

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OBJECT RELATIONS
DEVELOPMENT,
GOD IMAGE, SPIRITUAL MATURITY, AND
RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AMONG CHRISTIANS

A Dissertation

by

VICTORIA SIKES OLDS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2008

Major Subject: Counseling Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The Relationships between Object Relations Development,
God Image, Spiritual Maturity, and
Religious Fundamentalism among Christians.

(August 2008)

Victoria Sikes Olds, B.A., Middlebury College; M.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Donna Davenport

This study attempts to incorporate religious fundamentalism into an existing framework for understanding spiritual variables from an object relations perspective of development. Out of this theory have emerged two constructs—image of God and spiritual maturity—which are both spiritually and developmentally oriented. Based on theoretical considerations, it was hypothesized that religious fundamentalism would be connected to lower levels of object relations development and spiritual maturity, and more negative God images. Eighty-five Christians from 18-68 years old were therefore administered four inventories that measured these four constructs. Although mainly weak correlations for the overall sample were found, for students religious fundamentalism was linked to lower levels of object relations development, as hypothesized. Implications of this and other findings are explored.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my new niece, who was born the very day after my defense. You are lovely, angel, and I hope we all prove to be very healthy objects for you to introject!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee for their continued support through my graduate career. I appreciate their guidance and their help in making the dissertation process so doable. I greatly benefited from the instruction these individuals provided me academically and in terms of my professional development.

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I would also like to thank Michael Duffy for being so active in my personal and professional development. I am lucky to have had the chance to work with him in such a breadth of areas, all of which I have benefited from his guidance. Additionally, I appreciate his willingness to join my committee on such short notice when the need arose.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the recent proliferation of religiously motivated violence, the media has been filled with images of religious zealotry and discussion of religious (namely Islamic) fundamentalism and its impact on society. However, though current violence has brought the dangers of religious fundamentalism into focus on a large scale, there is already a body of literature and psychological research addressing aspects of religious fundamentalism that has been developing since the 1960s. Because this work has taken place in America, Christian—and more specifically Protestant—fundamentalism has primarily been addressed, with emphasis on its relationship to everyday psychological variables such as moral development and emotional well-being. Christian fundamentalism will also be the focus of this study.

The roots and definitions of religious fundamentalism are important to understand. The term fundamentalism dates back to 1910, when a group of laymen published a twelve-volume set of books entitled *The Fundamentals* in response to a liberal sway in Christianity (Copeland, 1994). The evangelical Christians who adopted its teaching became known as “fundamentalists.” The liberalism of the 1960s resulted in a reactive renewed interest in these fundamental ideals that steadily increased throughout the following decades (Hanson, 1991).

Though Protestant fundamentalism is seen as embracing specific tenets, such as

This dissertation follows the style of *Journal of Counseling Psychology*.

inerrancy of the Bible and the virgin birth of Christ, psychology researchers have primarily focused on a more general definition of religious fundamentalism that is applicable to religions outside of Protestant Christianity. One such definition, which will be utilized for the purposes of this study, was put forth by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992); they propose that

[Religious fundamentalism is] the belief that there is one set of religious teaching that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable, practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relation with the deity (p. 118).

In response to the reinvigoration of religious fundamentalism that occurred during the 1960s, researchers quickly began investigating its impact on a number of variables. Through this work, a trend was observed in which religious fundamentalists appeared less able to tolerate differences in others. More specifically, variables such as authoritarianism, homophobia, religious ethnocentrism, and racial prejudice were consistently shown to relate to religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996).

The connection between religious fundamentalism and intolerance of difference leads to the question of how religious fundamentalist views develop. A small number of psychologists have proposed connections between the process of human development and religious fundamentalism, considering the issue in terms of how early developmental experiences may impact one's level of religious fundamentalism later in

life (Baker, 1998; Copeland, 1994; Gibson, 1997; Rizzuto, 1979; Schwartz & Lindley, 2005; Stein, 2004). This issue has mainly been approached within the context of an object relations framework of development, which will be discussed in the following section. The current study builds on this approach, while incorporating two other spiritually-based variables which also fit within an object relations framework. These variables—image of God and spiritual maturity—will also be described in the following section.

Religion and Development

Object Relations Development

For the purpose of the present study, object relations development will be understood as the "Evolution of images of self and others, from crude, less differentiated, global representations distorted by unconscious needs to complex, integrated, and accurate representations of self and other...[that influence] the nature and quality of the person's interpersonal relations" (Fritsch & Holmstrom, 1990, p.320). Coming out of the psychoanalytic tradition, object relations focuses heavily on the importance of early relationships in influencing a person's sense of self and later ability to relate to others (Hamilton, 1988). Object relations proposes that objects—i.e. other people, or aspects of other people—are taken into a child's psyche, where they influence the development of the personality. Object relations theorists often describe "good" (loving, attuned, caring) objects from "bad" (critical, demeaning, neglectful) objects. How one relates to oneself and others is determined by the constellation of good and bad objects that have been taken in, or introjected, from the parent. The study of object

relations, then, is the study of how these internalized aspects of one's caretaker influence one's emotional development (such as when the parent's criticism is internalized in the form of critical self-attacks) as well as how these objects are managed by the ego through defenses such as splitting and projection.

A number of psychologists have discussed religious fundamentalism from an object relations perspective, proposing that the rigid, black and white thinking within fundamentalism relates to the process of splitting, or separating bad objects from good objects (Brown, 2004; Summers, 2006; Stein, 2004). These psychologists have highlighted that early parental failures on the part of one's caretakers can lead to a host of anxieties that may later play into fundamentalist thinking. Such anxieties may for instance be triggered by a depleted sense of self, a fear of the "bad" overwhelming the "good," (which is the impetus for splitting, mentioned above), or a fear of ambiguity. In order to manage these anxieties, it has been proposed that the religious fundamentalists find comforting structure within the rigidity of their interpretations and beliefs. Additionally, strong identification with one's group may play a role in bolstering the individual's brittle sense of self. The possible connection between object relations development and religious fundamentalism, however, has been discussed only theoretically and has not been substantiated quantitatively. The present study will therefore investigate the relationship between religious fundamentalism and object relations development using a quantitative approach.

God Image

Along with the concept of religious fundamentalism, another important construct within the literature regarding religious experience is that of God image. The most influential theoretical exposition of God image was written by Anne Maria Rizzuto in 1979. Since then, her understanding of God image has had a major impact on the literature. As an example of this impact, Lawrence (1991) developed a God image scale based on Rizzuto's understanding of this construct and its relationship to object relations theory. He describes God image as "the working emotional model of God. The kind of person that an individual acts as though God were," (p.6) that is outside the bounds of our intellectual understanding of God. This definition will be used for the purposes of the present study.

Beginning most notably with Rizzuto's work, a number of studies have addressed the relationship between object relations development and image of God (Brokaw & Edwards, 1994; Hall, 1996; Hansen, 2002; Rizzuto, 1979, 1996). The results of these studies generally suggest that higher levels of object relations development are correlated with positive God images, whereas lower levels of object relations development are correlated with negative God images. A few psychologists have proposed a connection between one's image of God and level of religious fundamentalism. Although never tested quantitatively, such a connection certainly seems intuitively plausible. While the definition of religious fundamentalism does not delineate a particular conceptualization of God, it is common to hear outspoken fundamentalists, such as Jerry Falwell, paint a picture of God as wrathful. To understand why this is the

case, Hedge-Carruthers (1997) looked at the biographies of individuals like Falwell from a developmental perspective. In her analysis, Hedge-Carruthers concluded that “the God image of the fundamentalism is that of a harsh, punitive father who must be appeased only by the blood sacrifice of his own Son” (abstract). In order to test this assertion that religious fundamentalism is linked to more negative images of God, this study looked at the relationship between religious fundamentalism and God image.

Spiritual Maturity

Despite the lack of research linking religious fundamentalism to developmental processes, there is a good deal of support for applying a developmental perspective to the process of spiritual maturation. Because an individual’s relationship to religion and to the divine seems to change throughout his or her lifetime (Rizzuto, 1979), a number of researchers have proposed a developmental trajectory of spiritual growth (Fowler & Dell, 2004; Rizzuto, 1979). Parallel to this developmental perspective, the construct of spiritual maturity has been developed through the literature (Allport, 1950; Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993; Carter, 1974; Hall & Edwards, 1996).

This type of maturity has been conceptualized in a number of ways and has included elements such as a person’s commitment to serving humanity (Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993); ability to move into the realm of complexity, flexibility, and tentativeness (Batson & Ventis, 1982); and level of tolerance (Allport, 1950). For the purposes of this study, however, spiritual maturity will be understood within a relational context that is consistent with object relations theory. The model of spiritual maturity utilized in this study was developed by Hall and Edwards (1996) and contains two main

components—awareness of God and quality of relationship with God. Although one's awareness of God is seen as a prerequisite to a strong relationship with God, it is the latter component—the quality of one's relationship to God—which is understood as most clearly reflecting one's level of object relations development. Hall and Edwards, among others (Pingleton, 1984; Shackelford, 1978), have proposed that the maturity that one displays in relating to people should translate or apply to the manner in which one relates to God. The foundation of spiritual maturity, then, should rest in one's psychological development, or one's level of object relations maturity.

Based on their theoretical understanding, Hall and Edwards (1996; 2002) developed the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI), which is the most commonly used measure of spiritual maturity in the literature. Despite its popularity, this instrument has never been used to measure the connection between spiritual maturity and religious fundamentalism. However, the SAI has been useful in revealing a positive correlation between spiritual maturity and positive images of God (Hall, 1996; Hall & Brokaw, 1995) as well as level of object relations development (Hall, 1996; Hall & Brokaw, 1995; Hall, Brokaw, Edwards & Pike, 2000; Smith, 2003). In light of the theoretically proposed connections between object relations development and religious fundamentalism, then, there is reason to believe that one's levels of spiritual maturity may be connected to one's level of religious fundamentalism. In order to verify this hypothesis, this study addressed the relationship between religious fundamentalism and levels of spiritual maturity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the development of religious fundamentalism from an object relations perspective. The four variables utilized in the present study are religious fundamentalism, object relations development, spiritual maturity, and God image. In order to clarify what psychological and spiritual factors contribute to the likelihood of subscribing to a fundamentalist approach to religion, this study examined how well the three independent variables (object relations development, image of God, and spiritual maturity) predict one's level of religious fundamentalism.

The following diagram summarizes the manner in which the utilized variables have been connected in the existent literature.

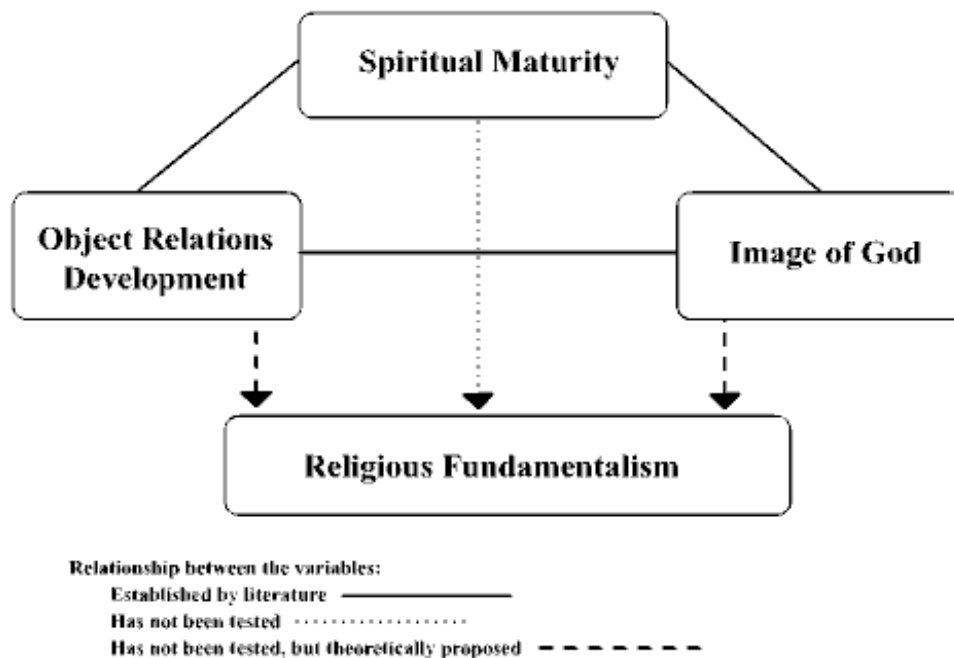


Figure 1. Correlations between Variable in Previous Studies

Hypotheses

Specifically, the current study will test six hypotheses, three of which, as far as the author is aware, have not been tested previously. These three hypotheses relate specifically to religious fundamentalism and whether it may be understood from an object relations perspective. They propose that:

1. Object relations development, as measured by the Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI-O; Bell, 1995), will meaningfully predict one's level of religious fundamentalism, as measured by The Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004), such that higher levels of object relations development will predict lower levels of religious fundamentalism.
2. God image, as measured by the God Image Scale (GIS; Lawrence, 1991), will meaningfully predict one's level of religious fundamentalism, such that positive God image will predict lower levels of religious fundamentalism.
3. Spiritual maturity, as measured by the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; Hall & Edwards, 2002), will meaningfully predict one's level of religious fundamentalism, such that higher levels of spiritual maturity will predict lower levels of religious fundamentalism.
4. The three predictor variables will each predict a unique portion of variance within participants' level of religious fundamentalism.

Along with these hypotheses, the current study will verify an additional three hypotheses that have been supported by the literature. Consistent with the literature, this study hypothesizes that:

5. Spiritual maturity, as measured by the Spiritual Assessment Inventory, will be positively correlated with positive images of God and negatively correlated with negative images of God, as measured by the God Image Scale.
6. Higher levels of object relations development, as measured by the Bell Object Relations Inventory, will be positively correlated with positive images of God and negatively correlated with negative images of God.
7. Spiritual maturity will be positively correlated with higher levels of object relations development.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Interest in the psychology of religious experience dates back to the earliest psychologists, as thinkers such as William James, arguably a father of psychology, struggled with this elusive topic. Fueled by their affinity for the sacred, writers such as James (1902), Starbuck (1899), and later Jung (1960) explored religiosity through an optimistic lens, assuming spirituality to be an integral part of the human experience. Other early psychologists, however, held a more skeptical view. Of these the most notable was Freud, who thought of religion as a universal neurosis (1928). Freud maintained that belief in God was humankind's attempt to assuage the fear that arises from the vulnerable position of being unable to control one's fate.

Although the psychological study of religion has developed since these early thinkers, it continues to be typified by a diversity of perspectives, a diversity which has fostered an increasing depth and richness within the field. Currently, one can find numerous articles and books written by a host of researchers, pastoral counselors, and clinical psychologists interested in addressing some aspect of religious experience within a psychological or pseudo-psychological framework. Yet despite the fact that religious phenomena are being discussed in finer detail, it continues to be the simplest questions which are most difficult to answer. Of these, one perplexing yet important question that has received a great deal of attention is "what is the connection between religion and behavior?," or as Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) put it, "are religious persons usually good persons?" (p. 113).

Development of Religious Typologies

This question, while seemingly straightforward, has in fact produced curious and sometimes contradictory findings (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). For instance, a number of studies have found a positive link between religion and mental health (Koenig & Larson, 2001; Gartner, Larson & Allen, 1991), whereas others have found a negative relationship (Graff & Ladd, 1971) or no relationship at all (Lewis, Lanigan, Joseph, & de Fockert, 1997). Hackney and Sanders (2003) suggest that these discrepancies are likely the result of differences in how spirituality is measured.

Similarly, there seems to be mixed evidence as to whether or not religious training can be linked to personal or moral growth. A number of studies have demonstrated positive correlations between the two (Smith, 2004). For instance, there is a fairly established literature suggesting that exposure to religious experiences facilitates moral development for adolescents (Nasir & Kirshner, 2003; Youniss, Mclellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). Yet while religious training seems to facilitate many types of moral growth, the literature suggests an opposite trend in one very important moral arena—the ability to tolerate differences in others.

This fact was first discovered in an important study performed by Allport and Kramer in 1946. These authors administered extensive questionnaires dealing with various aspects of prejudice to 437 college undergraduates. Although the results yielded an array of interesting findings, one of the most surprising was a relationship between religiosity and prejudice. In this study, students who claimed no religious affiliation were less likely to harbor negative feelings against African Americans than those who

self-identified as protestant or Catholic. Similarly, those who reported a strong religious influence at home scored higher in ethnic prejudice than those who reported less or no religious influence.

Allport and Kramer's unexpected results were quickly followed by a succession of similar studies, all of which yielded similar findings (Burnham, Connors, & Leonard, 1969; Rosenblith, 1949). Within a short period of time, the link between religiosity and various types of intolerance had been fairly well established. In 1991, David Wulff summarized this literature, stating:

Using a variety of measures of piety—religious affiliation, church attendance, doctrinal orthodoxy, rated importance of religion, and so on—researchers have consistently found positive correlations with ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, dogmatism, social distance, rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, and specific forms of prejudice, especially against Jews and blacks (pp.219-220).

Although the evidence linking religiosity and intolerance was clear, it led to some perplexing questions. On the one hand, the findings seemed to fit with historical examples in which religion played a role in fueling conflict. On the other hand, they did not seem to fit with the numerous other examples in which religious convictions have inspired individuals to work for equality and peace, actions which are indeed consistent with many religious ideals. Given the fact that the major Western religions such as Christianity teach of the equality of God's children, how is it that religious Americans are less tolerant?

Researchers sought to answer this question by searching for ways to distinguish between differing *types of religiosity* or faith. Allport himself began this investigation, hypothesizing the existence of two different approaches to religion that he referred to as extrinsic and intrinsic orientations (Allport, 1966). For individuals with an intrinsic orientation, Allport described religion as a “master motive” of their lives. For individuals with an extrinsic orientation, Allport described religion as a means to an end. In his first article on the subject, he stated that “The distinction helps us to separate churchgoers whose communal type of membership supports and serves other, nonreligious ends, from those for whom religion is an end in itself—a final, not instrumental, good” (1966, p. 454).

Through categorizing extrinsically and intrinsically motivated religionists into two groups, Allport set out to explain the connection between religiosity and prejudice. In 1967, he collaborated with Ross to test this “explanation for our riddle” (Allport, p. 455) through empirical means. Allport and Ross’s findings seemed to support the proposed hypotheses—that individuals with an extrinsic orientation would display higher degrees of prejudice than would those with an intrinsic orientation. Based on this finding, the authors proposed that churchgoers appear more prejudiced due to the large numbers of extrinsically oriented individuals within congregations.

Based on the results of Allport and Ross’s study, the construct of intrinsic/extrinsic religious orientation became mainstream, appearing in a wide array of studies dealing with religiosity (Kahoe, 1974; Wiebe & Fleck, 1980). These studies replicated Allport and Ross’s findings so frequently that Spilka, Hood, and Gorsuch (1985, as cited by

Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992) concluded that “the problem of religion and prejudice seems to be essentially solved” (p.273). Yet, despite the popularity of Allport’s construct, other researchers, starting with Batson and his colleagues (Batson & Ventis, 1982), began finding fault with the construct of religious orientation and the instruments with which it was measured. Batson and his colleagues found evidence to support their assertion that the negative relationship between intrinsic orientation and prejudice was an illusion based on intrinsically oriented individuals’ desire to *appear* to be more prosocial. Batson proposed an alternate type of religious orientation, which he called “quest” (Batson & Ventis, 1982). Batson described individuals with a high quest orientation as searching for answers to existential questions.

Though Batson’s construct also gained popularity, in the end both Allport’s and Batson’s conceptualizations were the target of a great deal of debate and criticism (Donahue, 1985; Gorsuch, 1984). In a notable article, Kirkpatrick and Hood (1990) spoke strongly against the intrinsic and extrinsic dichotomy, stating that the construct was laden with theoretical problems and confusion as to what is being measured. Based on these assertions, the authors argued that the construct should be abandoned entirely.

Although the early theories failed to explain conclusively why religion was linked to prejudice, research continued reflecting the assumption that the answer should lie in the distillation of varying types of religiosity. More recently, the construct of religious fundamentalism has been investigated as a possible ingredient in explaining the connection between religiosity and various forms of intolerance. If it can be assumed that it is a select group of individuals who at times give Christianity a bad name, then

there is a growing body of evidence which points to religious fundamentalists as potential culprits (McFarland, 1989; Crownover, 2007).

Since the earliest study connecting religious fundamentalism and prejudice, religious fundamentalism has gained a great deal of attention as a variable within psychological research. Although this correlation itself warrants such increased attention, this trend may in large part be explained by social and political events that have placed religious fundamentalism in the public (and in turn scientific) spotlight. Since September 11th 2001, the media has been filled with images and talk of religious (namely Islamic) fundamentalism and its global impact. Yet even before Islamic fundamentalism impacted American lives, religious fundamentalism among Christians had become an increasingly dominant force, both culturally and politically. It was in response to this force that through the 1990s the psychology of Christian fundamentalism began being more and more intensively explored, both from a theoretical and empirical perspective. Since this time a number of interesting findings have emerged. Before elaborating on this work, however, it is worthwhile to first take a closer look at the construct of religious fundamentalism and its recent history.

Religious Fundamentalism

The term *religious fundamentalism* does not refer to a specific set of teachings, but rather to a manner of believing, one that one can hear variously described as rigid, close-minded, dogmatic, authoritarian, black and white, etc. As religious fundamentalism is not limited to a specific doctrine, the term can be applied to individuals from varying religious faiths. Although religious fundamentalism seems to be a fairly universal

phenomenon, this study focuses specifically on fundamentalist thinking within Christianity. A Christian sample was chosen in order that the findings may be most relevant and applicable to clinical practice in America. Given the fact that the large majority of religious individuals who seek counseling in America are likely to be Christian, this population seems a logical starting point from which future research can, and hopefully will, build. Yet, because it further seems important for findings in the study of religion to connect as much as possible across faiths, a definition of religious fundamentalism was chosen that is applicable across religions. This definition, which was proposed by Altemeyer and Hunsberger in 1992, reads as follows:

The belief that there is one set of religious teaching that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable, practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relation with the deity” (p. 118).

Although this definition captures a type of religious belief, rather than a specific set of beliefs held by any religious group, a brief overview of Christian fundamentalism in particular may be in order, given the focus of this study.

Historical Overview

A phenomenon that originated in America, Christian fundamentalism claims no single founder. The term itself, however, can be traced back to a twelve-volume publication entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (Torrey, 1917). This

collection of essays was written by both British and American conservative Protestant theologians between the years 1910 and 1915. Through this work, these authors affirmed a fundamental set of Christian beliefs, including the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and Christ's imminent return.

Although the fundamentalist movement had lost steam by the 1950s, a resurgence of fundamentalist thinking occurred in the 1970s and 1980s (Copeland, 1994). Additionally, whereas early fundamentalists had been wary of political involvement, the new generation began pushing for greater participation in political matters. Through organizations such as the Christian Voice (1970s) and Falwell's Moral Majority (1980s), Christian fundamentalists, or the Christian Right, began to have a major impact on politics. As they gained power, the Christian Right began influencing votes through groups such as the Christian Coalition and Family Research Council. With regard to the recent shifts within the fundamentalist movement, Caplan (1987) wrote:

In the American setting, it no longer exemplifies the hill-billy element in rural or small-town Protestantism, as it did half a century ago. Today, it denotes an aggressive and confident religious movement which, in coalition with conservative political forces, seeks to combat what is regarded as the liberal takeover of the state, family and church since the days of Roosevelt's New Deal (p. 1).

Empirical Overview

Perhaps in response to the growing influence of Christian fundamentalism within America, the construct of religious fundamentalism has gained increasing attention within the psychological research literature. Out of this literature has come a number of consistent findings. Of these, two variables which seem most consistently related to religious fundamentalism are authoritarianism, defined as “the covariation of authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism” (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), and, as stated previously, prejudice.

In notable research by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992), five studies examining the relationships between right-wing authoritarianism, types of religiosity, and prejudice were performed using university students (n=339) and their parents (n=491). In this study, measures of religious fundamentalism were able to discriminate between prejudiced and unprejudiced persons when a variety of measures of prejudice and authoritarian aggression were utilized. In a similar study, fundamentalism was positively correlated with discriminatory attitudes towards Blacks, women, homosexuals, and communists—variables that were either unrelated or negatively related to Christian orthodoxy and intrinsic religious orientation (Kirkpatrick, 1993).

These types of results have also been replicated cross-culturally. In a study using a both Christian and Muslim Ghanaian sample, religious fundamentalism was correlated with right-wing authoritarianism and both of these variables were in turn related to negative attitudes towards homosexuals and women (Hunsberger, Owusu, & Duck,

1999). Also, a study taking place in America found that for subjects from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish backgrounds, religious fundamentalism correlated with authoritarianism and hostility towards homosexuals (Hunsberger, 1996).

The fact that religious fundamentalism would be simultaneously connected to both authoritarianism and prejudice is unsurprising, given that authoritarianism itself has been linked to prejudice (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). However, authoritarian individuals are not only often prejudiced, but tend to be highly punitive (Altemeyer, 1981, as cited by Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), and hypocritical (Altemeyer, 1990, as cited by Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992) as well. Additionally, as Altemeyer & Hunsberger (1992) noted,

If you add in that authoritarians appear to have little self-understanding (e.g. they think of themselves as “rugged individualists,” but are sometimes more likely to be swayed by normative pressure (Altemeyer, 1988), tend to be highly self-righteous (when experiments show they are just as likely to lie and cheat as others), and tend to be mean-spirited (Altemeyer, 1988), it does not add up to a pretty picture (p. 116).

Such descriptions of authoritarianism may shed light on religious fundamentalism, given that Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) have described fundamentalism as the religious aspect of authoritarianism. Whether these two construct can indeed be understood as parallel phenomena or not, religious fundamentalism’s strong connection to authoritarianism is not a flattering one.

Spirituality and Development

The connection between religious fundamentalism and variables such as authoritarianism points to our need to better understand how religious fundamentalism develops. Indeed, the recent climate of religious intolerance alone warrants a fuller investigation into the social, personal, and political factors that play into the creation of fundamentalist ideologies. Within the psychological arena, the question emerges, “what developmental factors early on affect one’s level of religious fundamentalism?” This question has a great deal of clinical relevance for clinicians interested in their clients’ emotional and spiritual development. An increased understanding of the psychological variables involved in the evolution of fundamentalist perspectives should help us foster healthy forms of religiosity during the therapeutic process.

Fortunately, there is already a body of psychological literature that examines religiosity through a developmental lens, as well as a number of variables born out of various theories and ideas about psychological and spiritual development. Within this area of study, the object relations theory of development has been of primary focus and has been the basis from which many key theories of spiritual development have been built. Out of the object relations perspective has emerged two key variables which have been used to describe the developmental nature of spirituality. These variables are *God image* and *spiritual maturity*. These concepts, along with the variable of *object relations development* itself, are of focus in the present study. This study explores these variables in terms of their capacity to clarify the nature and evolution of religious fundamentalism among Christians.

Object Relations Development

Object relations is the study of internal and external relationships as mapped by the dynamic interplay between self and object (Hamilton, 1988). A branch of psychoanalytic thought, object relations theory draws on many of Freud's original ideas, which were modified by early object relations theorists to incorporate an increasing focus on relationships. Freud utilized the concept of an object relation in order to emphasize that bodily drives must satisfy their needs through an external medium, or an object. Freud proposed that psychological health depended on one's ability to manage the tension between these bodily drives and the limitations placed by the realization that no object is perfectly reliable as a source of gratification. In other words, healthy psychological functioning was understood as requiring a balancing act between the drives of the id and the restrictions of the superego.

Because Freud focused on the management of drives within the structure of the id, ego, and superego, his theory can be understood as reflecting a drive/structure model (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). This model, however, was later revised by early object relations theorists such as Klein, Winnicott, and Fairbairn, who emphasized the importance of the object as a means in itself. Fairbairn (1954), whose work in particular captured this shift, concluded that, "a relationship with an object and not the gratification of an impulse is the ultimate aim of libidinal striving" (p. 50). Whereas Freud viewed relationships as avenues for the gratification of pleasure-seeking impulses, Fairbairn proposed that forming relations with objects (i.e. other people) is the end toward which the libidinal energy is directed, not simply the means. Therefore, according to early

object relations theorists, our primary drive is to find and maintain object relations, which, once internalized, form the structure of our personality.

Through this shift in emphasis away from the gratification of impulses and towards the relations with objects, Freud's original drive/structure model was transformed into a new relational/structure model. Within this model, an individual's relationships to various internal and external objects began being studied in some detail. Klein (1932), who is considered the founder of object relations theory, pioneered this work by expanding Freud's study of adults to the observation of children and child's play. Through her analysis of play, Klein originated many important concepts, including that of the "internalized object." This concept was picked up by other object relations theorists, such as Fairbairn (1954), whose conceptualization of internalization has been described as a "process of swallowing the object whole where it lives on inside the personality, a psychologically miniature version of its anxious, critical, or angry external self" (Jones, 1991, p.17).

Fairbairn believed that when the external mother does not provide adequate gratification, she is internalized and crystallized into an internal object that is then controlled (Jones, 1991). Although this process is done as a defense, it leaves the child having to relate internally to the bad object in the form of a critical voice. In a secondary effort for control, this internalized "bad" object is then projected onto other external objects. Static, bad internalized objects are thereby the root of psychopathology. In more plain terms, if an infant has repeated interactions with a critical, rejecting caretaker, this experience of relating to a rejecting other is taken inside, where it manifests in the form

of an internal critic. This internal critical voice, or object, is then projected onto real others, who are perceived as rejecting.

Not all objects, however, are bad. Infants also have the chance to relate to positive aspects of their caretakers, who provide care and nurturance (Hamilton, 1988). Through loving encounters with caretakers, the baby is able to take in good objects that are the foundation of a healthy personality. Through time, the child is able to rely more and more on his or her own good objects for self-care and comfort. Adequate, reliable parenting helps the child develop object constancy, or the ability to hold in awareness the loving support of one's attachment object, even when that object is not available, either because of physical distance or temporary misattunement.

Object constancy allows the child to become increasingly independent (Hamilton, 1988). However, because relinquishment of reliance upon parents is a difficult step to take, children typically find ways to transform an external object, such as a teddy bear or blankie, into a source of comfort. Such objects are invested with emotional energy until they have the power to sooth the child's emotions as only the parents once could. Winnicott (1953) termed these objects *transitional objects* because they help the child transition away from dependence on the mother as the only object of focus.

Image of God and Development

As stated, object relations heralded a shift of emphasis away from drives and towards objects as being of primary importance. This shift was reflected in changing understandings of religion and religious experience. According to Freud, religion could be understood as a defense mechanism, utilized to shield one's psyche from the

unbearable fear of one's powerlessness regarding pain and death (1928). Freud believed that we develop an image of God (which here will also be referred to as God image) as an exalted father in order to feel a sense of protection and to fulfill our own wishes for an ideal parent. He asserted that this image forms during the oedipal period and, through the process of transference, is based off our experiences with our real father.

Although the role of transference was maintained in later theories of God image development, post-Freudian models reflected a shift in the understanding of transference as a process (Hall, 1996). Whereas Freud conceptualized transference as the projection of instinctual conflicts, object relations theorists began viewing it as the reenactment of old internalized objects or relationships (Jones, 1991). In this way, religion shifts from being a priori pathological to a priori neutral, with its level of pathology determined by the health of one's internal landscape of objects. Whereas Freud viewed religion as a universal obsessional neurosis which had to be given up in place of rational thought, later theorists believed that an individual's relationship to God can be either healthy or unhealthy, and consequently conducive or non-conducive to psychological functioning (Hall, 1996).

Although various theorists have contributed greatly to the understanding of how one relates to God from an object relations perspective, one researcher—Ana-Maria Rizzuto—has been at the forefront in her field. In an introduction to an edited collection of essays on religion and psychotherapy, psychologist Mary Lou Randour stated that “If the symbol of Freud as ‘father’ of psychoanalysis has been used to explain his historical

position, certainly Rizzuto is the ‘mother’ of all attempts to explicate a developmental and clinical psychoanalytic theory of religious experience” (1993, p. 9).

In Rizzuto’s book “The Birth of the Living God” (1979), Rizzuto described conclusions reached through innovative research on 123 inpatients who were asked to draw pictures and fill out questionnaires designed to access information about their family dynamics and images of God. Of these individuals, 20 were analyzed in greater depth and written about in 30-page case formulations. Through this research, “for the first time, was a fully credentialed psychoanalyst demonstrating in a careful, rigorous fashion the *clinical* utility of taking an individual’s idiosyncratic religious beliefs with great seriousness *both* as another ‘royal road to the unconscious’ for the clinician and as a resource for the psychic well-being of the patient (and not simply an index of personal pathology)” (McDargh, 1997, p. 182).

Alongside her own observations, Rizzuto (1979) has drawn on the theoretical work of Freud and later object relations theorists in her understanding of how people form their image of God. Rizzuto agrees with Freud’s assertion that God image is formed during early life through processes rooted in the unconscious. However, whereas Freud believed that images of God are based mainly on experiences with one’s father, Rizzuto asserts that one’s God image is an amalgamation of images of both parents, as well as other family members. Rizzuto views God image formation as somewhat more complex and likely to begin earlier than the oedipal period, where Freud placed it.

Despite these differences, Rizzuto (1979) agrees with and has expanded upon a foundational idea put forth by Freud—that one’s image of God is based on affective

processes rather than on mental beliefs gained through dogma. In her writing, Rizzuto emphasizes the distinction between one's public, conceptually-driven *God concept*, which represents the beliefs about God as taught by one's religion or parents, and the private, preconscious *God image*, which is our emotional understanding of God. In Rizzuto's (1979) words, "The concept of God is fabricated mostly at the level of secondary-process thinking. This is the God of the theologians, the God whose existence or nonexistence is debated by metaphysical reasoning. But this God leaves us cold" (p.47-48). God image, on the other hand, as described by one researcher, is "the working emotional model of God. The kind of person that an individual acts as though God were" (Lawrence, 1991, p.6). Although not everyone believes in God, Rizzuto claims that everyone has a God image. Because encountering the idea of God is an unavoidable childhood experience, so too is it unavoidable to form an image of who God is.

According to Rizzuto (1979), one's image of God is based on unconscious affective processes that fill one's experience of God with either positive or negative emotions, images, associations, etc. So what determines whether one imagines God as a loving father, judgmental ruler, challenging teacher, passive observer, or something different entirely? As stated, Rizzuto believes that one's relationship with both parents, along with any other important caregivers, may lay the foundation. More specifically, if one's caretaker is attentive and responsive to one's needs and emotions, one is more likely to develop a sense of security that one will be cared for by others—in this context, one might say a sense of faith. In short, children's early experiences with caretakers

determine the quality of their internalized objects, which in turn affects how others, including God, are later experienced and perceived.

In her understanding of these processes, Rizzuto draws upon the work of Winnicott, who came up with the phrase “good enough mother” to capture the basic caring a child requires to develop affectively. According to Winnicott (1953), it is through the baby’s relationship with his or her caretakers that her or his own inexplicable experiences of sensation can be given meaning. Through providing a holding environment, the “good enough” parent takes in the baby’s experience, modulates it through her or his adult care and understanding, and gives it back to the baby, who internalizes it.

According to Winnicott’s model, the baby is psychologically merged with the parent, such that the mother or father is experienced as an extension of his or herself, or as Winnicott puts it, as “me-objects”. As attentive care instills the baby with feelings of confidence and trust, so too occurs a sense of omnipotence. As infants get older, they begin to relate to their parents as separate entities (or as “not-me objects”). Awareness of separateness, however, challenges their sense of omnipotence and therefore elicits anxiety. In order to help the child transition from symbiosis to a shared reality, transitional objects are employed. As stated previously, these objects offer comfort and soothing to the child. According to Winnicott, transitional objects are used throughout the lifetime and are reflected in such phenomena as art and religion.

Rizzuto also considers religious phenomena from this perspective, asserting that one’s God image can be understood from a psychological framework as a type of transitional object. Yet she emphasizes that unlike most transitional objects, which

disappear and are discarded, one's God image continues to develop through one's lifetime in a manner that reflects and supports one's evolving understanding of oneself and one's external environment. Additionally, while experiences with caretakers are seen as playing a key role in the development of one's image of God, so too, she believes, do self-created images of wish-for or feared parents. Rizzuto described this use of fantasy when she wrote,

In summary, then, throughout life God remains a transitional object at the service of gaining leverage with oneself, with others, and with life itself. This is so, not because God is God, but because, like the teddy bear, he has obtained a good half of his stuffing from the primary objects the child has "found" in his life. The other half of God's stuffing comes from the child's capacity to "create" a God according to his needs (p. 179).

Because Rizzuto places the formation of God image at such a young age, by the time that children reach a need for a transitional object, their image of God is readily available. As described above, this image is intimately connected to one's experiences with one's parents and the internal objects that these experiences engender. Rizzuto has based much of her conceptualizations upon her own clinical observations as well as upon psychoanalytic theory. Since her first publications, however, Rizzuto's basic assumption that object relations development and the quality of one's God image should be linked has been corroborated by empirical means.

For instance, in 1994, Brokaw and Edwards gave 92 undergraduates 3 measures of God image—the Loving and Controlling God Scales (Benson and Spilka, 1973), the

Gorsuch Adjective Checklist (1968), and the Religious Experience Questionnaire (Edwards, 1976, as cited by Brokaw & Edwards, 1994)—and 3 measures of object relations development—the Ego Function Assessment Questionnaire-Revised (Hower, 1987, as cited by Brokaw & Edwards, 1994), the Rorschach Test Comprehensive System (Exner, 1986, as cited by Brokaw & Edwards, 1994), and the Comprehensive Object Relations Profile (Burke, Summers, Selinger, & Polonus, 1986)—hypothesizing that level of object relations development would be significantly correlated with images of God as loving and benevolent and significantly negatively correlated with image of God as wrathful, controlling, and irrelevant. The correlations between God image and object relations development for the projective measures were non-significant. However, high, significant correlations were found between scores on the Ego Function Assessment Questionnaire—Revised (the only objective object relations scale utilized) and all the measures of God image in the hypothesized directions.

A year later, Key (1995) found significant relationships for 67 inpatients between object relations development, as measured by the BORI (Bell, 1995), and scores on the presence, challenge, and acceptance scales of the GIS (Lawrence, 1991) ($r = .43, .38,$ and $.38$, respectively, p 's $< .05$). These results were replicated by Tisdale et al. (1997), who compared scores for 99 subjects on the three GIS scales (acceptance, presence, and challenge) with four BORI subscales (insecure attachment, egocentricity, alienation, and social incompetence) at three different times. Of the subsequent correlations, 31 out of 36 were significant at the .05 level.

Spiritual Maturity and Development

Alongside the concept of God image, another key concept, spiritual maturity, has also been used to capture the link between spirituality and psychological functioning. As described in the previous section, the idea of God image came out of a shift within the psychoanalytic tradition away from a drive/structure model towards a relational/structure model of the psyche. Subsequent to this change, however, a further and more subtle shift occurred within the relational/structure understanding through the work of Kohut (1978), an object relations psychologist who developed self psychology. Like other object relations theorists, Kohut described the process of internalization, but emphasized that what is internalized is not a static object (as Klein and Fairbairn had described), but rather a relationship. His work thereby heralded an alternate way of understanding internalization which drew the focus away from internalized *introjects* towards internal and external *relationships*, or patterns of relating.

This shift in emphasis within the psychological domain provided a new direction for theorists interested in understanding religion from a psychological perspective (Hall, 1996). More specifically, as attention expanded to include the importance of internalized relationships, the construct of spiritual maturity, which captures an individual's relationship to God rather than simply his or her internal representation of God, became of interest. Although many researchers have used the term spiritual maturity in various ways, an understanding of spiritual maturity as capturing the nature of one's relationship to God will be the focus here.

According to Kohut, people are always in relationships and it is these relationships that form the structure of the self. Through meeting three fundamental needs—transcendence, acceptance, and belonging—relationships play a necessary role in the development of a strong and cohesive sense of self. According to Kohut's model, psychopathology is based on internalized relationships, or patterns of relating, rather than on internalized bad objects. Additionally, Kohut asserted that one's internal relationships are reenacted in external relationships with others.

As stated, this emphasis on relationships has impacted the study of religious phenomena such that attention is paid not only to people's images or representations of God, but to their relationships with God as well. In this way, the study has become interpersonal, rather than solely intrapsychic in nature. Through the concept of spiritual maturity, psychologists have begun investigating how one's internal matrix of internalized relationships play out and are reflected in one's relationship to God.

Toward the beginning, these investigations were more theoretical and qualitative in nature. Shackelford (1978, as cited by Hall, & Brokaw, 1995) was the first to undertake a theoretical study that analyzed the similarities between the understanding of dependence from an object relations and biblical perspective. In his study, Shackelford used the object relations concept of mature dependence, which is characterized as a differentiation between self and other, an attitude of giving and ability to receive, and a pattern of identification rather than incorporation.

In terms of the first component, Shackelford drew on four New Testament passages (John 5:19-20, John 15:1-15, Galatians 2:20, and Galatians 5:13-16) to support his

assertion that Christian teachings indicate a need for differentiation between self and others. For the second component, Shackelford highlighted the importance of giving as well as receiving from a biblical perspective. He pointed out that Jesus indicated his ability to both receive and give love in the statement: “Just as the Father has loved me, I also love you.” (John 15:9). Finally, Shackelford considers the issue of identification, suggesting that the bible encourages internalization of positive aspects of others. He again draws on statements from Jesus, such as, “For whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (John, 5:19).

Pingleton (1984) expanded upon Shackelford’s work, finding connections between a biblical and object relations understanding of mature dependence, which he called interdependence. He asserted that the “body” metaphor utilized by Paul represented the interdependence that exists in the church. He also highlighted the manner in which relationships are spoken of in the bible, such as people being mutually encouraging of one another (Romans 1:12), as reflecting a healthy form of dependence. Pingleton’s work, as well as Shackelford’s, reflected and expanded upon the growing assumption that people’s psychological pattern of relatedness is linked to the level of health or maturity within their spiritual functioning.

For an empirical investigation of spiritual maturity to occur, however, a more theoretically grounded conceptualization of the construct had to be developed. Fortunately, Todd Hall and Keith Edwards have worked to formulate and refine a definition of spiritual maturity that is informed by developmental theory (1996, 2002). Specifically, their work draws on object relations theory, which provides a relational

framework of psychological maturity that they have utilized in their conceptualization of spiritual maturity as being relationally driven.

Based on their conceptualization of this construct, Hall and Edwards (1996) developed a spiritual maturity scale which they divided into two main subscales—Awareness, which measures one’s awareness of God, and Quality, which measures the quality of one’s relationship to God. In terms of the Awareness subscale, Hall and Edwards (1996) proposed that in order for an individual to have a relationship with God, he or she must be aware of God’s presence. Yet while having a felt relationship with God is seen as an important step toward spiritual maturity, it is the quality of that bond, as measured by the Quality subscale, which determines whether one’s relationship to God is healthy or pathological.

As a means for assessing the quality of this relationship, Hall and Edwards drew on an object relations perspective of relationships and development. Using this theory, they developed three main dimensions that describe the level of health or pathology in one’s manner of relating to God. These are reflected in the original three Quality subscales—Instability, Grandiosity, and Realistic Acceptance. The Instability subscale was developed as an indicator of instability within one’s relationship with God. According to the authors, unstable relationships point to what object relations theorists would describe as a borderline personality organization. The authors describe this borderline dynamic as involving “an inability to integrate good and bad self- and other-images due to excessive splitting and projection” (1996, p.237). From an object relations perspective, when parenting is intrusive or unattuned, the child fears that the scant, yet extremely precious

positive experiences that they have with their caretaker will be overwhelmed or destroyed by the negative (Hamilton, 1988). In order to protect these positive experiences, then, they are likely to separate the good objects within the parent from the bad objects in a process known as splitting.

This process of splitting makes it difficult in the future for the individual to perceiving themselves or others (and in this case God) as complex, whole individuals. People who struggle with this dynamic, then, have difficulty containing complexity and ambiguity, and feel more comfortable when things can be understood as black or white. According to Hall and Edwards, this difficulty with ambiguity is likely to play out in these individuals' spiritual lives, such that they will desire to see things as either clearly right or clearly wrong. Additionally, when confronted with challenges or disappointments, people with this personality organization tend to be overwhelmed with emotion, which, according to the authors, may play out as anger at God or feelings of guilt.

The second subscale, Grandiosity, describes what in object relations terms would be called a narcissistic personality organization. In object relations theory, narcissistic individuals have an extremely devalued and generally depleted sense of self (Hamilton, 1988). As a defense against their felt lack of self-worth, these individuals attempt to present themselves as superior to others, harbor grandiose fantasies, and long for positive attention and praise. Through this positive attention, they utilize others as regulators of their self-esteem. Kohut referred to individuals who are used by narcissists to bolster their self-esteem as selfobjects, because he understood them as being

experienced as extensions of the narcissistic individual's self. For the narcissist, relating to others as selfobjects detracts from their ability to engage in mature, mutually fulfilling relationships. Instead, others (in this case God) are valued in their capacity to inflate the individual's sense of self, rather than being valued in their own right. Additionally, depending on how the selfobjects are performing their job of regulating self esteem, they may be idealized or devalued in extreme shifts.

The final dimension which Hall and Edwards (1996) originally outlined is termed Realistic Acceptance. From an object relations perspective, persons at this level of development may be described as functioning on a whole-object relations level. This means they are able to integrate the good and the bad, thereby seeing others as complex, whole individuals (Hamilton, 1988). Individuals at this level of development are also able to differentiate themselves from others. They are able to maintain meaningful human contact with another person, rather than relating to him or her as a means to an end. According to Hall and Edwards, these individuals are "able to experience and tolerate mixed feelings and ambivalence in their relationships with God, and thus come to some sense of resolution by dealing with these emotions" (1996, p.238). They are also able to tolerate disappointment and do not allow negative experiences to rupture their connection to God, who is valued in God's own right, not simply as a means to an end.

As described above, Hall and Edwards conceptualized spiritual maturity as describing the quality of one's relationship to God, which they believed to be determined by one's general ability to relate to others non-pathologically, or in other words, by one's level of object relations development. This hypothesis was initially confirmed by

two preliminary studies. In 1995, Hall and Brokaw investigated spiritual maturity in terms of its relationship to object relations development, as well as God image, hypothesizing that spiritual maturity would be linked to higher levels of object relations development and to more positive images of God. They utilized a sample of 20 evangelical Christian subjects who were tested at two times, three months apart. During these administrations, the Religious Status Inventory (RSIn; Hadlock, 1988, as cited by Hall & Brokaw, 1995) and the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1983, as cited by Hall & Brokaw, 1995) were used to measure spiritual maturity, the Ego Function Assessment Questionnaire was used to measure object relations development, and the Gorsuch Adjective Checklist (1968) was used to measure God image. Across the two data collections, a total of 72 correlations were calculated to test the link between spiritual maturity and positive God image. Of these, 60 were statistically significant in the predicted direction, the majority of these being at the .01 or .001 level. Additionally, all 8 of the correlations calculated to measure the relationship between spiritual maturity and object relations development were significant at either the .01 or .001 level.

A similar study by Hall (1997) also connected spiritual maturity to God image and object relations development. In this study, which utilized 76 subjects, 19 out of 20 correlations between spiritual maturity object relations subscales were significant, whereas 31 out of 35 correlations between spiritual maturity and God image were significant. This and the previously mentioned study together provided strong

preliminary support for the idea that spiritual maturity may be linked to one's psychological development.

A year later, similar results were found with a much larger sample size. As part of their work to validate the SAI (the original measure of spiritual maturity described above), Hall and Edwards (1996) administered this instrument to 470 participants from a local university, along with a measure of object relations development call the Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI). Results provided preliminary support for their hypothesis that the quality of one's relationship to God would correlate to one's level of object relations development. Although the Grandiosity scale did not correlate significantly, 7 out of 8 of the remaining correlations (i.e. those pertaining to the Realistic Acceptance and Instability subscales) were significant, most of those at the .001 level. Although these results were preliminary, they were confirmed during another validity study (Hall and Edwards, 2002) that tested a revised version of the SAI. In this study, the authors used a sample of 438 university students and compared scores on the SAI to scores on the BORI, as well as a variety of other instruments. Results indicated a connection between level of object relations development and spiritual maturity, evidenced by the fact that 16 out of 20 correlations were significant in the predicted direction, 14 of these at a .01 level.

Results from a study conducted by Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, and Pike (1998) also indicated a connection between object relations development and spiritual maturity. In this study, 76 participants were recruited from a spiritual direction training program, an outpatient clinic, and an undergraduate college population. The authors hypothesized

that spiritual maturity, as measured by three subscales within the RSI and two subscales within the SAI, would correlate significantly to object relations development, as measured by four subscales within the BORI. Of the subsequent correlations, 19 out of 20 were significant, with the majority of p-values being at the .001 level.

Religious Fundamentalism and Development

Religious Fundamentalism and Object Relations Development

The literature addressing religious fundamentalism from a developmental perspective is somewhat limited. There are, however, a few psychologists who have written about developmental factors that likely contribute to religious fundamentalism. Their work draws mainly on an object relations understanding of development. Within this writing, theoretical links have been made between religious fundamentalism and both lower level of psychological and spiritual maturity as well as negative images of God. While these connections lack empirical support, the authors' arguments are well grounded in theory and provide a strong base from which research attempts (such as this current study) might expand.

Unfortunately, there is little continuity within the existing literature focusing on the development of religious fundamentalism. Rather, this literature represents a host of the individual ideas of a number of psychologists, many of whom do not consistently draw on one another's work. Nevertheless, an effort will be made to indicate connections between the proposed ideas and highlight common themes that may shed light on the variables within this study.

Of these themes perhaps the most significant is anxiety. A number of psychologists have written about the role that anxiety seems to play in fundamentalist thinking, which is seen as providing a rigidity of structure that helps to manage this anxiety (Hedge-Carruthers, 1997; Stein, 2004; Summers, 2006). From an object relations perspective, various types of anxiety are experienced when parenting is in some way inadequate. Only when an infant's needs are met in a timely and caring manner can he or she learn that the world is a safe place. In this case, the parent is experienced as a good object that can be introjected, or taken in, such that the caring and soothing becomes internal and the capacity for self-love and self-soothing is developed (Hamilton, 1988). On the other hand, when bad rather than good objects are taken in, the child's inner world becomes frightening and persecutory. For instance, when the parent is demeaning or critical, the child will internalize this attitude in the form of a critical, demeaning voice.

Living in a world of bad objects produces acute anxiety, which must be managed through defenses such as projection, introjection, and splitting (Hamilton, 1988). In Klein's (1946) perspective, when the external object is persecutory, it is introjected in an effort to control it. Although this action reduces persecutory anxiety, it increases annihilation anxiety, or fear of one's own internal aggressiveness. This aggressive impulse is then projected back into the parent, who is seen as attacking. In this way, persecutory anxiety must once again be confronted, and introjection of the parent's aggressiveness again occurs. Klein believed this cycle of introjection and projection is used by children in order to manage their anxiety. In this process, the boundary between self and other becomes blurred such that parents' abusiveness towards the child will later

manifest as cruel self-attacks (introjection), or as a sense of being threatened or abused by others (projection).

Anna Freud (1966) saw the latter, i.e. the projection of internal judgments, as an attempt to allay guilt. She believed that criticism from external authorities are introjected into the superego, but when excessive, must then be projected onto others so as to avoid overwhelming shame. Stein (2004) followed a similar line of reasoning in her understanding of fundamentalist ideologies, which she pointed out often view evil as being external to their particular system, which contains only good. She believes that religious fundamentalists utilize projection in order to make other people “carriers” of unwanted emotions or faults (p. 7). This use of projection gives the individual the advantage of not having to own his or her own dark shadows, and additionally places evil in an external position where it can be more readily destroyed. Speaking from a fundamentalist’s perspective, Stein wrote that by “destroying the people who have become recipients and carriers of my bad, denigrated parts, I achieve the destruction of bad parts of my self, which is my deep goal, and brings me great relief” (p.7).

Related to this tendency to make certain others “all bad” is the defense of splitting. As described earlier, when parenting is poor or abusive, children separate out the bad experiences of their parents for fear that they will overwhelm the good experiences, which, in their paucity, must be preserved. As such individuals become adults, the early need to separate positive from negative experiences of parents generalizes into a need to split all that is seen as good from all that is seen as harmful or threatening. On a cognitive level, this process may manifest as very clear-cut thinking in regard to right

and wrong. It is unsurprising then, that such a defense has been linked to the black and white religious interpretations within fundamentalism ideologies (Stein, 2004). In other words, people are not only viewed as bad due to a need to project and destroy the bad, but because the world must be clearly organized into good and bad camps—so that, within this framework, the good might be protected.

As mentioned by Stein (2004), this separation can be exceedingly strict, such that even other Christians are denounced as evil when their interpretations do not exactly align with one's one. However, there may be other reasons for this separation of "good" believers from "bad" or non-believers. According to Summers (2006), religious fundamentalists separate good from bad because of a "need to believe in the certainty of the doctrines with which the self is identified" (p.337). To understand this point, it is useful to turn again to object relations theory. According to this developmental view, children who grow up with parents who are not attuned to their needs and emotions have difficulty developing a stable, clear sense of self. Within the process, Winnicott emphasized the importance of mirroring, a phenomenon in which parents attend to their children through reflecting back or mimicking the infant's expressions and shows of emotion (2003). Through seeing themselves in their parents' faces, children begin to know themselves.

When this type of attunement is absent, children experience what Erikson (1964) termed identity diffusion. In her analysis of fundamentalism, Hedge-Carruthers (1997) places fundamentalism within the fifth stage of Erikson's developmental model, because it is in this stage that identity diffusion is experienced. She noted that during this period

that individuals are vulnerable to social pressures and tend to draw their identity from a group, with which they are enmeshed. Because the group provides a needed identity, the group becomes very important, a point that Stein (2004) and Summers (2006) and Hedge-Carruthers (1997) build on in their work.

In exploring this point, these authors bring us back to the issue of anxiety—in this case the anxiety that arises when one’s sense of self is not clearly formed. They have pointed out that identification with a set of beliefs plays an important role in managing this anxiety. Summers noted that when the beliefs of the group that one is fused with become threatened, one’s sense of self is threatened. He wrote that, “Knowing no distinction between the belief system and his sense of who he is, the presence of alternative beliefs and lifestyles, such as gay marriage, makes the fundamentalist shudder with a sense of existential anxiety” (p.337).

Baker (1998) expressed a similar perspective, noting that twin-ships longings, or the desire to not be alone in the universe, are common within communities of religious fundamentalists, such that “commitment to the fellowship of believers take on a life-sustaining significance” (p.225). Along with twin-ship longings, Baker asserted that religious fundamentalism fulfills mirroring and idealizing longings. Through God, the believer finally finds an omnipotent other that they can idealize, and who is capable of attending to them with perfect attunement. Interestingly, Baker has stated that this state of fulfillment should be conducive to psychological development. He noted, however, that when the believer begins experiencing the natural desire for growth that arises from such a holding environment, he or she is shut down. He explained that such a “longing to

have one's inner experience validated as unique is often experienced by others in the Conservative Fundamentalist community as a demand for distinctness that is threatening" (p.225). According to Baker, when the believers' desire for growth and individuality is met with resistance, their "sense of emerging self" is injured, and must now be reinforced through an even more "fervent reliance upon the literal interpretation of a holy text" (p.225).

Like Baker, Stein (2004) has emphasized the role of dogmatic ideologies in helping an individual who for whatever reason was not able to develop a full, coherent sense of self. Stein described the fear of ambiguity that arises from such a tenuous position, stating that religious fundamentalism acts as "a mind-control and as a tight holding, providing a kind of soothing iron belt, a shielding carapace to keep away the confusion and fragmentation that come from a weakened, brittle self" (p.3).

Here Stein mentions confusion as growing out of a depleted sense of self, yet, as mentioned, immature object relations can lead to a general sense of fear and uncertainty about the world. Alongside the issue of identity is the general sense of insecurity which can lead to fears about death, meaning, morality, and other existential questions—questions which she notes are taken care of by way of clear, literal answers. In this way, religion serves many defensive roles. In his analysis of closed belief systems, Rokeach (1960) summarized these roles when he stated that, "in the extreme, the closed system is nothing more than the total network of psychoanalytic defense mechanisms organized together to form a cognitive system and designed to shield a vulnerable mind" (p.69).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, many factors are at play in the development of religious fundamentalism. The most recurrent and perhaps important theme, however, seems to be the need for individuals who lack a sense of internal structure to rely on a structure from without. Because of a host of anxieties, this structure must be rather rigid, thereby acting as a “comforting straightjacket” (Stein, 2004, p.3)—a space in which the world is clearly organized and the believer is clearly protected.

Religious Fundamentalism and Spiritual Maturity

Very little has been written connecting religious fundamentalism to level of spiritual maturity. In particular, the literature is lacking in regard to how the relationally-driven concept of spiritual maturity utilized in this study may be linked to religious fundamentalism. Such a link certainly seems likely, however, given that both of these constructs have been explained within the same developmental framework. If having a lower level of object relations development has the simultaneous effect of decreasing one’s level of spiritual maturity while increasing one’s level of religious fundamentalism, then it follows that these variables should be related.

In fact, a number of points of connection between the constructs are immediately apparent when one looks through a developmental lens. To begin with, theoretical expositions of spiritual maturity and religious fundamentalism both assume that the more pathology that is present, the more religion will be used to serve defensive purposes. As described previously, Hall and his colleagues (Hall, 1996; Hall & Brokaw, 1995; Hall, Brokaw, Edwards & Pike, 1998) focus on the qualitative nature of one’s relationship to God, and how it can be impeded by defenses such as splitting. They describe how

individuals with borderline orientations tend to have difficulty integrating good and bad, a pattern which leads to unstable relationships with others, such as God. These authors highlight how splitting impacts one relationship with God, while Stein (2004) and others focus on how splitting impacts the nature of one's beliefs.

Additionally, both groups of theorists (i.e. those focusing on the construct of spiritual maturity and those focusing on the construct of religious fundamentalism) have written about the problems that arise when one's sense of identity is depleted. Hall and his colleagues focus on how such a weak sense of self causes one to use God to inflate one's ego, while authors such as Summers (2006) and Stein (2004) focus on how a weak sense of self causes one to rely on strict dogma. Although the former authors attend to the believer's relationship with God, they center on the same underlying dynamics described by the latter, who focus on the believer's relationship to religion. Although the end-points differ, both groups of theorists assert that the quality of one's early object relations experiences should impact the way one approaches one's spirituality. Religious fundamentalism and spiritual maturity, then, seem to be parallel phenomena such that lower levels of spiritual maturity and higher levels of religious fundamentalism may go hand in hand.

Religious Fundamentalism and Image of God

There is a lack of literature addressing the God image of religious fundamentalists. However, as part of her conceptualization of religious fundamentalism, Stein (2004) described a process of purification through which fundamentalists are left with an image of God that is increasingly harsh and demeaning. Stein asserted that religious

fundamentalists, in their quest to extricate sin and evil from their being, must “violently transcend” (p.1) their lower nature through fervent religious activity. Stein wrote that “like a pencil that is reduced out of existence by becoming increasingly sharpened, this body will find its redemption by becoming pure instrument of God’s will, eventually by merging with God in a cataclysm of purifying fire” (2004, p.7). The most extreme example of this process of giving up one’s existence in the fight against evil would be the case of risking one’s life, or even killing one’s self, in the name of God.

Stein believes that as this process of purification heightens, one’s image of God adopts more negative, even violent, qualities. She explained that “Since the projection and identificatory processes described above become increasingly violent as they go on, God becomes increasingly harsh, demanding, and tyrannical” (2004, p. 7). In other words, as one’s own fear of internal darkness manifests in a need to rid one’s self of bad, a vision of God as tolerant and accepting becomes egodystonic and is replaced with a image of God that aligns more closely with one’s own harsh internal experience.

Although Stein’s assertions have never been tested, they do seem to be supported by conclusions drawn by Hedge-Carruthers (1997), who performed a qualitative analysis of prominent fundamentalist religious leaders. In her analysis, Hedge-Carruthers concluded that, “The God-image of the fundamentalism is that of the harsh, punitive father who must be appeased only by the blood sacrifice of his own Son” (abstract). In understanding why this is the case, she noted that the majority of these individuals were raised by parents who were either violent or withdrawn.

For instance, she described how Jerry Falwell's father was alcoholic and frequently abusive, quoting a story fondly retold in Falwell's autobiography. In this story, Falwell described how,

Dad was still sitting at the kitchen table reading a newspaper. Suddenly he looked directly at us and shouted.

"Both of you, stop!" William froze in his tracks, and I leaned forward eagerly to see what Dad was up to. William's eyes opened wide as Dad drew his gun and pointed it at the floor just in front of my friend's trembling legs.

"Don't move," he said quietly. Then he took careful aim and pulled the trigger. The shot from the .38 Remington pistol blew a fairly impressive hole in the kitchen floor. Calmly, Dad blew smoke from the barrel and placed the piston back on the table.

"I've been trying to get that fly all day," he said. (Falwell, 1987, p. 48-49, as cited by Hedge-Carruthers, 1997, p. 183).

In understanding how Falwell dealt with these types of events, Hedge-Carruthers highlighted Falwell's inability to recognize the inappropriateness of his father's violence, evidenced by his statement, "I lay in the darkness feeling the sting of his hand across my face. But I didn't hate him or fear him or mistrust him for it. I loved and trusted my father even in times like this" (p. 71, as cited by Hedge-Carruthers, 1997, p. 183). In her focus on this point, she proposed that Falwell's ability to reconcile two potentially dissonant accounts of his father may be linked to his ability to simultaneously view God as harsh and loving.

From examples such as this, Hedge-Carruthers constructs an account of religious fundamentalists as needing to believe in a perfect God, and yet unable to understand a Divine figure as separate from their earliest experiences of parental care. In summarizing this point, she wrote,

The God-image held by fundamentalism is of a God who is distant and capable of all-consuming wrath, but somehow is, nonetheless, all good. This God is seen as just, demanding a repayment for that which was taken, even though it extends to the death of his own son. But like Jerry Falwell's father, even though the sting of God's hand is felt across the check, the believer knows that God is love (p. 210).

In their explication of religious fundamentalism, both Stein (2004) and Hedge-Carruthers (1997) attempt to grapple with the complex nature of religious fundamentalists' image of God. Whatever the explanation, these believers, even while they firmly hold that God is loving and perfect, seem to envision a God that is more harsh and judgmental than the God of their fellow Christians.

Summary

Although the constructs of spiritual maturity and image of God have shed a great deal of light upon how developmental processes may affect one's spiritual functioning, this study attempts to add another variable—religious fundamentalism—into the existing framework. Studies have already confirmed that object relations development, which captures how one views and relates to others, is tied to how one views (ala God image) and relates to (ala spiritual maturity) God. Although it has not been tested quantitatively, it also seems plausible that developmental processes might influence how one relates to

religion or to one's religious beliefs as well. This idea has been expanded upon theoretically by a handful of psychoanalytic thinkers who have proposed that holding a fundamentalist stance towards religion accomplishes a number of defensive purposes (Hedge-Carruthers, 1997; Stein, 2004; Summers, 2006). For individuals with more pathological object relations, then, religious fundamentalism might be a way to deal with underlying anxieties about themselves or about life.

These authors have further suggested that religious fundamentalists should hold more negative images of God. This assertion has only been supported qualitatively (Hedge-Carruthers, 1997). Additionally, although the literature does not address the relationship between religious fundamentalism and God image, the similarities between the underlying dynamics that have been used to describe each variable suggests that these may be parallel constructs.

Based on the theoretical considerations described above, it seems likely that the construct of religious fundamentalism should fit nicely into a framework for understanding religiosity that is based on the theory of object relations development. In testing this assertion quantitatively, this study attempts to provide a deeper understand of religious fundamentalism, both in terms of how it develops and also how it relates to other aspects of spiritual functioning. Gaining a clearer developmental view of religious fundamentalism will contribute to our ability to understand how psychological and spiritual realms of functioning intersect—an understanding which is integral in working with spiritual clients.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants for this study self identified as Christians and lived in two moderate-sized cities ($n = 85$). Participants were recruited through contact with Christian groups, namely two churches and five Bible Study groups. Forty-five of the individuals were students at a large university. Participants' self-reported ethnicity was as follows: 90.6% ($n = 77$) Caucasian; 3.5% ($n = 3$) Asian; 2.4% ($n = 2$) Native American; and 3.5% ($n = 3$) Hispanic/Latino. The participants ranged in age from 18-68 years old ($M = 31.6$; $SD = 13.9$). Participants identified with the following denominations: non-denominational ($n = 43$), Baptist ($n = 16$), Episcopal ($n = 8$), Methodist ($n = 4$), None ($n = 4$), Protestant ($n = 3$), Congregational ($n = 2$), Catholic ($n = 1$), Postmodern ($n = 1$), Evangelical ($n = 1$), Lutheran ($n = 1$), and Pentecostal ($n = 1$).

Procedures

The procedures for the current study were approved by Texas A&M's Institutional Review Board and categorized as exempt from full review (protocol number: 2006-0605). It was decided by the Office of Research Compliance that verbal rather than written consent would suffice for this study. The principal investigator contacted Christian leaders through email and obtained permission to attend the meetings for the purpose of data collection. The investigator arrived towards the end of the meetings, during which time she was given an opportunity to introduce herself and the study. She invited individuals to participate, but emphasized that participation was voluntary. She

also stated that an incentive would be provided to each participant, in the form of 15 dollars in cash. Time was given for non-participating members to leave before packets were handed out. Then, after verbal consent was obtained, each participant was handed a packet, which included the four inventories utilized in the study. After completing the inventories, participants were handed 15 dollars in cash. Neither deception nor coercion was utilized in the study, resulting in minimal risks to participants.

Measures

Object Relations Development

In order to measure level of object relations development, this study utilized the Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI; Bell, 1995). The BORI is a component of the lengthier Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI; Bell, 1991; Bell, Billington, & Becker, 1986), but can be administered as an independent instrument. The BORI is composed of 45 self-report, true-false items that measure deficits in object relations ego functioning. In defining and measuring object relations development, authors of the BORI drew on key elements of object relations theory that are common across various camps of the theory, specifically, “that personality develops from experiences in early childhood relationships that produce internal self-other representations. These serve as templates for contemporary experience. With normal development these internal mental structures would grow more complex, differentiated, and flexible” (Bell, Billington, & Becker, 1986, p.733). Questions on the BORI include: “It is hard for me to get close to anyone,” and “No matter how bad a relationship may get, I will hold onto it.”

The BORI utilizes the following four subscales that capture four key elements of psychopathology from an object relations perspective: Alienation (ALN), Insecure Attachment (IA), Egocentricity (EGC), and Social Incompetence (SI). Individuals with high Alienation scores lack interpersonal trust and connection. They have difficulty with intimacy, tend to have shallow, unstable relationships, and can be guarded and lack empathy. Individuals who score high on the Insecure Attachment scale have painful interpersonal relationships in which they are easily hurt and quickly feel rejected. They tend to value relationships, which are painfully sought after as sources of security, but have difficulty valuing others as separate, unique individuals. Individuals who score high on the Egocentricity scale maintain three basic stances within their relationships—other people’s motivations are not trustworthy, others exist only in relation to oneself, and other people exist in order to be manipulated to fulfill one’s own needs (Bell, Billington, & Becker, 1986). These individuals tend to be exploitive, intrusive, entitled, and defended. Individuals who score high on Social Incompetence tend to be shy, socially nervous, and insecure in their interactions with members of the opposite sex. They have difficulty making and maintaining meaningful relationships and often have poor sexual adjustment.

During the design of the BORI, Bell, Billington, and Becker (1986) tested their instrument on a sample of 336 participants. To ensure a range of ego functioning, they drew from seven different subpopulations, such as active community members, undergraduates, outpatients, and inpatients at various stages of recovery. For this study, the four subscales were identified through factor analysis; the oblique rotated factor

solution obtained a total eigenvalue of 12.92 (accounting for 28.7% of the variance). Eigenvalues for the individual subscales were as follows: 8.98 (ALN), 1.68 (IA), 1.31 (EGC), and .94 (SI) (Bell, Billington, & Becker, 1986). As part of this same study, similar results were replicated on an additional sample of 613 participants. Factor loadings for the first sample were compared to loadings for the replication sample in order to produce similarity coefficients and correlation coefficients. The similarity coefficients for factors one through four were .97, .90, .84, and .93, respectively, whereas the correlation coefficients for these factors were .98, .96, .87, .97, respectively. These results indicated a stable factor structure underlying the subscales.

During this same study, the BORI also evidenced good reliability, with high coefficient alphas and Spearman-Brown split-half reliability coefficients for its subscales: ALN = .90, 90, IA = .82, .81, EGC = .78, .78, and SI = .79, .82. The BORI has shown to be relatively free of bias due to age, sex, or social desirability (Bell, Billington, & Becker, 2006).

Bell (2003) summarized the evidence for the validity of the BORI, noting that convergent validity has been demonstrated across many diverse studies, in which BORI scores have correlated with scores on related instruments. In terms of discriminant validity, Bell noted that expectable differences have been found within and among various pathological samples, such as eating disorders, substance abuse disorders, depressive disorders, borderline personality disorder, schizophrenia, among others (2003). He also stated that predictive validity has been shown for specific behaviors, such as safe sex practices, sexual decision making, and treatment outcomes.

Religious Fundamentalism

The Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004) was utilized to measure the extent to which individuals accept a fundamentalist approach to their religion. This 12-statement measure includes statements such as “God has given humanity a complete and unfailing guide to happiness and salvation that must be totally followed.” Participants respond to these statements on a Likert-scale from -4 (strongly disagree) to $+4$ (strongly agree).

Altemeyer and Hunsberger originally published their 20-item Religious Fundamentalism scale in 1992. Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004) stated that in the following years it proved itself as a reliable and valid measure of religious fundamentalism, for instance producing a mean inter-item correlation of .37 and an alpha coefficient of .92 on a large university sample. On samples of Hindus, Jews, and Muslims, the alphas ranged from .85 to .94. The authors (2004) have also noted how across many studies, the Religious Fundamentalism Scale has correlated with a number of other constructs, such as right-wing authoritarianism (.62 to .82), dogmatism (.57 to .78), zealotry (.44 to .55), belief in a dangerous world (.44 to .59), self-righteousness (.52 to .54), hostility toward homosexuals (.42 to .61), and prejudice toward women (.23 to .40). They also found that high scores were more likely to come from traditionally fundamentalist denominations, such as Baptists, Mennonites, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

In creating a shorter, revised version of their already established scale, Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004) administered a new 12-item version to 354 Manitoba

introductory psychology students and 424 parents. The scale produced alpha coefficients of .91 and .92, respectively, and mean inter-item correlations of .47 and .49, respectively. Factor analysis was also run. For the parent sample, the 12-item version produced one factor with an eigenvalue over 1.0 that accounted for 53.5% of the variance. For the student sample, the scale also produced one factor that controlled for 51.3% of the variance. As an investigation of validity, the Religious Fundamentalism scale was correlated with ten other related instruments. As an example, correlations between this scale and scales measuring dogmatism, right-wing authoritarianism, religious ethnocentrism, and belief in creation “science” all produced coefficients greater than .70.

In the present study, alpha coefficients were calculated as a reliability check. On this administration of the Revised Religious Fundamentalism scale, a coefficient alpha of .90 was obtained.

Spiritual Maturity

For this study, spiritual maturity was assessed through use of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; Hall & Edwards, 2002). This self-report measure includes 54 items and was developed for clinical and research use. The SAI is based on a relational framework that draws together theological and psychological perspectives on human nature. The SAI is based on two dimensions—awareness of God and quality of relationship with God. The Quality scale is rooted in an object relations perspective of relational development and is conceptualized as the more “psychological” aspect of spiritual maturity. On the other hand, the Awareness scale indicates a capacity to

commune with God, but does not necessarily indicate relational maturity. In the same way that one can be committed to an unhealthy relationship with another person, one can be devoted to God but relate to God in a pathological manner. Nevertheless, being conscious of God's presence is seen as an important element to spiritual maturity and is therefore captured through the Awareness scale.

The Quality scale on the SAI is broken down into four subscales: Instability, Grandiosity, Realistic Acceptance, and Disappointment. The Instability scale measures the degree to which one has difficulty integrating good and bad and finds it difficult to trust and feel loved by God. The Grandiosity scale measures a sense of superiority and a desire to use God to inflate one's self esteem and as a provider of protection. The Realistic Acceptance scale measures one's ability to integrate and tolerate positive and negative emotions and a tendency to value God in God's own right. The Disappointment scale measures one's level of disappointment with God. This scale was originally included as a measure of defensiveness, but was found to be an indicator of the quality of one's relationship to God. In place of the defensiveness scale, an experimental Impression Management scale has recently been included, namely for clinical purposes.

As part of revisions to the SAI, items were administered to 438 students at a private Protestant university (Hall & Edwards, 2002). The factor analysis revealed five factors, with eigenvalues of 12.96 (Awareness), 6.00 (Realistic Acceptance), 3.28 (Disappointment), 2.23 (Grandiosity), and 1.81 (Instability). The five factors accounted for 52.6% of the total variance. The authors also preformed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and found that all the measures of fit supported the five-factor model,

which, for instance, was supported by a non-significant chi-square ($p < .22$) and a Comparative Fit Index of .99.

Hall and Edwards (2002) found that the reliability of this instrument was demonstrated through the following alphas: Instability, .84; Disappointment, .90; Awareness, .95; Realistic Acceptance, .83; Grandiosity, .73; and Impression Management, .77. Convergent validity was obtained by comparing SAI scores to scores on the BORI, the Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989), the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Ellison, 1983, as cited by Hall & Brokaw, 1995), and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1984). Convergence with the BORI was of particular note, given the conceptual similarities between the instruments. Consistent with expectations, the BORI correlated more strongly with Quality scales (which are based on object relations theory) than the Awareness scale, with the strongest correlation being between the Egocentricity BORI subscale and the Grandiosity SAI subscale ($p < .01$). Finally, in an earlier study, none of the scales correlated significantly with the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability scale (Hall & Edwards, 1996).

In the present study, alpha coefficients were completed as a reliability check. On this administration of the SAI, the following coefficient alphas were obtained: .937 (Awareness), .921 (Defensiveness), .756 (Realistic Acceptance), .730 (Instability), .593 (Grandiosity), .740 (Impression Management).

God Image

In order to measure God image, this study utilized the God Image Scale, a shorter version of the God Image Inventory (GII) that was developed specifically for research

use (Lawrence, 1991). The GII is based on Rizzuto's conceptualization of God image, which includes aspects of belonging (Presence and Challenge scales), goodness (Acceptance and Benevolence scales) and control (Influence and Providence scales). The reliability of the GII was confirmed through data obtained from three samples: ($n=650$; $n=217$; $n=1580$) (Lawrence, 1997). Coefficient alpha scores ranged from .86 (Challenge) to .94 (Presence) for the first sample, from .85 (Challenge) to .94 (Presence) for the second sample, from .87 (Challenge) to .96 (Presence) for the third sample. Although high coefficient alpha scores were obtained, some high inter-scale correlations were also found within the third sample, the highest being a .94 correlation between Presence and Influence.

In order to test the validity of the GII, Lawrence administered the GII alongside a number of well-established measures. As hypothesized, the Extrinsic scale from Allport and Ross' (1967) Religious Orientation Scale correlated negatively with all the GII items, whereas the Intrinsic scales correlated positively with the Presence scale. Additionally, self-esteem, as measured by the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, correlated with the GII's Acceptance scale, and God Control, as measured by Valecha's (1972, as cited by Lawrence, 1997) Locus of Control Scale, correlated with the GII Providence Scale, as predicted. On the other hand, the Wrightsman Altruism Scale (1964) did not correlate highly with the GII Benevolence scale, as Lawrence had hypothesized. Nevertheless, the validity of the GII was sufficiently supported by the data.

Lawrence developed the GII for clinical use. Out of a belief that the GII contained too complex a factor structure to make it appropriate for use in research, Lawrence developed the God Image Scales (GIS), a condensed version of the GII with fewer scales. In doing so, Lawrence reduced the size of each scale to 12 items and dropped two scales (Salience and Faith) that had only been included for clinical purposes. Lawrence chose which items to remove with the goal of decreasing inter-scale correlations. Despite this effort, the factor analysis was disappointing. However, Lawrence found that he was able to achieve a very nice factor structure by including only the Presence, Challenge, and Acceptance scales. Lawrence therefore proposed that researchers interested in utilizing the GII consider using this three-scale, 36-item format. The coefficient alphas obtained for these scales were .95 (Presence), .81 (Challenge), and .83 (Acceptance). Examples of items within these scales, respectively, are “I feel God deep inside me,” “God encourages me to go forward on the journey of life,” “I am confident in God’s love for me.” A number of items are negatively questioned and reverse scored, such that higher scores on the GIS indicate more positive images of God.

As part of the current study, alpha coefficients were computed as a reliability check. On this administration of the GIS, the following coefficient alphas were obtained: .568 (Acceptance), .502 (Challenge), and .801 (Presence). The reliability of the scores for the Acceptance and Challenge scale was somewhat low. Results observed from these subscales should therefore be taken with caution.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Preliminary Data Analyses

Descriptive Analyses of Variables

Descriptive information for each variable is shown in Table 1. In order to determine whether there were meaningful differences between men and women on any of the subscales, the sample was separated by gender and an ANOVA was run to determine group differences. For this sample, scores for women and men did not differ significantly on any of the subscales. The whole sample was therefore treated as one group.

Testing of Assumptions

The data were tested to see if they met assumptions of univariate normality and multivariate normality, and to check for multicollinearity. Univariate normality was examined through calculating levels of skewness (symmetry of the distribution) and kurtosis (flatness or peakedness of distribution). These values are reported in Table 1, and were satisfactory for each subscale. This was determined in accordance with the appropriate ranges for skewness (± 3) and kurtosis (< 8) proposed by Kline (2005).

Multivariate normality was tested next through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which considers whether the differences between the sample distribution and hypothesized distribution are too large and thereby suggest non-normality. This test was completed for each variable's composite score. For this test, obtaining a significant D statistic suggests that the distribution is not normally distributed. The D statistics for

Table 1
Descriptives for Variables

Latent Variable	Subscales	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Religious Fundamentalism		-38-48	22.79	21.74	-1.12	0.38
Object Relations Development	Alienation	0-23	5.74	5.13	1.09	0.72
	Insecure Attachment	0-19	7.08	5.17	0.51	-0.89
	Egocentricity	0-9	2.06	2.26	1.10	0.86
	Social Incompetence	0-15	2.67	3.52	1.48	1.57
Spiritual Maturity	Awareness	30-95	76.28	12.64	-0.69	0.94
	Disappointment	7-35	18.33	7.47	0.46	-0.48
	Realistic Acceptance	0-35	23.98	9.87	-1.32	0.92
	Instability	8-30	16.61	5.29	0.70	-0.21
	Grandiosity	7-20	11.92	3.51	0.38	-0.76
	(Impression Management)	5-24	14.05	4.15	0.18	-0.25
God Image	Acceptance	30-48	43.65	3.66	-1.02	1.26
	Challenge	31-48	42.68	3.42	-1.34	2.18
	Presence	30-48	43.73	4.05	-1.14	1.39

N = 85

spiritual maturity, God image, and object relations development were all non-significant, suggesting normality. For religious fundamentalism, however, the D statistic was significant ($p < .05$). Although this suggests non-ideal normality, Klem (2000) argued that the assumptions of multivariate normality are difficult to obtain within the social science research field.

Lastly, multicollinearity was addressed through consideration of the correlations between predictor variables, which are discussed in future sections. When high correlations are present between these variables, there is a possibility that redundancy could obscure the regression results. Kline points to correlations of .85 or greater as indicating redundancy. None of the bivariate correlations was above this level.

Main Analyses

Before conducting the multiple regression analyses, a series of bivariate correlations between the subscales for each predictor variable (object relations development, God image, and spiritual maturity) and religious fundamentalism was examined to determine the relationships among these constructs. These relationships are depicted in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1: Religious Fundamentalism and Object Relations Development

Among these predictor variables, it may be recalled that level of object relations development was hypothesized to be linked to level of religious fundamentalism such that individuals with lower levels of object relations development would tend towards a more fundamentalist approach to religion. This conclusion was not supported by the correlational analysis. In fact, none of the four main subscales measuring object relations development were significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism. Slight

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

	Religious Fund.	GI: Accept.	GI: Chall.	GI: Pres.	SM: Aware.	SM: Dis.	SM: Realistic Accept.	SM: Instab.	SM: Grand.	(Impress. Manag.)	ORD: Alien.	ORD: Insec. Attach.	ORD: Ego.	ORD: Social Incomp.
Religious Fundamentalism	1	-.007	-.035	.232*	.365**	.153	.065	.335**	.256*	.105	.153	.130	-.003	.074
GI: Acceptance	—	1	.087	.159	.146	-.308**	-.241*	-.381**	.104	.276*	-.319**	-.335**	-.198	-.183
GI: Challenge	—	—	1	.253*	.048	.072	.078	.080	.015	.064	.069	.078	.110	.116
GI: Presence	—	—	—	1	.574**	-.062	.022	-.074	.082	.223*	-.077	-.134	-.215*	-.031
SM: Awareness	—	—	—	—	1	.073	.142	.052	.416**	.399**	-.015	-.022	-.179	-.035
SM: Disappointment	—	—	—	—	—	1	.725**	.564**	.232*	-.227*	.290**	.468**	.275*	.209
SM: Realistic Acceptance	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.423*	.125	-.090	.149	.233*	.003	.206
SM: Instability	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.356**	-.214*	.271*	.456*	.239*	.194
SM: Grandiosity	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.203	.089	.185	-.041	.031
(Impression Management)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	-.109	-.141	-.121	-.124
ORD: Alienation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.678**	.629**	.729*
ORD: Insecure Attachment	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.574**	.541**
ORD: Egocentricity	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.393
ORD: Social Incompetence	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Table 2
Continued

	Religious Fund.	GI: Accept.	GI: Chall.	GI: Pres.	SM: Aware.	SM: Dis.	SM: Realistic Accept.	SM: Instab.	SM: Grand.	(Impress. Manag.)	ORD: Alien.	ORD: Insec. Attach.	ORD: Ego.	ORD: Social Incomp.
ORD: Egocentricity	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.393
ORD: Social Incompetence	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

*p < .05 ** p < .01. N = 85 Note: GI = God Image, SM = Spiritual Maturity, ORD = Object Relations Development

correlations were found between religious fundamentalism and scores on the Alienation ($r = .153, p = .162$) and Insecure Attachment ($r = .130, p = .236$) subscales in the predicted direction, but neither of these correlations were significant. Correlations between religious fundamentalism and scores on the Egocentricity ($r = -.003, p = .997$) and Social Incompetence ($r = .074, p = .501$) subscales were negligible. When considering these correlations, no evidence was found to support the hypothesis that level of object relations development would be related to level of religious fundamentalism.

Hypothesis 2: Religious Fundamentalism and God Image

Along with level of object relations development, God image was hypothesized to relate to religious fundamentalism such that more positive images of God would be linked to lower levels of religious fundamentalism. This prediction was also not supported by the correlational analysis. God image was measured with three subscales that capture positive images of God as being present (Presence), accepting (Acceptance), and encouraging of growth (Challenge). None of these subscales was significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism in the predicted direction. However, one subscale, Presence, was statistically significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism in the direction *opposite* to what was hypothesized ($r = .232, p = .033$). For this sample, therefore, participants scoring high on religious fundamentalism did not differ from the other participants in terms of their tendency to view God as accepting and encouraging of growth, but did tend to view God as being more present. The correlations

thereby provide limited evidence linking religious fundamentalism and image of God, but in a direction which contradicts the author's prediction.

Hypothesis 3: Religious Fundamentalism and Spiritual Maturity

Scores measuring level of spiritual maturity were correlated next with scores on the religious fundamentalism scale. This was done to test the hypothesis that higher levels of spiritual maturity would be linked to lower levels of religious fundamentalism. Spiritual maturity was captured through five main subscales; scores on an impression management subscale were also calculated. In relation to the hypothesis, the correlations provided mixed evidence. Scores on two of the subscales, Instability ($r = .335, p = .002$) and Grandiosity ($r = .256, p = .018$), produced statistically significant correlations with religious fundamentalism in the predicted direction. The correlation with the Instability scale indicates that participants who appeared more fundamentalist in their approach to religion also seemed to maintain dynamics in their relationship with God that can be described as borderline in orientation—i.e. where excessive splitting and volatile emotionality are present. The latter correlation—between religious fundamentalism and the Grandiosity scale—indicates that more religiously fundamentalist participants may hold dynamics in their relationship with God that can be described as narcissistic—i.e. where a sense of superiority and a tendency to use God to bolster one's self-esteem are present.

Apart from the Instability and Grandiosity subscales, no other subscales measuring spiritual maturity were statistically significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism in the predicted direction (Disappointment: $r = .153, p = .162$; Realistic

Acceptance: $r = .065$, $p = .556$). However, one final scale, Awareness ($r = .365$, $p = .001$), was statistically significantly correlated to religious fundamentalism in the direction opposite to what was predicted. This finding seems consistent with the correlation between religious fundamentalism and the very similar God image scale—Presence; together they suggest that more fundamentalist participants not only *view* God as more present, but *feel* God as more present as well.

Although this finding contradicts the hypothesis that spiritual maturity would be linked to lower levels of religious fundamentalism, it is worth mentioning that Hall and Edwards (1996) conceptualized the Awareness scale as somewhat unique from the other scales within their inventory because it was the only scale not based on object relations theory. Although they felt that awareness of God was an important part of spiritual maturity, they viewed this scale as less connected to one's psychological health as compared to the other subscales, which describe the *quality* of one's relationship to God. When considering only the Quality subscales, two out of the four subscales produced significant correlations with religious fundamentalism, offering tentative support for hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4: Multiple Regression and Commonality Analyses

After producing the correlational matrix, the data were next analyzed using multiple regression. In order to facilitate ease in interpretation, composite scores were calculated for each independent variable through combining individual subscales in an unweighted fashion. Through summing the subscale scores, single scores were obtained for each construct, allowing religious fundamentalism to act as the dependent variable,

and level of object relations development, level of spiritual maturity, and image of God to act as predictor variables, entered simultaneously. In order to determine whether the spirituality-based measures helped predict religious fundamentalism above and beyond what was predicated by object relations development, a commonality analysis was also run in order to determine amounts of uniquely explained variance.

Because two of the subscales—Awareness (God image) and Presence (spiritual maturity)—were significantly correlated with the dependent variable in the direction opposite to what was predicted, they were not included in the composite scores used in the regression analysis. Doing so would have inflated the level of explanatory power, making the model more significant, but also making the results difficult to interpret. More specifically, including these two subscales would have made it difficult to determine the extent to which the overall model supported the stated hypotheses, given that increased explanatory power for some subscales would have indicated support for the hypothesis, whereas for others it would have indicated the opposite. Additionally, as mentioned, Hall and Edwards (1996) have proposed that having an awareness of God is a somewhat separate component of spirituality that is less impacted by psychological variables; it is therefore of less primary focus in the current study.

Before running the regression analysis, the correlations between the dependent and independent variables were considered. This correlation matrix is presented in table 3, and differs from the previously described matrix in the use of composite scores, rather than the individual subscale scores.

Table 3
Correlations between Composite Scores for Main Variables

	Religious Fund.	God Image	Spiritual Maturity	Object Relations Development
Religious Fund.	1	-.028	.312**	.125
God Image	—	1	-.092	-.152
Spiritual Maturity	—	—	1	.316**
Object Relations Development	—	—	—	1

*p < .05 ** p < .01. N = 85

Consistent with previous results, religious fundamentalism was most highly negatively correlated to spiritual maturity ($r = .312, p = .004$), only slightly correlated to object relations development ($r = .125, p = .254$), and uncorrelated to God image ($r = -.028, p = .802$). Additionally, God image was not significantly correlated with spiritual maturity ($r = -.092, p = .400$) or with object relations development ($r = -.154, p = .164$). Spiritual maturity, however, produced a significant correlation with object relations development ($r = .316, p = .003$). While not many significant correlations were discovered, these data do suggest that individuals with higher levels of spiritual maturity also displayed higher levels of psychological development (supporting hypothesis 5) and lower levels of religious fundamentalism (supporting hypothesis 3).

The multiple regression results (seen in table 4) were then obtained in order to address the hypothesis that the individual predictor variables would each add some unique explanatory power in predicting variance in religious fundamentalism. When all three of the independent variables were used simultaneously to predict religious fundamentalism, the subsequent model was statistically significant in its predictive ability ($R^2 = .098, F(3, 81) = 2.929, p = .039$).

Although this information generally supports the study's underlying hypothesis, it does not allow us to perceive which of the variables help contribute to the explanatory power of the model. A commonality analysis was therefore employed to determine the amount of variance uniquely explained by each of the independent variables, as suggested by Thompson (2006). These results can be seen in Table 5 and were calculated by running the regression equations for each variable and for all possible

Table 4
Multiple Regression Results

Predictors	B	SE	β	p-value
Object Relations Development	.048	.178	.030	.788
Spiritual Maturity	.645	.237	.302	.008**
God Image	.021	.445	.005	.963

*p < .05 **p < .01. N = 85

combinations of variables.

For the whole sample, the commonality analysis indicated that the majority of the *explained variance* in religious fundamentalism (99.2% of explained variance) was explained by spiritual maturity, whereas a moderate amount of it was explained by object relations development (16%) and a negligible amount was explained by God image (.8%). The percentages added up to over 100% because of notable overlap in the portions of religious fundamentalism that were explained by both spiritual maturity and object relations development. Overall, object relations development predicted a very small amount of variance in religious fundamentalism (1.56% of total variance); additionally, nearly all of the variance it explained (1.41 out of 1.56%) was also explained by spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity, on the other hand, was uniquely responsible for 8.21% of the explained variance. Given that in total spiritual maturity accounted for 9.71% of the total variance, it is clear that most of the relationship between spiritual maturity and religious fundamentalism was unique, or not accounted for by object relations development nor God image.

In summary, it seems that spiritual maturity accounted for nearly all of this explained variance, while a portion of it was also explained (but not uniquely explained) by object relations development. In terms of spiritual maturity, the commonality analysis confirms hypothesis 4, which predicted that the independent variables would explain some of the variance above and beyond what would be explained by object relations development. However, hypothesis 4 was not supported in the case of God image, which

Table 5
Commonality Analysis

Predictors/Partitions	Predictors		
	God Image	Spiritual Maturity	Object Relations Development
G.I.	<1%		
S.M.		8.22%	
O.R.D.			<1%
G.I. and S.M.	<1%	<1%	
G.I. and O.R.D.	<1%		<1%
S.M. and O.R.D.		1.41%	1.41%
G.I. and O.R.D. and S.M.	<1%	<1%	<1%
Total	<1%	9.71%	1.56%

N = 85 *Note.* Numbers represent percentage of variance in religious fundamentalism uniquely explained by each variable or set of variables. G.I. = God Image; S.M. = Spiritual Maturity; O.R.D. = Object Relations Development.

not only did not provide unique variance, but also explained a negligible amount of variance overall.

Hypotheses 5-7: Correlations between Predictor Subscales

Hypotheses 5-7 were next addressed by running correlations between the subscales of the independent variables. This was done in order to investigate the relationships between these variables, and to confirm previous findings that link each of these constructs.

Hypothesis 5: God Image and Spiritual Maturity

Overall, the correlations between the God image and spiritual maturity subscales did little support the hypothesis that positive God images would be linked to higher levels of spiritual maturity. When correlating scores on the five main spiritual maturity subscales with scores on the three God image subscales, only three of the subsequent 15 correlations were statistically significant in the predicted direction. Given that the Presence and Awareness scales capture similar phenomenon (viewing God as being Present and experiencing God as present), it is unsurprising that these scales would be strongly correlated ($r = .574, p < .001$). The God image Acceptance subscale was significantly negatively correlated with both the spiritual maturity subscales Disappointment ($r = -.308, p < .004$) and Instability ($r = -.381, p < .000$), suggesting that individuals who reported viewing God as accepting identified less disappointment in God and seemed to have more stable relationships with God, as was predicted. However, the Acceptance subscale also significantly negatively correlated with the spiritual maturity subscale Realistic Acceptance. This suggests, opposite to what was predicted,

that individuals in this sample who view God as accepting may have more difficulty moving past disappointments in God.

Additional to the main subscale on the spiritual maturity measure, an impression management scale was also calculated. Although this scale was not intended as a measure of spiritual maturity, it may be of note that two of the three God image subscales were statistically significantly correlated with this IM scale. These correlations were found with the Acceptance ($r = .276, p = .011$) and Presence ($r = .223, p = .040$) subscales, suggesting that individuals who report viewing God as accepting and present may have been influenced by impression management when answering questions. As an aside, the only other subscale across all the measures that was statistically significantly correlated with the IM scale in the positive direction was the spiritual maturity subscale, Awareness ($r = .399, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 6: God Image and Object Relations Development

God image was also hypothesized to be linked to level of object relations development, such that individuals with more positive images of God would display higher levels of development. Support for this conclusion was limited, in that only three of the 12 total correlations between the main subscales were statistically significant. The God image Acceptance subscale yielded statistically significant correlations with the object relations Alienation subscale ($r = -.319, p = .003$), as well as the Insecure Attachment subscale ($r = -.335, p = .002$). For this sample, individuals who viewed God as accepting appeared less alienated from others and seemed to have healthier attachment patterns, as was predicted. Scores on the Acceptance subscale were also

correlated with the other two main God image subscales in the predicted direction, but these correlations did not reach significance (Egocentricity: $r = -.198, p < .070$; Social Incompetence: $r = -.183, p = .094$). Finally, scores on the God image Presence subscale were significantly negatively correlated with Egocentricity ($r = -.215; p = .048$), suggesting that those who reported viewing God as present in their lives appeared less egocentric, as was predicted. Limited support for hypothesis 6 was evident in that three of the predicted correlations reached significance.

Hypothesis 7: Spiritual Maturity and Object Relations Development

Correlations between the spiritual maturity and object relations subscales provided limited support for the prediction that higher levels of object relations development would correlate with higher levels of spiritual maturity. Six of the 20 correlations were significant in the predicted direction, and one was significant in the direction opposite to what was predicted. Both spiritual maturity subscales Disappointment and Instability were significantly correlated with the following three object relations scales: Alienation (Disappointment: $r = .290, p = .007$; Instability: $r = .271, p = .012$), Insecure attachment (Disappointment: $r = .468, p < .001$; Instability: $r = .456, p < .001$); and Egocentricity (Disappointment: $r = .275, p = .011$; Instability: $r = .239, p = .028$). This suggests that for individuals who displayed higher levels of disappointment and/or instability in their relationship with God were also more alienated from others, more insecurely attached, and more egocentric. However, individuals with more insecure attachments were also more able to move past disappointments with God (Realistic Acceptance: $r = .233; p =$

.032), as was opposite to the prediction. Only very tentative support for hypothesis 7 was obtained through the correlational analysis.

Post-Hoc Analyses

Age as a Moderator and Confounding Variable

In analyzing the correlational data, a statistically significant correlation between participants' reported age and level of religious fundamentalism was observed ($r = -.365$, $p < .001$). Given that age was also significantly correlated to a number of the predictor variables as well (Disappointment: $r = -.186$, $p = .044$; Realistic Acceptance: $r = -.287$, $p = .004$; Instability: $r = -.319$, $p = .001$; Insecure Attachment: $r = -.216$, $p = .024$), the possibility that age might have acted as a confounding variable was explored. For instance, if age acted as a confounding variable between religious fundamentalism and instability, it is possible that the apparent relationship between religious fundamentalism and Instability was actually spurious—i.e. fully explained by the fact that younger participants were both more likely to be religiously fundamentalist and more likely to have unstable relationships with God.

In order to explore whether this was the case, the sample was split by age into two groups and the correlations were run again for each group. This was done so that individuals within the sample might be compared to other individuals more similar to them in age. Placing the participants into two cohorts in this way allowed the relationships between the predictor variables and religious fundamentalism to be viewed without as much impact from differences in age. In determining the age ranges of each cohort, a scatter-plot mapping age and level of religious fundamentalism was created in

order to determine any natural groupings or divisions that might suggest a cut-off age for each group. However, no obvious cut-off points were visible through the scatter-plot.

The next step was therefore to determine any theoretical justifications for splitting the groups at one age versus another. One obvious choice was to split the groups based on sampling. In this study, participants were recruited either through their affiliation with a Christian student group, or through their affiliation with an adult bible study or church group. Separating the sample into student and community groups created a fairly clean division in terms of age. The youngest age represented in the community group was 26; and although one student participant was also 26, the rest of the student group was younger, thereby creating minimal overlap between the two samples in terms of age. In order to determine the appropriateness of this division, a one-way ANOVA was run to determine the differences in levels of religious fundamentalism between the student and community groups. This difference was statistically significant, suggesting that the apparent link between religious fundamentalism and age was captured by group participation ($F(1, 83) = 9.966, p = .002$).

This finding, however, did not provide any information as to whether the difference between the two groups in religious fundamentalism could actually be most accurately attributed to age, given that it could also be attributed to student versus non-student status. In order to investigate this point, two ANCOVA analyses were run, one with and one without age acting as a covariate. In this way, it was possible to see if the group differences still remained significant after controlling for age. Results of the first ANCOVA indicated that the difference between the mean scores on religious

fundamentalism for both groups (Student: 29.3; Community: 15.1) was significant ($p = .002$). However, once age was controlled for, the differences between the groups became non-significant ($p = .563$). This suggests that the difference between the means was indeed explained by age, rather than by student/non-student affiliation.

Differences in Correlations between Groups

A number of interesting differences were observed when the correlations between the independent variables and dependent variable were calculated separately for both the student and community samples (as can be seen in table 6). The most notable of these were in relation to the correlations between object relations development and religious fundamentalism; in fact, correlations found for all four object relations subscales were notably different for the student and community samples, suggesting an interaction effect. For instance, on the BORI Alienation subscale, the scores for the community sample produced a negligible correlation with religious fundamentalism ($r = -.063$), whereas scores for the student sample produced a positive correlation with religious fundamentalism ($r = .355$, $p = .015$). This correlation was statistically significant, despite it being run on only a section of the sample ($n = 46$). It therefore appears that religious fundamentalism was closely linked to a sense of being alienated from others for student participants, but not for community participants.

The next difference was found between correlations on the Insecure Attachment subscale. Whereas religious fundamentalism for the community sample was not student and community samples, suggesting an interaction effect. For instance, on the BORI Alienation subscale, the scores for the community sample produced a negligible

Table 6
Correlations with Religious Fundamentalism for Student and Community Samples

Latent Variable	Subscales	Student Sample	Community Sample
Object Relations Development	Alienation	.355*	-.073
	Insecure Attachment	.211	-.063
	Egocentricity	.250	-.321*
	Social Incompetence	.116	-.009
Spiritual Maturity	Awareness	.285	.446*
	Disappointment	.156	.102
	Realistic Acceptance	-.074	.057
	Instability	.268	.287
	Grandiosity	.102	.395*
	(Impression Management)	-.143	.264
God Image	Acceptance	.101	-.027
	Challenge	-.006	.008
	Presence	.150	.193

* $p < .05$ Note. Student sample: $N = 46$; Community Sample: $N = 39$

correlation with religious fundamentalism ($r = -.063$), whereas scores for the student sample produced a positive correlation with religious fundamentalism ($r = .355$, $p = .015$). This correlation was statistically significant, despite it being run on only a section of the sample ($n = 46$). It therefore appears that religious fundamentalism was closely linked to a sense of being alienated from others for student participants, but not for community participants.

The next difference was found between correlations on the Insecure Attachment subscale. Whereas religious fundamentalism for the community sample was not connected to insecurity of attachment ($r = -.063$), it was connected to insecure attachment within the student sample ($r = .221$). Similarly, Social Incompetence was not linked to religious fundamentalism for the community sample ($r = -.009$), but was linked to religious fundamentalism for the student sample ($r = .116$).

The final discrepancy between the two groups was perhaps the most notable, in that relatively strong relationships between object relations development and religious fundamentalism were found for both groups, but in opposite directions. This discrepancy was found for the variable Egocentricity. For student participants, egocentricity was correlated with religious fundamentalism in the positive direction ($r = .250$), whereas for community participants, egocentricity was correlated with religious fundamentalism in the negative direction ($r = -.321$). This latter correlation was significant ($p = .046$), despite it being run on only a portion of the entire sample ($n = 39$). Adding this piece of information to the other correlations, it seems that although religious fundamentalism was not linked to lower levels of object relations development for the community sample

(and in fact was correlated to lower levels of egocentricity), it was connected to lower levels of object relations development in the student sample, such that more fundamentalist student participants were also more likely to be alienated from others, to feel socially insecure, to be egocentric, and to display insecure attachments.

Although the interaction effect was most notable in terms of the object relations scales, a few other subscales may be worth mentioning. Overall, age did not seem to impact the correlations between religious fundamentalism and God image. Only one of the scales (Acceptance) showed any difference between the two cohorts, and this difference was relatively small (Community: $r = -.027$; Student: $r = .101$).

In terms of spiritual maturity, two of the five correlations are worthy of note in terms of differences between the two groups. On the spiritual maturity Awareness scale, religious fundamentalism was correlated to awareness of God for both groups, but this correlation was notably stronger for community participants ($r = .446$) than for student participants ($r = .285$). In fact, the former correlation, despite the decreased sample size, was significant at .01 level ($p = .004$). Similarly, the Grandiosity scale correlated positively with both groups, but the correlation was stronger for community participants ($r = .395$) than for student participants ($r = .102$). Again, the former correlation was statistically significant despite the decreased n ($p = .013$).

Alongside these discrepancies, it is worth mentioning that a notable difference between the two cohorts was found on the Impression Management subscale included within the spiritual maturity measure. For community participants, religious fundamentalism was connected to greater impression management ($r = .263$), although it

was connected to lower impression management for the student sample ($r = -.102$).

Although this finding is interesting in its own right, it may also shed light on some of the discrepancies between the groups, as will be addressed in the discussion section.

While these interactions were most immediately observable, age also seemed to act as a confounding variable in a number of instances. First, although the original correlational analysis showed a relationship between religious fundamentalism and viewing God as present ($r = .232$, $p = .033$), when separate correlations were run for each group, both of the new values were lower than the original correlation (Student: $r = .150$; Community: $r = .193$). Although some relationship between scores on the religious fundamentalism and the Presence scale was apparent, at least a portion of the originally observed relationship can be explained by the fact that younger participants were both more likely to be religiously fundamentalist and to view God as present.

Similarly, at least a part of the observed relationship between religious fundamentalism and instability in one's relationship to God seems to be explainable due to differences between age groups. Although a relatively strong relationship between these variables is still apparent even after separating the groups (Student: $r = .268$; Community: $r = .287$), these values are slightly diminished in relation to the original correlation ($r = .335$).

Differences in Regression and Commonality Analyses Results between Groups

Next, the multiple regression and commonality analyses were run on both the student and community samples. Although it is impossible to compare levels of significance across groups (due to different sample sizes), it is worth noting that the R^2

values were somewhat higher when considering the groups separately than when they were included together (whole sample: $R^2 = .098$, student: $R^2 = .146$, community: $R^2 = .110$). Although the model explained 9.8% of the variance when applied to the entire sample, it explained 14.6% of the variance when applied to the student sample, and 11.0% of the variance when applied to the community sample. Though these increases are modest, they confirm that the predictor variables worked to explain religious fundamentalism somewhat differently for the two groups (and therefore did a better job when the groups were not combined).

Similar to the overall sample, however, a great deal of overlap was observed during the commonality analysis for both groups. These results are displayed in Table 7. For the student group, God image uniquely explained 1.3%, spiritual maturity uniquely explained 5.8%, and object relations development explained 2.2% of the explained variance. For the community sample, God image uniquely explained 0.58%, spiritual maturity uniquely explained 9.7%, and object relations development explained 2.4% of the explained variance. As was the case for the whole sample, the most significant overlap for both groups was between object relations development and spiritual maturity, such that nearly all of the variance explained by object relations development was also explained by spiritual maturity. However, for the student group, object relations development shared a greater portion of the variance explained by spiritual maturity, in this way predicting a much larger amount of the total variance as when compared to the community sample (student: 8.29%; community: 1.11%). Given previously discussed results, it is unsurprising that object relations did a better job predicting religious

Table 7

Commonality Analysis for Both Student and Community Groups

Predictors/Partitions		Predictors		
		God Image	Spiritual Maturity	Object Relations Development
God Image	Student:	1.36%		
	Community:	<1%		
Spiritual Maturity	Student:		5.81%	
	Community:		9.69%	
Object Relations Development	Student:			2.22%
	Community:			2.43%
God Image and Spiritual Maturity	Student:	<1%	<1%	
	Community:	<1%	<1%	
God Image and Object Relations Development	Student:	<1%		<1%
	Community:	<1%		<1%
Spiritual Maturity and Object Relations Development	Student:		6.18%	6.18%
	Community:		<1%	<1%
God Image, Spiritual Maturity, and Object Relations Development	Student:	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Community:	<1%	<1%	<1%
Total	Student:	<1%	10.82%	8.29%
	Community:	<1%	8.43%	1.11%

N = 85 *Note.* Numbers represent percentage of variance in religious fundamentalism uniquely explained by each variable or set of variables.

fundamentalism for the student sample. The commonality analysis allows us to further see, however, that the additional explanatory power of object relations development that was apparent for the student sample was not unique, but rather shared by spiritual maturity.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis stated that level of object relations development would predict level of religious fundamentalism such that lower levels of object relations development would be associated with higher levels of religious fundamentalism. For the overall sample, this prediction was not supported. None of the four object relations subscales were significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism. When the subscales were combined to create composite scores, these scores did correlate with religious fundamentalism, but this correlation did not reach significance ($r = .125$, $p = .254$). Finally, the regression results indicated that only 1.56% of the variance in religious fundamentalism could be explained by level of object relations development.

These findings conflict with assertions made by psychologists who have used object relations theory to explain religious fundamentalism. These theorists (Hedge-Carruthers, 1997; Stein, 2004; Summers, 2006) have conceptualized fundamentalism as resulting from poor object relations development, positing that individuals with chaotic or persecutory objects may rely on religious fundamentalism in shielding themselves from underlying anxieties. Their assertions, however, have not been based on quantitative evidence, and, at least for this sample, did not seem to be supported by the data.

There are a number of possible reasons for this lack of support. First, it is possible that religious fundamentalism does *not* in fact attract individuals with poor

object relations development. In this case, hypothesis one would simply not be true. Although this is a possibility, it may also be that religious fundamentalists do have anxieties, but that these are so well defended by the structure of their beliefs as to not be apparent in the assessment situation. Gibson (1997) discussed an interesting point in relation to a concept called foreclosure that may be relevant to discussion of this possibility. Gibson described individuals maintaining spiritual foreclosure as having come to a dogmatic, rigid religious stance without any previous explorations. He pointed out that although such a position

may leave an individual feeling “extremely threatened” when parental values are non-functional, it may be that by association with others who hold similar values and who provide mutual support for the foreclosed system, such a person may report levels of well-being commensurate with identity achievers (p. 83).

Gibson pointed to a 1983 study by Walaskay in which elderly adults in the foreclosed group evidenced equal levels of well-being when compared to non-foreclosed participants. Because the concept of religious fundamentalism is very similar to that of foreclosure, it is possible that Gibson’s explanation of these findings may apply to the current results.

A second consideration in understanding the results regarding the first hypothesis (and for that matter, hypotheses 2 and 3) is the possibility that religious fundamentalism may not have been adequately measured by the utilized inventory. Although the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (RFS; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004) is a widely used measure, it may not completely achieve its aim of distilling religious

fundamentalism as separate from religious orthodoxy. Slater, Hall, and Edwards (2001) have suggested that the RFS improves on existing measures in its attempt to capture an approach to religion, rather than a set of beliefs. Nevertheless, they point out that part of Altemeyer's and Hunsberger's definition of fundamentalism is still confounded with Christian orthodoxy (i.e. "there is one set of religious beliefs that capture the essential truth about humanity, and that truth is opposed by forces of evil"). If the RFS does in fact at least partially measure religious orthodoxy, then it makes sense that scores on this measure would not be correlated with object relations development.

As a third explanation of the results, it is possible that object relations development does impact level of religious fundamentalism, but that other factors, such as religious training, are simply more salient in determining one's level of fundamentalist thinking. Stark (1971) has asserted that one's religious upbringing has a greater impact on beliefs than other psychological factors. In support of this possibility is a concept called socialized correspondence, which proposes that individuals with secure attachments are to a greater degree socialized into the spiritual ideals of their caregivers. This idea was developed by Granqvist and Hagekull (1999, as cited by Schwartz & Lindley, 2005) in response to Granqvist's previous finding that participants with secure attachments were more likely to adopt the religious orientations of their parents.

Schwartz and Lindley (2005) tested this theory on what they referred to as a "bible belt" population. Because of the more fundamentalist bent of the sample, the authors hypothesized that security of attachment would be linked to religious fundamentalism (which in this case reflected a taking on of one's parents' religious

identities). This assertion was supported by their results. To be clear, the authors did not interpret the data to support an actual link between secure attachment and religious fundamentalism, but rather explained their results in light of the impact of religious socialization and the nature of the sample. Given this line of reasoning, it seems possible that a relationship between object relations development and religious fundamentalism might exist, but not to a level that would allow such an effect to be visible given more salient factors, such as the level of fundamentalism of one's parents.

Such a possibility, however, does not explain why greater object relations development *was* linked to lower levels of religious fundamentalism for younger participants (for which all four object relations subscales were correlated with religious fundamentalism in the predicted direction), but not for older participants (for which only one object relations subscale was significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism, and that in the direction opposite to what was predicted). One contributing factor may relate to the fact that for older participants, fundamentalism was positively correlated with impression management ($r = 2.64$), whereas for the younger, student participants, it was negatively correlated with impression management ($r = -.143$). Given this discrepancy, it may be that community fundamentalists simply seemed healthier because they were trying harder to present themselves positively, whereas student fundamentalists were more willing to be honest in terms of their psychological struggles.

Another possible explanation for the differences between the cohorts may relate to the fact that the nature of religious fundamentalism has changed throughout the last half-century. As mentioned, during the last 25 years religious fundamentalism as a

movement has become increasingly focused and politically driven (Copeland, 1994). As one author notes, fundamentalism had changed by the 1980s from “small-town Protestantism” to an “aggressive and confident religious movement...in coalition with conservative political forces” (Caplan, 1987, p.1). Given this shift in quality, it seems possible that maintaining more conservative religious views may have been more normative for families in the 1970s and earlier, whereas it subsequently became associated with more extremist political stances and institutions, such as Falwell’s Moral Majority.

For older individuals within this sample then, being raised to hold more literal views of the Bible may have been a normal part of being Christian. For the younger participants, on the other hand, holding these views may indicate an affinity for the type of spirituality preached by leaders such as Falwell—one typified by a political stance that rejects the expanding level of diversity that is present in modern life. The divergent findings between the student and community participants may therefore reflect a difference between the age groups regarding the types of spirituality being captured by responses that are intended to reflect fundamentalist thinking. If this is the case, then exploring such differences may be an important element in further revising our current means of measuring religious fundamentalism.

Whatever the explanation for the differences between the age groups in the impact of psychological development on religious fundamentalism, such a finding is potentially significant in not only deepening our understanding of the intersection between the psychological and spiritual domains, but also in shining a light on the

unique role that age may play in spiritual functioning. If lower levels of psychological development are associated with religious fundamentalism for college-aged individuals, being aware of this dynamic would be important in working with fundamentalist students in a counseling setting. In working with Christian young adults, it may be useful for counselors to attend to psychological variables, such as attachment and social isolation, in understanding and helping clients to explore the role religion plays in their lives.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis asserted that God image would predict level of religious fundamentalism, such that maintaining more positive images of God would be associated with lower levels of religious fundamentalism. This hypothesis was not confirmed. Only one of the three God image subscales, Presence, was significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism, and this correlation was not in the predicted direction. Additionally, a negligible amount of variance in religious fundamentalism was explained by God image during the regression analysis. The results therefore indicated that for the current sample more fundamentalist participants did not differ in terms of their viewing God as accepting and challenging, but did see God as being more present in their lives.

This finding does not confirm nor disconfirm previous qualitative findings, as the relationship between God image and religious fundamentalism has not been previously empirically tested. It does go against conclusions drawn from a qualitative study of religious leaders in which the author stated that “The God-image of the fundamentalism

is that of the harsh, punitive father who must be appeased only by the blood sacrifice of his own Son” (Hedge-Carruthers, 1997, abstract). It also disconfirms an assertion made by Stein (2004) that as fundamentalists become increasingly self-demanding in their own process of purification, their image of God should become harsh and demeaning as well.

Given these assertions, one might expect at least a weak relationship between negative God image and religious fundamentalism. However, it is particularly intriguing that the results not only failed to confirm such a relationship, but actually supported the opposite notion in relation to the Presence scale. In understanding this result, it may be worth mentioning that the Presence scale was significantly correlated with the spiritual maturity subscale Impression Management. As an aside, the very similar Awareness scale (which was also significantly correlated to religious fundamentalism) was also correlated with Impression Management. These correlations indicate that individuals who reported viewing and experiencing God as present may have allowed their answers to be influenced by self-image concerns. Because of this, their scores on these scales, as well as subsequent correlations with religious fundamentalism, may not have been completely valid. Additionally, it seems possible that individuals who felt compelled to express the “right” answers in relation to God’s presence may also have felt the need to endorse the “right,” or more dogmatic, Christian responses on the religious fundamentalism scale. This is possible given that religious fundamentalist participants scored higher on the impression management scale as well, although this correlation did not reach significance ($r = .105$).

Although these considerations may explain the relationship between viewing God as present and religious fundamentalism, they do not explain the low correlations for the other two subscales. It is worth noting, however, that the reliability check on these two subscales produced somewhat low coefficient alphas: .568 (Acceptance), .502 (Challenge). Correlations with these two subscales should therefore be viewed tentatively. Nevertheless, the current study failed to find support for hypothesis 2, leaving us with the possibility that religious fundamentalists truly view God in a manner similar to non-fundamentalists.

One final note regarding the measurement of the God image construct is worth mentioning. This is the fact that the God Image Inventory (Lawrence, 1991) was the only utilized measure which includes questions that ask participants about their perceptions of God, rather than focusing primarily on their experiences, as the other two inventories do. These questions, such as “God’s love for me is unconditional,” might activate learned templates of who God is. Although Lawrence (1991) felt he had avoided this problem in creating the inventory, it may be that these templates are over-learned for religious fundamentalists (given that in general they are more religiously involved (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004)), and therefore have a stronger influence on responses for this group. Such a possibility would be worth exploring in future research. If it were to be supported, it would help explain the lack of support for hypothesis 2 found in this study.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis stated that spiritual maturity would predict religious fundamentalism such that lower levels of spiritual maturity would be associated with higher levels of fundamentalism. This hypothesis was partially supported in that two subscales— Instability ($r = .335, p = .002$) and Grandiosity ($r = .256, p = .018$)— evidenced strongly significant correlations with religious fundamentalism in the predicted direction. However, a third subscale, Awareness, was significantly correlated with religious fundamentalism in the direction opposite to what was predicted.

This may be the case for couple of reasons. First, as mentioned, the Awareness scale was also significantly correlated with the Impression Management scale, indicating that answers on this subscale may have been mitigated by needs to appear a certain way. Additionally, Hall and Edwards (1996) designed this scale to measure a unique aspect of spiritual maturity that they believed was less determined by psychological functioning when compared to the other subscales. Although all the other subscales were developed within an object relations framework, Hall and Edwards believed that Awareness itself does not indicate healthy or unhealthy dynamics. As an explanation of this, they pointed out that people can have intense relationships with one another, but that does not mean the relationships will be well-balanced ones. Rather, the health of the participant's relationship with God was meant to be captured in the Quality subscales. Given the framework of the current study then, it is unsurprising that the Awareness subscale would relate to religious fundamentalism differently than the Quality subscales.

When considering the Quality subscales alone, two of the four subscales strongly support the given hypothesis, suggesting that spiritual maturity may indeed be linked to lower levels of religious fundamentalism. Additionally, when the Quality subscales were combined into composite scores, the subsequent scores predicted a significant portion of the variance in religious fundamentalism during the regression analysis ($r = .312$, $p = .004$). Such a finding may be significant for counselors working with religious clients. Understanding the link between religious fundamentalism and certain aspects of spiritual maturity may help counselors in addressing spiritual concerns with their clients and in facilitating growth in this area. Additionally, knowing that certain spiritual beliefs may be less functional than others may orient counselors to potential dynamics to watch for in relation to specific forms of belief.

As an aside, the above results are also generally consistent for the student and non-student groups. One variation between the groups, however, is the fact that Grandiosity was much more strongly correlated with religious fundamentalism for the community group ($r = .395$) than for the student group ($.102$). It seems natural that those who have lived long enough to have had a diversity of life experiences would be less likely to view the world in rigid terms (which may also explain the fact that age was negatively correlated with religious fundamentalism). Therefore, to grow older and still maintain high levels of dogmatic thinking may reflect a level of grandiosity that would not necessarily be present within youth who hold the same beliefs. Being aware of this possibility may be useful for counselors working with individuals who hold

fundamentalist beliefs, in terms of understanding the differing implications that holding these beliefs may have for younger versus older clients.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that the two spirituality-oriented independent variables (spiritual maturity and God image) would predict religious fundamentalism above and beyond what would be predicted by object relations development. This assertion was not based on previous research, but was an exploratory hypothesis aimed at understanding how all of the variables work together in explaining religious fundamentalism. Because God image did not end up predicting religious fundamentalism overall, it obviously did not provide any predictive value after controlling for object relations development. Hypothesis 4 was therefore clearly not supported in relation to the God image variable.

In relation to spiritual maturity, however, hypothesis 4 was confirmed. During the regression analysis, spiritual maturity was by far the strongest predictor of religious fundamentalism. Additionally, although some of the portion of religious fundamentalism explained by spiritual maturity was also explained by object relations development, most of it was unique.

For spiritual maturity, Hypothesis 4 was also confirmed when considering the student and community samples individually. Given that object relations development was more highly correlated to religious fundamentalism for the student group, it is unsurprising that it explained more of the variance in religious fundamentalism during the “student” regression analysis. However, it is interesting to note that the additional portion that object relations explained was also explained by spiritual maturity. Due to

this notable overlap then, for the student group spiritual maturity held less unique explanatory power above and beyond what was explained by object relations development. However, for both groups spiritual maturity did provide a notable amount of unique explanatory power.

The findings in relation to hypothesis 4 may be useful in understanding the relationship between spiritual maturity and religious fundamentalism. While spiritual maturity is conceptualized from an object relations perspective, it seems that it nevertheless correlates with religious fundamentalism, even after object relations development is controlled for. This is an interesting finding, given that of all the hypotheses in this study, the relationship between the quality of one's relationship to God and level of religious fundamentalism was not pointed to in any of the previous empirical or theoretical literature. This hypothesis, rather, was built on observed similarities in the underlying dynamics that were described for each of these constructs. The fact that relationally-driven spiritual maturity ended up being the strongest predictor of religious fundamentalism may therefore be significant in pointing to a new way of understanding religious fundamentalism that has not been attended to in the previous research.

Hypothesis 5

The correlational data yielded very little support for hypothesis 5, which predicted that higher levels of spiritual maturity would correlate with more positive images of God. Correlations between the five spiritual maturity and three God image subscales resulted in a total of 15 correlations. Only three of these were significant in the predicted

direction (though all three *p* values were less than .01), and one was significant in the non-predicted direction. These findings were inconsistent with the two previous studies which have tested this relationship, one having found significance in 31 of 35 predicted correlations (Hall, 1997), and the other having found significance in 60 out of 72 predicted correlations (Hall & Brokaw, 1995). These previous results were impressive, although both studies had fewer participants than the current study, with *n*'s of 76 and 20, respectively. Either way, this study does not add support to the idea that God image and spiritual maturity are more than moderately related.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 stated that positive images of God would be linked to higher levels of object relations development. Support for this assertion was somewhat limited, with only three of the 12 correlations reaching significance in the predicted direction (although a fourth approached significance). In general, the Acceptance subscale was the most strongly correlated with object relations development (the four *p*-values being .003, .002, .070, and .094). There is definite support then, for the possibility that those who view God as accepting are generally more psychologically healthy. The Challenge subscale, on the other hand, evidenced no significant correlations with object relations development. There may be marked discrepancies, therefore, in how object relations plays into different images of God.

The fact that a greater number of significant correlations was not obtained is inconsistent with previous studies, one of which, Tisdale et al. (1997), for instance, found significance in 31 out of 36 predicted correlations. Of these studies, however, two

out of three were performed on an inpatient population (a third was performed on students, but found less consistent results). Perhaps, then, the link between God image and mental health is more salient for those whose mental health concerns are more pronounced (i.e. for an inpatient population). If this is the case, then it would be interesting to explore further how developmental factors might impact religious factors differently for different groups.

Either way, the current study provided mixed evidence in terms of the link between object relations development and God image. Because the stronger correlations with religious fundamentalism tended to be clustered under one subscale, it would also be interesting to explore further how individual images of God are uniquely impacted by psychological development.

Hypothesis 7

The final hypothesis proposed that spiritual maturity would predict object relations development such that higher levels of spiritual maturity would be associated with higher levels of object relations development. In support of this hypothesis, mixed evidence was found. More specifically, notable discrepancies were found between the spiritual maturity subscales in terms of their connection to object relations development. Two of the five subscales—Disappointment and Instability—correlated strongly with the four object relations subscales almost across the board. For the Disappointment subscale the subsequent 4 p-values were .007, <.001, .011, and .055, while for the Instability subscale, the subsequent 4 p-values were .012, <.001, .028, and .075. However, when considering the other three subscales—Awareness, Realistic Acceptance, and

Grandiosity—no significant correlations in the predicted direction were found. One correlation between Realistic Acceptance and Insecure Attachment was noted, but this was in the direction opposite to prediction. Therefore, for two of the subscales strong support of the given hypothesis was obtained, while for the other three subscales, no support was found.

These findings are somewhat in conflict with results from a number of previous studies which have given strong support for the conclusion that spiritual maturity would be related to object relations development (Hall, 1997; Hall & Brokaw, 1995; Hall & Edwards, 1996; Hall & Edwards, 2002). For these studies, in general significant correlations were found across the board, rather than being clustered with one or two subscales. However, one study (Hall & Edwards, 1996) did mention that the Grandiosity subscale failed to find significant correlations with object relations development, a result that is consistent with the current findings.

So what might explain the discrepancies between the subscales in terms of their relation to object relations development in the current study? In terms of the Awareness subscale, a lack of strong findings may be partially explained by the previously mentioned fact that Awareness was the one subscale designed outside a psychological framework. It was believed that Awareness would be less related to psychological variables given that being aware or attentive to another person does not necessarily imply a healthy relationship (although it was still considered an aspect of spiritual maturity).

Additionally, it is interesting to note that the two subscales that correlated with object relations development were also the scales most related to potential negative feelings in relation to God—disappointment reflecting feeling disappointed with God, and Instability reflecting feeling a lack of stable positive connection with God. In summary then, while spiritual maturity was not connected to psychological development across the board, for the given sample having lower levels of psychological development predicted having a less positive, stable relationship with God. This finding may be significant for counselors working to understand how a client's early relationships may impact the stability of his or her relationship with God.

Limitations of Study

There are a number of limitations of this study. The primary limitation was that the study was not designed to assess how the observed relationships would differ between age groups. Although it was possible to divide the sample by age in order to explore these differences once they were noted, doing so resulted in working with two samples that were each about half the size of the original sample. For the post-hoc analyses, determining statistical significance was difficult to do and only comparisons across effect sizes could be made. Additionally, the fact that such notable differences existed between the age groups made the results of the whole sample difficult to interpret. It seems that this study would have been more effectively accomplished had age been controlled for during sampling, or if a significantly larger number of participants had been recruited such that both age groups could be looked at separately, while still retaining a high *n*.

Alongside sampling concerns, there were a few indications of problems within the nature of the data itself. First, although most of the subscales indicated high coefficient alphas, the alpha values for two out of three of the God Image Inventory subscales were somewhat low (Challenge: .502; Acceptance: .568). This lack of reliability indicates that the results pertaining to God image should be taken with caution. Additionally, data for one of the variables, religious fundamentalism, failed to pass the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. However, the fact that three out of four of the variables did pass this test may be a satisfactory result, given that Klem (2000) argued that the assumptions of multivariate normality are difficult to obtain in relation to social science research. Nevertheless, all of these data concerns should be considered in understanding the current results. The lack of support for the given hypotheses, particularly those relating to God image, may be a partial result of such concerns.

In terms of the scores on religious fundamentalism, an additional and perhaps more notable concern may be that the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (RFS) may not adequately measure religious fundamentalism as a way of relating to religion apart from any specific set of beliefs. Although the authors of the scale intended to capture a religious approach that could apply across a variety of beliefs (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004), Slater, Hall, and Edwards (2001) have criticized the RFS as being confounded by orthodoxy. The psychological nature of orthodoxy and fundamentalism are distinctly different, as evidenced, for instance, by the fact that in two studies religious fundamentalism was positively related to prejudice while orthodoxy was unrelated or negatively related to prejudice (Kirkpatrick, 1993; Rowatt, & Franklin, 2004). If the RFS

does indeed partially measure orthodoxy, then the present lack of strong results related to religious fundamentalism may be largely explained by this fact.

Implications for Future Research

Both the findings and limitations of the present study highlight a number of points to consider in proceeding with future research. To begin with, it would be useful to explore how psychological constructs (such as object relations development or attachment processes) may impact religious variables differently across various groups. While age seemed to have a strong impact on scores for the current sample, perhaps other differences, such as level of education, or convert versus non-convert status, may be worth investigating in relation to the research questions.

Future research should also explore the differences this study found between the age groups, specifically addressing possible reasons for these differences. In doing so, it may be useful to interview participants about their relationship to religion and in this way gain a more nuanced perspective as to the qualitative differences within (and not simply among) various religious approaches. Such a perspective may help to explain the contradictory findings regarding religious fundamentalism and object relations development in the current study. If there are indeed qualitatively different ways of holding fundamentalist beliefs, then understanding such a typology (and how it interacts with variables such as age) would be useful in further explorations of this construct.

Perhaps such an understanding would also be helpful in improving the ways that we measure religious fundamentalism. It has been noted that measuring spiritually-oriented variables is in general rife with difficulties (Slater, Hall, & Edwards, 2001). As

mentioned, one difficulty that has been faced in measuring religious fundamentalism specifically is how to capture the qualitative nature of fundamentalism without reducing it to a set of beliefs. In approaching future research then, it may be useful to continue building on the existing ways of measuring religious fundamentalism, an effort that would require us to clarify what we mean when we use the term *religious fundamentalist*.

Implications for Clinical Practice

Results of this study point to a few considerations in terms of working with clients, particularly religious young adults. Before addressing these, however, it is worth noting that although a number of correlations within this study were statistically significant, the sizes of the correlations were rather small across the board. It is therefore difficult to say whether these correlations hold *clinical* significance. Given this fact, it is difficult to judge how the given results might most accurately translate into clinically useful information.

Nevertheless, some general points may be worth making given the study's findings. In counseling young adults who hold a more fundamentalist approach to religion, for instance, understanding that their religious beliefs may reflect underlying developmental issues may orient the counselor to attend to these issues. Providing a positive attachment relationship for these clients may alleviate some of the underlying anxieties that might contribute to fundamentalism. Working on this level is not only likely to foster healing for clients, but in doing so may also help prepare clients to adopt more mature approaches to religion. Given that spirituality has the potential to play a supportive role

in the lives of young adults, assisting these clients to engage in healthy forms of religiosity seems a worthwhile endeavor.

As mentioned, the three object relations subscales most strongly correlated with religious fundamentalism for the student group were Alienation, Egocentricity, and Insecure Attachment, in that order. The dynamics captured in these three subscales are likely to result in marked difficulty relating to others in positive ways. In working with fundamentalist students, it may therefore be helpful for counselors to attend to how these clients are functioning interpersonally, particularly given that the college environment is very socially driven. Additionally, feeling alienated from others may lead to other psychological difficulties for students, such as depression or anxiety.

Whether working with students or individuals from the community, it seems important for counselors to be sensitive to their clients' spirituality both in terms of how this spirituality may reflect their psychological health, as well as of how it may be used to support their psychological health. Although this study provided mostly weak or mixed evidence by way of the stated hypotheses, it is clear that individuals approach religion in a variety of ways and that understanding these approaches will help us better understand our clients.

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APPENDIX A

Information Given by Principal Investigator during Introduction to Study

1. Investigator's name and academic affiliation
2. That the study investigates the relationship between psychological and spiritually-oriented variables
3. That the study would take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete
4. That participation in the study is voluntary
5. That a 15 dollar cash incentive would be given to participants

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