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Article

Place Spirituality:
An attachment perspective

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Abstract
The expression of attachment to the divine in certain places among different groups has been documented by anthropologists and sociologists for decades. However, the psychological processes by which this happens are not yet fully understood. This article focuses on the concept of 'place spirituality' as a psychological mechanism, which allows the religious believer or non-believer to achieve an organised attachment strategy, involving the interplay of place and spiritual attachment. First, place spirituality is considered as an experience that satisfies the attachment relationship criteria in that geographic places and divine entities can be perceived as 'objects' of attachment. Second, it is proposed that the maturational aspects of the attachment repertoire in adults make the place spirituality experience possible since adults' cognitive abilities are much wider than those of children and can include relationships to geographical spaces and invisible divine entities. Finally, the theme of place spirituality is explored to further position the concept as a relational paradigm for understanding the relationship between place experiences and spiritual attachment.

Introduction

Days after the series of coordinated terror attacks of 13 November 2015, in Paris, which left 130 victims dead, many Parisians were seen singing spiritual songs in public places[1] as they honoured those who had lost their lives, and at the same time confronted their own fears (CNN, 2015). A Paris resident interviewed by CNN was reported as saying that after the attack most of the people she knew turned to religion and began to pray 'even [though] they don't believe in God'[2] (CNN, 2015). This sentiment revives the long-standing discourse on the relationship between religion and place, showing that emotional bonds to place (Low & Altman, 1992), and attachment-based spirituality (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990), are important lenses for understanding place spirituality (PS) as a form of religious behaviour and representation (Counted, 2018).

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This understanding of PS as an attachment-based model is reflected in a study by Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004), who examined the relationship between religion and emotional attachment to place, arguing that the meanings given to certain places can be a result of the sacred status of such settings which bring individuals closer to a divine entity or a sacred object. Counted and Watts (2017, p. 219) also reason that PS is an ancient phenomenon, based on several biblical accounts of its importance. For example, in the Old Testament there are attachments to Jerusalem, Canaan and Mount Sinai, even though they differ among themselves in interesting ways. Attachment to Canaan plays a key role in the nationhood of Israel, and exile from it is considered idolatrous and traumatic. Mount Sinai was seen as the seat of authority and a place for experiencing Jehovah. Jerusalem is a place for cultural creation and identity formation for the Israelites. However, in the New Testament, a different understanding of PS is seen as the early Christians developed reverence for Jerusalem as the place of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the belief that their faith transcends attachment to any particular place (Counted & Watts, 2017).

The case for PS in the Paris event above, and in the studies by Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) and Counted and Watts (2017), provide insights for understanding the relationship between religion and place. For example, they show how the aesthetics and features of a place can facilitate devotion to the sacred and the ways in which religious believers and non-believers relate to the sacred in a particular geographic setting through events (e.g. war conflicts, terror attacks, violence, protests), rituals, artefacts and storytelling. They also show how religious belief systems (e.g. Christianity) may transcend attachment to any particular place (Counted & Watts, 2017), and position place as the by-product of an emotional attachment to God (Counted, 2018). These conceptualisations consider PS experience as the *attachment bonds* established between individuals, places, and their religious objects of attachment.

Nonetheless, PS remains an important undiluted area of conversation in the psychology of religion research. This is because the concept of PS can help us to see how the divine is present in a place through the experiences of people and how several core aspects of religious behaviour represent real manifestations of PS. In this article, we propose that such experiences can provide a unique window into the maturational aspects of attachment processes in adulthood, showing how relationships can be maintained with spatial settings and religious objects of attachment.

While drawing on several studies (e.g. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978, 1982; Counted & Watts, 2017; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Low & Altman, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2014), we propose an understanding of religious behaviour in terms of PS, which integrates with the relationship with attachment surrogates (e.g. a place with a divine entity). This perspective is based on the idea that adults can have more and richer attachments than those experienced by infants towards their parents. We argue that such adult attachments can be expressed through different patterns. For example, individuals can become attached to people who are important to them in a place, architectural designs of a place and meanings they attribute to a place. Any of these relational connections may lead to spiritual significance and meaningful spiritual experiences that are symbolic of life changes, in such a way that place is imagined by the individual as an object of attachment. This article offers ways in which these different PS experiences can be understood in relation to two separate developmental theories: attachment to God and place attachment. In the final section, an attempt is made to integrate both theories in order to conceptualise PS as the relationship between place experiences and spiritual attachment that involves maintaining a relationship with a divine entity or sacred object.

Relational spirituality and attachment to God

There is a widespread misconception about the meaning of religion, such that it is often conceptualised to mean beliefs about the sacred. Watts (2017) has contested this view, arguing that

religion is, at the core, different from spirituality. The former involves religious practices and institutionalised character of religious beliefs, whereas the latter is about belief and the personal character of spiritual transcendence. McCarroll, O'Connor and Meakes (2005) and Piedmont (1999) reason that spirituality differs in many ways from religion due to its changing, dynamic constitutive trait and attribute as a broad-based relational domain and language term that involves universality, prayer fulfilment and connectedness. These two contrasting views are important for our study, as we focus on spirituality, not religion, as a relational domain that captures important psychological qualities that are important for personal development, self-transcendence and meaning-making (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003).

Literature on the psychology of religion also offers different interpretations of relational spirituality. For example, Tomlinson, Glenn, Paine, and Sandage (2016) indicate that the various ways in which relational spirituality has been interpreted over the past few decades show that many conceptualisations on the topic often overlap with each other. After a careful examination of the different propositions on the subject, it seems that relational spirituality is mostly discussed within two categories: one interprets spirituality as a cognitive appraisal of existential issues, and the other sees it as experiential knowledge of the divine. The former draws mostly on Fairbairn (1952), whose object relations theory recognises relational spirituality in connection to the cognitive appraisal of stress and coping when one experiences being in a relationship with the divine. Rizzuto (1979) describes this aspect of relational spirituality as God representations. Davis, Moriarty, and Mauch (2013) refer to this cognitive representation of the divine as the *head* knowledge of God, through which the relational dynamics with a religious figure or sacred object serve as a coping mechanism for appraising stressors and interpersonal struggles.

On the other hand, the second category of relational spirituality is seen in the application of psychoanalytic theory and developmental psychology, in particular attachment theory, and often interpreted as the heart-knowledge of God (Davis et al., 2013). Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) introduced this heart-knowledge of God in the study of the psychology of religion, and it was further developed by Granqvist and colleagues (1998, 2009) and Granqvist, Mikulincer, and Shaver (2010). Considerable evidence supports this second view of relational spirituality, which is shaped primarily through implicit relational and experiential representations of the divine that are essential to faith development (Hall, 2004, 2007).

Drawing on the two relational traditions mentioned above, it is argued that relational spirituality is not learned but shaped in the course of one's developmental processes and references to relational experiences with the self, a religious figure and close others. Kirkpatrick (1994, 1995, 2005) first pioneered the idea that relational spirituality can best be understood through the lens of attachment psycho-biology. He argued that a relationship with a divine entity (e.g. God) can be explained as an attachment process due to the bond of affection between the believer and their religious figure in terms of adaptation to a variety of biological and environmental factors. In other words, the same panoply of feelings that accompany human attachment figures is present in divine attachment figures. Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2016) concur with this understanding of relational spirituality in which core aspects of religious behaviour represent manifestations of attachment processes, particularly in adults, even though most religious figures may be physically invisible (e.g. God, Jesus, Mary, Allah, etc.).

The application of adult attachment theory in the study of the psychology of religion has been received by religious scholars with both doubt and interest. Part of the reason for this theoretical *anxiety* is because most divine entities are often physically invisible as human attachment figures. Despite this argument, Cicirelli (2004) reasons that adults are likely to form attachments to divine entities and sacred objects due to their increased cognitive abilities over children, and this may depend on the knowledge of the whereabouts of their objects of attachment to maintain proximity. Luna (2009) has also argued that adults have stronger cognitive control and motivation than infants,

which may guide their behaviour and enhance their affective processes. The ability to maintain attachment to physically invisible divine entities is a result of the cognitive control in most adults that may be associated with their response inhibition and working memory (Fuster, 1997a, 1997b). These two brain functions are central components of prefrontal cortex and executive function, which are peculiar to adults and only develop during adolescence (Luna, Padmanabhan, & O'Hearn, 2010; Miller & Cohen, 2001). Response inhibition enables adults to voluntarily select a specific goal-oriented task while suppressing responses that may be contrary to the task. Working memory allows the individual to retain important information in the brain in order to manage a planned, goal-directed response (Luna, Garver, Urban, Lazar, & Sweeney, 2004). Both cognitive processes (i.e. response inhibition and working memory) work together to support individual goals that are driven by (attachment) behaviour. One of the aims of such behaviour is to attain a sense of 'felt security' through visual and imaginary proximity with objects of attachment (e.g. God) that may be non-observable or mystical (Sroufe & Waters, 1977).

Central to most monotheistic religions is the belief in God, with whom one seeks a personal relationship as a faithful follower. Proximity to God is maintained and sustained through having a relationship that might require commitment to Him through religious involvements such as prayer, fasting, scripture reading, rituals, meditation and other demonstrations of religious attachment behaviour. These might be some of the ways in which religious believers maintain attachment to the divine due to their increased cognitive abilities. This cognitive control enables them to have attachment satisfaction through visual or verbal contact with non-corporeal divine entities simply through the belief in their existence. In Christianity, for example, the relationship dimension with God, or Jesus Christ, is central to how believers evaluate their faith and is activated through perceiving the divine based on attachment-related descriptors as a 'benevolent', 'comforting', 'loving' and 'protective' figure, as opposed to being 'unreachable' and 'impersonal' (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Biblical history is full of stories of people's dynamic relationship with God Jehovah as a safe haven to turn to for protection and hope, and as a secure base for exploring the world of danger and individual growth. The psalms of King David signify these divine attributes of God as omnipresent (cf. Psalm 139:7–10), omnipotent (cf. Psalm 33:6) and loving (cf. Psalm 136:26; Psalm 103:8) attachment figure. This perception of the divine may be different in Islam and Judaism. Muslim believers relate to God as an attachment figure differently than Christians, in that the Islamic faith teaches that the best way to have a relationship with God is to obey his commands because God is beyond comprehension. Nonetheless, Bonab, Miner, and Proctor (2013) argue that Allah can also function as an attachment figure for Muslim believers and that most of the Islamic rituals and behaviours are based on seeking proximity to Allah. Bonab et al. (2013) further suggest five types of Islamic texts which posit Allah as an attachment figure: (1) the divine attributes or names of Allah that signify he is caring and nourishing, (2) Quranic stories that denote the dynamic attachment relationship between Allah and his prophets/servants, (3) Quranic verses that support the caring nature of Allah, (4) Islamic sayings and prophetic nuggets that underscore Allah's caring attribute, and (5) individual supplications that reveal Muslim believers' relationship with Allah.

In addition to the examples above, the expression of a personal relationship with God in Judaism is seen as a covenant relationship. According to Counted and Watts (2017), this relationship is related to the Jewish national identity and established in the context of place, such that exile from it (i.e. the Promised Land of Canaan) is both traumatic and idolatrous. The theme of 'place' is important in the Jewish spiritual life, even though this has often been ignored. The story of Jewish attachment spirituality starts with the story of Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism, who was commanded by God Jehovah to 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you' (Gen. 12:1). Abraham's journey, and that of his children's

children', to find the Promised Land of Canaan is a chronicle that signifies God's caring nature as both an attachment figure and as one who provides for and protects his children in the wilderness (Counted & Watts, 2017).

The activation of the attachment system is based on the interaction between the individual and their attachment figure. Frequent repetition of this interaction generates an unconscious psychological framework of attachment relationship known as the *internal working model* (IWM), which is the manifestation of a long-term bond with an attachment figure. The IWM also serves as the framework for exploring relationships with attachment surrogates in relation to the quality of their interaction. When the quality of interaction with the attachment figure is compromised by negative affective states, the attachment is described as insecure: anxious/ambivalent, avoidant and dismissive or disorganised (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main & Solomon, 1990). However, when the quality of care in the relationship is positively affected by the interaction with the attachment figure, the attachment is described as secure (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The IWM is the 'foundation for understanding how attachment processes operate in adult relationships' (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000, p. 155). It is also the basis upon which attachment scholars such as Kirkpatrick (1992) and colleagues (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990) have formulated their theories of proximity behaviour in attachment–religion processes.

A divine entity can assume the role of an attachment figure (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016), especially in situations where the primary attachment figure is no longer available. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) describe this as the compensation model, arguing that a history of unsatisfactory attachments to primary caregivers may predispose the individual to form an attachment to a divine attachment surrogate who can compensate for their insecure attachments. This 'compensation' model of religious attachment was first reported in the findings of Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) and has been strongly supported by additional quantitative (e.g. Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Halama et al., 2013; Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, & Hill, 2009; Schnitker et al., 2012) and qualitative studies (e.g. Counted, 2016a; Proctor, Miner, McLean, & Bonab, 2009).

Another proposed model of religious attachment, the correspondence hypothesis, shows how the religious believer models their previous attachment experiences (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). While some may compensate for their unsatisfactory attachments by developing a relationship with the divine through their involvement in theistic religion or new age spirituality (Granqvist, Ivarsson, Broberg, & Hagekull, 2007), others may try to transfer their previous attachment experience onto their relationship with a religious figure. Here, God functions as a security-enhancing figure in relation to the IWM of attachment. There is no precise hierarchical structure to the IWM of God. Some believers may perceive their religious figure to be 'sensitive', 'available' and 'benevolent', or model a negative representation of God in which the divine is perceived as 'fear-provoking', 'unavailable' and 'insensitive', depending on the experiences they have had with previous attachment figures.

Essentially, a relationship experience with a divine attachment figure can meet the defining criteria of an attachment relationship since the believer develops a representation of a 'living' divine entity that assures a sense of care that is controlled by the positive affective functions of the divine in caregiving situations (Rizzuto, 1979). To affirm a relationship with God as an attachment experience as such would represent God as a target for proximity-seeking religious behaviour, as a response to loss or separation from previous attachment, as a safe haven to turn to in times of danger and frightening situations, as a secure base from which to explore a world of imagined danger, and as a stronger and wiser friend in times of life's uncertainties (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Depending on the need of the believer, a relationship with God is used as a medium to meet their longing for security enhancement, companionship, hope and emotional support. An attachment to God can therefore be described as a relationship pattern that is

maintained through various forms of religious behaviour that may involve spending time in prayer and fasting, involvement in a faith community, ritual practice, searching for God in Scriptures or sacred texts, among others. Experiencing a spiritual attachment to the divine allows the believer to perceive God as one who is in a relationship to them and involved in their daily routine of experience as a surrogate attachment.

Place and attachment

An obvious starting point for applying attachment theory to the study of place is the notion that people have a special positive bond to some particular spatial settings. This notion is of particular interest in the fields of environmental psychology and human geography and has been supported by a number of empirical and theoretical research studies (Giuliani, 2003; Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Low & Altman, 1992). In this section, Bowlby's attachment theory will be extended beyond the attachment–religion discourse to propose that non-religious figures, such as topical objects, may also fill the attachment relationship role in addition to, or instead of, God. It is also proposed that the relational bond with a spatial setting can also add to spiritual significance, whereby a place becomes an important setting for spiritual or religious experiences for a religious believer (e.g. Counted & Watts, 2017; Mazumdar & Mazumder, 2004).

The concept of place generally suggests an environmental locus through which the experiences and actions of individuals or a community are spatially drawn together (Casey, 2009; Seamon, 2014). This understanding of place has been studied under the umbrella of 'place attachment' for the past two decades in environmental psychology and human geography (Low & Altman, 1992). Place attachment is recognised as the emotional component and quality that make up the understanding of place to which people are drawn. Giuliani and Feldman (1993) reviewed the different cultural and developmental theories related to place attachment, and came to the conclusion that it is a positive emotional bond to a geographic setting and the meaning attributed to that bond. This emotional quality of place is a bond centred on a perceived advantage afforded by place, or the function attached to a setting that represents the characteristics of an actual attachment figure.

Researchers such as Morgan (2010) have argued that place attachment may be related to the IWMs of attachment in that it may be the consequence of childhood memories. In providing support for the remembrance of childhood place experiences among adults, Morgan (2010) proposes that these early memories are generalised into unconscious IWMs of place, which later on manifest 'subjectively as a long-term positively affected bond to place known as place attachment' (p. 11). These memories create strong place-meanings and emotional bonds that stimulate proximity-seeking to such geographic settings, thereby making such places targets for proximity even in adulthood. Aside from the emotional aspects, the natural and physical qualities of a place can stimulate proximity-seeking behaviours, and to some extent make the individual depend on a place (Counted, 2015). There are several ways proximity to place can be manifested. For example, studies suggest that people develop proximity to place by purchasing a home in a particular suburb and by displaying photos of an important landscape or scenery (Ryan & Ogilvie, 2001). This can also be expressed through repeat visitation to an important place (Kelly & Hosking, 2008; Tan, 2017), visualising a childhood place (Scannell & Gifford, 2017), or, in an extreme situation, refusal to evacuate a place even though it is endangered (Billig, 2006; Donovan, Suryanto, & Utami, 2012).

The idea that place may function as an object of attachment and embodies certain advantages reminiscent of attachment figures may also be because of the emotional qualities of place in terms of it serving as a safe haven and secure base (Scannell & Gifford, 2014). As a safe haven, certain geographic places have the qualities of 'survival and security' (Chatterjee, 2005; Counted & Watts, 2017; Giuliani, 2003), serving as refuges for safety in times of instability (e.g. Billig, 2006). In

terms of playing the role of a secure base, studies show that geographic places can afford the advantage of individual growth in terms of 'goal support' (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004), 'social belonging' (Giuliani, 2003), 'self-continuity', and 'identity' and 'self-esteem' (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). In addition, the social contacts and networks of support that individuals have in a place can serve as a sense of safe haven and secure base, respectively, making them turn to those resources or their social capital when in danger (Brown et al., 2003) and when in need of exploring other places (Fried, 2000). People are drawn to objects of attachment because of their caregiving attributes to which the individual turns for emotional regulation and attachment affiliation (Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, & Nitzberg, 2005). Against this backdrop, it is argued that place can equally provide similar enduring qualities that facilitate proximity and individual growth, and create a sense of security as an exalted attachment surrogate.

Furthermore, place is represented as an object of attachment in our day-to-day engagements due to the interactions and activities that require our proximity to place. This proximity serves as a functional feature of attachment relationship in place experiences. Apart from 'proximity to place' being a common feature of the place attachment discourse, another reason why attachment to place may be common in contemporary life is due to the environmental and social quality of a place in responding to psychological needs (Marcheschi, Laike, Brunt, Hansson, & Johansson, 2015). According to attachment theory, attached individuals are most likely to turn to their objects of attachment when confronted by frightening events and negative emotions that activate their attachment system (Bowlby, 1982). Historically, geographic settings are often used as a reference point to describe places of refuge (Counted & Watts, 2017). Place attachment theory also gives another perspective to the migration crisis in Europe, in that the refugees fleeing there for help as a safe haven may have been drawn to the place as a perceived object of attachment. In an interesting view on the migration crisis in Europe, Cherson (2015) captures how Western Europe is seen as a better 'object of attachment' than Eastern Europe and their homeland, promising survival and goal-support for Syrian refugees:

> [Syrian refugees] run to Europe … they do not want to stay in a poor Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria; and even Spain, Greece and Portugal are not attractive to them. They are heading for Germany, the Netherlands and Great Britain, where wages and above all, social subsidies, are higher. This is what they want. (Cherson, 2015, para. 13)

The Syrian refugees seem to be drawn to Western Europe even though they have not explored those places physically. Perhaps this is one of the distinct ways in which attachment to place processes differ from other kinds of attachment. It seems that the Syrians were rather attached to the fantasy of a Western European safe haven. This suggests that place attachment can happen either verbally or visually, even without being physically present in the place. Scannell and Gifford (2017) referred to this dimension of place attachment as 'place visualisation', which is the function of place type, socio-demographic characteristics and memory support. It is therefore possible for people to turn to a place or the idea (visualisation) of a place in times of danger because it is perceived as a safe haven.

A theoretically ideal 'place' of attachment would resemble a kind of hybrid image, combining the prototypical qualities of being supportive and protective of one's life goals and security needs. Morgan (2010) observes how the remembrance of childhood places, that is, family structure, family members, family culture and even the wider culture and the environment itself, creates a unique attachment nostalgia or repulsion for a place. The way a place is experienced can be traced to the broader biographical frame of childhood memories, which can invoke *working* memories and emotional bonds through feelings of love, grief, pleasure, security and identity. Childhood

memories of a place, especially those associated with grief and pain, can also influence how the individual relates to a place (Manzo, 2003). For example, the memories of the 2001 9/11 memorial location and the venue of the November 2015 Paris attack now serve as places to remember and honour victims who died during the terror attacks.

Place and spirituality

As discussed in previous sections, place experiences and several aspects of relational spirituality could be interpreted as attachment processes. These relationship experiences were described as the maturational aspects of attachment development. It was argued that these adult attachment processes provide a window into a world of experience that takes into account the relationships with objects of attachment, serving as important points of reference for the construction of identity and religious behaviour.

One way to look at the relationship between place and spirituality based on theories previously discussed is to consider it as a 'transactional' process that amplifies the content of interactions between the individual and the objects of attachment (e.g. a geographic place and a divine entity). In other words, the ongoing, imagined interaction between the individual and the object of attachment could help in understanding PS as a transactional process involving two antithetical poles, such that one end of the pole serves as the *sender* of information and the other plays the role of the *receiver* of information (Berne, 1961). Berne saw the transactional process as a fundamental unit of social intercourse in which social actions are based upon the interactions between two *objects* in order to construct communication as a two-way, reciprocal process. In describing this transactional process, Berne (1961, 1964) argues that when we communicate we do so based on our feelings and physiological needs at the time of the communication, which determine what content we use at a particular time. In the context of PS, this means that the individual experience emerges from the interactions between the content of their social behaviour (laden with feelings of exploration and needs for attachment affiliation to place or God) and the environmental setting which motivate such behaviour.

Berne's transactional theory might help to illuminate the relationship between place and spirituality. Hence, the first step towards understanding the concept of PS would be to see it as a transactional process involving the religious believer and the objects of attachment, such that they are defined in relation to each other and affected by each other (Thomas, 2001). This means that the religious believer can be drawn to a place and at the same time have a relationship with God, with both objects of attachment having a positive or negative effect on their religious experience. In other words, attachment to a geographic place could have a spiritual significance for religious believers, depending on the psychological needs that are stimulated by their environment. This spiritual significance enables them to make sense of life events, relationships and the self, as they interact with the objects of attachment.

Furthermore, the correspondence and compensation models of attachment can also be used to interpret the concept of PS. For example, in the event that an object of attachment is perceived to be unsafe or unreliable, a compensatory attachment may be formed as the individual turns to another *object* for relationship. However, the correspondence transactional process can differ in that relationships can be maintained with an object of attachment as a way of enhancing the individual's felt security and not necessarily because of relationship problems with another object (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). The reciprocity generated through these two transactional pathways (correspondence and compensation models) is central to the tenets of attachment. This is partly because the individual reinforces proximity to an object of attachment based on the effects of their IWMs, which remain active in the attachment system (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987).
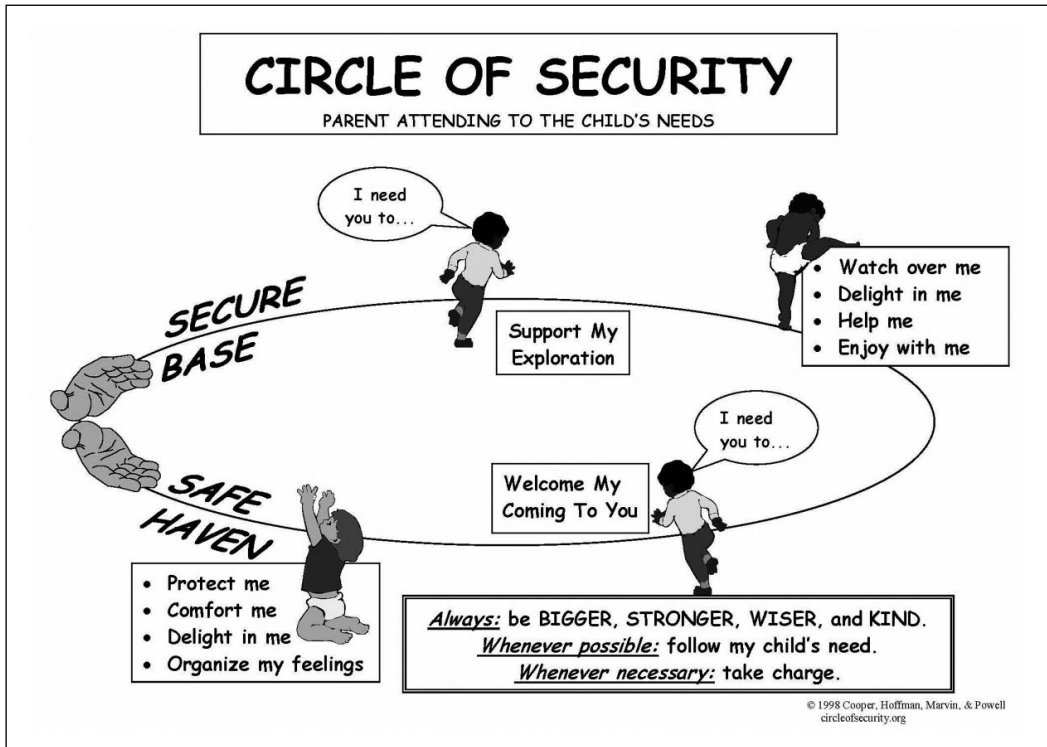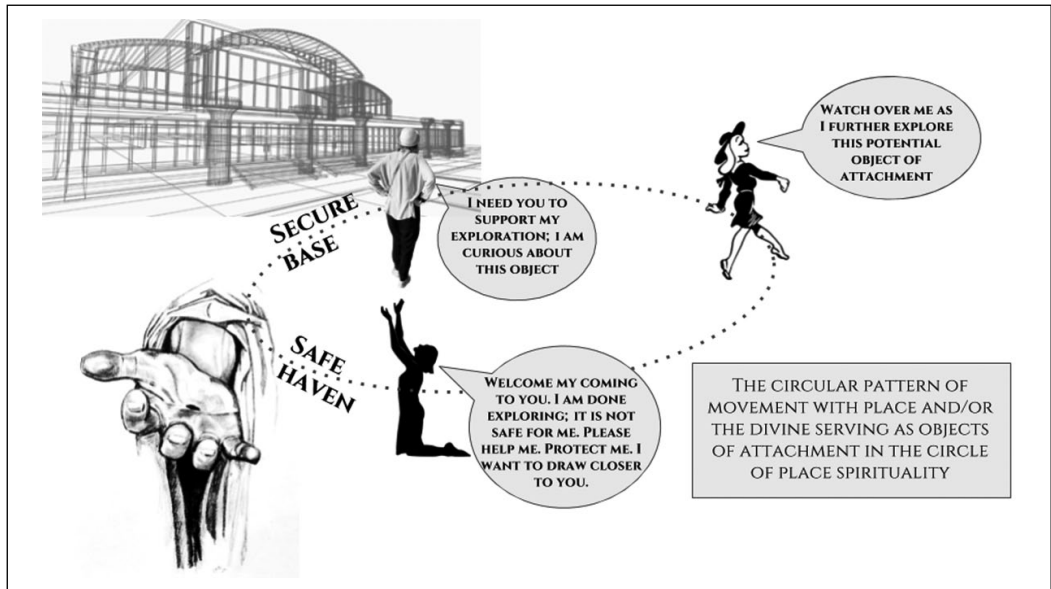
Figure 1. Circle of Security.
Source: Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, and Powell (1999).

PS demonstrates the interactions with objects of attachment, such as a place and a divine entity, serving as targets for proximity-seeking behaviour. These interactions allow for a to-and-fro oscillation of behaviour between two antithetical poles, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, which portray the transactional model of PS using Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, and Powell's (2002) Circle of Security model (CoS). The CoS framework was developed by Marvin and colleagues in order to investigate the child's circular pattern of movement with the attachment caregiver in the physical environment. According to CoS, the primary caregiver is seen as a safe haven for affect regulation and serves as a secure base for exploring the world, as seen in Figure 1. We have adapted the CoS model to design a 'Circle of Place Spirituality' (CoPS), which is the circular pattern of movement with objects of attachment in a transactional chain (also see Counted, 2018).

As shown in Figure 2, in order to understand PS one should recognise the to-and-fro movement of the religious believer away from God to explore the world of opportunities around them (or towards God to escape a frightening world). When an object of attachment fails to fulfil its relationship role, the attached individual can be driven into a relationship with another object that can keep them feeling secure and protected (Bowlby, 1982; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Eventually, people may turn to God when they perceive a place to be dangerous and harmful to their well-being, especially during war or conflict, natural disasters, terror attacks, police brutality and protests, among other factors. Turning to prayer, showing interest in religious participation (e.g. going to church) and reading Scriptures or religious texts (e.g. the Bible or the Quran) are ways in which such an attachment can be formed. Place events can create a sense of

Figure 2. The Circle of Place Spirituality.

place dissatisfaction, prompting individuals who find themselves within such spaces to develop a connection to the divine – a relationship that is aimed at assuring security, emotional meaning, healing and hope. Alternatively, religious believers are likely to turn to the social activities and environmental qualities of a place when they feel abandoned by God or perceive Him to not exist. When an object of attachment loses its magnetic draw, people who were once drawn to it may look elsewhere for attachment.

To illustrate, we draw some insights using the incident of the Paris attack in November 2015, which was cited in the introductory section of this article. One Paris resident, Victoria Setga, seemed to be attached to her environment, but after the terror attack there was a sudden shift in her attachment affiliation, whereby instead of Paris being her place of attachment she felt the need to explore a relationship with God, another potential object of attachment, through the medium of prayer. She reasoned that the terror attack made people 'pray even though [they] don't believe in God', with some residents forming spiritual attachments that manifested in their singing the religious song 'Hallelujah' by Jeff Buckley.[3]

Alternatively, another example of exchanging one object of attachment for another is the case where Victoria could be a religious believer from a very poor socio-economic background who moved from a very religious country to secular Europe. In her new environment, Victoria realised that her dreams and aspirations would be met in her new abode regardless of whether she prayed or not. And as a result, she decided to ignore her relationship with God, and explore the opportunities in her new environment, even though she needed to learn about the new place in order to understand how to achieve her goal. However, as an additional example, Victoria might just as well have decided not to ignore her relationship with God and also spend quality time in her new place of abode.

As illustrated by the three possible scenarios above, we can see how objects of attachment seem to *send* transactional information to Victoria as the *receiver* of the information, offering a sense of hope, meaning and enhanced security. In other words, Victoria seems to maximise her attention to attachment-related information that led her to explore a relationship with either God or her

environment as an object of attachment. As long as the object of attachment continues to provide satisfactory emotional quality and growth opportunities in the context of more disruptive experiences (e.g. terror attacks, war or conflict, natural disasters), this adjustment would allow the individual to achieve a sense of PS as an organised workable attachment strategy. We come to the conclusion that PS directs our attention to the benefits received by the religious believer or nonbeliever through relationships with geographic places or the divine, which determine the extent to which they either explore or draw close to objects of attachment in a transactional chain.

Concluding remarks

Conceptualising PS from an attachment perspective has been the primary task of this article. We started by highlighting the various traditional concepts regarding relational spirituality in the psychology of religion, with a particular focus on the theory of attachment to God. This was followed by a review of literature on place attachment in environmental psychology and human geography, which emphasised the attachment attributes of place bonds as matching the definitional criteria of an attachment relationship. In the concluding sections, we conceptualised PS as a transactional process and an organised attachment strategy between an individual and his or her objects of attachment. This understanding of PS might be especially important for exploring the religious experiences of people whose attachment to place might be disrupted by natural disasters, war or conflict, protests, terror attacks and socio-cultural inequities, among others. This model of relational spirituality also makes a case for understanding the relationship between religion and place as psychological dynamics that involve attachment processes. Clarifying the role of place attachment in religion would be an important task for future studies, which could enhance and deepen our understanding of PS. Further studies that factor the meaning of place and how the divine may be present in a place in different cross-cultural contexts would contribute to the proposed PS model.

Notes

1.   Watch the video via this link: https://youtu.be/SBWj3ZvwoHM
2.   The CNN interview with Victoria Setga can be watched online via the following YouTube link: https://youtu.be/fN262KwkeOw
3.   Watch the videos via these links: https://youtu.be/SBWj3ZvwoHM and https://youtu.be/fN262KwkeOw

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