as the internal life of God is always reflected—though not completely—in God's self-revelation in history. A prime example of this is what Robert Jenson refers to

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[84] Nancy R. Howell, "Openness and Process Theism: Respecting the Integrity of the Two Views," in *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists*, ed. John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 62.

[85] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 328.

as "*dramatic coherence*."[86] Dramatic coherence highlights God's agency throughout the biblical narrative in ways that draw attention to unpredictable and sometimes risky activity of God (i.e., God handing the Son over to maleficent intentions) while also inviting participation in a tenacious story that anticipates the birth of God's promise to bring about a new creation in the future.[87] Dramatic coherence illustrates the differentiated unity of God's agency as manifest in the immanent-economic distinction, and it draws attention to the significance of the economic Trinity, which leads to the development of a nuanced, yet finite understanding of the immanent Trinity. An even greater implication of dramatic coherence, however, is the reality that God's faithful, consistent agency emerges from the internal life of God for the sake of God's redemptive purposes. One of these purposes is spiritual transformation occurs, as described by the God-human dimension of relational spirituality.

Conclusion

The inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality is illustrative of the impact of God's agency—which is derived from the internal life of God—on human life. This is significant for the purposes of developing the notion of relational spirituality, as the inner Trinitarian and God-human dimensions share an intimate relationship. The manifestation of God's agency occurs in such a way that produces dramatic coherence in the narrative of God's relationship to creation, which demonstrates the dynamic interplay of the inner Trinitarian and God-human dimensions of relational spirituality. This is

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[86] Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 64.

[87] Ibid., 65-66.

because God's agency is not necessarily derived from one dimension or the other—both the inner Trinitarian and God-human dimensions of relational spirituality are characterized by God's desire to move beyond God's self toward humanity. Yet, the outward impact of God's agency is always consistent with the inward essence of God's character, thereby highlighting the significance of the differentiated unity of God and the immanent-economic distinction. One implication of this is that God's agency may be experienced uniquely depending upon the divine person(s) from which people benefit from God's action. This may be dependent upon the primary God-images a person has. Nonetheless, the impact of this action will inevitably be consistent with the breadth of the Triune God's ministry. The impact of the inner Trinitarian and God-human dimensions of relational spirituality are complementary.

All in all, relational spirituality is upheld by the inner Trinitarian and God-human dimensions, as it is God who initiates and sustains relationship with humanity. While this concept remains quite simple, an explicit mention is of great importance. It is the co-creative agency of the Divine that has the potential to bring about thriving in human life and relationships. In other words, the agency of God continuously invites spiritual transformation, even amidst tragic circumstances like grief. Recognizing that that life and relationships are upheld by Divine grace creates new opportunity to experience the potentials that accompany the ministry of the Triune God.

CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODLOGY

The previous chapters serve as essential components of this practical theological exploration in order to explore current trends in grief research, and to develop the interpretive lens of relational spirituality. The ultimate purpose of this is to explore the relationship between contemporary bereavement science and the disciplines of pastoral care and counseling. This exploration is significant for providers of pastoral care and counseling, as grief is an inevitable, universal experience, and there is need to integrate current trends in grief research within the disciplines of pastoral care and counseling. The goal of this research is to provide practitioners theoretically sound pragmatic guidelines for tending to grief. To this end, relational spirituality has been discussed to support the integration of contemporary bereavement science with pastoral care and counseling, as it offers a descriptive, interdisciplinary view of spirituality. While the survey of grief research and the discussion of relational spirituality represent the interpretive and normative moves of practical theological reflection respectively, this exploration remains incomplete without engaging in the descriptive-empirical move, operating at the most formal level of attending via empirical research.[1] Thus, narrative inquiry has been

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[1] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 37-38.

employed to elicit data from bereaved parents—who experienced the death of a child in a major pediatric hospital system. This chapter will, therefore, focus on the research design and methodology.

Research Question

The goal of this research is to examine participants' grief experiences through the interpretive lens relational spirituality, which raises the primary research question: How does participants' relational spirituality impact their grief response? The descriptive quality of relational spirituality offers insight into how individuals relate to the sacred from psychological and theological perspectives.[2] This is an intentional move toward observing relational qualities and the context of participants' spirituality, as opposed to decontextualized, prescriptive ways of defining spirituality.[3] Consequently, this exploration of relational spirituality and grief relies solely upon qualitative measures, including an online questionnaire and an interview process. A primary point of inquiry within the qualitative measures pertains specifically to the way in which research participants' relational spirituality is expressed in light of their grief.

Like relational spirituality, grief is explored from the unique perspectives of participants, who have experienced the death of a child. Their grief responses are conceptualized in light of chronic grief, recovery, and resilience,[4] which this research seeks to understand in light of relational spirituality. However, one limitation of this research is related to the assessment of chronic grief, recovery, and resilience, as the

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[2] Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*, 25.

[3] Ibid., 26.

[4] See Bonanno, "Resilience to Loss and Chronic Grief."; Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*.

scope of this research does not employ quantitative measures to classify participants into these categories. Not only has this already been done, but it is also prohibitive in terms of participants' willingness and capacity to engage in multiple surveys, interviews, etc., in addition to the required resources (i.e., appropriate credentials to administer and evaluate assessments, time, etc.).[5] Therefore, this exploration of grief is rooted in my analysis and understanding of contemporary grief research in order to evaluate the expressed qualities of participants' grief.

It is also important to note several external factors that may be impacting participants' responses to survey and interview questions. First, research participants received varying degrees of support since the onset of grief. Support may have been received from family and friends, faith communities, support groups, therapists, online communities, or other relational venues. The full impact of this is largely unknown, as bereaved people are subject to support that moves them towards healing, and well-intentioned, yet misguided support sometimes inflicts deep interpersonal wounds, making coping even more difficult. Furthermore, contemporary grief research has proposed that a vast majority of people do not benefit from formal support, like therapy, unless the lingering, depressive symptoms of grief do not subside after a prolonged period of time.[6] Thus, the quantity and quality of support participants have or have not received has a unique impact.

A second factor potentially impacting responses is related to secondary losses. Secondary losses are new experiences of loss that may or may not be related to the initial

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[5] See the work of George Bonanno for an in-depth examination of how chronic grief, recovery, and resilience are assessed.

[6] Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 106-109.

loss of losing a child, and these have a strong potential to exacerbate a participants' experiences in general. For example, a secondary loss impacting someone could be the loss of a home due to financial instability resulting from medical bills related to the death of a child. Since the list of secondary losses a person might encounter is endless, the degree to which secondary losses impact participants is variable.

Participants' openness to spiritual experiences is another noteworthy factor, especially since inquiring about spirituality and grief is immensely private and sacred. Since the purpose of relational spirituality is to describe the relational qualities related to participants' sense of spirituality (thereby making the focus of research accessible to all), differences in expression of spirituality are to be expected. However, the fact that participants are bereaved and living amidst difficult circumstances impacts their openness to spiritual experiences, and their appreciation, or lack thereof, for spiritual experiences may be fluid and changing, even throughout the duration of the research process. Participants' openness to spiritual experiences may have changed throughout the process of research, whereas another participant's might remain constant. The way in which participants describe grief in light of their spirituality is impacted by their willingness to experience and share sacred moments.

Research Design

A qualitative, narrative inquiry research design was employed with bereaved parents and guardians of children who were patients of a major pediatric hospital system in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The only criterion for participation, aside from a willingness to participate, was that the loss had occurred a minimum of three months prior to my first contact so that participants were able to

describe some of experience life after loss. The sample is comprised of bereaved parents and guardians who experienced the death of a child at the hospital (no particular causes of death were excluded). The sample was drawn from the hospitals' bereavement database, which includes records of bereaved parents and guardians who have been in contact with the hospitals' bereavement program. The sample is representative of a variety of ages, religions, socio-economic classes, and other life circumstances. This diversity proved beneficial for the research because it enabled examination of a broad spectrum of the population, which is consistent with my ministry contexts as a pastor and chaplain.

A non-probability, stratified random sample was used. While there are more than a thousand people comprising the bereavement database, the exact sample size was determined by a quantity of qualitative data that was large enough to elicit a breadth of themes and small enough to delve deeply into participants' stories. In addition, the sample size was influenced by participants' willingness to participate. A first step in conducting this research involved analyzing the bereavement database and separating potential participants into their respective stratum, which are defined by the amount of time since the loss. The primary purpose for using the six strata was to allow for a nuanced interpretation of the participants' grief in terms of short-term and long-term experiences. The six strata include: 4-11 months since the time of death, 12-23 months since the time of death, 2-3 years since the time of death, 4-5 years since the time of death, 6-10 years since the time of death, and 11 or more years since the time of death. The data of all potential participants was organized according to each stratum and stored in separate Microsoft Excel documents. Unnecessary data, including the deceased's

name, was excluded for privacy, and remaining data was included in each of the files. Within these files, data columns included names of parent(s) and/or guardians, addresses, the deceased's dates of birth and date of death. This allowed accurate record keeping so that no people received two letters of invitation.

In order to carry out this qualitative, narrative-based methodology, it was necessary to tend to a variety of ethical considerations with great care. Before beginning the research process, I engaged in a lengthy process of acquiring approval to conduct research with both the hospital's and Luther Seminary's Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards. Working within the framework of two IRBs proved advantageous, as confidentiality in identifying, working with, and writing about human subjects provided me with ample opportunity to protect the safety and confidentiality of the research participants, especially given the sensitivity of the questions presented to them. Since I collected and analyzed the data as an individual, the framework of the IRBs provided excellent accountability throughout the research process, which was manifest in multiple ways.

Individuals who had a history with the hospital's bereavement program and had lost a child more three months prior were randomly selected to receive a letter of invitation to participate in the study.[7] The letter of invitation clearly outlined the purpose of the study and requested participation in an online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. Research participants received a full explanation of the purpose, benefits, risks and discomforts of the study, and safeguards taken to protect participants.[8] Participants gave

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[7] Appendix A.

[8] Appendix B, pages 1-2.

their consent by accepting the terms of the study and proceeding to the online questionnaire. Individuals who did not accept the terms of the study were automatically routed to the conclusion of the questionnaire, thanking them for their participation.

The purpose of the online questionnaire was twofold, as it was designed to elicit both demographic and qualitative data.[9] The most significant piece of demographic data acquired was the amount of time since the participant's loss, which allowed for individuals' responses to be analyzed according to a particular stratum. The qualitative data was elicited through several open-ended questions, to which participants freely responded to in writing. These questions have been designed to follow narrative inquiry as they address the "internal conditions" (i.e., "feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions") and "external conditions" (i.e., environment) so that the past, present, and future could be considered.[10] This data was extracted and stored in password protected Excel documents and PDF's for analysis.

The first mailing included 50 randomly selected potential participants. Eight people from each of the six strata were invited to participate with the exception of stratum five, from which 10 people received a letter of invitation. More participants from stratum five received a letter of invitation, as it held the greatest number of potential participants. Participants were randomly selected by highlighting rows within the Excel documents with no visibility of potential participants' data. This data was bolded for the purposes of tracking which participants received letters, and it was copied into a new

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[9] Appendix B, pages 4-6.

[10] D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 50.

Excel document. My research sponsor (a requirement for the hospital IRB) printed letters and envelopes via mail merge and stuffed and mailed the letters of invitation.

The first mailing to 50 participants occurred on December 16, 2013. The first five responses received served as a field test, which was specifically designed to ensure the questionnaire was easily understood and elicited significant stories and experiences from participants. Letters that were returned to sender (i.e., recipients no longer at current address) were shredded and no additional effort was made to make contact with those participants. The response rate was quite low after the initial mailing, and an amendment to the research process was filed with and approved by the IRBs to mail a follow-up postcard approximately four weeks after the mailing.[11] After the first five responses were received, data was reviewed and it was confirmed that appropriate data was received, as several shared themes across responses were quickly identified. Thus, no changes were made to the questionnaire, which allowed for additional questionnaires received beyond the first five to be accepted as part of the research data.

Three subsequent mailings were conducted to recruit more research participants. The process for these mailings was precisely the same as the first, except for the quantity of letters mailed. The second mailing invited 50 people to participate, and letters were mailed on January 9, 2014. This mailing invited 8 participants from each of the six strata with the exception of stratum five, from which 10 people received a letter of invitation. The third mailing invited 360 people to participate, and letters were mailed on February 2, 2014. The fourth and final mailing also invited 360 people to participate, and letters were mailed on March 10, 2014. The third and fourth mailings each invited 60 people

[11] See Appendix C.

from each of the six strata to participate. Approximately four weeks after each of these mailings, follow-up postcards were mailed, asking once more that participants complete the online questionnaire. These postcards were also printed and mailed by my research sponsor.

At the onset of this research project, the initial goal was to recruit a total of ten participants from each of the six strata, but this target needed to be reconsidered given a low response rate during the field test portion. This response rate can be attributed to a variety of factors, such as the sensitive quality of the research topic and the emotional energy required to respond, a lack of easy access to the internet, and a willingness to generously donate the time required to complete the survey with no tangible benefits. Nonetheless, a total of 38 people were recruited to participate in the research process by beginning the online questionnaire. Of the 38 people who began the survey, 28 people completed the final question. Questionnaire responses with more than two blank responses in the open response section were discarded, resulting in a total sample size of 25.

The final question of the online questionnaire invited participants to consider a face-to-face or telephone interview in order to acquire a greater depth of participants' insight.[12] A total of 21 participants answered this question affirmatively, though only six of these participants agreed to the interview once formally invited. The invitation process involved a brief phone call or email in order to explain the process and acquire a mailing address, which was used to mail informed consent with a stamped return envelope.[13]

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[12] Appendix A, page 10.

[13] Appendix D.

Informed consent was received prior to conducting each of the interviews. Each of the six participants who agreed to the interview opted for a private telephone conversation. The line of questioning strictly followed the interview protocol, which is also rooted in narrative theory.[14] The first interviewee represented stratum six, and served the purpose of a field test. This created opportunity for me to know which questions were most useful in eliciting data. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, and were audio recorded and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document by me.

It is important to note that data is confidential and secure. Data (i.e., survey responses, interviews, audio recording transcripts, identification numbers for matching measures to people, audio recordings, transcriptions, etc.) has been stored on my personal computer, which requires a password to access, and any hard copy data or consent forms have been stored in a locked file cabinet in my private office. It is important to note that any health protected information within the bereavement database has always remained behind the hospital's firewall. This system has ensured that I am the only researcher who has access to it and knows how to locate and identify participants by their identification numbers.

Open response data was collected and coded, and then interview data was coded following the same process. The coding framework employed is that of Kathy Charmaz, who proposes a four-step process to coding qualitative data.[15] In this model, each response must be read before initiating the next phase of coding. First, I relied upon what Charmaz describes as initial coding to identify *in vivo* codes/themes and treat specific

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[14] Appendix E.

[15] See Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (Los Angelas, CA: SAGE, 2006), 43-71.

words, lines, and stories as equally as possible.[16] To this end, I focused on identifying the presence of initial themes and their consistency in multiple responses, even if precise words were not mirrored across responses in precisely the same way. This also provided me an opportunity to be reflexive, as I considered the themes that were most clear in the responses of participants. After the initial round of coding clear themes were identified for both the open response and interview process, and there was no need to seek additional participants to add clarity.

The second, third, and fourth phases of coding refer to focused, axial, and theoretical coding, respectively. Focused coding is supported by the process of initial coding, as it examines previously identified themes in larger segments of data and compares them to one another, thereby leading into axial coding, which allowed me to sort, synthesize, organize, and reassemble large amounts of data..[17] This process offered a greater depth of insight into the initial themes and identified the most significant and/or frequent themes. Finally, I engaged in theoretical coding, which served as the final phase of the qualitative analysis by identifying how themes relate to one another. Theoretical coding brings the data back into a "coherent whole," which provides the framework for application.[18] Here, major themes and supporting anecdotes are organized in such a way that the most significant themes are well-supported with qualitative data.

It is important to note that I have taken steps to let the data speak for itself throughout the process of analysis. First, I have been intentional about approaching the

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[16] Ibid., 48-57.

[17] Ibid., 57-60.

[18] Ibid., 60-62.

entire research process with reflexivity. This means I have tended to my own level of self-awareness by noting my hopes and expectations for the research project prior to the research process and each interview, which has brought clarity to my unconscious expectations. Second, I made an effort to triangulate the data as much as possible by maintaining a research log to enhance my awareness personal biases within data. The particularities of qualitative results were interpreted in light of other individuals' stories and broad, emerging themes from both questionnaires and interviews. A significant amount of time passed between the onset of data collection and analysis, which has further removed me from my own reactions. In this way, maintaining a reflexive posture and triangulating the data allowed me to accurately comprehend the stories of participants while collecting, analyzing, and reporting the responses of research participants as accurately as possible. Finally, a sample of the data was triangulated by another coder, who has received training in Charmaz's coding model. The anonymity of research participants was protected in this data.

CHAPTER 6

DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK:

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter extends the descriptive-empirical task of this practical theological exploration by presenting, analyzing, and summarizing collected data, as described in the previous chapter. While the process of acquiring data occurred in a linear process, the content comprising this chapter has been integrated in order to provide a concise representation of the research participants' responses from surveys and interviews. In the most general terms, the purpose of exploring the data is to understand participants' grief experiences in light of relational spirituality. After providing an overview of the participants' demographic data, data from both the online questionnaire and the interview process will be employed to present a broad, yet deep presentation of participants' experiences of grief in light of nine *in vivo* codes/themes.

Demographic Data

Of the 36 total surveys received, 27 surveys yielded sufficient data to be considered complete. These surveys contained both choice and free-response questions, and the demographic data was primarily collected through choice responses. Significant trends can be noted from a careful examination of demographic data, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Data.

Gender

Men	15%
Women	85%

Age

17 or younger	4%
18-20	0%
21-29	0%
30-39	44%
40-49	41%
50-59	4%
60 or older	7%

Marital Status

Married	96%
Never Married	4%

Education Level

Less than high school	4%
High school degree or equivalent (i.e., GED)	7%
Some college but no degree	19%
Associate degree	7%
Bachelor Degree	33%
Graduate Degree	30%
Post graduate degree	0%

Religious Preference

Not religious	11%
Jewish	4%
Christian	85%
Buddhist	0%
Muslim	0%
Hindu	0%
Other	0%

Strata (Time Since Loss)

Stratum 1 (4-11 months)	0%
Stratum 2 (12-23 months)	11%
Stratum 3 (2-3 years)	22%
Stratum 4 (4-5 years)	11%
Stratum 5 (6-10 years)	37%
Stratum 6 (11 or more years)	19%

The most striking commonalities pertain to relationship to the child, gender, age, and religious preference. All participants were parents despite inviting both parents and guardians to participate. While it may be impossible to identify a precise rationale for the commonality of gender, I speculate this is largely due to the nature of the research topic and survey, which was conducive to personal reflection and communication. Experience has taught me that grief is a tender and difficult issue to discuss, especially as it pertains to the loss of a child, and mothers—in comparison to fathers—may have a qualitatively different relational connection to their children, which is often evidenced by the ways in which they choose communicate about their children. This is evidenced by the majority of participants that are female, representative of two age categories (30-39 years-old, and 40-49 years-old), and of the fifth stratum.

Participants were overwhelmingly Christian. This could be attributed to two factors: 1) research participants who identify as Christian were more likely to respond to a survey from an ordained Christian minister studying at a Lutheran seminary; and, 2) the Christian tradition tends to emphasize community support, sharing, and the practice of relational pastoral care. Furthermore, the letter of invitation and survey were not translated into other languages, which may have impacted the homogeny of religious preference represented. All in all, it may have felt more natural for a Christian to respond to the survey.

The sample also displays some diversity in education levels and time since loss. Diversity can be noted in education levels, though 70 percent of participants have earned a college degree. While efforts were made to present the survey at a middle-school reading level, the survey did not accommodate those who had difficulty engaging the text

in any way. Diversity in time since loss was expected and hoped for when generating the survey, but it is important to note the lack of representation from stratum one. Since none of the potential participants from this stratum completed the survey, it can be hypothesized that the opportunity to participate in this research and complete a survey was too burdensome from an emotional point of view, especially only 4-11 months following the loss of a child. Lastly, it is important to note the five interviewees represented three of the six strata—stratum two (1), three (2), and five (2).

Initial Analysis and Findings

A comprehensive review of the data involved an awareness of trends in demographic data while reading and rereading free responses from the online questionnaires and interview transcripts. Since the purpose of this research is to examine participants' grief experiences through the interpretive lens relational spirituality, key concepts representing contemporary bereavement research and relational spirituality were taken into consideration when identifying *in vivo* codes/themes. Engaging the data in this way allowed for unique and seemingly fragmented pieces of information to be formed into meaningful themes or codes that illustrate the complexity of relational spirituality and grief. In order to acquire an understanding of participants' experience of relational spirituality and grief, a narrative inquiry strategy was employed in the questionnaire and interview protocol. While the specific questions posed to research participants did not utilize the precise terminology of contemporary bereavement science (i.e., chronic grief, recovery, resilience) or relational spirituality (i.e., attachment styles, attachment to God, etc.) developed elsewhere in this dissertation, participants' responses illuminated many relevant themes related to these concepts. Significant findings emerged and are noted as

in vivo codes/themes in Table 3, as each one has direct implications for the purpose of this research. The frequencies of these codes were calculated, and they reside in Table 4. Crosstabulations were also calculated in order to demonstrate the relationship between grief experiences, attachment styles, and attachments to God. Crosstabulations reside in Table 5.

Table 3. *In Vivo* Codes/Themes.

In Vivo Code/Theme	Key Concept	Description
	Grief Experience	
Shifting My Purpose	Resilience	Live productive lifestyle; Capacity to experience positive and difficult emotions; Demonstrate generativity; Hardiness; Maldapative coping.
It Was—The Past Tense	Recovery	Evidence of chronic grief and recovery; Employ past tense to describe especially difficult moments.
The Darkness	Chronic grief	Inability to live productive lifestyle; Evidence of lasting mental health concerns (i.e., depression, PTSD, etc.); Ongoing yearning and futile rumination.
	Attachment Styles (Adult)	
Listening Presence	Secure	Positive self-image; Comfortable with intimacy; Autonomous; Capacity to self-soothe.
Dismissing	Insecure	Apprehensive about good intentions of others; Inability to self-soothe; Dismissing of intimacy (dismissing); Counter-dependent (dismissing); Fearful of intimacy (fearful); Socially avoidant (fearful); Negative view of others (fearful); Preoccupied with relationships (preoccupied).
	Attachment to God	
Comfort in Tears	Secure	View God as a safe haven, secure base, and initiating responses to seperation and loss; God provides a sense of equilibrium; Experience trust, security, and safety in relationship to God; Intimate forms of prayer (i.e., meditative prayer), Demonstrates capacity to forgive; Embodies hopeful disposition; Has lower levels of stress
Manager of Tragedy	Insecure	Routinely practice help-seeking forms of prayer; Dissatisfaction and/or mistrust with the way God manages tragedy/blessings; Lack of trust in God; Pessimistic disposition; Exacerbation of stress (ambivalent); Unspiritual or emotionally cold experiences of God (avoidant); Comes from overprotective, rigid, or authoritarian views of God (disorganized); Has anxiety over lovability in relationship to God (disorganized).
Growing Stronger	**Intrapersonal Relations**	Positive view of self—sees self as a resource; Negative view of self—self as liability.
Common Understanding	**Interpersonal Relations**	Positive view of significant, supportive relationships; Negative view of significant, unsupportive relationships.
Support Groups—Unhelpful or Helpful?	**Community Relations**	Positive and/or negative views of communities/groups outside immediate family (i.e., faith community, support group/counselors).
Innocent Reminders	**Environmental Relations**	Positive and/or negative views of environments/external influences (i.e., hospitals, sanctuaries, cemetaries, nature, etc.).

Table 4. *In Vivo* Codes/Themes Frequencies.[1]

Shifting My Purpose					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	15	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Yes	10	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

It Was-The Past Tense					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	12	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Yes	13	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

The Darkness					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	23	92.0	92.0	92.0
	Yes	2	8.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Listening Presence					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	9	36.0	36.0	36.0
	Yes	16	64.0	64.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

[1] Frequencies omit interview data, which is duplicative of the surveys.

Dismissing					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	Yes	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Comfort in Tears					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	9	36.0	36.0	36.0
	Yes	16	64.0	64.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Manager of Tragedy					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	17	68.0	68.0	68.0
	Yes	8	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Growing Stronger					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	17	68.0	68.0	68.0
	Yes	8	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Common Understanding					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	15	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Yes	10	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Support Groups-Unhelpful or Helpful?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	Yes	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Innocent Reminders					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	8	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Yes	17	68.0	68.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. *In Vivo* Codes/Themes Crosstabulations.[2]

Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense * Comfort in Tears Crosstabulation					
			Comfort in Tears		Total
			No	Yes	
Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	.00	Count	1	1	2
		Expected Count	.7	1.3	2.0
		% within Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Comfort in Tears	11.1%	6.3%	8.0%
		% of Total	4.0%	4.0%	8.0%
	1.00	Count	8	15	23
		Expected Count	8.3	14.7	23.0
		% within Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%
		% within Comfort in Tears	88.9%	93.8%	92.0%
		% of Total	32.0%	60.0%	92.0%
Total		Count	9	16	25
		Expected Count	9.0	16.0	25.0
		% within Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	36.0%	64.0%	100.0%
		% within Comfort in Tears	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	36.0%	64.0%	100.0%

[2] Crosstabulations omit interview data, which is duplicative of the surveys.

Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense * Listening Presence Crosstabulation					
			Listening Presence		Total
			No	Yes	
Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	.00	Count	1	1	2
		Expected Count	.7	1.3	2.0
		% within Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Listening Presence	11.1%	6.3%	8.0%
		% of Total	4.0%	4.0%	8.0%
	1.00	Count	8	15	23
		Expected Count	8.3	14.7	23.0
		% within Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%
		% within Listening Presence	88.9%	93.8%	92.0%
		% of Total	32.0%	60.0%	92.0%
Total		Count	9	16	25
		Expected Count	9.0	16.0	25.0
		% within Shifting My Purpose & It Was-The Past Tense	36.0%	64.0%	100.0%
		% within Listening Presence	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	36.0%	64.0%	100.0%

Themes were identified and named based on frequency, triangulation, and theoretical relevance. Triangulation refers to the employment of one or more methods, researchers, or analytic techniques used.[3] Theoretical relevance refers to the ways in

[3] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 65-70.

which theoretical components of grief and relational spirituality were evident in the data. It is important to note that the use of quantitative measures for assessing grief experiences and attachment styles remain beyond the scope of this project and can be found in other research. Furthermore, qualitative data is advantageous to this research, as it has greater capacity to describe the nuances of the relationship between relational spirituality and grief. This ultimately allowed me to consider the themes as a whole and how they relate to one another, especially throughout the process of rereading the participants' responses. Each of the *in vivo* codes/themes are described below and illustrated with representative quotes from the research participants' questionnaires and interviews.[4]

1. *Shifting My Purpose*. Despite experiencing tremendous loss and subsequent emotional and spiritual hardship, 40 percent of participants were overwhelmingly engaged in a process of meaning-making in which sources of purpose and meaning in daily life were often clearly articulated. In fact, all five of the research participants that were interviewed referred to an increased emphasis on family relationships as a primary source of purpose and meaning. Participants who had experienced more time since their loss spoke of these trends more concisely in comparison to those who had experienced less time. These shifts in purpose are closely aligned to the concept of resiliency in that individuals have discovered ways to live productive lifestyles, acknowledge and express positive and difficult emotions, and demonstrate generativity, especially in terms of investing in family or other significant relationships. In fact, all five of the interviewees and six survey responses emphasized without duplication the notion of generativity, making this the most prevalent characteristic of resilience in this research.

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[4] All names and other potential identifiers have been removed to protect the anonymity of the research participants.

Interview 5—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—9.16.14. We've read through Job a little bit more than we did before. We have just been in awe of his [God's] power and our creation and our response to him. Before my son died I was concerned about it being hard for us to grow our family, and wanting our family to be perfect. Now, I think my focus has become more *shifting towards my purpose*. My purpose is towards building his kingdom, and I need to make sure I'm following the footsteps he put before me and following him. This past year we decided to adopt again, and we were approved last summer.[5]

Interview 2—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.15.14. The one thing is that we felt so overwhelmingly drawn to do something for our daughter, we started a non-profit…we provide resources to families going through the journey in the NICU….Then, we ask what they need or what would be most helpful…Target gift cards, house cleaning, gas, or whatever they need. Then, we provide those resources to families. By doing this, we are so busy, but it has created so much healing in our family. For me, giving to one family and hearing how this helps them is better than buying a new car. Every time we give to a family I see my daughter smiling and her legacy. That is something that has been tremendously healing for us.

Survey Response 38—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—6.27.14. I have good days and bad days still. Some days I wonder if I could have done more but I know in my heart that what we did was best for our child. My other children are what is most important to me.

Survey Response 19—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 4—4.1.14. I have struggled with decisions that we had to make, but I know in my heart we did the right thing. Family is most important to me, and I live in a way that I hope will honor my baby and earn me a place next to her in heaven someday.

Survey Response 37— Father, 50-59 years-old, Stratum 5—6.23.14. I'm quicker now to show emotion, especially sadness. My self-esteem is the same or better. If anything, I feel stronger because nothing else that will happen in my life will negatively impact me to the degree this did, so in some ways that's freeing. It also makes me realize that family and friends are most important and everything else is a means to the end of nurturing and working on those relationships to make them successful.

Survey Response 35—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—6.4.14. At this point in time I have come to terms with my daughter's death, and I feel really good about myself. We talk about her often within our family. My self-esteem is at its highest level. It is important to me that my family does not forget our beloved daughter and forget what we went through.

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[5] Emphasis added.

2. *It Was—The Past Tense*. Fifty-two percent of research participants spoke of their grief (i.e., the most difficult days) in the past tense. This theme is well documented in surveys and interviews ranging from stratum two through stratum six. Interestingly, the complexity of grief responses varied initially from one participant to the next, yet many individuals were able to assemble some sense of meaning through life-altering changes in perspectives. As evidenced below, all but one response refers to a return to rhythms and routines of daily life (i.e., work, caring for children, etc.) even when feeling distracted, guilty, or depressed. These responses also include characteristics of both chronic grief and resilience, as difficult feelings and/or experiences persisted for a period of time and slowly gave way to some semblance of rhythm and purpose in daily life. There are no glaring differences or commonalities between responses from each of the six strata.

> Interview 1—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.13.14. I was told by my family that I wasn't myself for a while. My husband and I, we are very close and supportive of one another, so we always talk. I also saw a counselor for a little bit. It was pretty dark for me….I know that I didn't feel as confident, like even at work and stuff, and with simple decisions. It felt weird and off, and all I could think about was what I lost and when I can get that again. When can I get kids…that's what I wanted, and that's what occupied my thoughts. I was pretty distracted. I always thought back a lot and sometimes it's good and bad.

> Interview 3—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—8.18.14. My doctor heard through some other staff at the OB clinic that this had happened. I remember her calling me and pushing me to get on a sleeping medication and get on an antidepressant. I remember feeling like I couldn't and I didn't want to do it. It was almost like I was frozen, and I was unable to move. I couldn't move forward….I think we have adjusted to a new life, and our daughter is always going to have an impact on our days…I remember reading in the something I would feel better in six months or one year. Then, the longest timelines. It feels like there has been a level of acceptance, but we haven't ever really adjusted.

> Survey Response 10—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—3.29.14. Initially, I found it very challenging to be in groups of people, though we strove to keep "walking through life."

Survey Response 12—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—3.30.14. At first I felt like I would never be happy again. Things seemed pretty grim. The feeling of loss was sharp and the pain was all the time. Everything reminded me of my daughter that I had lost. When I went back to work I was indecisive and I was not as confident. I could only see myself being happy again once I got to bring a healthy, happy baby home with me.

Survey Response 23—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 4—4.9.14. After nearly six years there is only a fraction of time that I feel extremely sad, depressed that we couldn't do more for my daughter.

Survey Response 34—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—6.2.14. The first two years were the most unrecognizable. I believe I suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress on top of the heavy grief. Grief was a constant struggle, and it affected every aspect of my life. I was anxious and on edge. I felt like I had one foot in heaven with my son and the other here on earth for my daughters. I was caught between two worlds and my heart was broken. I felt that first year I was in a fog as I went through the day. I had a hard time seeing beyond the pain and the loss. I felt guilty for not feeling fully present, yet my family, a few close friends, and connecting to those with similar losses are what pulled me through. Over time, I try to be gentle with myself and understand that whatever I do, does not take away from the love I have for my son. He is with me wherever I go and in whatever I do. I am functioning better day-to-day, but certain things still cause me great anxiety. Milestone dates, seeing and especially hearing newborns, remembering certain events, the beeping monitors, and visiting certain places all bring angst. I recognize these triggers, and often try to escape or avoid newborns or places if possible. Grief is so consuming, but I have mostly found a way to integrate the loss into my everyday life.

Survey Response 25—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—4.17.14. To explain how I relate to myself since my children died is a daunting question to even begin to answer—the only thing about me that is the same now as it was before is, quite simply, my name. There is no single aspect of ME that is untouched and unchanged by loss and grief, and it has been a long and difficult journey of re-discovering who I am, how I perceive things, and how I relate myself to others and events that occur in my life. On top of the soul-breaking sadness and grief, I spent years also dealing with my own guilt, the loss of my sense of purpose, the loss of dreams, friends, interests, hobbies, and frankly, the loss of truly living for a period of time following their deaths. These things…they simply changed EVERYTHING. The loss of my children has, over time, forged me into a strong, happier more deeply-feeling ME, with a focus on what's important to me about life and love and living, and a better love for who I am the scars that I bear on my heart and my spirit.

Survey Response 32—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—5.20.14. In the beginning I was very hard on myself and felt very inadequate as a mother. With

> time I've come to accept the death of my child and the path that my life has taken. My spouse and living children are the most treasured part of my life in so many ways. I can now say after years of working through my grief of loss that my life is very blessed.

3. *The Darkness*. Only 8 percent of participants characterized grief as an extremely challenging, reporting descriptions of unproductive lifestyle, making explicit references to lasting mental health concerns (i.e., depression, PTSD, etc.), and/or communicating an ongoing sense of yearning and futile rumination. Even though the quantity of these responses is minimal, the volume of these responses is consistent with the broader body of grief research that suggests approximately 15 percent of individuals experience chronic grief,[6] thereby highlighting the reality that chronic grievers are in the minority. This, however, must not minimize the significance of grief responses, as many research participants discussed long-lasting, palpable pain.

> Interview 2—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.15.14. As the months progressed and time went on it was a rollercoaster of emotions. Anger, frustration, overwhelming sadness. I struggle with depression, and having a girl in my depression was far worse. I also struggle with PTSD because of our time in the NICU, and the way she actually died. I couldn't bring myself to even move….*It was a really dark time in my life*. It still is really, really hard, and I would say it never gets easier. You just learn to adapt differently.[7]

> Survey Response 24—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—4.13.14. I have struggled with acceptance, understanding, pain, anxiety, fear and so many more emotions. My life is completely different now than before my daughter died.

> Survey Response 33— Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—5.26.14. This is extremely difficult to describe. I went from wanting to kill myself right after she died to where I am today, which is somewhere better…it is closer to where I would like to be but honestly I am still trying to figure out who I am truly am and understand myself better.

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[6] Bonanno, "Resilience to Loss and Chronic Grief."

[7] Emphasis added.

4. *Listening Presence*. Sixty-four percent of participants gleaned support from other people who dedicated time and energy to listening. These relationships were characterized by intimacy, trust, and non-judgmental dispositions. Each relational characteristic is significant, as they created capacity for research participants to manage anxiety within the context of dialogue and explore personal avenues for support. In other words, research participants found a secure base that allowed their experience to be normalized. This created opportunity for participants to discover and experience their intimate feelings. In some instances, the words employed to describe these feelings share a close resemblance to the language of secure attachments. These types of relationships depend upon understanding through personal experience with the death of a child or a similar type of life-altering grief. In short, the formation of supportive, caring relationships is dependent upon the context and mediational influences of life for the research participants.

> Interview 1—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.13.14. Well, I kept in touch with the nurse I met, and she took care of me quite a bit. We actually knew each other a little bit through other people, but we met through the hospital. She is actually going to come to my daughter's birthday. We would go on a lot of walks when I was recovering from surgery. I talked a lot, and she would *just listen to me*. I talked because she knew a lot about what happened. She understood….My husband, whenever I feel like talking he listens. He is pretty much all I needed. I guess we have just through a lot together. He is the first person I call with any problems or anything, and same for him. He was heartbroken with this, too.[8]

> Interview 5—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—9.16.14. Some people I can trust. I have a good friend who suffers from chronic fatigue. She understands life looking like I didn't think it would look.

> Interview 4—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—9.10.14. My husband and I, one of the huge blessings through it all. We've heard that many people end up divorcing through something like this. We tried to make each other a priority. My

[8] Emphasis added.

> husband is a good talker. We had each other. We had the same faith. I would say that most of our comfort came from the Lord and each other.

> Survey Response 38—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—6.27.14. Some of my relationships with friends have changed—some no longer exist while others have a stronger bond. People don't know how to deal with you when you have lost a child, and so they don't. I have had to reach out to others who have lost babies/child and to our neighbors who have had babies in the hospital. It's sad that there are others who have to experience what we have had to, no parent should.

> Survey Response 12—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—3.30.14. I've become closer to people in my past and/or my present who have had a similar experience of losing a child. I'm also finding that friends who are going through pregnancy difficulties contact me for support.

> Survey Response 25—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—4.17.14. I can see now, 10 years later, that I have re-shaped my entire existence in ways that matter to me, and that I've surrounded myself with compassion and understanding and openness in my relationships with others.

5. *Dismissing*. Twenty-eight percent of participants expressed difficulty managing relationships due to emotional pain stirred up by a lack of understanding. Participants generally believe this to be the fault of others who have not taken the appropriate steps to develop a deeper level of understanding. However, participants also have their own apprehension about the good intentions of the support others extend, and they are doubtful about the effectiveness of developing supportive, intimate relationships within new contexts. Participants are generally emotionally cautious, as they have been wounded by others and are fearful of these wounds being reopened—even the thought of it happening is distressing. The relational consequences of this include preoccupations with how to manage significant relationships (i.e., relationships with parents, best friends, etc.), dismissing others' attempts to create intimacy, and a lingering fear of engaging intimately in relationships. Research participants are dismissive about some relationships.

> Interview 5—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—9.16.14. In some ways I think *I isolate myself a bit more, because I'm scared that people are going to say something that might hurt*….My son was adopted, and infertility was part of our story before that. That was something that was isolating socially, especially in relationships with other moms. We're really connected to a lot of families, but a lot of that can be hard because the focus over the last ten years has been building a family. When that involves disappointment for us I think I am a bit more careful. [9]

> Interview 2—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.15.14. People's response is really interesting, revelatory, and a huge learning. I would rather have a person say nothing than to say something that is not right. It's hard to say anything right, though I should say…I would say, "Don't worry, you can have more children." Or, "Don't worry, your daughter was suffering." Or, "She's in a better place." No, the best place is with me, her dad, and her sister. That is the best place for her to be. You know? I know that heaven is a beautiful, amazing place, and so that's a hard one. "I know how you feel, my grandma died." That is not the same! There is no comparison to this. That is probably the hardest, and I've walked away from people in conversations because they say things like that.

> Survey Response 34—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—6.2.14. I have pulled back from some people who I felt hurt by. I don't initiate interactions with some old friends and may hold back sharing feelings with those who said or did hurtful things.

4. *Comfort in Tears*. Despite enduring tremendous tragedy and loss, 64 percent of participants communicated the importance God, both at the onset of grief and following, as they demonstrated the practice of theological reflection in relational terms. That is, various images of God and spiritual practices were described by research participants, though participants generally view God as a loving, proximity-seeking being that is safe and initiating responses to suffering. Prayer is the primary practice participants utilized when relating to God, and these prayers can be described as colloquial and meditative. Where some individuals expressed raw, painful emotions, others described moments of thanksgiving, privilege, and trust. In addition, these responses also described hopeful

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[9] Emphasis added.

disposition that includes low levels of self-focus and increased capacity for emotional regulation. Participants expressed a wide variety of emotions without escalating. In these ways, participants who seemed to demonstrate secure attachments to God indicated God was the most ideal attachment figure in the midst of grief.

> Interview 4—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—9.10.14. Yes, I would say that our faith has grown, and I don't know how to explain it. Terrible things happen, and somehow I feel better cared for. God loves us and there is this strange privilege in suffering. I don't know how to explain that. Certainly our own faith has grown….I remember falling apart. I told my husband that if God takes him away I am going to be so mad. I was yelling there in the hospital room. Even though that was a moment of anger, I don't feel like there was any less of his presence in that moment, too. It's very typical, when you're at the worst part; it's when you feel closest to the Lord, if you're looking in that direction. You either run to him or away from him—there is no sitting in the middle. There were many times when we felt a sense of *comfort in tears*. A sense of his presence.[10]

> Interview 2—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.15.14. Prayer is huge. We rely on prayer with God every day. It gets me through. It helps us make decisions. General conversation. Being able to function. Prayer is huge….I prayed the entire flight. In that moment, too, God told me, "I know you love her, and I know you're doing everything. I know this is your last ditch effort, but I'm going to reveal to you that this isn't going to be her home." I would say that I had this amazing rush of relief….I rely on him to help me get through…There are days that are hard, and I turn to God and ask him to help me. I ask for peace a lot, and calm in my heart. I ask him to wrap me in his arms a lot. Sometimes my anxiety, depression…it blocks everything. My faith is so much stronger and he has a purpose and a meaning.

> Interview 3—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—8.18.14. There was a picture, I don't remember what it was, but it was maybe of a horse or some animal pulling a wagon. I remember the chaplain taking me through a visualization process. She said, "Visualize yourself." I remember feeling the heavy weight…she was talking to me about handing this weight over to God, and letting him help carry the burdens. I think there hasn't been as deep of lows as there were the first couple of years, but I remember using this technique and doing that frequently. That has been one thing that was incredibly helpful for me….I think I did have the feeling that God is in control, and this is up to God. I don't necessarily hold God responsible. I feel more of a partnership, and I feel like there is an element of bad things that happen a lot. There is more of a leaning on my faith rather than feeling like it's his decision, and it's something I need to let go of. I think I have this

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[10] Emphasis added.

> ability to put some of the burden of grief on God and let him carry that….I feel truly that God is sad and grieving with me, and with our family.
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> Survey Response 38—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—6.27.14. I question God's reasoning to this day, but I know I have to put my life in his hands and he will help me find the reason one day.
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> Survey Response 14—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—3.31.14. I feel like my relationship to God has never been better. My spiritual understanding has deepened greatly. I used meditation to get through this time period and I still use that tool daily. I've had breakthrough realizations about God and what the point of life is.
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> Survey Response 19—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 4—4.1.14. I felt God take my baby with him to heaven. I have never experienced such a powerful feeling in my life. For a few years afterward I struggled with feelings like I was going to hell because my husband and I had to make the call whether or not to remove our daughter from her ventilator. I felt like I was being asked to play God, and for that I was doomed to hell and would never be able to see her again. In my heart, I know that if she were meant to still be here, she would be, but even now those thoughts creep in sometimes. I am thankful that God took her to live with him, where she never has to hurt again, and I teach my daughters about the wonderful place she now lives and how God makes sure she has everything she needs and she can always feel our love.
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> Survey Response 18—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—4.1.14. I never questioned God why out of any anger. I only wondered why he thought that we were special enough or my daughter was special enough to choose her….God chose us to go through this trial. He gave us an anchor in Heaven and we continue to strive to be in Heaven with her one day. We miss her and love her dearly, but God's will be done. In His time, not ours.

5 *Manager of Tragedy.* Thirty-two percent of participants also evidenced theological reflection in relational terms while expressing their distaste with God, as some view God as a manager of tragedy in the sense that God is accountable for the death of their child. This has resulted in blame, anger, and cutting-off relationship from God for many research participants. The fact that participants were rooted in these feelings and continued to demonstrate low levels of religious coping after a significant amount of time (i.e., strata three through six are represented) indicates significant challenges in moving

toward a sense of healing with God (i.e., forgiveness). Furthermore, these respondents tended to view God's lack of intervention as a personal injustice, which may be representative of spiritual grandiosity. These factors seemed to inhibit participants from developing an intimate and trustworthy relationship with God.

> Interview 1—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.13.14. I felt anger…probably because someone or something that I don't know….I was just mad that it happened at all. I didn't understand that. I know bad things happen to good people, and I still don't get that. That's one thing about religion. I don't know why that happens, especially kids. I was upset, pretty much….I think maybe if he [God] has any involvement in this, well, I don't think it would have happened….I feel like *there is too much for him to manage*. I don't understand what people say, or if he hears everyone's prayers or what. I feel there is more going on that he didn't have time to help us or save her kind of thing. Or, he wanted us to have our other daughter.[11]

> Survey Response 36—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 4—6.16.14. Prior to my son's death I was already verging away from organized religion. His short, painful life brought it home very clearly to me that while God exists, God is not personally listening. The idea of going to a church flat out makes me uncomfortable….I have a hard time believing in the idea of a personal God now. What kind of divine being lets an innocent child suffer?

> Survey Response 33—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—5.26.14. I turned my back on God. I blamed Him, for he could have saved her but did not.

> Survey Response 15—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—3.31.14. I was brought up Catholic. I had a blinded faith. I never questioned, and I believed beyond reason. When my son was sick, I started to wonder what kind of "father" God was. Why would a parent test his children to see if they are worthy of Him? That, to me, is sadistic and non-loving. I for sure would not kick my children out of the house and then decide who can come back in after they prove that they are worthy of me. I also started to think that a loving God would not choose specific people to test with suffering….After it was over, we each came to our own conclusion that there is no God as we knew him.

6. *Growing Stronger*. Thirty-two percent of participants reported marked improvement over time in the ways they related to themselves following the death of a

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[11] Emphasis added.

child. In fact, some participants even felt as though their self-esteem and self-image were significantly better than it would have been if they had not endured the loss. This is not because living through tragedy left them without enduring pain; rather, that enduring pain has increased self-confidence, as it was the worst pain many could imagine experiencing and yet they had survived.

> Survey Response 23—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 4—4.9.14. *My self-esteem has improved dramatically*, mostly because before her passing I would worry about all the little things, now the little things don't bother me at all, focusing on big picture with confidence at work. Possibly because I don't care about making mistakes anymore—nothing will ever be worse than losing your daughter.[12]
> Survey Response 13—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—6.31.14. Positive self-esteem: courageous, brave, strong.
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> Survey Response 37—Father, 50-59 years-old, Stratum 5—6.23.14. It's hard to describe given the range of emotions and the length of time since my son's passing. Even though he died of leukemia, there's time's I feel like it was my fault and he paid for the sins of his father. I'm quicker now to show emotion, especially sadness. My self-esteem is the same or better. If anything, I feel stronger because nothing else that will happen in my life will negatively impact me to the degree this did so in some ways that's freeing. It also makes me realize that family and friends are most important and everything else is a means to the end of nurturing and working on those relationships to make them successful.
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> Survey Response 15— Mother, 50-59 years-old, Stratum 6—3.31.14. It's been quite a few years, so now I feel pretty good about myself most of the time. Occasionally, like once or twice a year, I visit a place of guilt and discouragement where I spent more time right after my daughter died…thinking I should've done something different or better. That being said, I come out of it pretty quickly, less than a few hours, and I feel as though I'm actually a much stronger person with a lot of self-confidence because of her death.

7. *Common Understanding*. The initial and ongoing support participants did or did not receive from other people seemed to be dependent upon common understanding with other people. Forty percent of participants commented on this. Common

[12] Emphasis added.

understanding can be generated in relationships where individuals are willing to listen and learn from the one grieving. Not surprisingly, participants noted more relational challenges with people who lacked common understanding through personal experience. Some of these relational challenges included cut off relationships and lingering frustrations with significant relationships (i.e., parents, siblings, etc.). These frustrations seemed to climax when others attempted to provide support that did not resonate with the participant. Conversely, participants who identified and sought support from other people with common understanding generally described the care they received as helpful. Participants expressed appreciation for being understood and cared for, even via very simple gestures. In sum, participants experienced supportive relationships both positively and negatively, and common understanding seemed to account for the difference between support being received positively as opposed to negatively.

> Interview 3—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—8.18.14. *I didn't necessarily want to reach out to other people who had experienced a loss to share our stories*; I wanted to reach out to other people that would support me….There is another gal at church who I've gotten to know that lost a three month-old to SIDS. This was 5 years after our daughter passed away, but I've connected with these people. You start a different level of friendship when you meet under those circumstances….There are also people that are very unhelpful or damaging because of their lack of being able to talk about our daughter and remember her, honor her, and those were members of my husband's family that just went away.[13]

> Interview 5—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—9.16.14. My husband is in a running group and bible study and a friend of that group…they lost a child the year before we did. They reached out to us and have been supportive, not as intensely as our other friends, but when their son died they did all of the red balloons for the funeral and all of that. They helped to coordinate something similar at the time of my son's death. Let me think, there is a group….It's a couple who lost a son and they send resources out to families who have lost a child. They again were friends of friends. They sent us something that was helpful. A couple other friends that I had known growing up that I had not known who had lost children reached out to me, too. I think most of it has been people in

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[13] Emphasis added.

terms of emotional support have been people in our church have offered to just go to coffee or something like that. That has been really helpful….I think knowing that they cared enough to do something was helpful. The caring intention was most helpful probably.

Survey Response 26—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—4.23.14. I feel like most relationships have become more meaningful. I'm not so good with small talk anymore; life is much too important to have to sort through all the bullshit to get to the real stuff, so I prefer to bypass it. I have a hard time being in social settings for long and much prefer one-on-one. One relationship that has suffered is with my mom. I feel like she's always trying to fix me, and it's hard because she just needs to be okay with me broken since that is what I am. My husband and I are still very close. We turned to each other and we can talk it through when we need to, but it isn't the only thing we have in common. My relationships with my kids seems alright, but as I said above, I'm not as playful as I was so I feel like I'm not as good of a mom as I was before. My daughter never knew me as she was born after he died, but my older son can remember when it was shiny and new and I feel like he misses how it used to be, too. When I get overwhelmed, I tend to shut down a bit, so we spend a lot more time reading and watching movies than ever before. I suppose that isn't all bad.

Survey Response 23—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 4—4.9.14. Relationships stayed the same with my wife. However, it has been challenging with family members who don't understand what we really went through….Most challenging was when my brother and sister-in-law had their daughter six months after ours was born and passed away and decided to name her after the same grandmother we had named our daughter after. Family hasn't been the same since. My mother gets it…my father says, "Get over it," and it has been a challenging family dynamic ever since.

Survey Response 32—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—5.20.14. Some relationships have suffered due to lack of compassion, understanding, etc. from others.

8. *Support Groups—Unhelpful or Helpful?* Twenty-eight percent of participants noted feelings regarding support groups. Some participants attended support groups for a brief time, and these groups were described as both unhelpful and helpful. On the one hand, research participants who experienced groups as unhelpful described group dynamics as sad, bitter, angry, depressed, and generally hard to be around. On the other hand, research participants who experienced groups as helpful described group dynamics

in terms of common understanding, comfort, love, and lasting relational connections. The distinction between groups that were considered unhelpful versus helpful is important, with the primary difference appearing to be the level of self-focus in the group. That is, groups described as unhelpful were focused on the individuals' problems whereas the helpful groups were supportive of one another and cultivating lasting relationships.

> Interview 1—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.13.14. We went to a support group at the hospital, and that was nice because it made me see people who had losses over and over. It didn't help, it made me more scared, and I went to that a few times. They never got what they wanted, and I didn't know if they were done trying or not, but it just made me more sad….I couldn't think about that all the time.

> Interview 4—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—9.10.14. I did participate in a grief group, and I have to say it was the worst experience for me. I'm sure every group is different. I felt like the person who started the group, who had lost her son, asked me to join….She was having a much harder time dealing with it all than me. The difference in the group was easy. The people who were there without being completely run down by it had a faith. There was a really clear distinction. You know, every once in a while someone would come just bitter, angry, and depressed—people who claimed they didn't have any sort of faith. It was hard for me to participate in the group because I didn't find any comfort in the things they found comfort in.

> Survey Response 6—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—2.10.14. I attended a grief support group through work several times, but found many in the group so hard to be around. They were having a really hard time with grief and depression.

> Survey Response 18—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—4.1.14. I decided to attend a grief support group at a hospital. It was not a good experience for us. We were told to give the group a chance for four meetings to decide whether it was for us or not. We gave it four meetings, but we didn't need four meetings to decide it wasn't for us. Everyone else in the group was very angry at God and we weren't in that place. I felt sorry for the way they were feeling, but I didn't need them to bring me down into their depth of anger.

> Survey Response 34—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—6.2.14. I connected greatly to the infant loss community both in person at my support group and online through blogs. I reach out to people now who experience the loss of a child. Of all the infant loss mothers who experienced loss around the same time I did, only one other has not gone on to have a rainbow baby. That was especially hard in the first few years after our loss. We do not see each other as often as we

did, but I am forever connected to those mothers though, and we can pick up right where we left off. You become close friends so much more quickly when so few people understand what you are going through.

Survey Response 33—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—5.26.14. My support group that I attended through the hospital was a lifeline for me.

Survey Response 32—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—5.20.14. Attended a Loss Support Group….For a year following the death of my son. That support group was a lifesaver for my husband and me. Can't say enough about the support, comfort, and love that we exchanged with other grieving parents while in that group. Still in contact with a few mothers from that group.

9. *Innocent Reminders*. Regardless of the length of time since the death of their children, 68 percent of participants noted unique relational qualities towards their physical environment. In some instances, anger or and sadness was stirred up by reminders of their grief in the midst of routine daily activities, such as shopping in the grocery. Other participants described feelings of peace and comfort in places where fond memories of their child remain (i.e., sanctuary, cemetery, nature, etc.). The physical environment of research participants impacted their grief experience in the moment, and participants learned to avoid or go to places that would cause harm or support them, if possible.

Interview 1—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—8.13.14. I still get angry seeing that kind of stuff. I don't like to see kids suffer at all. It boggles my mind that you could have something like that and ignore it. You should treat them like a human being and participate in everything in life. It seems like a lot of good parents don't even do that much. I get frustrated with that. Seeing kids complaining about things they are grateful for. I don't get as angry as I did before, because I know kids complain, and I did before.

Interview 3—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—8.18.14. I also think that being in the sanctuary of our church, the place of my daughter's service…I feel, more connected to her. I can visualize the funeral happening when I'm there. My husband has the opposite feeling. He feels more uncomfortable being in church. Whether it's for a meeting or worship, being present in our sanctuary is helpful for me.

Interview 4—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—9.10.14. Then, on other days I would be walking through the grocery store and go past the blueberries and then have a meltdown. Thinking about how my son loved blueberries. Sometimes it wasn't the big things you would expect that would be hard; it would be the normal things in the daily routine.

Survey Response 30—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 2—5.14.14. I want to take care of my environment better. These are all gifts/blessings from God, and I want to be appreciative of it. I love the idea of planting a tree, or something symbolic of a lost one.

Survey Response 26—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 3—4.23.14. We've moved across the country since he died so we don't have a lot of place memories. Before we left I had a hard time driving past the hospital. We actually switched pediatricians because it was too hard to go in the building. His urn is in our bedroom, we have pictures all over our house, and our daughter wears his old clothes sometimes. The hard things are linked to stuff, not places. And the holidays, etc. We are very Irish, so St. Patrick's Day is hard. He died the day after Christmas, so all winter holidays are hard. Snow is hard because it was during that really snowing winter three years ago and the cold snow just means sickness and death. Which I think is part of the reason we moved to a warmer place. Our son hated the cold, so sunny beaches always make us smile, thinking of him. He loved the sand….We called him "J" so whenever I see a blue jay outside I feel like it's him sending me a hello and it makes me feel happy and sad altogether. We have this really amazing Grotto near our city and we were actually visiting here on vacation on his first birthday that he was gone. And I went to it and walked through this amazing, sacred place and in the grotto, I kneeled before this amazing display of Mary holding Jesus' dead body after he was taken down from the cross and I sobbed for almost an hour. It was just the right place to be. Now I try to go back there for Mass and his Heaven Anniversary and sometimes his birthday. It's so hard to go to those kinds of places with kids.

Survey Response 19—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 4—4.1.14. I love returning to the hospital, and my family and I visit everything month to bring donations. It feels like a second home because it is the only home my baby ever knew. Being along, especially in the car, is hard for me. I don't like silence because it lets my thoughts take over and then I start remembering all the sad things that happened.

Survey Response 11—Father, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 4—3.30.14. Picking up our kids at school I often see children our daughter would have gone to school with. Leaves me wondering what she would be like now.

Survey Response 33—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 5—5.26.14. For the first year after she died, I went to her grave site daily. I would plan other events around my daily time with her. I am fortunate that her grave site is only a few blocks away from where I live. This brought me great comfort and it was what I needed

> at the time. I now know that she is always with me every second of every day; I still tend to visit her there about two to three times per month.
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> Survey Response 25—Mother, 30-39 years-old, Stratum 5—4.17.14. I have struggled heavily with post-traumatic stress disorder, to the extent where I have experienced huge gaps in time where I am lost to myself and to what year it actually is. Those extreme moments are few and far between now, but they existed largely on, one, routes to and from the hospital, two, the parking lot of the University where I worked at the time, and where I parked the morning I lost my son, three, the fall and the changing of the leaves, the angle of the light as the sun rises over Lake superior in September, and perhaps most significantly, the sound of helicopter blades.
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> Survey Response 15—Mother, 40-49 years-old, Stratum 6—3.31.14. Well obviously the cemetery can be a difficult place, though it is also a place that I feel peace and healing and renewal. I guess this is true for any place. I don't return to the hospital where she died often, but when I have, the same is true there. It can bring challenging emotions, but also brings a sense of healing and peace. For me, unexpected moments bring challenging emotions much more than particular places.

Summary and Implications

The nine *in vivo* codes/themes represent an initial analysis of data which examines participants' spirituality and grief experiences in relational terms. Significant findings include the prevalence of grief responses characterized by resilience and recovery, the importance of supportive and caring relationships after loss, and the articulation of spiritual dynamics in light of grief. That is, participants' relational orientation towards God was primarily described in terms of secure and insecure attachments to God. However, this analysis does not adequately address how participants' relational spirituality impacts their grief response. Further integrative analysis and implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

RELATIONAL SPIRITUALITY, GRIEF, AND THE PROCESS OF CARE

This chapter seeks to integrate key concepts and themes of contemporary bereavement science, relational spirituality, and the analysis and summary of previously presented data in order to bring this practical theological exploration to its culmination in the pragmatic task. Since the pragmatic task seeks to answer the question "How might we respond?," the chief purpose of this chapter is to identify specific strategies for action to support the *process* of generating pragmatic guidelines in moments of caring for those who are experiencing grief. Pragmatic guidelines are best thought of as "rules of art," which "provide direction in carrying out an activity, but require the creativity, skills, and good judgment of the performer in a particular context."[1] In other words, rules of art ought to be adapted to the needs of particular practitioners of pastoral care and counseling and individuals receiving care. Given the fact that a significant sample of bereaved individuals participated in a vigilant exploration of relational spirituality and grief, the rules of art presented here suggest normative, theoretically grounded ways of attending to individuals' grief experiences.

In this chapter, therefore, I build upon the previously described moves of practical theological exploration by engaging in the pragmatic task, focusing on the process of attending to individuals' grief experiences in light of relational spirituality. In order to

[1] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 227.

accomplish this purpose, relational spirituality will serve as an interpretive lens to view grief experiences through, thereby resulting in the generation of a process for attending to individuals at the onset or in the midst of grief experiences. It is important to note this process not only depends upon the theoretical grounding of this research, but it also demands pastors are equipped with a refined vision of attending, which provides care givers with the appropriate posture to employ relational spirituality as an interpretive lens. Of note, these ways of attending are supported by a relational approach to interdisciplinary dialogue, which means both psychological and theological concepts will be considered alongside one another (i.e., inseparable unity) while maintaining fundamental disciplinary distinctions (i.e., indissoluble differentiation) and giving theological reflection due precedence (i.e., indestructible order), specifically as it pertains to sources of thriving in human life. A close reading of these arguments demonstrates the breadth and depth of relational spirituality, as it provides a normative relational framework for the practice pastoral care and counseling.

Relational Spirituality and Grief

Bringing this practical theological exploration to a close necessitates the direct treatment of its primary question: What is the relationship between relational spirituality and grief? In order to answer this question, relational spirituality, the dependent variable, will be considered in light of grief experiences, the independent variable, via the previously identified *in vivo* codes/themes. Relational spirituality will serve as a descriptive interpretive lens to conceptualize particular grief narratives. A theoretically-grounded interpretive lens empowers pastoral care givers to make accurate assessments,

thereby optimizing opportunities to embody a substantive view of presence by co-creating narrative that moves the receiver of care toward thriving in human life.

Grief in the Human-Human Dimension

The human-human dimension of relational spirituality is primarily elucidated by attachment theory and IPNB, and it highlights the significance of the ways in which individuals relate to others throughout the lifetime, memory and emotion, neural integration, and narrative construction, all of which impact a person's capacity to be resilient in the face of adversity, like grief. Resilience is not merely a genetic predisposition; it is also developed and enhanced through the relational contexts individuals experience throughout the lifetime. That is, the accessibility of supportive, caring relationships and an individual's capacity to access meaningful support from them is associated with resilience and thriving in human life. The opposite, of course, is also true, and both ends of this spectrum can be observed in research participants responses via the *in vivo* codes/themes. Identifying these elements in the lived experiences of the bereaved supports the development of a process of care in light of the human-human dimension of relational spirituality.

Examining the grief experiences of research participants through the lens of the human-human dimension highlights the significance of supportive, caring relationships. In fact, the presence of meaningful relationships amongst research participants is identified within the themes of *Shifting My Purpose* and *It Was—The Past Tense*. This is best evidenced in *Shifting My Purpose*, as the resilience of research participants is rooted in a capacity to make-meaning by reprioritizing significant relationships. Furthermore, the same research participants acknowledged and expressed positive and difficult

emotions, thereby demonstrating a strong capacity to engage intimately in relationships. The opposite can be observed in *The Darkness* where research participants largely did not comment on relationships and overwhelmingly focused on their own internal responses, highlighting potential preoccupations with one's self. This is a key finding, as comfort with intimacy is positively correlated with secure attachment styles in adulthood. It can be concluded, therefore, that grief experiences characterized by resilience and recovery tend to manifest in individuals with relationships characterized by secure attachments.

Attachment styles are relevant to grief experiences because grief is a good example of one type of adversity that activates attachment systems. While primary and secondary conditional attachment strategies support the necessary relational adaptations to manage adversity, both hyperactivation and deactivation of attachment systems influence individuals' conscious or unconscious desire to seek proximity or become self-reliant (i.e., increasing physical and emotional distance), respectively. The themes of *Shifting My Purpose* and *It Was—The Past Tense* also illustrate hyperactivation of attachment systems in ways that move individuals toward secure attachments, thereby providing relational mechanisms of support in times of need. This is best evidenced in the themes of *Listening Presence* and *Growing Stronger*, which exemplify the importance of relationships characterized by secure attachment through intimate sharing. Not only does intimate sharing provide opportunity for dialogical self-exploration, but it also heightens research participants' awareness of their own emotions, thereby creating capacity to self-soothe outside the context a relationship. In addition, the capacity to self-soothe is also influenced by one's connectedness to the physical environment, as described by the theme of *Innocent Reminders*. This may contribute to enhanced processes of neural

integration, as individuals with secure attachment styles tend to have a greater capacity to reflect upon difficulties and mindfully generate solutions to problems.

The deactivation of attachment systems is most notable in *The Darkness*, or chronic grief, as research participants turned inward and rarely sought outside support, thereby perpetuating self-reliance and limiting the potential of relational support. Here, *The Darkness* indicates the presence of insecure attachment styles, and this can also be observed in the themes of *Dismissing* and *Common Understanding*, where the relational anxiety of some research participants is heightened through misunderstanding and generating self-reliant coping strategies. In this way, bereaved individuals that demonstrate insecure attachment styles tend to further isolate themselves and withdraw from opportunities to experience supportive, caring relationships. Without these relationships the process of neural integration is likely to generate fragmented memories and a restricted sense of self within the narrative individuals are seeking to create. Thus, a sharp contrast exists amongst bereaved individuals with insecure and secure attachment styles, as relational support enhances opportunities to experience thriving. This may also explain why resilience and recovery differ radically from chronic grief.

Resilience and movement toward thriving in human life may be understood by noting how attachment styles manifest among the bereaved. The theme, *Support Groups—Unhelpful or Helpful?*, highlights this well, as the context of support groups brings together the unique attachment styles of many bereaved individuals. Research participants that described support groups as unhelpful note group dynamics feel sad, bitter, angry, and depressing, whereas groups described as helpful are described as safe havens to experience feelings like comfort, love, and common understanding. When

viewed through the lens of IPNB, the distinction between unhelpful and helpful groups may be attributed to neural integration and the narratives bereaved individuals are constructing within the context of the group. While it has already been noted that neural integration and the construction of narratives is influenced by pre-existing attachment styles, support groups are environments where the processes of neural integration are engaged in a vigorous task. The process of meeting others with the assumption of common understanding and presenting one's own grief narrative to others prompts a high level functioning in which self-representations are presented to others. Regardless of whether or not individuals choose to authentically represent themselves, they encounter conscious memories, knowledge, sensations, feelings, and behaviors that influence the ways in which narrative is constructed. The difference between helpful or unhelpful support groups ought not to be attributed to the notion of support groups in general; rather, it can be attributed to developing contemporaneous attachments within the context of a group and the ways in which empathy and compassion are experienced. The presence or absence of empathy and compassion in a group will likely result in a climate of resilience, isolating vulnerability, or an experience somewhere in-between. This suggests that bereaved individuals can move towards thriving when presented with opportunities to construct narratives in supportive environments characterized by empathy and compassion.

Grief in the Human-God Dimension

The human-God dimension of relational spirituality is explained by the concept of attachment to God, which is dependent upon the ways in which individuals perceive and experience God. When grieving, the relational qualities bereaved individuals ascribe to

experiences with God are manifest in God-images that motivate spiritual and religious expression. This is most notable within the narratives of research participants when attachment systems are activated as well as when attempts to make meaning of grief experiences occur. The particular style of attachment research participants employ when relating to God draws attention to significant distinctions in resilience and chronic grief, which highlight thriving and suffering in human life.

The qualities individuals ascribe to their relationship with God highlight God-images, and this is central to understanding the attachment styles employed when relating to God. Research participants describe God-images in their individual grief narratives, though they can be generically categorized in light of Ainsworth's criteria for attachment relationships, which include seeking and maintaining close proximity, seeing God as a safe haven, viewing God as a secure base, and initiating responses to separation and loss. These relational attributes manifest when attachment systems activate, and the *in vivo* codes/themes of *Comfort in Tears* and *Manager of Tragedy* illustrate this well.

Secure attachments to God are evidenced in the theme *Comfort in Tears*. This theme exemplifies the ways in which research participants describe God as a haven of safety who is both present and supportive in response to loss. *Comfort in Tears* highlights research participants who experience God through religious practices, like prayer, when attachment systems activate. While the practice of prayer is not itself indicative of secure attachment to God, the theme of *Comfort in Tears* highlights secure attachments through colloquial and meditative prayer styles. These prayer styles allow research participants to freely experience raw and difficult emotions without feeling abandoned by God. Not only did this help participants cope effectively, but this also results in a grateful and hopeful

disposition, low-levels of self-focus, and increased capacity for emotional regulation. The theme of *Growing Stronger* evidences this well, as some individuals view grief as an opportunity to improve self-esteem and/or self-image. When people embody gratitude and hope, they thrive, even in the midst of grief. These embodied virtues propel the bereaved to seek out supportive and caring relationships, which in turn enhance their resilience and recovery. In this way, secure attachments to God lead to thriving in human life.

Insecure attachments to God are evidenced in the theme of *Manager of Tragedy*, which alludes to research participants' insecure attachments to God. Participants' feelings towards God (i.e., blame, anger, etc.) no longer enable God-images characterized by a secure base or haven of safety. This results in the perception of a cut-off relationship with God, as participants' often demonstrate low levels of religious coping after help-seeking, prayerful pleas have gone seemingly unnoticed in the midst of crises. Furthermore, many participants expressed a variety of difficult, lingering emotions that point towards unfulfilled relationships with God. Some participants have lived with emotions like these for years, and a relational orientation to God like this suggests dispositional forgiveness is lacking (i.e., inability to stop blaming God). This is consistent with an insecure attachment style to God. Furthermore, the nature of repeating help-seeking behaviors perpetuates higher levels of self-focus, which may result in spiritual instability and grandiosity. This may also result in lower levels of emotional regulation, which can have a negative impact on one's capacity to develop supportive and caring relationships. The theme *Common Understanding* is a good example of this, as frustrations climax and forgiveness is lacking when individuals do not have the luxury of sharing common

understanding through personal experiences. Thus, grief experiences characterized by recovery and resiliency may be less common amongst individuals with insecure attachments to God, likely resulting in increased suffering.

Grief in the God-Human Dimension

The God-human dimension of relational spirituality seeks to articulate a normative view of *how* God's relational orientation impacts the human spirit in the midst of grief. The concept of *analogia spiritus* posits that the Holy Spirit exists analogously, yet asymmetrically to the human spirit. This bi-polar relational unity engenders creative processes that seek to bring transformation to the human spirit. Even though the transformative potential of this co-creative relationship is derived primarily from God, the transformation occurs within the context of human life. Therefore, qualitative, second-order change, as the narratives of research participants depict, are best conceptualized within the framework of *imago Dei*, specifically a new vision of embodied self in which the bereaved manifest virtues consistent with thriving in human life.

The manifestations of virtues that lead to thriving are consistent with grief experiences characterized by resilience and recovery. That is, resilience is understood in terms of hardiness, self-enhancement, expressions of positive emotion and laughter, and generativity, and these aspects of resilience are embedded within many of the *in vivo* codes/themes. Hardiness and self-enhancement are most clearly evidenced within the theme of *Growing Stronger*, as research participants identified a by-product of tragedy is opportunity to "nurture." Participants use this term to describe newfound capacity to believe in one's self, to live into a more meaningful future, and to improve self-esteem

and self-image. However, the most prominent examples of virtues manifesting is in the themes of *Shifting My Purpose*, *It Was—The Past Tense*, and *Comfort in Tears*. These responses indicate experiences of both difficult and positive emotions alongside virtues, such as: generativity, peace, and gratitude.

It is important to note these virtues are described from inside and outside the context of a relationship with God, and qualitative differences exist between them as a result of the relational origins of the virtues. For example, the way in which research participants describe generativity is illustrative of the human capacity to consciously or unconsciously be resilient, as evidenced in the psychological benefits of authentic happiness. This can be contrasted with research participants who describe peace and gratitude and overwhelmingly describe it from within the context of a secure attachment to God. Virtues that emerge from individuals (i.e., generativity) provide a source of meaning in grief just as virtues that emerge from the context of a relationship with God (i.e., peace and gratitude). However, virtues emerging from a relationship with God also led to increased capacity to be mindful and present to each moment. The theme of *Comfort in Tears* explains this well, as research participants describe the ways in which secure attachments to God provide a framework to accept and embrace the mystery of life and death, whereas the theme *Shifting My Purpose* points to self-empowerment in supporting others as a meaning-making mechanism. The qualitative difference, therefore, between the relational origins of virtues (as people experience and describe those origins) can be described in terms of self-empowerment (i.e., emerging from relationship with one's self) versus embracing mystery (i.e., emerging from relationship with God).

Viewing this difference through the descriptive lens of relational spirituality draws attention to the significance of the God-human dimension. Virtues related to resilience may be present in human life regardless of any awareness of God's agency. It is important to note that because God is active in all human life and because God is co-existent with all things, even virtues expressed in and through an atheist, for instance, can be seen theologically as related to divine action. At the same time, there is a difference between this and those who manifest virtues in the context of faith, that is in spirit-to-Spirit relationality. The God-human dimension adds to the human-human and human-God dimension of relational spirituality by more fully describing how the creative processes of the Holy Spirit aides grieving human spirits, which reveals the value of precedence owed to God's agency.

Grief in the Inner Trinitarian Dimension

The inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality pertains primarily to the ways in which God relates to God's self, and the differentiated unity of God's agency is manifest in the economic-immanent Trinity. The economic-immanent distinction can be employed to describe God's activity and redemptive purposes in the world, which has implications for thriving in human life. This is because the self-giving agency of the Trinity has always extended relationship to humanity, even if it has been at great cost to God's self. Dramatic narrative coherence exemplifies this, and it parallels participants' understanding of how God is at work in their lives and the world. Participants understood God's agency in varying ways, as the *in vivo* codes/themes of *Comfort in Tears* and *Manager of Tragedy* suggest. It is important to note that the inner Trinitarian dimension of relational spirituality seeks to interpret research participants' understanding of God's

agency, as the task of theological reflection involves working from above and below simultaneously, wherein God's transforming relationality is in process within the narratives of research participants.

Since the inner Trinitarian dimension is focused on the differentiated unity of God's agency, an appropriate starting point to describe this within research participants' narratives is virtues resulting from the co-creative work of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. God's activity in initiating relationship with humanity is the source from which the virtues of peace and gratitude are ultimately derived. Here, the agency of God's differentiated unity can be appreciated alongside the mystery of divine freedom to create and sustain thriving in human life. A prime example of God's agency is depicted in *Comfort in Tears*. While this theme is undoubtedly characterized by secure attachments to God, research participants demonstrate nuanced ways of comprehending God's agency and suffering with them while also noting a unique, long-lasting sense of trust that creates an opportunity to embrace the mystery of life and death. Research participants even noted lingering existential questions stemming from their grief, and the inability to adequately answer these questions does not inhibit functioning in daily life or produce unhealthy God-images. Thus, it seems research participants that have established secure attachments to God have experienced God's agency in ways that foster trust, hope, and peace, even amidst excruciatingly difficult life circumstances.

Conversely, some research participants did not experience God's agency in life-giving ways. This is evidenced in the theme of *Manager of Tragedy*, where research participants demonstrated low levels of religious coping and largely viewed God's lack of intervention on behalf of their child as a personal injustice. These factors inhibit the

development of intimate, trustworthy relationships with God, and the God-images that support these insecure attachments to God are inconsistent with the notion of dramatic narrative coherence. This is not surprising due to the absence of religious coping, as engagement in religious practices may result in more nuanced ways comprehending God's agency amidst suffering. It is, however, important to consider how the life narratives and relational influences have cumulatively shaped research participants' desire and capacity to experience God's agency differently. While the life-narratives of research participants are beyond the scope of this research, the assumptions research participants hold about God's agency influence their perception of God's lacking interventions. Therefore, participants' assumptions about God dramatically color the ways in which God's agency is anticipated and experienced in the midst of grief. The co-creative, transforming potential of God's agency should not be dismissed under any circumstance, as Spirit is asymmetrically related to that of the human spirit.

The Process of Caring for the Bereaved

The primary purpose for developing relational spirituality in this work is to create an interpretive lens to view individuals' grief experiences through in order to generate a *process* of caring for those who are experiencing grief. A focus on process is not meant to imply a singular or linear strategy for tending to individuals at the onset or in the midst of grief; rather, the notion of process ought to be considered in light of key paradigms or ways of conceptualizing an individual's grief experience while attending to the particularities of the individual's narrative. A focus on the process of care is also inherently descriptive, as it seeks to facilitate grief by empowering individuals to construct a narrative consistent with thriving in human life despite unimaginable

hardship. In this way, the pastoral care giver's capacity to empower the receiver of care to construct a meaningful, life-giving narrative is dependent upon a substantive view of presence that is both incarnational and theoretically grounded in social sciences. While pastoral care givers' theoretical grounding may vary in terms of personal interests and academic specializations, relational spirituality is suggested as a normative tool for attending that has the potential to provide pastoral care givers with an explicitly relational, interdisciplinary paradigm that creates transformational dialogue applicable to a breadth of human needs.

A New Vision of Attending: Claiming a Substantive View of Presence

Embedded within the notion of attending is the physical, emotional, and spiritual presence of the care giver, and the process of care supported by relational spirituality is dependent upon a substantive view of presence. This is because the notion of presence is concerned with *how* care givers approach the receiver of care. In order for pastoral care givers to be fully empowered with the paradigm of relational spirituality, they must move beyond a passive view of presence whereby listening characterizes the whole of pastoral care. That is, pastoral care givers ought to participate meaningfully in the process of care with intent to impact how individuals are relating to the sacred via relational spirituality.

An emphasis on "spirituality of presence," or a "ministry of presence," has received a lot of attention within the disciplines of pastoral care and counseling.[2] Osmer rightly argues that the notion of attending is at the core of this theme. He suggests

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[2] Ibid., 33. See also, Jean Stairs, *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000); Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (London: A Cowley Publications Book, 1992); Tilden Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Your Life to the Awareness of God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

attending is fundamentally about “relating to others with openness, attentiveness, and prayerfulness” in ways that enhance potential for an “I-thou” relationship, which occurs when others are authentically known and the relationship is dependent upon the “communion-creating presence of the Holy Spirit.”[3] At its baseline, therefore, the concept of attending, or presence, is fundamental, and it ought to be ought to be the starting point for all pastoral ministries. Attending to the Holy Spirit and the receiver of care provides opportunity for pastoral care givers to partner with the Spirit of God and re-present Christ.

However, developing a spirituality of presence can be a great challenge, and Osmer attributes this to the scarce resources of time and energy in pastoral ministry, thereby resulting in quick, value-laden judgments.[4] Scarce external resources have the potential to result in a spirituality of presence that limits effectiveness by continually deferring to a supportive, yet passive presence that fails to move beyond the basics of pastoral care (i.e., active listening, prayerful being, etc.), thereby inhibiting the development of an “I-thou” relationship. One way to develop a more active, engaged form of attending is through carefully examining the pastor’s self and realizing the potential of his/her agency. This is the work that must occur before pastoral care is practiced: pastoral care givers should demonstrate competency in developing a self-reflective focus on how divine and human action relate, engaging in theoretical interpretation of social sciences, and showing capacity to practice wise judgment.[5] A

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[3] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 34.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 82-86.

spirituality of presence that carefully attends to others by demonstrating these capacities has potential to develop attunement to the Holy Spirit. This ultimately creates opportunities to co-create transforming moments that can cultivate strength in weakness, hope in despair, and peace in unrest.

A helpful starting point for developing a deeper, more substantive view of presence is the incarnation, which the Chalcedonian pattern is ordered after and, therefore, illustrates the significance of the pastors' agency. Analogies of the incarnation are widespread and interpreted broadly in light of pastoral care, and many interpretations are rooted in the idea that the incarnation is a past event, paradigm, and principle,[6] and this has implications on the ways in which agency (i.e., agency of God, agency of pastor, agency of recipient(s) of care) is perceived and valued by the caregiver. At its most basic level, the incarnation is about the mysterious relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus, so it is logical to turn toward Barth's interpretation of the Council of Chalcedon once more—the divine and human natures of Jesus maintain an "indissoluble differentiation," "inseparable unity," and "asymmetrical ordering."[7] Since Barth argues that Christ's divinity takes precedence over his humanity because it is only by the divinity that the divine and human natures of Christ can exist in relationship together, the reality of the incarnation is applicable to ministry in the sense that pastoral care givers ought to give precedence to God's agency while still honoring their own.

Honoring the agency of the pastor is also central to claiming a substantive view of presence. This is because the task of reimagining presence is concerned with the "*what*"

[6] Herbert Anderson, "Incarnation and Pastoral Care," *Pastoral Psychology* 32, no. 4 (1984).

[7] Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*; Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*.

of incarnational ministry (i.e., the Spirit of Christ dwelling within the caregiver, re-presenting Christ to recipients of care, etc.) in addition to the "*how*," specifically the ways in which the pastor's agency can be best enhanced by God's agency. That is, the "*what*" and the "*how*" are interconnected. Charles Gerkin has alluded to this by framing pastoral care as an incarnational style of tending to present life experiences.[8] In other words, the pastor's identity is undergirded by the presence of God, yet style and approach are dependent upon the individual. If the pastor is without a sense of her/his agency, self-awareness, and capacities for ministry, her/his potential will not be fully actualized.[9] Pastors may better partner with the ministry of the Triune God when awareness about how to use the self in ministry increases.

Providing incarnational pastoral care, therefore, necessitates being a faithful presence that is actively attuned to one's own spirit, the spirit of the receiver of care, and the Spirit of God. This type of attunement may be described as spirit-to-spirit-to-Spirit listening, as it receives the messages embedded within the receiver of care's spirit. Tuning into a person's spirit does not only require a compassionate presence, but it also entails the pastor is theoretically well-versed (i.e., relational spirituality) and self-aware. Pastors must be aware of their own presuppositions and remain free from judgment in order to authentically experience the receiver of care and the Holy Spirit simultaneously. This is important, as the pastor's expertise is equally related to interpersonal communication skills, theoretical and theological concepts, and the process of care.

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[8] Charles V. Gerkin, *Crisis Experience in Modern Life: Theory and Theology for Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989).

[9] Joel A. Jueckstock and Kyle Vlach, "Claiming a Substantive View of Presence: The Significance of the Pastor's Self," *Covenant Quarterly* 73, no. 3-4 (2015): 32.

Cumulatively, these elements necessitate more than a passive, empathic presence.

Thus, spirit-to-spirit-to-Spirit listening results in a dynamic, co-creative process in which critical relational, emotional, and spiritual processes can be replaced, revised, or blessed in order that the receiver of care might live into a future story characterized by virtues consistent with thriving in human life, such as healing, sustenance, justice, and reconciliation. It is the co-creative partnership of all involved that makes this practice inherently incarnational. A substantive view of presence creates opportunity for all involved parties—God, pastoral care givers, and the receiver of care—to be actively engaged in co-creating a transforming narrative, and this way of attending maximizes the potential of care givers to employ relational spirituality as a central paradigm in pastoral care and counseling.

Attending with Relational Spirituality

Empowered by a new vision of attending, relational spirituality provides practitioners of pastoral care and counseling with an interpretive lens to address a breadth of human needs in episodes, situations, and contexts of care. That is, the human-human, human-God, God-human, and inner Trinitarian dimensions' theoretical rootedness offer paradigms for conceptualizing both suffering and thriving from an interdisciplinary perspective, which creates opportunity to comprehend relationality in social, cognitive, affective, behavioral, neurobiological, and existential dimensions. Not only does this provide insight into suffering and thriving in human life, but it also generates co-creative moments of transformation empowered by the Spirit of God, especially when the care giver is mindful of how the dimensions of relational spirituality are ordered according to the Chalcedonian pattern. A primary implication of this pertains the assumption that

attending resembles an art, not a science, and requires a spirituality of presence that is deeply attuned in spirit-to-spirit-to-Spirit listening.

A new vision of attending via relational spirituality assumes God's co-creative, transformational agency is always at work, as God's self-giving agency is manifest in the virtues described within the dimensions of relational spirituality. This means care givers can maintain a spiritual focus without expecting the receiver of care to approach God or spirituality in a particular way. In other words, the co-creative work of God need not be named as such within the context of caring conversation, as incarnational ministry in which the pastor's agency is aligned with God's creates opportunity for diverse groups of people to experience second-order transformations ultimately derived from the Spirit. Furthermore, the assumption that God's transformational agency is always at work emphasizes the immanence of the Spirit within the context of human relationships, thereby avoiding overly simplistic, dualistic, and narrow ways of imagining God's relationality. While the co-creative, transformational agency of God is not dependent upon human agency, it is mediated in social, cognitive, affective, behavioral, neurobiological, and existential dimensions. The precedence owed to God's agency, therefore, empowers care givers to adopt a new vision of attending in ways that are consistent with the transforming relationality of God's self.

For example, attending to an individual's grief narrative with relational spirituality necessitates an awareness of the care receiver's attachment to God, which informs the pastor's style and approach. In the instance of an insecure attachment, the receiver of care is consciously or unconsciously uncertain about God's capacity to provide a secure base. This person might also transfer an insecure relationship with God

onto the pastor, who represents God. By being aware of these dynamics, the pastor can identify roadblocks to developing an intimate, trustworthy rapport and join with the individual in a new way. From the perspective of IPNB, this involves extending authentic empathy and compassion that will ultimately result in increased well-being and resilience, thereby supporting the receiver of care's construction of a coherent narrative. In this way, the pastor can help the receiver of care mindfully observe one's self in relation to external events, which replaces negative, concerning thoughts with a freedom to respond creatively without quick judgment. This process supports experiences of the co-creative work of God, in which God's agency can reframe God-images by graciously revealing God's self. A conceptual grounding and self-awareness such as this makes it possible to move beyond the basics of pastoral caregiving skills.

Attending via relational spirituality is, therefore, more accurately described as an art than a science, and it requires a substantive use of the care giver's self in order be engaged in spirit-to-spirit-to-Spirit listening. Practitioners that employ relational spirituality solely at an intellectual level will fail to live into a new vision of attending, as the dimensions of relational spirituality only provide paradigms to describe how the receiver of care are relating to the sacred. While comprehension is essential, the identification of transforming moments and moving the receiver of care towards second-order change demands the care giver is well attuned and engaged in engaged in spirit-to-spirit-to-Spirit listening, in which the co-creative Spirit of God is conveying the spiritual needs of the receiver of care to care giver, the receiver of care, or both. Herein lies the significance of the care giver's agency, as it the care giver's responsibility to follow these cues as paradigms, potential lines of inquiry, and ways of attending that can be used to

foster thriving in human life. In other words, attending with relational spirituality may further dialogue and produce transformation by inspiring ways of reimagining spirituality in relational terms and stimulating well attuned, open-ended questions, all while embodying a safe, supportive, incarnational presence. It is important to note that a focus on thriving in human life may likely elicit narrative that moves deeply into the spiritual pain of the receiver of care, as sources of thriving in human life often result from the construction of life-narrative and identification of virtues following difficult circumstances, like grief.

Attending to Grief with Relational Spirituality

In order to further describe the art of attending via relational spirituality in more precise terms, the previously identified findings of this research will support the ways in which a pastoral care giver might tend to others at the onset or in the midst of grief. Just as no two individuals' grief experiences are the same, there is no singular approach to providing pastoral care, especially when attending to grief experiences. However, the sample size and careful examination of data in this exploration makes it possible to identify a series of potential pragmatic guidelines that may foster resilience in a majority of people. This is important not only because a majority of people's grief results in recovery or resilience, but it is also important because care givers do well to maintain some hope that people have the capacity to change. Therefore, the following sequence of guidelines is not intended to be a prescriptive approach for attending to grief; rather, the following sequence is presented as paradigms, potential lines of inquiry, and ways of attending which pastoral care givers may employ in order to foster resilience and move the receiver of care toward thriving in human life.

Appreciate and Normalize Grief Responses. While grief experiences can be broadly categorized in terms of chronic grief, recovery, and resilience, it is clear grief responses are unique to individuals—there is no single way to grieve. This has clear implications on the ways in which the history of conceptualizing grief colors current perceptions of grief for the bereaved and caregivers. The particularly of grief must be appreciated non-judgmentally by the care giver. A preliminary step in doing so involves recognition that the distinction between healthy and unhealthy ways of grieving may not be clear, as previously proposed. This is because earlier conceptualizations of grief, such as complicated grief or stages of grief, are quick to offer a defined diagnosis or category respectively, and they fail to account for the longevity and evolving nature of grief processes. In other words, employing specific models for conceptualizing grief constrains an individual's experience to a moment in time rather than appreciating a particular moment in light of a larger story. For example, some research participants describe specific grief responses akin to complicated grief, yet describe a trajectory of recovery over longer periods of time. This means grief responses should not viewed in terms of diagnosable symptoms; rather, grief responses ought to be appreciated in light of an individual's trajectory over long periods of time.

When a care giver genuinely appreciates the particularity of an individual's grief, the receiver of care will benefit from their experiences and responses being normalized. The practice of normalizing is foundational and commonplace for many helping professionals, and it is of utmost importance at the onset or in the midst of grief, as a failure to validate the experiences and responses of individuals has the potential to lead to isolation, particularly for those experience chronic grief and/or insecure attachments with

people or God. It is important to note that even chronic grief experiences and responses should be normalized. Despite being in the minority of grief responses as a whole, chronic grief responses remain representative of a significant category. The following table illustrates some common grief responses that may be representative of chronic grief, recovery, and resilience when viewed from the context of an individual's grief narrative.

Table 6. Common Grief Responses.

Behavioral Responses	**Cognitive Responses**
Detached from self, family, and friends Changes in interests and activities Isolation Changes in relationships Changes in productivity Loneliness Impatience	Difficulty concentrating Decision making Loss takes over Easily distracted Decreased attention Short-term memory loss Confusion
Emotional Responses Sudden changes in mood Panic and fear Sadness and numbness Anger and anxiety Shock and disbelief Guilt Changes in activity level	**Physical Responses** Changes in appetite Difficulty falling asleep/staying asleep Nightmares Headaches and stomach aches Lower levels of energy Increased sickness Slowed movements
Spiritual Responses Change in belief system and/or values Change in relationship to God and/or image of God Change in desire to worship Hopelessness Change in support system Questioning Disconnect from self	
Chronic Grief Responses Depression Eating disorders Destructive behaviors Suicidal thoughts Substance abuse Risk-taking behaviors	

Each of these responses may be considered a normal component of the grief process. However, evidence of chronic grief responses, as shown in the lower portion of the table, may be normalized, though they will also likely warrant a higher level of care from a mental health professional. Maintaining an awareness of normal grief responses and viewing them with appreciation is of utmost importance for pastoral care givers.

Empower Others to Remember Well. Care givers empowered by a new vision of attending and relational spirituality have capacity to elicit narrative, and the way in which this occurs impacts the process of neural integration. This is because neural integration is undergirded by memory and emotion, as eliciting emotion-laden memories impacts the formation of narrative. In this way, care givers can foster resilience by inviting the receiver of care to recall memory and emotion in a safe, secure environment. Inviting the recollection of memories in this environment will positively impact the coherence of the individual's developing narrative. For instance, the care giver might reflect the degree to which an individual is self-critical, ashamed, or overly optimistic in a specific memory, and begin reframing internal working models of attachment as a result of the care giver's compassionate presence. In doing so, the process of neural integration is furthered because the receiver of care recalls the onset of grief, a series of grief experiences, and the relational qualities surrounding the loss. Enhancing self-awareness in this way supports new ways of relating to the sacred as neural pathways are formed. Since the activation of neural pathways creates emotional and physical responses, well attuned care givers may be able to experience the activation of attachment patterns and better appreciate the complexity and particularity of grief alongside the bereaved. Therefore, care givers that remember well with the bereaved foster resilience through attunement, as

the care giver embodies a supportive, caring relationship characterized by empathy and compassion. This reality influences the remaining elements in the process of care because it draws attention to *how* care givers may move the receiver of care toward thriving in human life.

Create and Enhance Supportive, Caring Relationships. Since supportive, caring relationships are central to recovery and resilience, secure attachments need to be created and/or enhanced whenever possible. While the ethics of care ought to prevent pastoral care givers from being secure attachment figures over the long-term, providing a secure, safe base for people at the onset or in the midst of grief can in specific moments can help facilitate grief responses in ways that foster resilience over the long-term. For example, a care-giver may encounter a bereaved individual whose beliefs and attitudes about others perpetuate feelings of loneliness and isolation, which is indicative of an insecure working model of attachment. By being well attuned and attending with a spirit of compassion, concepts like mirror neurons and Duchenne expressions highlight the ways in which the receiver of care will experience compassion. As a result, insecure attachments may begin to be reframed, as a newfound sense of trust in the proximity of others can be experienced. This is particularly important for individuals with insecure attachments, as a secure environment can support affect regulation in times of emotional distress.

Care givers may also enhance supportive, caring relationships in the lives of the receiver of care. While any secure attachment two people share may be enhanced, a bereaved couple is a good example. This is because there is opportunity for the individuals to mutually benefit from the support of one another, as they each have capacity to provide a haven of safety in the midst of difficult emotions while also

providing a secure base from which to explore. That is, these individuals may rely upon their relationship for the necessary strength to re-acclimate to the rhythms and routines of daily life, a key characteristic of recovery and resilience. Care givers can foster resilience by empowering the couple to support one another in the context of a safe, caring conversation, whereby each person can explore their unique style of grieving in the presence of their partner. This creates a mutual understanding of how couple's secure base can serve both individuals best.

Identify and Enhance Healthy God-images. While God-images emerge from the relational intersubjectivity of attachment relationships and are specific to the perceptions of individuals, pastoral care givers have opportunity to impact the ways in which the receiver of care relate to God. In order for this to be accomplished, pastoral care givers must begin to understand how others relate to God when attachment systems are activated. This is of utmost importance because a majority of people view God and engage in theological reflection in relational—as opposed to philosophical—terms (i.e., prayer), especially in the midst of existential crises. In general, the absence of discussion regarding experiences of God may be indicative of an insecure attachment, whereas a desire to experience God's nearness, protection, and care may be indicative of a secure attachment. It is important to note that pastoral care givers ought to honor every individual's attachment to God—it is not the task of the pastor to change deeply embedded ways of relating, even if the pastor disagrees. However, pastoral care givers can impact attachments to God by honoring the particularity of individuals and approaching them with an incarnational presence that seeks to identify and enhance healthy God-images.

Pastoral care givers can impact insecure attachments to God by identifying healthy ways of relating to the sacred when grieving. Since insecure attachments to God tend to manifest in grief as help-seeking prayers, blaming God, and perceptions that God is ambivalent to suffering, conversation limited to or in many cases explicitly related to the God-human dimension will not likely foster resilience in and of itself. However, drawing attention to virtues consistent with thriving in human life through the human-human dimension may foster resilience. For example, a pastor could draw an individual's attention to their emerging, yet unfamiliar desire to be generative. This dialogue may be the first step in developing a secure attachment to God, as it relates to sense of purpose and meaning outside of the self. The incarnational presence of the pastoral care giver may be perceived as analogous to God, thereby causing the receiver of care to transfer attachments to God onto the pastor. When pastors refrain from the need to identify the Spirit of God as the ideal source of thriving amidst grief, the receiver of care can experience the co-creative agency of the Spirit prior to consciously or unconsciously dismissing the possibility of a secure attachment to God.

Pastoral care givers may also enhance attachments to God at the onset or in the midst of grief in several ways. Even if an individual tends to demonstrates proximity-seeking behaviors and views God as a secure base, the relational qualities that are manifest when spiritual and religious coping occurs does not guarantee a resilient grief experience. Grief is an emotionally turbulent and confusing experience, especially at the onset of grief. However, pastors can foster resilience and enhance God-images by modeling secure attachments to God, which can occur in multiple ways. First, pastors must be able to embody a non-anxious, peaceful presence amidst the depths of human

despair and be willing to participate fully in reflective dialogue that is both emotionally and theologically challenging. This kind of presence demonstrates the potential of a secure attachment to God. Second, pastors must approach spiritual and religious coping with their own secure attachments, which is consistent with the work pastors must do to adopt a new vision of attending. Finally, pastors ought to embody a hopeful disposition, specifically as it relates to God-images that are safe and capable of providing a safe base from which to explore. In this way, hope is not merely a religious cliché or theological proposition—it is a genuine sense of trust in God's faithful, caring presence and desire to create thriving in human life. Identifying and enhancing God-images fosters resilience and supports thriving in human life.

Bring Virtues to Life. Recognizing that virtues are ultimately upheld by Divine grace creates new opportunities to experience the potentials that accompany the ministry of the Triune God, even if the agency of God is not named. However, moments of second-order transformation may be experienced when the pastoral care giver attributes the life-giving nature of virtues to the Spirit of God. For example, viewing grief through the dimensions of relational spirituality will highlight the presence or absence of virtues for the receiver of care aside from divine agency. Here, the pastor's opportunity is to identify the ways in which virtues can support thriving in human life in order to be consistent with the agency of God's Spirit, as described by the notion of dramatic narrative coherence. By identifying the etiology of virtues as the co-creative Spirit of God, the pastoral care giver can fully embrace the partnership of God's agency, thereby allowing the Spirit to give new life to virtues by constructing narratives that support thriving in human life.

Conclusion

A normative framework for attending to grief via relational spirituality, therefore, results in a process of care that is characterized by a new vision of attending and an application of each dimension of relational spirituality. This process is not a step-by-step approach to pastoral care, which is why it is most accurately conceived of as an art. The process empowers pastors to practice incarnationally in order to release new paradigms, potential lines of inquiry, and ways of attending that elicit meaningful narrative and invite the Spirit of God into the co-creative process of meaning-making. The paradigms, lines of inquiry, and ways of attending described above are proposed as normative guidelines for attending to grief that foster resilience and thriving in human life. In this way, the process leads pastoral care givers to a variety of approaches that suit the receiver of care best.

Summary and Key Findings

In this dissertation, the relationship between relational spirituality and grief has been explored by engaging in practical theological exploration. Grief has been conceptualized in light of contemporary bereavement science, and the concept of relational spirituality was further developed by delineating four dimensions: human-human, human-God, God-human, and inner Trinitarian. These dimensions were developed in order to bring conceptual clarity to interdisciplinary issues and draw attention to the ways in which divine and human action are distinct, yet complementary. The Chalcedonian pattern supports this notion throughout this work. It is also operationalized in the previously described process of care, thereby applying it to the practice of pastoral care and counseling in new ways. The process emerged from the

qualitative exploration of research participants' grief experiences and interpreting them through the lens of relational spirituality. A new application of the Chalcedonian pattern of logic, therefore, is one contribution of this work, as it creates relationship between relational practical theological exploration, interdisciplinary dialogue, concept development (i.e., relational spirituality), and pastoral conversations. As a result of this work, four other key findings emerged.

1. Relational spirituality can serve as an interpretive lens through which to view the practice of pastoral care and counseling, especially when tending to grief experiences. Not only is this evidenced in the previously described process of care, but it may also be verified in the data because each of the questions posed to research participants was supported by the theoretical framework of relational spirituality. Consequently, one unintended benefit of the questions used relates to their potential usefulness in eliciting narrative in the context of pastoral care and counseling. The application of relational spirituality extends its usefulness beyond a theoretical framework and equips practitioners of pastoral care and counseling with an explicitly relational, interdisciplinary framework, which avoids overly simplistic, dualistic ways of imagining divine and human agency.

2. Grief experiences characterized by recovery and resilience are positively correlated with the manifestation of virtues consistent with thriving in human life. That is, the research participants who described grief experiences related to recovery and resilience also highlighted the manifestation of virtues in their lives, such as generativity, gratitude, and peace. Virtues like these were most often described when research participants were sharing meaning-making narratives. While the virtues within the

narratives of research participants were consistent with those shown in relational spirituality, the interdisciplinary dimensions of relational spirituality offer a greater number of virtues, which may be applicable to different individuals and other spiritual issues. Nonetheless, the identification of virtues within grief narratives suggests ways of characterizing grief processes by recovery or resilience.

3. Grief experiences characterized by recovery and resilience most often emerge when people have secure attachment relationships. While relationships have been previously linked to resilience, the specific relational qualities that support recovery and resilience have not been described in great detail. Secure attachment styles, therefore, serve as a primary catalyst for recovery and resilience. When viewed through the lens of relational spirituality, secure attachments styles may include the way in which individuals relate to other individuals, groups, communities, environments, and God. This has profound implications on the ways in which helping professionals can support the bereaved, as the developing and enhancing of secure attachments at the onset or in the midst of grief have the potential to positively impact an individual’s grief experience as a whole.

4. People tend to practice theological reflection in relational terms, especially in the midst of existential crisis. That is, the outworking of philosophical and theological questions does not emerge solely from cognitive processes; many people also rely upon their ways of relating to the sacred to arrive at personal philosophical and theological conclusions. The narratives of research participants supported this, as their starting point for theological reflection tends to be related to attachment styles. For example, participants with insecure attachments often approached God with help-seeking prayers,

and, when no resolution emerged, relationships with God were cut-off by declaring that God did not exist or was indifferent about human suffering. The opposite is also true of secure attachments, as colloquial and meditative prayers led to the emergence of life-giving virtues, thereby affirming a concerned, nurturing God-image. In both scenarios, philosophical and theological views of God emerge, and these reinforced previously established attachments to God. All of this suggests theological reflection most often occurs in dialogue, as people relate to the sacred in their own ways.

Future Directions

The exploration of relational spirituality and grief has been an exercise in practical theological exploration, and the normative task sought to answer the question "What ought to be going on?" with the support of attachment theory, IPNB, attachment to God, *analogia spiritus*, *imago Dei*, Trinitarian relationality, and the immanent-economic distinction. These arenas of thought and research have offered an in-depth picture of relationality, though these are also not comprehensive in their capacity to articulate relationality in general. Other areas of thought and research might also be considered in order to offer a more comprehensive representation of relational spirituality. For example, relational spirituality, as described in this work, has not yet been explored from a philosophical perspective. Doing so would allow this work to move beyond the philosophical location it is embedded within and generate new insights.

The normative guidelines surrounding relational spirituality suggest they might be utilized further by expanding pastoral imagination in other specific ministry paradigms, venues, and practices. This is due to the descriptive nature of relational spirituality, and its most basic assumption that relationships are at the core of all pastoral

practice and reflection. For example, relational spirituality might suggest normative guidelines for fostering missional leadership in congregations through preaching and teaching. Relational spirituality is flexible in this way, as it has the potential to draw attention to sources of thriving in human life, which may enhance relational connections while also deepening processes of personal and spiritual formation. Thus, the descriptive, interdisciplinary nature of relational spirituality might be applied to many paradigms and contexts.

The descriptive-empirical task is at the core of this practical theological exploration, as it sought to integrate contemporary bereavement science with relational spirituality. This research depended upon a qualitative analysis of research participants' grief narratives, which provides unique insight in the particularities of how grief may be experienced. However, additional quantitative data would enhance this study by integrating psychometric measures for grief and attachment theory, which would generate more concrete categories to describe the relationship between grief and relational spirituality. However, qualitative measures must remain a key component of this research question, as it creates opportunity to understand the phenomenon of divine and human action. Thus, expanding the descriptive-empirical task to include a mixed-methods research design would extend this research well.

Finally, the pragmatic guidelines resulting from the exploration of relational spirituality and grief result in a process of care, which involves a combination of theological and social science acumen alongside the embodiment of a substantive view of presence. Integrating these elements into a process of care raises key questions regarding the personal and spiritual formation of the pastoral care giver: What implications does

attending via relational spirituality have on the process of pastoral formation? How can pastors best utilize the self as a resource in ministry encounters? What other "work" must pastors accomplish in order to do this well? All of these questions suggest a need to view the employment of relational spirituality from a holistic perspective in which relational spirituality itself might offer insight into its application.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION

Note, some information has been redacted to protect the anonymity of research participants.

Date

Name, Address etc.

Dear

You have been invited to participate in a study of spirituality and grief as a result of your experience with bereavement programming at [redacted]. First and foremost, we recognize that grief is always challenging, but the death of a child is a special kind of grief. Please be assured of our continued support for you.

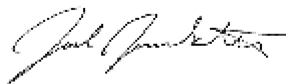
This letter describes the purpose and benefits of the study and is your invitation to participate. This study is being conducted by me, Rev. Joel Jueckstock, Chaplain at [redacted] as a part of my Ph.D. dissertation project in Pastoral Care and Counseling at Luther Seminary. My advisor is [redacted].

This study comes from a desire to improve bereavement care for individuals and families at the beginning of grief. The purpose of this study is to look at people's experiences of grief in light of spirituality, no matter what spiritual or religious views one may have. Spirituality and religion may mean different things for different people, and my hope is to learn about your grief as it relates to your spirituality. It is common for researchers to study experiences of grief, but spirituality and grief have not been studied in relationship to one another. I am hopeful that your participation will play a key role in changing current chaplaincy interventions in the face of loss, death, and other life-changing events so that people are better cared for during these times. This is a great opportunity for you to possibly make a difference for someone else who is experiencing loss.

If you agree to participate, log on to [redacted] where you will find a full explanation of the purpose, benefits, risks and discomforts of the study, and safeguards that will be taken to protect you. Accepting these terms will allow you to proceed with the online questionnaire. Know that your responses will remain completely confidential and will not be identified with you without your consent.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Rev. Joel Jueckstock

APPENDIX B

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Note, some information has been redacted to protect the anonymity of research participants.

Spirituality and Grief

1. Introduction and Background

This study is being conducted by me, Rev. Joel Jueckstock, Chaplain at [redacted], to improve bereavement care for individuals and families at the beginning of grief. This research is part of my Ph.D. dissertation project at Luther Seminary. The purpose is to look at people's experiences of grief in light of spirituality, no matter what spiritual or religious views one may have. Spirituality and religion may mean different things for different people, and my hope is to learn about your grief as it relates to your spirituality. It is common for researchers to inquire about experiences of grief, but spirituality and grief have not been studied in relationship to one another. I am hopeful that your participation will play a key role in improving current chaplaincy interventions in the face of loss, death, and other life-changing events. This is a great opportunity for you to make a difference for those who have a similar story as yours.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, your consent may be given when you acknowledge the terms, conditions, and risks of the survey. I expect this might take approximately 30 minutes to complete; however, you are free to do this wherever you are most comfortable and to take as much time as you need. No direct financial benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses may be used to benefit others who are experiencing the loss of a loved one by improving chaplaincy services and the training of future clergy.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a face-to-face or telephone interview. If you are willing, you will be asked to provide some basic contact information and may be contacted to participate in an interview. Any information that is given in this may be used to connect you with your responses to the questionnaire, but this will remain strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone, like all of the data collected.

It is important to note that there are no incorrect answers throughout the entire process—your personal perspective is most important.

RISKS

The study has one primary risk: You will be asked about the way you relate to God and your experience of grieving a loved one, and that may be emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically challenging. You will, however, have time to process your emotions and thoughts at a pace that is comfortable for you. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you comes from the amount of time taken to complete the survey. In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment, counseling, and follow-up care as needed. However, payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third party payer, if any, (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.).

Page 1

Spirituality and Grief

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for being in the study. You may benefit from having the chance to share your experiences. The information gained from this study may improve chaplaincy services and the training of future clergy.

ALTERNATIVES

No alternative studies are being conducted, though you have the freedom to choose whether or not you would like to participate or cease participation at any point.

HOW TO GET ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

You are encouraged to ask questions both before you agree to be in the study and also at any time you need information.

If you have any questions about this study please contact the researcher, Rev. Joel Jueckstock, at [redacted]. If you participate in the study and have questions at a later date please also feel free to ask at any time.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or any complaints that you feel you cannot discuss with the investigators, you may call [redacted].

If you have any questions or concerns that you feel you would like to discuss with someone who is not on the research team, you may also call the Family Relations Liaison ([redacted]).

◯ I have read and understand the information above.

Page 2

Spirituality and Grief

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If a report is published, it will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in my office; only the researcher's advisor, [redacted], and the researcher will have access to the data and any tape recordings. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. Even though every effort to ensure confidentiality in publications or presentations will be made, anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants.

Audio recordings will be created for the purposes of this study, and only my advisor and I will have access to the data. This information will not be used for educational purposes, and raw data will be destroyed by June 2016 (federal guidelines specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data).

FINANCIAL ISSUES

There are no costs to you for participating in the study and there is no direct financial benefit for the investigator conducting the study.

OTHER INFORMATION:

You have been told about the research process, including those parts that are investigational, about the side effects and benefits to be expected, and have had other choices described to you. Taking part in this research is completely voluntary. By beginning the online questionnaire, you agree to take part in this research study. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without prejudice of any kind. If you have any questions at any time, they will be answered. If you choose not to take part, you will still be offered the best care for the your needs.

☐ I have read and understand this information, and I accept the terms, conditions, and potential risks of participating in this research.

☐ I do not accept the terms, conditions, and potential risks of participating in this research.

Page 3

2. Spirituality and Grief

Demographic Information

Are you male or female?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

Which category below includes your age?

- ◯ 17 or younger
- ◯ 18-20
- ◯ 21-29
- ◯ 30-39
- ◯ 40-49
- ◯ 50-59
- ◯ 60 or older

Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?

- ◯ Married
- ◯ Widowed
- ◯ Divorced
- ◯ Separated
- ◯ Never married

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ◯ Less than high school degree
- ◯ High school degree or equivalent (i.e., GED)
- ◯ Some college but no degree
- ◯ Associate degree
- ◯ Bachelor degree
- ◯ Graduate degree
- ◯ Post-graduate degree

Spirituality and Grief

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ◯ Less than high school degree
- ◯ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ◯ Some college but no degree
- ◯ Associate degree
- ◯ Bachelor degree
- ◯ Graduate degree

Are you White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander, or some other race?

- ◯ White
- ◯ Black or African-American
- ◯ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ◯ From multiple races

Some other race (please specify)

Do you consider yourself Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, a follower of some other religion, or not religious?

- ◯ Christian
- ◯ Jewish
- ◯ Buddhist
- ◯ Muslim
- ◯ Hindu
- ◯ A follower of some other religion
- ◯ Not religious

If applicable, describe your sense of spirituality in the space below.

Page 5

Spirituality and Grief

3. Spirituality and Grief

What is your relationship to the loved one who died?

- ◯ Mother
- ◯ Father
- ◯ Brother
- ◯ Sister
- ◯ Uncle
- ◯ Aunt
- ◯ Cousin
- ◯ Friend
- ◯ Don't know
- ◯ Other (please specify)

How long has it been since your loved on died?

- ◯ 0-3 months
- ◯ 4-11 months
- ◯ 12-23 months
- ◯ 2-3 years
- ◯ 4-5 years
- ◯ 6-10 years
- ◯ 11 or more years

What was the age of your loved one when he/she died (if less than one year, please indicate the age in months).

Page 6

Spirituality and Grief

4. Open Response

Please feel free to write as much as necessary to answer the questions as well as you are able. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

Since your child died, describe how you have related to yourself (Describe your feelings about yourself, your self-esteem, what is most important to you, and the way you feel most of the time).

Since your child died, describe how you have related to others (Describe the quality of your relationships and how you have felt about them before, during, and after the loss).

Page 7

Spirituality and Grief

5. Open Response

Please feel free to write as much as necessary to answer the questions as well as your are able. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

Since your child died, describe how you have related to groups of people or communities. For example, you might write about you church or faith community, support groups, or even co-workers. (Describe how, if at all, you have interacted with any new groups of people or groups of people you have solidified existing relationships with. If you have withdrawn from groups or communities, say why.)

Since your child died, describe how you have related to your environment (Describe any places that bring up helpful or challenging emotions for you. What are these places [be as specific as possible] for you? Some poeple would say these places are their kitchen, bedroom, nature, or a sanctuary.).

Page 8

Spirituality and Grief

6. Open Response

Please feel free to write as much as necessary to answer the question as well as your are able. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

Since your child died, describe how you have related to God, the divine, or a higher power (Describe how your understanding and/or experience of God has been impacted by your loss.).

Spirituality and Grief

7. Spirituality and Grief

May I contact you for a follow-up interview?

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes (Please indicate a telephone number and email address you can be reached at)

Page 10

Spirituality and Grief

8. Your survey is complete.

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey! Your response is greatly appreciated, and it will have a positive impact on someone's journey of grief.

Page 11

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD

Note, some information has been redacted to protect the anonymity of research participants.

Dear

You recently received a letter from me inviting your participation in a study of spirituality and grief as a result of your experience with bereavement programming at [redacted] [redacted].

If you have already completed the online questionnaire, thank you very much! If not, please consider taking a few moments to do so by logging onto the website, [redacted] Your input is greatly appreciated as it may improve current chaplaincy interventions and make a difference for someone else who is experiencing loss.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Rev. Joel Jueckstock

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT

Note, some information has been redacted to protect the anonymity of research participants.

Relational Spirituality and Grief

RESEARCH INORMED CONSENT FORM.

INTRODUCTION
Before agreeing that you will take part in the interview portion of this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation. It describes the purpose, benefits, risks and discomforts of the study, and the safeguards that will be taken. It also describes the other options available and your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

BACKGROUND
You are invited to be in a research study of spirituality and grief as a result of your personal life experience. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this portion of the study. This study is being conducted by Rev. Joel A. Jueckstock, as a part of his Ph.D. dissertation project in Pastoral Care and Counseling at [redacted]. His advisor is [redacted], [redacted].

RESEARCH PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to look at people's experiences of grief in light of spirituality, no matter what spiritual or religious views one may have. Spirituality and religion may mean different things for different people, and my hope is to learn about your grief as it relates to your spirituality. It is common for researchers to inquire about experiences of grief, but spirituality and grief have not been studied in relationship to one another. Your participation may play a role in improving care for those who are facing loss.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
You will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interviewer will inquire about your experience of grief and the ways you relate to God. Feel free to take as much time as you need to respond to the questions. It is important to note that there are no incorrect answers throughout the entire process—the researcher is simply interested in hearing your perspective. Your responses will be digitally recorded and transcribed into word processing documents. Your identity will be protected in the transcribed documents and only an identification number will be used (name or contact information will not be associated with the transcription).

RISKS
The study has one primary risk: You will be asked about the way you relate to God and your experience of grieving for a loved one, both of which may be emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically challenging. You will, however, have time to process your emotions and thoughts at a pace that is comfortable for you. In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment, counseling, and follow-up care as needed. However,

1

payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third party payer, if any, (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.).

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for being in the study. Indirect benefits include: an opportunity for you to talk about your experiences and be listened to carefully; the opportunity to participate in a research process that may benefit others who have also experienced the loss of a loved one; the opportunity to be a part of potentially improving chaplaincy services and the training of future clergy.

ALTERNATIVES

You may choose not to participate in this study.

HOW TO GET ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

You are encouraged to ask questions both before you agree to be in the study and also at any time you need information.

If you have any questions about this study please contact the researcher, Rev, Joel Jueckstock, at . If you participate in the study and have questions at a later date please also feel free to ask at any time.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or any complaints that you feel you cannot discuss with the investigator, you may call IRB Administrator, .

If you have any questions or concerns that you feel you would like to discuss with someone who is not on the research team, you may also call the Family Relations Liaison ( ).

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to be sure that your participation in this study and all records of your participation will remain confidential. But absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Due to the nature of clinical research oversight, some regulatory agencies may have the right to review the records of this study. These include the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB may review the records of the study to help ensure that the rights and welfare of the participants are protected and that the study is carried out in an ethical manner.

If the researcher publishes any type of report, he will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in his office; only the investigator and his advisor, , will have access to the data and any digital recordings. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While the researcher will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number to be studied.

Audio recordings will be created for the purposes of this study, and only the researcher and the researcher's advisor will have access to the data. This information will not be used for educational purposes, and raw data will be destroyed by June 2016 (federal guidelines specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data).

FINANCIAL ISSUES
There are no costs for participating in the study and there is no direct financial benefit for the investigator conducting the study.

OTHER INFORMATION:
You have been told about the research that you will participate in. Taking part in this research is completely voluntary. By signing this Consent Form, you agree to take part in this research study. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without prejudice of any kind. If you have any questions at any time, they will be answered. If you choose not to take part, you will still be offered the best care for the patient's needs.

In the event that this research activity results in an injury, please contact Joel Jueckstock at [redacted]. Treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment and follow-up care as needed. Payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third party payer, if any (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.). By signing this Consent Form, you are not waiving any rights that you otherwise may have. In the event that you are not covered by insurance please call the patient relations liaison at [redacted], who will help you with your rights.

Your signature below means that you have read the above information, that you have discussed this study with the researcher, and that you have decided to take part based on what you have read and discussed.

You will be provided a copy of this form.

____
Participant Signature Date

I have fully explained this research study to the participant and in my judgment there was sufficient information regarding risks and benefits, to make an informed decision. I will inform the participant in a timely manner of any changes in the procedure or risks and benefits if any should occur.

____
Researcher's Signature Date

IRB #: [redacted]
IRB Approval Date:

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Protocol Guidelines

The following protocol was used to guide the interview process. The first section was read word-for-word with each participant in reiterate the risks and rights of the participant. The numbered questions were read to the participants to elicit key information. Follow-up and probing questions were used to produce more narrative if the research participant offered minimal or incomplete information.

Interview Protocol

"First, let me begin by thanking you for your willingness to participate in this interview. I appreciate the sacrifice you are making not only in generously giving your time and energy by sharing pieces of your story with me. Your story is sacred, and it is a privilege for me to hear it. I will be asking you some questions about your relationship with your loved who passed away and how it has impacted you. I will also ask some questions about your spirituality or faith. Please know this is confidential, and that you are not obligated to share beyond your level of comfort. You may opt out of any question or the interview at any time. I am interested in your gut level response—there are no right or wrong answers. Also, there may be times when you need to process your thoughts or cry for a period of time. Please know that you have time and space to do that. My role

during this process is to ask questions and listen to you, but I will check-in to see if you need a quick break or moment of rest during the interview."

1) How have you been since your child passed away?
2) How would you describe your emotional and spiritual state since your child passed away? Share a story that best captures this.
    a. Possible Probes
        i. You are doing as well as you could be (silence)
        ii. Say more about that.
        iii. I can (imagine) feel the weight you have been carrying.
        iv. It sounds like you remember him/her well.
    b. Follow-up Questions
        i. So, by doing "alright", it sounds like you mean that (repeating/paraphrasing/naming some of what they communicated- verbal and nonverbal).
        ii. Earlier I heard you say that "_____," which is important to you? (silence)
3) I suspect you hold a great deal of memories with the loved one you lost. Would you be willing to share one with me?
    a. Possible probes
        i. You cherish that joyful memory very much.
        ii. The day your child passed away is very vivid.
        iii. He/she was very special in that way.
    b. Follow-up questions

i. You shared a/some _____ (e.g. positive/challenging) moment(s) with me. Would you say more about why this particular memory came to mind?

ii. How often have you recalled these memories since your child's passing?

4) What has it been like for you to move toward the normal routines of life since the time your child passed away?

a. Possible probes

i. Going back to ______ (e.g. work, hobby, etc.) has allowed you to take your mind of off your son/daughter. Say more about that.

ii. You like to be busy? Or, you miss the peace and quiet.

iii. It sounds like it has been quite the challenge to concentrate on much of anything.

b. Follow-up questions

i. Why do you suspect being busy has been constructive?

ii. As you have readjusted to the ebb and flow of the busyness that comes with life in our culture, what, if anything, has been particularly challenging?

iii. How have you noticed yourself take on more and more over time? What emotions have you associated with this.

5) What people, places, groups, and organizations have impacted you directly or indirectly since you began grieving?

a. Possible probes

i. You belong to a _____ (e.g. faith community, church, mosque, synagogue, you don't go)?

ii. My hunch is that there is a story lurking there. (silence)

iii. Why do you think that is?

iv. Say more about your _____ (e.g. mother) and why that was so.

b. Follow-up questions

i. Since you go to a _____ community, you have been gifted with a unique community?

ii. Your involvement in the community is a _____ (e.g. reminder) to you?

iii. Your _____ (e.g. parents) have been a resource for you?

iv. It sounds like that relationship has been a _____ (e.g. gift) to you?

6) How, if at all, have you related to people differently since your child's passing?

a. Possible Probes

i. When you say, "Not differently," it is because you do not sense a connection between your relationships and the loss of your child?

ii. You feel quite lonely during this time, as if no one understands what you have been going through. Say more about that.

iii. It sounds your most significant relationships (e.g. spouse) have been impacted significantly. How have you pulled together? OR How have you drifted from each other?

b. Follow-up questions

i. You mentioned that _____ (e.g. people, relationships, etc.) have not been meaning. Say more about that.

ii. If in saying that _____ (e.g. people, relationships, etc.) is a key aspect of your life, what story or experience would best capture this for you?

7) What tools, resources, practices facilitate the way you have related to God? Describe a particular instance where you used one or all of these.

a. Possible probes

i. _____ (e.g. prayer, contemplation, writing, exercising, etc.) serves you well because (e.g. do it irregularly, you do it often)?

ii. It sounds like _____ (e.g. prayer) is a key resource for you, are there any other tools, resources, or practices that facilitate the way you relate to God?

iii. That is interesting. I am not totally familiar with that, how do you practice it? Why is particularly meaningful to you?

b. Follow-up questions

i. I appreciate the way you are able to _____(e.g. enter into conversation with God) through _____(e.g. prayer, scripture reading, etc.)

ii. It sounds like those _____(e.g. practices) are an important part of your relationship to God?

8) Talk about whether or not you experienced God's presence immediately following the time your child's prognosis was determined. What feelings or emotions did you encounter?

    a. Possible probes

        i. You were drawn to God through this experience of _____(e.g. helplessness, frustration, sadness, etc.)?

        ii. Your ______ (e.g. anger, fear, guilt, etc.) pushed you away from God?

        iii. Say more about that.

        iv. This has been a trying time.

    b. Follow-up questions

        i. This experience is one that impacted you significantly?

        ii. It sounds like God _____(e.g. was, was not) something you were mindful of.

9) How, if at all, has the way you relate to God changed since your child's passing?

    a. Possible probes

        i. When you say, "Not at all," it is because you do not practice a particular faith tradition?

        ii. Your understanding of God _____(e.g. aided, distorted) your relationships. Tell me what happened to cause this.

        iii. You told me about how integral your understanding of God is for relating to other people. Is there any particular reason why that is so?

b. Follow-up questions

i. Just a moment ago you mentioned that _____ (e.g. that God does not influence you at all), and this has been the case for some time?

ii. In saying that God is a key aspect of your life, you would agree that God influences your relationships?

10) What do you imagine God's responses to these circumstances are?

a. Possible probes

i. You said that it does not matter? Say more about that.

ii. God is quite distant? Why do you think that is?

iii. God is _____ (e.g. good, loving, gracious, present, teary, etc.)? Talk more about that.

b. Follow-up questions

i. For you, God does not care?

ii. For you, God cares a great deal?

11) Is there anything more you would like to add about any of the things we have discussed?

"That is the last question. Thank you, again. It has been a privilege to hear your story and journey with you through this time. Please know that I am open to further communication if you would like to add anything or are interested in any other follow-up conversation."

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