

**Millennial Identities As Emerging Ecumenical Missional Paradigm: A
critical study of culture as a crisis and opportunity for mission**

By

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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy Religion and Culture in Faculty of Theology at
Stellenbosch University*

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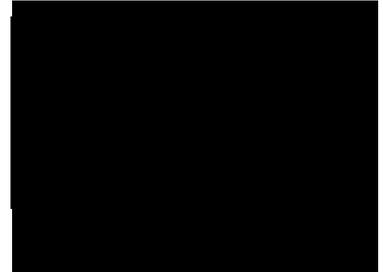
March 2015

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, discussions around youth identity crisis and *missio Dei* have become one of the most challenging issues of our time. Given that staying true to self and God is complicated. We seldom come to terms with what our identity should look like in relation to the character and image of God. Just like any experience, a self-discovery experience with the 'self' and an attachment relationship with God, is like a rollercoaster ride.

The researcher engages the reader in an empirical study that zooms in on the identity crisis of Stellenbosch Christian Millennials in relation to the subcultures of self and God images. Hence, attempting the all-important question: How can a Christian life, lived within the restorative and prophetic context of *imago Dei* become the milieu in which the youth-in-mission finds an enduring and satisfying identity in a time of crisis?

The research is an exhaustive study that draws from the theories of attachment to God, authenticity, and theological anthropology in its exploratory navigations to bring to bear the identity crisis of Christian Millennials who participated in the study. Using a qualitative case study design, the researcher exhaustively gave account to the experiences of the respondents in the study by providing the reader with a robust narrative that explains the identity crisis of Christian Millennials in relation to their self and God images.

The hallmark of the study was the observation of a common coping mechanism by way of splitting or self-fragmentation, used by the respondents to deal with their identity crisis as they struggled to remain authentic to self and maintain a positive God image. They dealt with their identity crisis by self-creating a *prophetic* future within the structural qualities of the self to engage in a relationship between its divine given purpose in an eschatological future and the mission of God.

It was this identity crisis that led to an opportunity that enabled the youth-in-mission to interpret their experience in God's terms. The researcher introduced this opportunity as a *coping missional hermeneutic*, which is a theological model that allows us to change the frame of our identity crisis to the pattern of the *imago Dei* in order to tell our stories from the perspective of *missio Dei*.

OPSOMMING

Tydens afgelope paar dekades het die bespreking rondom die identiteitskrisis van jongmense en *missio Dei* een van die mees uitdagende aspekte in die hedendaagse lewe geword. Om voortdurend opreg te wees aan die self en God is ingewikkeld. Mense kom nie altyd tot 'n vergelyk oor die identiteit wat behoort te wees wanneer verwys word na die verhouding tussen die karakter en beeld van God. Soos dit die geval is met enige ander ervaring, kan die ontdekking van die 'self' en 'n persoonlike verhouding met God vergelyk word met 'n mallemeule.

Die navorser betrek die leser by 'n empiriese studie. Hierdie studie fokus op die identiteitskrisis van Christen jongmense in verhouding tot die subkultuur van die self- en Godsbeelde.

Hiermee saam poog die studie om lig te werp op die volgende aspek: Hoe kan die Christen lewe binne die konteks van die *imago Dei*, 'n kanaal wees vir 'n voortdurende en genotvolle identiteit tydens 'n identiteitskrisis?

Die studie is komprehensief en is gebaseer op die teorieë van "attachment to God", "authenticity" en teologiese antropologie. Die teorieë was gebruik deur die navorser om die identiteitskrisis van Christen jongmense (Millennials), wie deelgeneem het aan hierdie studie, te beskryf.

Die navorser maak gebruik van 'n kwalitatiewe gevalle studie om te rapporteer oor die ervaringe van die deelnemers aan die studie, deur die leser te voorsien van betroubare stories oor die identiteitskrisis van jong christene in verhouding met die subkultuur van die self- en Godsbeelde.

'n Uitstaande kenmerk van die studie is die waarneming van die algemene hanterings meganisme van verdeling (splitting) en godsdienstige taal waartydens deelnemers hul identiteitskrisis hanteer en sodoende die ware self te wees en 'n positiewe Godsbeeld te hê.

'n Identiteitskrisis het die geleentheid geskep vir jongmense om hul ervaringe van God in Gods terme te interpreteer. Die navorser het deur middel van die geleentheid die *coping missional hermeneutic* bekendgestel. Dié teologiese model stel ons in staat om die raamwerk waarbinne ons, ons identiteitskrisis beskou, na 'n *imago Dei* te verander. Hierdie verandering sal ons help om ons stories uit die perspektief van *missio Dei* te vertel.

DEDICATION

“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” — Isaiah 40:30 – 31

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God Almighty, through Whom all things are possible. Completing this study is a proof of Divine intervention. I know I did not complete this study on my own — You were always there, Lord.

Consequently, reflection on all the people that have contributed in one way or the other to the completion of this study is commensurate to their endeavours, as I reflect on the “heroes” of this achievement, without whom this research will not come to fruition.

First is to my study leader, Professor D.X. Simon whose leadership has helped me learn so much during the period of my study here at Stellenbosch University. It all started with his tips on the importance of “conceptualizing” a research, an important factor in research, which I was never privileged to learn during my previous degree. This has conceptually ignited in me, a theoretical mind of reflection from where I engage the world around me in exploration, as evidenced in this study. Secondly, is to my good friend Dr Edwards Davis, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Wheaton College, an attachment and authenticity expert, who did almost similar study in his dissertation as I did but only focused on the quantitative aspect. After our discussion on the need for a qualitative approach to the study, through his support, I have here continued from where he stopped. Thank you for creating the time to answer my never-ending questions as we discussed the prospects of the study. In addition, not forgetting the compassionate, Professor Robert C. Dryskra of Princeton Theological Seminary, who expanded the study on the postmodern self in his dissertation in the early 80s. After I requested for his dissertation, which I couldn't access online, he immediately ransacked his archive, instructing his department's secretary, Kate, to make the copy available to me. Thank you sire for your kindness. And to someone I look up to, Professor Adam Possami of the Religion and Society Centre at the University of Western Sydney, I simply want to thank you for being a good man and acting in more ways than one for my own good. Thank you for understanding the fragile nature of a relationship with upcoming, ‘wanna-be’ academic like myself. With great love, I embrace my Stellenbosch “father”, Jürgens Hendricks, Professor Emeritus of Practical Theology en Missiology, and Executive Director of NetACT without whom I did probably throw in the towel and give up on this program. Your NetACT project has truly being a blessing to me here at Stellenbosch University. Aside from providing me with an affordable accommodation for my study, I remember running out of cash when I was doing my fieldwork you came to my rescue via NetACT to support my fieldwork financially. Because of the money your organization gave me to complete my study, I was able to ‘spoil’ my respondents with quality refreshment as they happily, yet convulsively spilled all the data I needed to support my writing during my interviews with them. However, mostly for given your ears to me, especially

when I am in distress. Truly, thank you for being a father figure to me during my time in Stellenbosch.

Next are the churches and church leaders in Stellenbosch that opened their doors for me to conduct this research with their youth groups. For ethical reasons, I won't be allowed to mention your names in here, but you know who you are. And of course, it will be irresponsible of me not to acknowledge the effort of the Ethical Clearance Committee and the Head of the Department of Practical Theology and Missiology, Professor Johan Cilliers. Also, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Professor Nico Koopman, for showing leadership in their tremendous contributions towards achieving interdisciplinarity in the field of theology at the faculty. An achievement without which this study is insignificant to my Master's degree requirement. Thank you for allowing me to express myself in an interdisciplinary way on the borderline between psychology and theology.

And for others for whom I owe a great deal of gratitude for writing a chapter in my story during my period of study here in Stellenbosch, namely: Joyce Arawole, Vivienne Mothibi, Liena Hoffman, Aaron September, Mark Pieterse, Linda Uys, Christopher Muller, Sanchia and many others, words cannot express how I will miss our friendship. Thank you for being there for me.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to my parents, Rev. and Mrs I.G. Agina, for bringing me into this beautiful world, and deciding even before hand through their pledge to God, the contours of my life's journey, which is evidently invalid outside the compass of faith and spirituality. Therefore, to this I say thank you for a job well done, but mostly for being there for me with the little you have.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CM	Christian Millennial
DAF	Divine Attachment Figure
IWM	Internal Working Model
SAF	Substitute Attachment Figure
DAF	Divine Attachment Figure
HAF	Human Attachment Figure
AF	Attachment Figure
CMH	Coping Missional Hermeneutic

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Just as the story of anyone's life is the story of relationships — so each person's religious story is a story of relationships" — Andrew M. Greeley

"The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are." — C.G. Jung

1.1 Background of the Research

Bosch started a discussion on the ecumenical missionary paradigm with a short note on *Mission in a Time of Testing*. Here, Bosch saw the church undergoing new forms of mission imagery shaped by the contemporary crisis of identity and thus admits, "The Christian mission is under attack "[from all sides]", even from within its own ranks", a necessary tension "to find an entirely new image today" (Bosch 1991: 518). This "time of testing", seen at the turn of the twenty-first century has brought with it profound effects on how Christians experience God and stay true to self. If Bosch believes that a "paradigm shift" (in the way we think about God and His mission) is underway, then old assumptions and images that might represent God and who we are in relation to His mission need to be re-evaluated, and new expressions and language about God and His mission need to be investigated and perhaps, developed.

The idea of paradigm is very intriguing and often times confusing. Naughton et al. argue that the goal of a paradigm should be "to understand the dynamics of relationships between the knowledge/meaning, power, and identity" (Naughton et al. 2001: 46). On one hand, to understand the nature of these relationships, Rizzuto (1979) advises us to look at how individuals experience God, which is a "relationally and experientially constructed phenomenon, it is organic and can be cast and recast throughout the life cycle" (Rizzuto 1979 cited in Frawley-O'Dea 2015: 169). Whilst Wood et al. (2008) on the other hand, suggest examining how individuals stay true to whom they are. The created images of God and self often reflect the "relevant historical, cultural, political, religious and spiritual, communal, and personal experiences and relationships" (Frawley-O'Dea 2015: 169). Therefore, a paradigmatic approach to identity-related crisis would consider the self and God images of members of a "scientific community" within their relevant historical, cultural, and personal experiences.

Thomas Kuhn believes that "A paradigm is what members of a scientific community, and they alone, share" (Kuhn 1974: 470). Bosch saw how the shared crisis of identity in the early Christian paradigm was portrayed in insecure self and God image experiences, as the then Gentile Christians struggled with an identity crisis when the faith of the Church was tested. According to Bosch, they were asking relational and emotional questions such as, "who are we really? How do we relate to the Jewish past...? Is Christianity a new religion or a

continuation of the faith of the Old Testament? How do we relate to the earthly Jesus, who is gradually and irrevocably receding into the past?" (Bosch 1991: 85). These were the crisis of identity and an indication of the self and God image anxieties the "scientific community" of the early Gentile Christians were facing, as the Church was undergoing an "almost complete transformation" (Ibid. 85).

Kahn argues that in order to revise the notion of paradigm in any scientific community, such community needs to be isolated and studied first. Bosch had done a good job to study the relational and emotional experiences of the early Gentile Christian community. Therefore, to continue with this same pattern of thought, a primary goal in this study would be to zoom in to study the shared self and God image experiences of a "scientific community" within the ecumenical paradigm in order to understand the nature of their crisis of identity.

Bosch (1991) relates to the term 'ecumenical paradigm' as a new framework for understanding the mission of God in the contemporary world. Hence, a "scientific community", as defined by Kuhn would be understood in this study as "practitioners of a scientific specialty" in the contemporary world (Kuhn 1974:461). By looking closely at the selected scientific community for this study, the researcher hopes to draw the attention of the reader to the emotional experiences and the crisis of identity members of this community share across their community lines.

Kuhn (1974) notes however, that empirical challenges within a paradigm arise in terms of identifying and investigating scientific communities. Moreover, as we focus on a community of young Christians in this study in relation to their relational and emotional experiences, we hope to affirm and analyse their experiences as an opportunity for mission.

Bosch (1991) had helped us to understand the nature of the crisis of identity of a "scientific community" in the early Christian church, which according to him, was influenced because of the "increasingly hostile attitude toward the church displayed by Pharisaism", (Ibid. 85). In a quite intriguing article on *Emotions in the Christian tradition*, author Roberts argues that from the viewpoint of early Christian tradition, their experience "express a character that is attuned to the way things are: to our nature as creatures, to God's nature as God, to the relations we bear to the goods and evils of life" (Roberts 2011: ¶34). Pastoral Care historians believe that it was at this period that 'representative Christian persons' began *helping acts* directed towards the "healing", "reconciling", "supporting", and "guiding" of "troubled persons" within the early Christian community who were facing emotional and relational crisis (Lartey 2007:1-2). According to Bosch, the tension in the early scientific Christian community as they were forming their identity in the midst of a *missio*-logical crisis suggests an internal "confusion,

tension and conflict” aimed at dividing “them from one from another” (1991: 59). In this manner, their identity crisis was addressed by representative Christian leaders as they prepared the way for “reconciliation, forgiveness, and mutual love within the community” so as to “convey self-confidence to a community facing a crisis of identity”, (Bosch 1991: 59). This intervention “embolden the [Christian] community members toward seeing opportunities for witness and service around them” (Bosch 1991: 59). It is against this background that Bosch saw the apparent contradictions between the Gentile and Jewish Christians as a crisis of identity affecting the early Christian paradigm.

Bosch presents the different terms used by several authors to describe paradigm changes in mission such as “models of interpretation”, “frames of reference”, “research traditions”, or “belief systems” (1991:187). These concepts were used to describe the issues confronted by different scientific communities “crying out for responses that are both relevant to the times and in harmony with the essence of the Christian faith” (Bosch 1991: 188).

As young people break down under their crisis of identity, we can as well, understand the relational, cultural, and emotional experiences of their “scientific community” in relation to their Christian faith and identity as we continue to grasp and guess what the new ecumenical paradigm may look like.

Therefore, focusing on the identity crisis of young people, the fast-growing hero/civic generation born from 1981 to 2001 who are experiencing their *unravelling turning* (Howe and Strauss, 1991) is an important task for understanding the present ecumenical paradigm. According to Howe and Strauss (1997), the *unravelling turning* is the time of a social generation with an anti-institutional tendency and a strong individualism. If having a dislike for religious institutions for example is the nature of Millennials, how does this tendency influence their relationship experience with God? Again, if having a strong sense of self is an attribute of this social generation, how does this tendency influence how they understand themselves?

In a recent report on youth dialogue organized by the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, Ambassador Dumisani S. Kumalo believes the African youth “Is characterized by a weak value system,” (2011:4). Though he wasn’t clear as to what he meant by this statement, but study done by Malachia and Ranchod (2006) associate such characterization of a “weak value system” as the effect of elements of an emerging or imbedded emotional patterns within a youth subculture. Darren Twa (2010) in his book *Relationship and Value System*, describes a “value system” as the “Sum total of your ideas and beliefs.” A person’s value system, according to Twa, “develops through what you are taught and experience, combined with your reactions to them, forming your preferences and your unique perspective on life.”

And since a value system develops through human relationships and experiences, attention is then required on the theoretical models that inform such perspective.

Specifically, self and God image experiences have been considered in this study as the building blocks of the crisis of identity facing the youth-in-mission. Given that, self and God images potentiate head-to-head to one another and sometimes parallel to each other from childhood to initiate an identity orientation in social relationships, which determine how we relate to self and God (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Granqvist, et al., 2010; Wood et al., 2008; Moltmann, 1974).

Against this background, the study have paid closer attention to the self and God image experiences of the scientific community of Christian Millennials in this study in order to better understand and interpret their crisis of identity. This is an understanding of identity in terms of *process*, "not something we find, or have once and for all..." (Sarup 1996: 28), but something, as Grenz (2007) puts it, that "is no more than an accidental cohesion in the flux of time" (Grenz 2007: 128). According to Jeronicic (2008), postmodernity subjects identity to the social formations of language. The researcher identifies with Jeronicic's thought and thus attempts to understand millennial identities, its crisis, and language within the linguistic conventions of self and God images.

How then can we understand the identity crisis of Christian Millennials within the present ecumenical paradigm in relation to the subcultures of self and God images?

John Bowlby and Anna-Maria Rizzuto (1971) describe the development of the God image schema in their Attachment theory as an early contact relationship with a caregiver. This relationship is formed through bodily sensations, non-verbal communication, and symbolic behaviours (Bowlby & Rizzuto, 1971; Badenoch, 2008). Bowlby (1969) acknowledges that the early interactions with a caregiver develop into representations called *internal working models* that may last for a long period between a person and their close *others*, especially their Divine Attachment Figure (DAF). These representations keep them connected to the DAF, considering the needs they have that can be met by the DAF. Hence, I have attempted to understand the God image crisis in this study from the Attachment-to-God theory, as the way young people unconsciously represent God and attach themselves to God at an "emotional, physiological, relational, largely nonverbal, or usually implicit level" (Noffke & Hall 2007: 147).

Self-images on the other hand have also been a major crisis of identity (Erikson, 1968). Scholars have often understood this concept as the consistency with an individual's feelings and thoughts (Akin & Akin, 2014). The idea of 'self' or the intersection between one's feelings and thoughts has been perceived as a moral necessity, especially within the Authenticity

theory scholarship (Bialystok, 2009; Akin & Akin, 2014). Wood and his colleagues (2008) were among the many scholars who have contributed to Authenticity scholarship. They describe it as a modern or essentialist view of the self-image (Vitz & Felch, 2006) that reflects such concepts such as the *core self* (Rogers, 1961; Stern, 1985), the *true self* (Winnicott, 1965), the *real self* (Masterson, 1985, 1988, 2005), *self-actualization* (Maslow, 1968), *self-determination* (Deci & Ryan, 1985), *self-made man* (Vitz, 2006), and *Renaissance man* (Vitz, 2006). The Authenticity theory proposed by Wood et al (2008) uses the three inter-related components of a person-centred authenticity. The concepts are *self-alienation*, *authentic-living*, and *external influences* (Wood et al., 2008; David, 2010). According to Wood et al. (2008), the measure of congruity between these three constructs determines one's self-image and weighs in on one's crisis of identity. The congruity is often achieved through *self-fragmentation* (Moltmann, 1974; 1976) or *splitting* (Masterson, 1981; 1988), a self-deceptive and discovery process that introduce a promissory self, destined to realize God's intent for it with the intention of an eschatological fulfilment (Moltmann, 1974; 1976; Jeroncic 2008). Therefore, self-images were discussed in this study from the Authenticity theory in order to understand how the experiences of the scientific community in this study confirm the self-image argument of Authenticity scholars.

A critical question that lies ahead as we consider the crisis of identity within the ecumenical paradigm would be that of *value*, *meaning*, and *interpretation* of self and God images amongst the scientific community of young people in this study.

1.2 Motivation for the Research

The researcher's personal involvement as a Christian millennial largely motivated this study. Secondly, the researcher is interested in discerning a missional response to the burgeoning literatures on self and God images in relation to the millennial generation. Thirdly, as a pastor, it is important to specialize in some kind of skill of the psyche, of the self or soul. Dykstra reasons (1997: 4), "If pastoral work involves, as characterized historically, the *cura animarum*, the care of souls, then pastors need somehow to be experts of the self, of its nature and functioning, its sickness and salvations". Coming to grips with the experiences of young people is important for pastors in general to enable them to be more attentive to such situations, in order to recognize and restore conflicting conditions of troubled persons within the church.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to learn more about the identity crisis of Christian millennials in relation to their self and God image experiences in order to help them address the vacuum of value and security with the *character* of God from the lens of *missio Dei*. This proposition is necessary to help the researcher discern a theological response that will enable pastoral care workers and researchers interpret and direct the identity crisis of young people in a way that allows them find themselves in the image of God.

Indeed, the church is faced with new adaptive challenges. Therefore, we most substantively set out to:

- Explore the identity crisis of the respondents who participate in this study in relation to their self and God image experiences.
- Examine the relationship between the self and God images of respondents who participate in this study.
- Provide empirical support for the conceptualization of self and God image related studies.
- Address the need for security in relation to the subcultures of self and God images during a crisis of identity in order to discern a missional opportunity to which Christian Millennials can find themselves in the image of God.

1.4 Research Problem

The crisis of identity is a serious problem facing young Christians (Erikson, 1968). This crisis also makes it difficult for local churches to cater for the spiritual needs of their youth groups. Several conceptual frameworks have been proposed to understand crisis of identity amongst Christian youths and perhaps most popular of these would be their attachment and authenticity tendencies, which are often used to understand the subcultures of self and God images respectively.

Although the subcultures of self and God images may be vague concepts and subject to constant criticism, the emotional and relational experiences of young people in their relationship experience with God and self seem, nonetheless, central to religious and cultural identity crisis, even today. Studying the ways young people feel about their relationship with God and how this influence their true self is barely expressed in the common stock of words. To yield into fruitful results, "one has to study the content of their thoughts, not just their pre-coded reaction to fixed lists of stimuli" (Janssen et al. 1994: 106). These different thought patterns can only be studied by "examining thinking processes, not the conclusions of the processes" (Spilka et al. 1985: 69).

Besides, *academic* theology, according to Hoffman, “historically has not dealt adequately with the God image subject”, (2000: 5). Karlson saw “The beginnings of *academic* theology proper, “[as]” where one studied what others had said about God, without such study having any necessary contact with one’s own spiritual life” (2009: ¶5). Even though this method had improved over the years, “It did so at a cost”, says Henry Karlson since “theology became more abstract and cut off from the needs of the Christian Faith” (Ibid., ¶5). Hence, we see academic theology creating excess ambiguous and esoteric ideas about God, says Hoffman (2000).

Researchers within religion and psychology believe that academic theology often shy away from dealing with religious experiences in a formal manner (Ibid. 5). As a result, there appears to be an active *escaping* from the emotional shards of the God image discussion, out of fear that it would distort the logical understanding of God. What then will it look like to have a self and God image relationality from the restorative context of Christ’s redemption and identity?

1.5 Research Questions

The main research objective is to **explore the self and God images amongst young (religious) people from psychological and theological lens, in order to discern an appropriate missional response to their identity crisis**. The following research questions were addressed:

- What narrative describes the respondents’ God image experiences in relation to their God attachment orientation?
- How does the attachment language in the respondents’ narratives about their relationship experience with God correspond to their early attachment bond with their parents?
- How does dimensions of God images relate to dimensions of self-images?
- What narrative describes the respondents’ self-image experiences in relation to their authentic self-behaviours?
- What kind of theology addresses the need for security in relation to the subcultures of self and God images during a crisis of identity, in order to present an opportunity to which Christian Millennials can find themselves in the *imago Dei*?

1.6 Significance of the Study

In this study, the researcher has attempted to provide a narrative of the identity crisis of Christian Millennials with regards to the subcultures of self and God images. The study is

divided into three main parts: First it looks at the theological and theoretical explanations of the self and God image dynamics using existing psychological and theological literatures. Secondly, it is an empirical exploration of the self and God image experiences of Christian Millennials that participate in the study. And finally, in what concludes the study, a depiction of self and God image relationality as part of the *imago Dei* using a missional response.

This study is considered a “critical research.” Mertens (2005) sees a critical research as one that encompasses a wide range of approaches that challenge norms that are taken for granted within a system. Cannella and Lincoln on the other hand, explain that a critical research “illuminate the hidden structures...., [inquire] deeply into the usages of language and the circulation of discourses that shape social life,” (2009:55). The study therefore is a critical study because we seek to analyse the historical and emotional conditions giving rise to identity crisis amongst young people, while also recognizing that self-identification can be motivational and therefore dialectically related to the conditions of young people. The study is interested in the role that attachment and authenticity plays within the crisis of identity. Goldstein et al. (2014) believe that the intellectual heritage of a critical study in an inter-disciplinary study of religion lies within its ability to converge various theoretical and theological viewpoints and traditions to discuss a subject matter. A critical study, according to Goldstein et al. (2014), does not reject this consilience of knowledge but rather critically self-reflects on the relationship thereof. We have paid close attention on different conceptual models in this study to bring to bear the different self and God image experiences of young people in this study.

Therefore, of note, one of the strength of this study is in its *consilience*, defined by Wilson (1998) as the “convergence and consonance—among a wide variety of theories and research, from a wide variety of disciplines and sub-disciplines” (1998:8). Wilson in his works consistently employed a deliberate style of writing that highlights consilient model and results, instead of pointing out its weaknesses. He advocates for this *consilience* — linking together of facts and theories — as key to advancement of knowledge. He calls it the unity of knowledge (Wilson, 1998). The overarching goal of this study is in its ability to link together different theories for the understanding of the subcultures of Christian Millennials in their relationship with God and self-representation.

1.7 Research Methodology

The researcher uses an empirical case study design to collect data by way of in-depth interviews with fifteen Christian millennials who are members of youth groups within churches in Stellenbosch, Western Cape South Africa.

The respondents were selected based on the random sampling technique with the help of the respective churches involved, to ensure robustness and convergence of knowledge in the findings in a way that reliably support the respondents' understanding of their self and God image experiences.

While analysing the research data, the researcher took a deductive approach in order to see how the experiences of the scientific community in question relate to and confirm the theories used in the study, while also noting new patterns of thought. By applying a deductive approach to confirm theories, the in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to carefully identify and explain selected themes relevant to the theories used in the study. This has helped the researcher to articulate an exhaustive narrative on the identity crisis of Christian millennials who participated in the study in relation to their self and God image experiences using attachment-to-God and authenticity theories.

1.8 Key Terms Used in the Study

For the purpose of the present investigation, the following definitions and concepts were used:

Attachment Bond. Relatively speaking, this is a long-lasting relationship with an attachment figure; usually someone who is irreplaceable in one's life and whom an individual often beckons for proximity. According to Lee Kirkpatrick, the relationship with God (Attachment to God) can be described as an attachment bond (Kirkpatrick, 1986).

Attachment Figures and Close 'Others'. Attachment figure is seen as a secure base from where the seeker explores the world around them. Parents and early caregivers usually fall within this category as attachment figures. However, separation from an attachment figure often causes anxiety, if the relationship is lost (Ainsworth, 1985). The study uses both words interchangeably, representing the various types of intimate relationship partners, including friends, parents, pastors, other Christians, and God (Davis, 2010). Thus, a divine attachment figure (DAF) can be "divine" figures such as Jesus, God, Allah, Mary and so on.

Attachment to God. This is a bond of affection existing between someone who believes in God and their Divine Attachment Figure (DAF) (usually GOD). The Divine Attachment Figure is experienced as "personal" in relationship and nature, in a way that meets preferred criteria of an attachment bond (Beck & McDonald, 2004).

Attachment Orientation. This is a "person's habitual pattern of expectations, needs, emotions, and behaviour in interpersonal interactions and close relationships" (Hazan & Shaver 1987: 657). Attachment orientation was used throughout the study to relate to the way the respondents feel, think and relate to close *others* in their intimate relationships.

Authenticity. We proposed the following working definition of a person-centred authenticity: “the unhindered operation of one’s self-experiences in one’s feelings, thoughts, and/or behaviours” (Kernis & Goldman 2006: 303-307).

Christian Millennials. This term is understood as young Christians of the *hero* or *civic* generation going through their *unravelling turning* as described above (see definition on ‘Millennials’ below).

Christian Natives. Is a term used to describe millennials or young people who were born to Christian parents/family and eventually grew up (in the church) as Christians.

God Concepts. Lawrence (1997) defines the God concepts as a person’s cognitive understanding of God; what a person learnt about God through perception, learning, and reasoning. Dykstra (1986) describes God concepts as some sort of religious language, whilst Muck (1998) calls God concept the ‘religious self’.

God Images. The God image is a person’s “experiential understanding of God” (Huffman, 2010). The God image is through what we experience whereas the God concept is through what is taught.

“**Imago Dei.**” This refers to the unique character of God placed upon humanity as God’s special creation (Klassen, 2004).

“**Missio Dei**”. *Missio Dei* is a Latin term used to describe the mission or sending of God to the world in relation to the doctrine of Trinity. It demonstrates the sending of God the Father through the Son Jesus, and the Father and Son sending the Holy Spirit to the Church into the world to live within the restorative context of *imago Dei* (Bosch, 1991).

Self and God Images. Self and God images, as it is referred to in this literature, are the mental, experiential representations of God and self in relation to close ‘others’ and the environment. Close ‘others’ could be human or divine attachment figures.

1.9 Summary and Organization of the Study

The background to the study, research statement/problem, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terms open up the first chapter of this study. Chapter 2 starts with the theological frameworks, followed by the theoretical frameworks of the study. Chapter 3 looks at the methodological procedures used for the qualitative study. Chapter 4 presents

the results of the empirical case studies. Chapter 5 concludes with a coherent and conclusive discussion on the findings and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

“When I look back on my seminary education I think I can work out a balance sheet somewhat like this:

- Told what to do – 90%
 - Told how to do it – 9%
 - Shown how to do it – 1%”
- Peter Lourdes, SDB

“Indeed questions about faith, about God, about self and suffering can plague the anxious soul, until it is difficult to think about anything else.” — Rachael Dymski

2.1 Introduction

This study draws from both theological and theoretical frameworks to focus the discussion of the self and God image experiences of Christian millennials in this study. First, the researcher started with the theological dimensions of self and God images in relation to Moltmann’s (1974; 1981) understanding of the Trinitarian theology and Louw’s (2000) theological hermeneutics respectively. Secondly, the researcher took a trans-disciplinary approach to understand terms such as “Millennials”, “self-images” and “God-images” from theoretical propositions of Howe and Strauss (1991), Bowlby (1969), and Wood et al. (2008) respectively. These theological and theoretical underpinnings lay the foundations for the last section on the *crisis* of identity and self-discovery on one hand, and the *opportunity* for coping within the context of *imago Dei* on the other hand, as we reflect on the pattern of crisis within the subculture of the youth-in-mission in an ecumenical paradigm. Therefore, themes such as attachment figures, abandonment, authentic self-behaviour, splitting, self-fragmentation, self-regulation, attachment-anxiety, and missional hermeneutic are of great importance to this study.

2.2 Theological Frameworks and Contributions to Theology: Self and God Images

Theological hermeneutics of self and God images often take an anthropological dimension, with reflections on the doctrine of Trinity and liberation theology. We will see the development of the theological discussion around self and God images from here.

2.2.1 Understanding “God Images” through Theological and Cultural Schemata

Moltmann’s theology has influenced many theologians among them was Daniel Louw (2000) his student, who wrote passionately about God images on a cultural and contextual level within the history of Christian doctrine. Louw (2000) gave several interpretations on the meaning of suffering in relation to God image experiences. Louw (2000) contends that God images, to a vast extent, are influenced by culture. According to Louw, “In our postmodern culture many experience God as indifferent to suffering and evil and as an abuser” (Louw 2000: 5). Such cultural interpretations of God often suggest God’s omnipotence as an imperialistic force, and

sometimes, a vulnerable identification of God's solidarity with our human predicament and history (Louw 2000:6). Louw (2000) provides us with different theological hermeneutics and cultural schemata for understanding God images on a broader level. The different interpretations of the understanding of God, according to Louw, "reveal the interaction of faith with culture and contemporary philosophy" (Louw 2000: 6). Such interaction of faith with culture and contemporary philosophy, according to Louw, makes it possible to utilize positive versus negatives labels in one's understanding of God. Characterizations such as "nurturing versus disciplining, masculine versus feminine, benevolent versus wrathful, loving versus punishing, loving versus controlling, and healer versus king are most common" (Findley 2009: 6).

The following God image schemas were highlighted by Louw (2000) in his book, *"Meaning in Suffering"*.

2.2.1.1 The Hellenistic Schema

According to Louw (2000:6), "God is interpreted in terms of a causal and logical principle". Hence, as the cause and originator of all things, God is seen in this model in terms of immutability and apathy. Within the Hellenistic schema, God is seen as indifferent to people's emotional experiences since it does not affect Him at all. Inbody (1997:139) describes God in this context as the "unmoved mover"; a notion derived from a monotheistic concept of *primum movens* advanced by Aristotle himself.

2.2.1.2 The Metaphysical Schema

In this model, the transcendence of God is understood as being distant from historical events (Louw, 2000). In other words, God's revelation to humanity implies "God's concealment" (Ibid, 6). Hence, behind every revelation is "another God". This otherness of God, according to Louw (2000:6-7), "introduces an ontological schism between God and our human existence", allowing people to experience *God as the ultimate Being* there is.

2.2.1.3 The Imperialistic Schema

Drawing from a Constantine perspective of militant power and supremacy, God is here fashioned in the image of the "cultural gods" — the imperial rulers of the Ancient empires (Louw, 2000). Louw (2000:7) further describes the *imperialistic schema* as a Caesarean understanding of God, where "God reigns as a Caesar and therefore determines [all aspects of] life". Louw (2011) in a recent article, citing Inbody (1997), describes this succinctly. According to Louw (2011), in a quest to understand divine power, two things can happen. On one hand, our God image can become 'too small', or 'too big'. If God empathise with the human experience and does nothing about it, then God is 'too small'. On the other hand, if

God is associated as a God who can do 'just anything' in His omnipotence, then God is 'too big'. As it has been for years, the church have given God such theistic attribute of omnipotence, which has ideally portrayed God as the "official Head of a powerful establishment" (Louw 2000: 7), therefore representing God's kingdom in terms of an empire. Within this context, Louw (2011) argues that God becomes merely a Hellenistic *Pantokrator* – –a God that is powerful because of His authority and physical strength in relation to the Church establishment.

2.2.1.4 The Patriarchal Schema

In this model, God is understood as one acting as a Patriarch and therefore dominates His creatures with moral obedience. As Patriarch, negative God images are sustained as a result of moral demands of a very stern, Patriarchal God whose actions are regarded in terms of purification, edification, and retribution. Louw describes God here as "an authoritarian Father" (2000:7).

2.2.1.5 The Hierarchical Schema

This model emphasizes how life is viewed in hierarchy of system, position, and differentiation. As stake here are frictions over status, importance and position along the lines of class differences (Louw, 2000). In such a model, people's understanding of God is influenced by the clash between an ordered system, especially the "tension between superiority and inferiority" (Ibid. 7). God therefore is seen here as "royal King, Lord and ruling Judge" (Ibid. 7).

2.2.1.6 The Economic and Materialistic Schema

An understanding of God in this model is drawn from the perspectives of wealth, achievement and affluence. Louw describes God here as a "public idol: a God who safeguards prosperity" (2000:7). This God image model maintains God as one who serves our selfish needs. Hence, the kingdom in the words of Louw becomes a "good investment to bypass tragedy" (2000: 7). Within this context, God is understood as a stock exchange Manager who gives back and attends to those who invest in His *kingdom shares*.

2.2.1.7 The Political and Societal Schema

Liberation theology plays much of the role here, as individuals within a liberation struggle begin to see God as one who sides with their struggle against marginalization. Hence, God becomes a "liberating God who sides with the oppressed, takes care of the underdog as well as those discriminated against" (Louw 2000: 7). Within this context of justice, God is seen playing a role in the human *dreams* of freedom and intervention. According to Louw (2000:7), "the kingdom

of God is interpreted in terms of the exodus theme”, this images God as a Liberator and a ‘Freedom Fighter’.

However, Louw’s understanding of the God image seems limiting and somewhat deductive.

The challenge with the hermeneutical schemas of God images presented by Louw (2000) above has to do with its emphasis on socio-political theory rather than the intra-psychic and interpersonal emotional understanding of God as studied by attachment and object relations scholars. Louw’s understanding of the God image describes the God image experience as a deductive paradigm and does nothing about elaborating on its development and dynamics.

Bosch warns against using a ‘paradigm’ model in discussing identity crisis because of its complexity. Such approach is a “secondary step” and only serves to “confirm and legitimize the idea or principle” (Bosch 1991: 421). The processes of the internal interactions of the God image dynamics are important. Bosch recommends using an interpretative approach to our understanding of human experiences. He points to how “Churches arrogated to themselves the right to determine what the ‘objective’ truth of the Bible was and to direct the application of this timeless truth to the everyday life of believers” (Bosch 1991: 421). In what follows, this broad definition of the “everyday life of believers” (Ibid. 421), their conflict and confusion, came from a deductive thinking which does not explain what is really happening or what has happened. Bosch advises, “Instead of starting from classically derived principles and theories” one has to start “with observation” (Ibid. 421) in order to shift and coexist “peacefully with one another” and move away from debate that “no longer centred around what was *true*, but around what were *practically* (more specifically, *pragmatically*) the right things to do,” (Ibid. 422).

In order to recommend a self and God image theology of healing that would be “manifestly the best” (Bosch 1991: 422), it is important to come to grips with how the God image dynamics really works. There is a need to understand the “ugly ditch” (Ibid. 422). In Bosch’s words,

The Christian church is always in the process of *becoming*; the church of the present is both the product of the past and the seed of the future. For this reason, theology must not be pursued as an attempt at reconstructing the pristine past and its truths; rather, theology is a reflection on the church’s own life and experience” (Ibid. 422).

In the same manner, an observation of the *processes* of our experience is crucial to understanding the content of our internal conflict and God image subculture since every human experience is a product of the seed of the past. Louw (2000) has not succeeded in providing us with such potent, inductive elaboration. An elaboration about the “product of the past” as the “seed of the future” in relation to his God image hermeneutics is needed to understand the God image *processes*.

He does what is called “voltage drop” (Drof & Svoboda, 1996) in Kirchhoff's voltage law in physics. Therefore making it difficult for theologians within the God image field to understand the nature of the change that has taken place between the point just before the negative God image *resistor* and a point after the negative God image *resistor*, as the God image *electrons* travel from a negatively to a positively charged *terminal* (Drof & Svoboda, 1996).

This is not to undermine the great work done by Louw in contributing theologically to the God image argument. However, the researcher feels there is a need to theologically revise the God image hermeneutics; stating inductively how each of the suggested God image schemas really works. Works that would contribute to such scholarship would bring Louw's great contribution to the discipline of pastoral care and counselling to *perfection*.

However, although Louw's model could be used in discussing God image as a phenomenon on a general, deductive level, but on a person-centered level, the psychoanalytic approach is more robust and realist to understanding how the God image contagion works from *cradle to the grave*. One goal of this study is to show how the respondents portray the intra-psychic and interpersonal dimensions of their God images. Therefore, based on this, it might be challenging to use Louw's theological and cultural schemas for discussing God images in this study.

2.2.2 Understanding “Self Images” through the Trinitarian Theology and *Imago Dei*

Themes such as cross and resurrection and suffering and hope are central to Moltmann's (1971; 1974; 1995) theological anthropology on the experience of the *postmodern self*. Moltmann's argument on the experience of self starts with a review of Freud's psychoanalytic investigations of the self. He shares a fair degree of sympathy with Freud's position on the human self as a fragmented and ambivalent entity with an “ineradicable element of self-deception” (Jeronic 2008: 97). David Hume (1738) calls this ‘self’ a bundle of perceptions. It is in this context that Freud (1913) interprets selfhood as “force-flows of psychic energies” (Thiselton 1996: 127), which he later calls ‘super ego’.

Moltmann's (1974) theological anthropology of selfhood conceptualizes the doctrine of Trinity as both “social” and “relational”. This characterization of the Trinitarian God, as widely accepted by many scholars, is reflected in the understanding of selfhood.

Described as a ‘theological trailblazer’, Stanley Grenz, before his untimely death, improved on Moltmann's work and describes the traditional God-likeness model of three “persons” sharing one identity—though with different *centres* of purpose and will, as a manifestation of the postmodern self, giving to its “threeness”. It is from this notion that Grenz (2007) constructs

the concept of 'self', as a relational entity, with a "social Trinity". According to Grenz (2007), "person" in this context of the Trinitarian theology of the *Imago Dei* is defined relationally and not as a substantial fact. This Trinitarian relationality in relation to God is linked to the human experience of relationality within a "community in transition" (Bosch 1991: 85).

At the heart of the theological understanding of the nature of self is an interpretation that speaks about the "human person in particular as a creation of God destined to be the *imago Dei*" (Grenz 2007: 3).

Before this knowledge, is a Trinitarian task to understand the relationality between the God "persons". Drawing from the Hegelian thought, Grenz (2007) described how Hegel (1967) not only explained the reasonableness of the "Social Trinity" but the movement or regulation of the "Absolute" (Grenz 2007: 28). This *regulation* draws our attention to the link between the "dialectic and Christian conception of God as triune" (Ibid. 28). In Grenz's words, Hegel refers to this "Absolute" as the *Absolute Self or Person of God*, who "reveals himself in the process of history and who can be conceived as existing only in the sense of this historical unfolding" (Ibid. 28). Convinced about the self-actualization of God with regards to history and the human self, Grenz and Hegel saw a link between the *union* of God and that of the human person. And therefore *missio Dei* in this context aims at coming into *being* of the *Absolute Self* in relation to the *Absolute God* who is actualized within multiple forms of relationality.

In order to convince his readers about the link between the actualization of the unity of the divine and the human self, Grenz explains the three movements of the divine reality as *Essential Being*, *explicit Self-existence*, and *Self-knowledge* (2007: 27). The first form was seen as a "pure, abstract Being", and describes God as an essential being. The second thresholds the grand entrance of an abstract self into the human existence in the person of "the Son". He describes this as an "objectively existent [self]" that "knows itself to be essential Being" within the confines of "alienation and abandonment" (Ibid. 28). This *moment* shows how God moves outside of his conventional *Essence* to enter "into relation with what is other than himself as is evident in the bringing of the universe into being" (Ibid. 29). However, in order to ever relate in the present with humankind, God returns to himself in his third dimension of Trinity, for the purpose of relating with the religious life "for which humankind comes to know God [as we] correspond to God knowing God's own self" (Grenz 2007: 28 citing Hegel 1967: 781).

The third dimension of the Trinitarian *regulation* is described by Grenz as the Self "passing into self-consciousness" (Ibid. 28). According to Grenz, this *moment* however in the Trinitarian relationality "marks the completion of reconciliation within reality" (2007: 28).

This triadic nature of the "social trinity" in relation to the connection between God and the relational self is central to Hegel's (1967) thought, and forms the interface for Grenz's (2007) discussion on "Social Trinity" and "Relational Self" in his book.

It is from this relational Trinitarian triangle that Grenz surveys three main lines of thought for understanding *imago Dei* in relation to self-images: (1) to have certain structural and essential qualities within the self (primary mode of being), or (2) to engage in a relationship between God and his creation (the relational interpretation), or (3) "as the divinely given goal or destiny awaiting humankind in the eschatological future and toward which humans are directed, 'from the beginning.'" (McDonnell 2009: 100).

Hence, consensus is drawn over the doctrine of trinity and relationality as the consequence of being God in relation to selfhood and its different roles of self identifications. Ultimately, God is constituted by the communion of the three persons of Trinity and regarded in terms of those relations. This self-directed unitary self in relation to the Trinitarian theology has paved the way for theological discussions around the postmodern self, which according to Grenz, is constantly changing relations. This self is described as an inviolable inward *regulator* detached from its reality. Such that *self* engages in a self-exploratory role to detach itself from the subcultures or experiences it does not want.

Taylor (1992) saw the meaning of *authenticity* as an act of reflexivity associated with the self. Taylor calls this the *reflexive self*, which is seen as the public and private self-exploratory roles by individuals to draw out latent schemas that make them unique. According to Jeronicic (2011:89), "true freedom....consists in the capacity for re-imagination and self-analysis that enables and encourages the weaving of personal narratives". This self-creation attribute of the self partially explains the "centrality of the idea of authenticity in modern delineations of the self" (Jeronicic 2008:90). It is from this notion that Moltmann introduces a concept he calls *weak* self-integration, a form of self-fragmentation or self-consolidation, describing the destruction of the unified selfhood. Harr imagines all modern forms of self representations as instances of "plurality that has imagined itself as a unity" (1992:18).

Jeronicic (2008:94) essentially saw human beings in Moltmann's theology as their own "anarchic laboratory" with the capacity to fragment into a million shapes with interplay of different construction of metaphors and symbols. Jeronicic (Ibid. 94) describes this self as "a subject in process...constructed in and through language". This self-fragmentation was presented in Moltmann's theology as an ontological struggle in human existence that has to do with the different forms of social, environmental, and cultural estrangement, which are in most cases, fundamentally psychological.

Both Moltmann and Grenz saw this act of self fragmentation as an attribute of *imago Dei* in which is said to be created. Theologically *imago Dei* refers to certain qualities of God that humans possess. Notably, Grenz (2007) points to 'reason and will' as attributes that allow self to *image* the Creator in order to achieve a divine goal that is actualized in an eschatological future. It is here that Moltmann (1974; 1976) introduces his eschatological and promissory self, a self that is destined to realize God's intent for it and created for some kind of eschatological fulfilment. Grenz (2007) on the other hand calls this new, transformed self the 'ecclesial self' —a self, born out of its inner *relations* and transformed by the power of the *selfhood* within a subculture through the use of language (Dykstra, 1986).

2.3 Theoretical Frameworks: Millennials, Self and God Images

The following theories explain the subcultures of self and God images of the millennial generation from an interdisciplinary perspective.

2.3.1 Understanding "Millennials" through the Generational Theory

Howe and Strauss's (1991, 1997) generational theory has been used to conceptualize Christian millennials. In this research, there are the Hero/civic generation going through their *unravelling turning* – a time of weak and distrusted religious institutions and strong individualism. In their generational theory, Howe and Strauss (1991) propose that society alternates between a cycle of growth, conformity, divisiveness, and decay. According to these theorists, each cycle is driven by changes in the values and attitudes of each new generation. Each of these cycles is about the length of a life span. Each cycle is divided in four phases which they call 'turnings'. Each turning is associated with a specific generation. To capture one entire cycle or four turnings, the authors suggest, it is better to identify which generation is associated with which turning to understand how they function. Howe and Strauss believe that each generation in history has a set of characteristics that repeat themselves within a predetermined cycle and are easily identified and understood. They recognized in their thesis that particular defined age groups share distinct behaviours and attitudes due to the period in which they grew up.

Howe and Strauss described social generation as one phase of an individual's life and it is also understood as a new generation every twenty years. Each generation is delineated by individuals whose birth dates fall within the twenty years time span referred to as "turning", (Howe and Strauss, 1991). Each turning comes with its distinct characteristics. As one turning evolves into the next, certain societal and behavioural architectures fundamentally change, though shaped by particular historical events that occurred when individuals were young. As

individuals mature, they tend to shape the life-events they found themselves, in a way that certain specificities are carried onto future turnings and generations.

Howe and Strauss (1997) label the four turnings as *high*, *awakening*, *unravelling* and *crisis*. The *high* turning was described as a period of conformity in which society wants to do everything as a whole. Rarely is there nonconformity. This *high* turning period follows a crisis period. This period is described as a time when institutions are strong and individuals weak. The *awakening* turning on the other hand is a time when individuals seek to reclaim their uniqueness by attacking the “powerful” institutions and bringing back human dignity, authenticity, and autonomy. This period marks the genesis of self-expression. The *unravelling* turning sees very weak and distrusted institutions with strong individualism. Next, the last turning is *crisis*. This is a time where institutions are destroyed and rebuilt to accommodate the new patterned archetypes of knowledge. At this last *turning*, civic authority is reconstituted and revived, and people tend to forsake individuality for the collective good of community and institutions. Next, the *crisis* turning then ultimately evolves to a *high* turning and repeats the four turnings in a new generation.

The four generations or archetypes replayed here are hero/civic, artist/adaptive, prophet/idealist, and nomad/reactive. To capture one entire generation or the four turnings, it is important to recognize which generation is associated with which turning. The prophet/idealist generation has been associated with the Boomer generation that survived the World War II (1943-1960). The Nomad/reactive generation referred to as Generation X by Howe and Strauss (1991) evolved during and after the Vietnam War (1961-1980) – a society shaken to the core by dramatic institutional and value changes. Whilst the Hero/civic generation associated with the Millennial Generation or Millennials, born from 1981 to 2001 will soon encounter the Artist/adaptive generation, a social generation described as the Homeland generation which is also referred to as the New Silent Generation by Howe and Strauss (1991; 1997).

Each of these generations comes with essential characteristics that are unique to them. This study is interested in studying the God-experience and self-experiences of the current Hero generation or Millennial Generation born from 1982 to 2001, a time of supposedly weak and distrusted religious institutions but a strong sense of individualism. Howe and Strauss (1997) argue that the Millennial Generation is *unravelling* and gradually asserting itself among culture wars, postmodernism, and technology. It is important in this research to explore the God-experiences and self-experiences of the Millennial Generation who are going through a critical turning point in their lives, forming their identities and pattern archetypes.

2.3.2 Understanding “God Images” through Attachment and Object Relations Theories

In the recent years, studies on God image development and dynamics have been of great importance in the field of religion, psychology, and sociology. These studies are merely emphasizing and re-emphasizing the model of the psychoanalytic development (Freud, 1913) and object relations (Bowlby, 1969; Rizzuto 1979) theories. These theories have formed the foundational basis for attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Rizzuto 1979), from which researchers now study God images, and to the point of identity (Barry et al., 2010). Although attachment theory was traditionally ascribed to John Bowlby, it has been described in the recent years as the joint-work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). The basic tenet surrounding the theory is the concepts ranging from ethology, cybernetics, information processing, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis, (Bretherton 1992: 759). Scholars like Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990), Huffman (2006), Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2008), and Noffke and Hall (2007) have equally contributed to the development of this theory empirically, mainly in relation to the God image conceptualization.

In Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, God images develop early in life; from a parent to a child. Jones describes this process as a palingenesis of the patriarchal (Jones, 2007: 37). Freud (1939) based his arguments on his case studies of clients and historical figures, from where he argues that during oedipal stages of a child’s development, feelings of guilt and longing toward a father figure often becomes displaced onto their God images (Freud 1939: 244). In other words, God becomes condensed into a fiery throb of gender. According to Freud, the child longs to relate with this divine attachment figure whose severe demands for moral obedience engender fear and guilt. Thus, Freud concludes, based on this estimation, that religion becomes opium of the people – an obsession/compulsive neurosis (Freud, 1913) fuelled by the superego (Moriarty & Davis, 2010; Jones, 2007).

Freud (1913) also tried to determine whether the God images of adults are more similar either to their father images or mother images. Freud’s findings reveal significant links between adults’ God images and that of their parents. However, studies later found evidence that there are more consistencies to maternal God images than to paternal God images of a child (Godin & Hallez, 1965; Nelson, 1971; Strunk, 1959). Even so, others found the opposite (Vergote & Aubert, 1972; Vergote et al., 1969). Present studies, on the other hand, have suggested that there is no consistent flow of data because the God image projections of an adult are determined by the preferential attachment-scale of both parents (Nelson & Jones, 1957). As a result, some scholars have conceptualized God images as a mixture of both maternal and paternal images (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1975; Birky & Ball, 1988; Dickie et al., 1997).

Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2008) have led this view in their duo work, *Attachment and religious representations and behavior*.

The issue is not whether the God images of a person emerge from the father or mother. . The most sensible conclusion is given by Vergote and Tamayo to “combine elements of both stereotypically maternal and paternal qualities” (1981: 908). According to Vergote and Tamayo, “God is neither an exalted father figure nor an exalted mother figure. Rather, God is an exalted Attachment Figure” (1981: 908). In light of this understanding, the study followed the same protocol, since there was no need creating a dichotomy of maternal and paternal images of God.

It is important to note here that the relative parental God-image influence on a person’s spirituality or God-experiences may differ from person to person, based on numerous constructs and background issues. Scholars summarize these issues to include, but not limited to gender, culture, race, sexuality, age, history, and church denomination (Hoffman, et al., 2007). Richards & Beging (2000) and Moon & Benner (2004) have done a comprehensive study on how a person’s religious or denominational affiliation, if any, influences a person’s God image projections.

Object relations theorists argue that God-image development occurs through a mechanism they call the “internalization” (cf. Fairbairn, 1952; Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Parker, 1999). This process of value-incorporation has been described by Moriarty as “the gradual process by which people learn to treat themselves as others treat them” (2007: 89). Schafer further explains this process as the entirety of transforming the relational and real or imagined interactions and characteristics of person’s God-experiences and self-experiences into inner regulation which informs a person’s actual emotional and relational images of God (Schafer 1968: 9). Moriarty and Davis (2011) illustrate the object relations theory by saying: “If children repeatedly experience their early caregivers as critical, they will internalize this criticalness—that is, they will imbue images of others, self, and eventually God with characteristic criticalness toward the self” (Moriarty & Davis 2011:).

On the other hand, Rizzuto (1979) aptly studied this *process of internalization*. In her work *The Birth of the Living God*, Rizzuto studied 20 psychiatric inpatients as a case-study for her research, concluding from a Freudian theoretical insight that God images are formed primarily during the early stages of life. Ward Davis (2010) summarized these three main stages succinctly. First trust or mistrust is established. Next is the internalization of self and close ‘others’ based on the toddler’s relationship experience. These first two God image dynamics

then determine the God representation of the child and how the child interacts between its inner and outer world (Ibid. 117).

Rizzuto's argument stirs around a pendulum of balance and ideally teaches that God images help people uphold internal poise and calmness; or the opposite, conflict and insecurity (Sroufe & E. Waters, 1977; Davis & Moriarty, 2008; Moriarty, 2006).

Bowlby's (1969) proposes that the mental/neural representations of self and others guide a person's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functioning, both in their relationship with God and close 'others' (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). This mental representation(s) of self and others is what Bowlby calls internal working models. These IWMs, according to Bowlby and Rizzuto (1971), initially develop through early childhood experiences with parents, but remain open to modification and specification across the life space through contact and dealings with attachment figures such as friends, parents, partners, DAFs and so on (Bowlby, 1988; Siegel, 1999, 2007, 2012; Davis, 2010). The IWMs of a person inform how people relate with others; centring on either an attachment figure or to self. Siegel (2012) argues that by the time people reach adulthood, they have three superimposed IWMs, mentally represented in their long-term memory (cf. Collins et al., 2004; Davis 2010: 117). Davis (2010) described this hierarchy as:

- Global internal working models that correspond to a person's generalized views of self, others, and self-with others. [Collins et al. (2004) saw this as the default model that corresponds to the most general representations about people and the self, abstracted from a history of relationship experiences with caregivers and peers];
- Domain-specific internal working models that correspond to a person's prototypical views of self, others, and self-with-others within a specific relationship domain. [Collins et al. (2004) believes that these models correspond to particular kinds of relationships (with parents, friends, lovers) and may not describe any one of them very well as the first]; and
- Relationship-specific internal working models that correspond to a person's prototypical views of self, others, and self-with-others within a specific relationship [according to Collins et al. (2004) these are the most specific models corresponding to particular partners and particular relationships] (Davis 2010: 88; Collins et al., 2004).

The first two hierarchical IWMs may fit a range of situations but rarely are they useful in determining perception and behaviour since they barely match details of any particular situation, says Davis (2010). Nevertheless, IWMs are an essential part of our dynamics that reflects "neural networks of associative, prototypic mental representations of self, others, and self-with-others" (Davis 2010: 88; Bucci, 1997; Fraley, 2002; Fraley & Brumbaugh, 2004).

Bowlby (1973) also understood internal working models as the image of self, others, and self-with-others. This conception points to the allegiance of self in relation to another, particularly an attachment figure. It also examines the availability and responsiveness of an attachment figure to impulses of support and protection from an individual. The attachment structure impels the caregiver to function as a secure base from where the infant could engage the

world in exploration (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Albeit seldom, the quality of a person's attachment structure, according to Bowlby (1988), is determined by the history of interactions and the extent to which a person depends on their attachment figures as sources of security and comfort (Bowlby, 1988).

This led to Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) development of the "Strange Situation" assessment to test Bowlby's (1988) attachment theory. With Ainsworth's procedure, her team was able to study the impact of separation and reunion on an infant and their attachment figures (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Her research confirms Bowlby's initial conclusion on attachment behaviors which are activated "when an infant feels afraid, anxious or otherwise reacts to separation from the primary caregiver" (Bowlby 1969: 67). Ainsworth et al. also conclude likewise, affirming that when attachment activation is engaged, the infant sends out signals, for instance crying, to communicate an urgent need for something to the caregiver, wherefrom the caregiver respond to this "disturbing" signals with some form of bodily, physical contact (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

This conceptualization of attachment behavioral interaction by Ainsworth et al (1978) led to her classification of three attachment styles, which are secure, anxious-insecure, and avoidant-insecure attachments. Main and Solomon (1986) also came up with a fourth attachment style known as disorganized-insecure attachment. Each style is described below.

2.3.2.1 Secure Attachment Style

This form of behavior is developed when infants seek reassurance and attention from a caregiver who positively responds accordingly by attending to the proximity needs of the child. Secure attachment style is established based on trust and the feeling of safety experienced by a child with an attachment figure, (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The extent to which a child is secure in relationship with an attachment figure determines their ability to maintain positive expectations that will flaunt their self-confidence and authentic self-behavior (Simms 1998: 63-79). This secure system allows them to feel comfortable and exude "positive emotional effects that occur internally and are displayed outwardly," (Shaver et al., 1996; Crowley 2006: 12). According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), the secure attachment style is a positive attachment energy which describes a person's demonstration of "low level of anxiety and low degree of avoidance which shows that they trust others and have a strong sense of self" (Crowley 2006: 8).

2.3.2.2 Insecure Attachment Styles

In contrast to secure attachment style, Ainsworth et al. (1978) also describe the insecure or negative attachment styles such as anxious and avoidant insecure styles. The former tends

to develop a child's dysfunctional perceptions of their self and close 'others', which often is caused by an inconsistent parental upbringing. Usually, infants under this category feel unloved and desire to be loved by their caregiver. Though they are generally *attention seekers*, but often would reject affection from others due to the unreliable nature of relationship they have had with their caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978). This negative neural functioning creates anxiety and uncertainty for the child in novel encounters with close *others* (Shaver et al., 1996). Ainsworth et al. (1978) also acknowledge that this pattern of attachment mostly activates when the child perceives the caregiver as *inaccessible*. The consequence of such experience is an anxious interaction behavior with others, especially a divine attachment figure. The child becomes prone to what Ainsworth et al. call a pervasive fear of abandonment which pilots their avoidant tendencies (Ainsworth et al., 1978). An anxious attachment style is demonstrated by feelings of unworthiness and a need for self-approval from others. This means that an anxious person will score high level of anxiety and low level of avoidance in his/her relationship with close 'others'.

Avoidance is the second style of insecure attachment. People characterized as *avoidant* tend to avoid closeness or interaction with close 'others'. In the study of Ainsworth et al. (1978), avoidant behavior is portrayed when a child ignores a mother's presence or turns away from her bodily or perhaps eye contact. People in this category are usually behaviorally independent of their attachment figures because of their lack of trust in others which often dwindles their self-confidence. As the anxious insecure attachment style, an avoidant-insecure attachment is caused by unreliability and inaccessibility of a caregiver to a child; the consequence of which often results to a lack of concern for attachment figures, (Ainsworth et al., 1978). This also falls under Main and Solomon's (1986) fourth "fearful" and "dismissing" attachment style, which they labelled *disorganized*. Fearful in the sense that the child is suspicious of others and dismissing because the child expresses a feeling of self-reliance while avoiding close 'others'. Avoidant individuals experience low anxiety but high avoidance tolerance.

Taken together, Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) attachment styles have implications for the development of a person's self-esteem and interpersonal relationships (Collins & Read, 1990). However, insecure attachment styles may negatively impact an individual to exude aggressive, suspicious, and impulsive behavioral characteristics (Simons, Paternite & Shore, 2001). This demonstration of distrust and anti-social behavior may also lead to the display of defensive or detached behavior towards a divine attachment figure (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Main and Solomon's (1986) disorganized attachment model falls under the insecure attachment style. In their proposition, a person with a disorganized insecure attachment style lacks attachment behavior. Their responses to attachment figures are often elusive, with a mix of behaviors; simultaneously portraying both an avoidant and anxious contagion toward their attachment figures. Main and Solomon (1986) describe this set of individuals as disorganized or anxious in relation to an AF (Main & Solomon, 1986). Their position was that parents' inconsistency in their attachment responsibilities to a child might be a contributing factor to the development of such insecure attachment tendencies in the child. More clearly, they argue that caregivers who mask a presence of "fear" and "reassurance" toward their children might confusedly shape a disorganized insecure attachment style in them, since the child will experience both comforting and frightening relationship from the parent.

2.3.2.3. Attachment Propositions Supporting God Image Development

John Bowlby's attachment theory has become a popular framework among researchers for understanding the God image (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Noffke & Hall, 2007). Bowlby (1988) concludes that the schemas of self and others, developed from the parent-child proximity are actively reflected in the child's relationship with others, especially their Divine Attachment Figures.

Attachment theory has been subdivided into four main models that uniquely explain God-image development and dynamics from an attachment-based framework. The models are (a) the internal-working-model correspondence model (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992), (b) the emotional compensation model (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990), (c) the socialized correspondence model (Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999), and (d) the implicit-relational-knowing correspondence model (Hall, 2004; Hall et al., 2009). An understanding of each of these models is important to this study.

a. The Internal Working Model Correspondence Model

This position was proposed by Kirkpatrick (1992) who describes the condition of an overall internal working model to correspond to the embodied or disembodied relationship with a divine attachment figure. Davis (2010) reasons, in an internal-working-model correspondence model, "the global internal working models people develop and exhibit in their human attachment relationships correspond to the internal working models they develop and exhibit in their embodied, emotional relationship with a divine attachment figure" (Davis 2010: 87). The model emphasizes how a person's mental representation of a divine attachment figure is based on their relationship with close 'others', especially a primary caregiver.

b. The Emotional Compensation Model

The emotional compensation model proposed by Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990), posits that extended experiences with early caregivers who are unavailable, insensitive or inconsistent with their attachment affection lead to the development of negative, global internal working models of self and the DAF (cf. Davis, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Kirkpatrick stresses that the consequence of this mental disposition is reflected in an insecure global attachment tendency toward a DAF, which serve as a “substitute attachment figure (SAF)” (Kirkpatrick & Shaver 1990: 315). Hence, this SAF is “functionally used as an affect-regulation tool” (cf. Kirkpatrick, 1998; Davis, 2010). Depending on necessity, the DAF, according to Davis (2010), is used to meet the person’s emotional needs and to down-regulate an attachment-related distress, thereby restoring a sense of felt security.

c. The Socialized Correspondence Model

The third proposition is the socialized correspondence model by Granqvist (1998, 2002). He argues that extensive experiences with parents who are available, sensitive, responsive and religious as opposed to those who are inaccessible often lead to the development of positive internal working models of self and close ‘others’. This mostly leads to a positive mental representation of a DAF (Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). Mikulincer and Shaver describe the role played by the DAF here as a “security-enhancing attachment figure” (2004: 174).

d. The Implicit-relational-knowing Correspondence Model

Hall (2004) first proposed the implicit-relational-knowing correspondence model. This theory came out of continuous, consistent mixed results that have emerged from studies on the IWM correspondence model, emotional compensation model, and the socialized correspondence model. Implicit-relational-knowing gives a substantial research support for the three previous models (Davis, 2010).

Hall’s model reconciles the discrepant findings of the other three models. In the implicit-relational-knowing correspondence model, there is a strong emphasis on the need for an independent maturity to recognize how and when not to identify with close ‘others’. According to Hall et al., people’s experiences in relationship with human attachment figures help them develop ‘gut-level’ knowledge to perceive how to interact with other humans or with specific relational partners (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1998). This set skill allows an individual to develop a corresponding implicit relational knowing which is reflected in their implicit religious/spiritual

functioning with a DAF (Davis, 2010; Hall et al., 2009). The implicit religious functioning of a person can be at an “emotional, physiological, relational, largely nonverbal, and usually non-conscious level” (Davis, 2010; Hall et al., 2009). This reflects in people’s emotional relationship to a DAF as opposed to a situation where an implicit-relational-knowing is based on an explicit religious-related functioning such as religious commitment or church attendance and etcetera. Here, a person’s religious functioning is independent of the ‘external strings of requirements’ within a religious order.

Individuals in this category appear to understand God, themselves and close ‘others’ regardless of their explicit religious/spiritual requirements or teachings. Such individuals have “gut-level” discretion to accept or live independent of external religious influences. Their religious functioning is internally established. Hall et al. (2005) argue that many of the empirical foundations used to support the emotional compensation proposition are likely to fall within the implicit-relational-knowing model. For example, the “instances of insecure individuals reporting sudden religious conversion or increased religiousness following an interpersonal crisis” (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008) may support Hall’s implicit-relational-knowing correspondence model because such arrangements seem to reflect “the operation of characteristic affect-regulation strategies” (Moriarty & Davis 2008: 121). Even so, the empirical research for this correspondence proposition is small compared with the support for the three other models.

The correspondence and compensation models are grounded within the Multiple Code and Interactive Cognitive Subsystems theories, as will be discussed from here.

2.3.2.4 Bucci’s Multiple Code Theory and Emotion Schemas

Hall’s (2004) *implicit relational knowing* proposition is largely grounded in Bucci’s (1997) *multiple code theory*. Hall coalesced *implicit relational knowing* in the form of emotion schemas. Bucci defined emotion schemas in his work in such a way that one easily sees the correlation between the emotion schemas, God images, and implicit relational knowing. Bucci defines emotion schemas in this manner:

Emotion schemas are defined as prototypic representations of the self in relation to others, built up through repetitions of episodes with shared affective states. The affective states consist of clusters of sensory, visceral, and motoric elements, which are largely sub-symbolic, and which may occur within or outside consciousness. Such affective states are activated repeatedly and regularly in response to particular people and events... [These] episodes with a common affective core, involving other persons in relation to the self... form functionally equivalent classes from which prototypic images of episodes are generated. (Bucci 1997: 195).

Bucci describes emotion schemas as stored spontaneous but prototypic affect laden patterns and images that are often unspoken but are often played out through different sensory and

behavioral reactions/responses (cf. Badenoch, 2008; Fogel, 2009). Noffke describes these schemas as having “a gut-level sense of how to be with ‘significant others’” (Noffke & Hall 2007: 77) due to previous experiences with self and close ‘others’. (cf. Badenoch, 2008; Fraley, 2002; Fraley & Brumbaugh, 2004). Hence, the implicit relational knowing model provides a non-conscious but active memory for relating with attachment figures. Bucci argues that a well mastered implicit relational knowing of how to relate with close ‘others’ eventually becomes generalized and converted into a coding that directs a person’s relationship with God (Davis & Moriarty, 2008; Noffke & Hall, 2007).

Multiple code theory posits three types of cognitive representational levels. According to Bucci, these are the “sub symbolic level, nonverbal-symbolic level, and verbal-symbolic level” (Bucci, 1997, 2001). Studying these levels is not the focus of this study. However, Hall (2005) argues that God images are primarily programmed into sub and nonverbal patterns that largely reflect the programming of *implicit relational knowing*.

This conceptualization means that implicit relational knowing of a DAF is acquired via supports because God images are chiefly encoded in sub symbolic and nonverbal-symbolic code; they correspondingly are typically processed at the sub symbolic and nonverbal-symbolic levels of emotional information-processing (Davis 2010: 128).

Taken together, one can say that the *Implicit Relational Knowing* of a DAF is primarily acquired through “implicit, emotional, and incidental learning—especially of how to manage a relationship with attachment figures” (Davis 2010: 128-29).

Davis et al. label Bucci’s *implicit relational knowing* as a “prototypic affect-laden mental/neural representations that have been encoded into implicit procedural memory and are associated with certain affective, physiological, and kinesthetic responses” (Davis et al., 46). The imaging representation is largely based on the dominance of emotion schemas which “underlie humans’ relational functioning, offering gut-level, non-conscious ‘how to’ scripts for perceiving and interacting with others, based on experience-dependent, prototypical relational expectations” (Davis et al. 2012: 10). For people in this category, “their implicit relational knowing about how to be in relationship with close ‘others’ gets prototypically generalized onto their relationship with God” (Davis, 2010; Hall, 2004). However, their attachment dynamics with DAFs are mediated via salient God images (Noffke & Hall, 2007).

2.3.2.5 Teasdale & Barnard’s Interactive Cognitive Subsystems

Gibson (2006) discussed God images using Teasdale & Barnard’s (1993) Interactive Cognitive Subsystems theory as implicational religious cognitions (cf. Teasdale & Barnard, 1993; Yarborough, 2009), showing that “religious cognitions are encoded within the implicational-meaning cognitive-subsystem” (Davis 2010: 129). Gibson explains this

'implicational-meaning' mode of perception to contain a "holistic, intuitive, or implicit sense of knowing something with the heart or having a gut feeling for it" (Gibson 2006: 7). The heart of the matter is that God images mirror a person's heart-knowledge of God (Davis, 2010; Gibson, 2006; Moriarty, 2006; Yarborough, 2009). This kind of knowledge is gained by knowing and associating with close 'others' — "a knowledge-by-acquaintance" (Gibson 2006: 7).

For each person, Gibson (2006) argues, there are varying and multiple complexities associated with their God images. One or more God image may be activated at a given time. Owing to Markus and Kunda's (1986) conceptualization of a working self-concept (Yarborough, 2009), Gibson calls this schematic fluctuation the "working God schema" or "working God image" (Gibson, 2007; Badenoch, 2008). Even so, chances are that certain God image tendencies may be more accessible than others, although it largely depends on the frequency of usage, degree of over-learning, and extent of neuro-connectivity (Gibson, 2006/2007; Davis, 2010). Additionally, a study done by Hall and Hill (2002) shows that a person's 'heart-knowledge' of God is inconsistent. It changes according to the constraints of mood and situation (Hill & Hall, 2002; Thurston, 1994). Regardless of the relative "state-dependent and trait-based" (Davis 2010: 129) constraints, activated God images "will have certain cognitive, emotional, motivational, and physiological responses that have become associated with them" (Davis 2010: 129). The subliminal interactions within the complex attachment system informs the manifestation of certain relative behavioral patterns and characters in an individual.

2.3.3. Understanding Selfhood and Identity through Authenticity Theory

Identity is a popular concept in the popular culture (Nathan, 2011). Motivational speakers and scholars alike have commonly given a functional definition to this concept as a way of 'being' that reflects one's true self (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008). *Self* is believed to be one's identity. Identity is "something unique to each of us that we assume is more or less consistent [and hence the same] over time" (Buckingham 2008: 1). However, it is a vague and slippery concept, which has been used—and perhaps overused—in different contexts and for many different purposes, particularly in recent years (Ibid, 1). There are diverse assumptions about what identity really is, and about its relevance to our understanding of religion, particularly the Christian religion. In any case, identity is considered as a case of moral necessity addressing the congruence of feelings and thoughts (Bialystok, 2009). This is often called authenticity (Akin and Akin, 2014).

In this study, Authenticity theory was used as the epistemological framework to understand identity and selfhood. Authenticity theory is grounded in a modern/essentialist view of the self

(Vitz & Felch, 2006), reflecting concepts such as *core self* (Rogers, 1961; Stern, 1985), *true self* (Winnicott, 1965), *real self* (Masterson, 1985, 1988, 2005), *self-actualization* (Maslow, 1968), *self-determination* (Deci & Ryan, 1985), *self-made man* (Vitz, 2006), *hyphenated self* (Jeroncic, 2012), *unified ego* (Lacan, 2001), *promissory and eschatological self* (Moltmann, 1976), *religious self* (Muck, 1998), and *renaissance man* (Vitz, 2006). In this study, the researcher used the “unhindered operation of one’s self-experiences in one’s feelings, thoughts, and/or behaviours”, (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) as the working definition of authenticity.

2.3.3.1 Wood et al.’s (2008) Authenticity Proposition

In their seminal work, *The Authenticity Personality*, Wood and his colleagues conceptualize authenticity as a tripartite construct made up of three inter-related components. The components are self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence (Wood et al., 2008). Wood et al. describe this person-centred view of authenticity from Barrett-Lennard’s (1998: 82) conceptualization as requiring “consistency between the three levels of (a) a person’s primary experience, (b) their symbolized awareness, and (c) their outward behaviour and communication”. The conceptual effort to map a consistency between a person’s experience, awareness and behaviour had earlier been described by Masterson (1988) as *splitting*. Within the discipline of theological anthropology, Moltmann (1974) calls this *self-fragmentation*. Self-fragmentation is a vanguard and coping mechanism “of the self’s defences against at the ruinous feelings of the abandonment depression, and in addition to various forms of behavioural ‘acting out’” (Drystra 1997: 30). Many scholars have given this self-regulation different names; such as, *kaleidoscopic or protean self* (Jeroncic, 2012); *multiphrenia* (Gergen, 1991); *eschatological/promissory self* (Moltmann, 1976); *unified ego* (Lacan (2001); an “interplay to ‘manipulate ourselves,’ and to be manipulated, ‘into a million shapes’ (Foucault 1994: 231).

According to Wood et al., the first part of authenticity, which is *self-alienation*, involves profound mismatch between what he calls “conscious awareness and actual experience” (Wood et al. 2008: 386). In other words, this is the ability to distance oneself from a consuming emotional activity to discover one’s *true self*. Wood et al. reason that “perfect congruence between these aspects of experience is never possible” (Ibid), therefore the extent to which a person can understand themselves in emotional and psychological trauma, mood or state, composes this first aspect of identity. Davis described *authentic living* (which is the second component) as expressing emotions that are consistent with one’s physiological states, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions. This self-experience is represented in the conscious awareness (2010: 51). Wood et al. describe this aspect of self as the “congruence between

experience as consciously perceived...and...behaviour” (Wood et al. 2008: 386). In other words, *authentic living* involves being true to oneself in accordance to one’s relative values and beliefs. The third aspect of Wood et al.’s authenticity (accepting external influence) involves “the extent to which one accepts the influence of other people and the belief that one has to conform to the expectations of others” (Wood et al. 2008: 386). Wood et al. argue that since humans are largely influenced by their environment (Schmid, 2005); therefore *accepting external influence* affects the first two aspects of authenticity (i.e. authentic living and self-alienation). Taken together, Davis concludes that Wood et al.’s three-fold authenticity proposition “corresponds to lower levels of self-alienation and accepting external influence and high levels of authentic living” (2010: 58).

Wood et al.’s *authentic living*, which is understood as *congruence* is a term that originally came out of Rogers’ (1961) person-centred approach to therapy. Rogers used *congruence* to describe the extent to which the patient was genuine and authentic or vague and ambiguous (Arthur & McCarthy, 2007; Rogers, 1961). By subjectively evoking feelings of self-alienation and functionally allowing inauthentic behaviours, Rogers believes that the *conditions of worth* and externally imposed forces can impede personality development and put individuals at risk for being incongruent and thus distances one from its true self (Nathan 2011: 24; Rogers, 1961; Davis, 2008). According to Arthur and McCarthy (2007), an individual with an incongruent disorder is less likely to listen to their feelings and accept himself or herself. Hence, an unsettling inconsistency between the real and ideal self is inevitable.

Wood et al.’s (2008) position therefore suggests that an expression of congruence between the symbolic, subjective, external experiences can drive one towards self-actualization to becoming a fully functioning individual (Wood et al., 2008).

This position of authenticity implies the need for a unitary, coherent, durable, stable, autonomous, rational, unique, masterful, and agentive conceptualization of the self (Vitz & Felch, 2006). It details on a person’s embodied nature of self-experiences, which includes “actual physiological states, emotions, and schematic beliefs” (Wood et al. 2008: 386).

Psychologists such as Rogers (1959) and Wyatt (2001) attribute the history of Wood et al.’s authenticity theory to have its history from the humanistic theory. This is largely based on Wood et al.’s emphasis on the centrality of the organism in psychology. This *organism* is known as the “psychological locus of all human experience” (Davis 2010: 40). The quality of expressing a congruity between the actual external/internal experiences and symbolized awareness and behavioural expressions of an organism establishes the true or core self (Kernis and Donald, 2006; Wood et al., 2008; Davis 2010). According to Wood et al., the position of self is highlighted by its congruence in relation to the *phenomenal field* of the

individual and the human capacity for *subception* (Wood et al., 2008). Davis describes the *phenomenal field* as the “totality of a person’s conscious and unconscious experience” (Ibid. 50), while *subception* implies “perceiving incoming information or sensations at a level below conscious awareness” (Ibid. 50).

In addition, some aspects of Wood et al.’s theory express influences from psychodynamic and existential theories. According to Davis, this specifically affirms “the psychodynamic theory’s distinction between the true self and the false self and have appreciated environmental contributions to false self-development” (2010:117). Winnicott (1965) and Horney (1951) describe such environmental influences to include but not limited to impingements i.e. abusive upbringing, early abandonment, attachment separation, peer pressure and so on. Equally, Wood et al. (2008) also sparsely inject the dynamics of existential theory on the centrality of awareness, freedom, autonomy, and the potential for existential isolation into his conceptualization of authenticity.

2.3.3.2. Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) Authenticity Proposition

Philosophically, Kernis and Goldman’s definition of identity/authenticity is a combination of philosophies of Aristotle, Hume, Descartes, Sartre, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Their “authenticity” proposition is primarily grounded in the ‘modern view of the self’ theory (Vitz & Felch, 2006). This concept of self emphasizes Aristotle’s “eudaimonia” and the pursuit of well-being and character virtues. To fathom subjectivity, they used Descartes’ awareness, focal attention and unbiased processing. Hume’s relational concerns were interjected into their theory and his distinction between artificial virtues and natural virtues. The theory also taps into Kierkegaard’s self-discovery philosophy of “becoming one’s innermost self through engaging in chosen behaviour that is consistent with self-defined (as opposed to externally imposed) ends and goals” (Davis 2010: 47). Their work also draws from Sartre’s discourse on engaging in choice behaviour and his note on possibilities for facticity and transcendence, as characteristic disposition for exhibiting identity. Nietzsche’s intrinsic derived self-values is also emphasized in this theory. They advise individuals to live beyond externally imposed constraints of life. While also borrowing from Heidegger’s “accepted responsibility”, encouraging acts of kindness by embracing projects that give shape to our existence, (Kernis & Goldman 2006: 291; Davis, 2010).

Kernis and Goldman (2006) propose four inter-related components of authenticity, which are “awareness, unbiased processing, [genuine] behaviour, and [a genuineness-valuing] relational orientation” (Kernis & Goldman 2006: 303). This led to the definition of authenticity

as “the unobstructed operation of one’s true- or core-self in one’s daily enterprise” (Kernis & Goldman 2006: 294).

Although some elements of Kernis and Goldman’s identity proposition were influenced by the humanistic philosophy, existential theory (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951) and some aspects of social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), the identity proposition has its root in the self-determination theory (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1995, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002, 2004). From the difference constructs, Kernis and Goldman skilfully combined philosophies from Kierkegaard’s self-determination/discovery, Sartre’s choice behaviour, Descartes’ awareness and unbiased processing to frame identity. Their model directs “toward becoming fully functioning individuals” (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961) that are open to the world around us by enjoying life and cultivating the willpower to see the self in the process of self-discovery, in order to experience freedom (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

There is emphasis on the awareness of individual needs and desires in this identity format. This existential side of their identity proposition places great importance on an awareness of self and personality aspects. The social-cognitive reflection sees identity to include the need for autonomy: orderliness, self-organization, and self-integration (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

2.3.3.3. Jack and Dill (1992) Authenticity Proposition

Jack and Dill (1992) state that identity/authenticity vary by relationship domain, which is contrary to Kernis and Goldman (2006) and Wood et al.’s (2008) identity/authenticity theories which operate at a global dispositional level. Jack and Dill (1992) also developed four inter-related aspects of identity, which are “externalized self-perception, caring as self-sacrifice, silencing the self, and divided self” (Jack and Dill 1992: 98). *Externalized self-perception* uses physically established standards to examine the self. *Caring as self-sacrifice* refers to the attachment-related tendency and benevolence with close ‘others’. *Silencing the self* is the ability to manage low tolerance level, in an effort to avoid conflict with close ‘others’. Finally, the *divided self* refers to “the experiences of presenting an outer compliant self to live up to [certain] role imperatives while the inner self grows angry and hostile” (Jack & Dill 1992: 98). This conceptualization of identity is grounded in the post-modern or social constructivist view of self (Vitz & Felch, 2006).

Jack and Dill (1992) first developed this theory for understanding self in female romantic relationships. Of recent, researchers have reasonably applied this concept in their study on relationships between males and females (Sippola et al., 2007; Davis, 2010) in workplaces, in religious and other relationship domains.

2.3.3.4. Lopez and Rice Authenticity Proposition

Lopez and Rice's (2006) identity/authenticity is examined within the relationship-specific aspects of individual relationships. This kind of identity builds its foundations from the relational-psychoanalytic theory of Mitchell (1992) and the social constructivist theory (Gergen, 1991), albeit – reflecting an aspect of postmodern view of self (Vitz & Felch, 2006). *Relationship Identity* is the “relational schema that favours the benefits of mutual and accurate exchanges of real self-experiences with one’s intimate partner over the attendant risks of personal discomfort, partner disapproval, or relationship instability” (2006: 364). *Relationship Identity* comprises of these two elements; “unacceptability of deception and intimate risk taking” (Davis, 2010). The *unacceptability of deception* understands both self and partner representations in a relationship as deceptive, while *intimate risk taking* refers to a risk-taking expression of interest in an on-going intimate relationship with one’s partner (Lopez & Rice 2006: 366).

2.3.3.4. Harter Authenticity Proposition

Authenticity/Identity in Harter’s Authenticity proposition is understood as “owning one’s personal experiences; be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs... which act in accord with the true self, expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings” (Harter 2002: 382). This theory structure is dependent of Kernis & Goldman’s (2006) and Wood et al.’s (2008) foundational theories on authenticity/identity. Harter’s theory shows some similarity with Wood et al.’s theory, in that they both emphasize the relationships between “(i) internal experiences, (ii) awareness of those experiences, and (iii) behavioural and emotional expression of those experiences” (Wood et al., 2008; Harter, 2002). From Kernis and Goldman’s theory, Harter adopts awareness and behaviour components. Harter’s “behaviour” definition was further broadened to reflect two of Wood et al.’s components, which are self-alienation and authentic living. The theory emphasizes the complexity of particular situational contexts in relation to how relational self-worth individuals feel in certain social context. This theory proposes that social-contextual factors influence a person’s identity-related functioning at a given social context. Harter (2002) argues that identity related representations have the tendency to reflect an authentic expression informed by a particular social context.

Of recent, the academia has witnessed an increasing number in empirical literatures studying identity/authenticity tendencies. Researchers like Harter (1999, 2002), Jack and Dill (1992), Kernis and Goldman (2006), Lopez and Rice (2006), Masterson (1985, 1988, 2005), Winnicott (1965), Wood et al. (2008), Davis (2010) have all empirically contributed to the

authenticity/identity theory. Even so, the empirical literature in this area is still at its infancy, with many gaps. Davis (2010) has argued that this sparseness is largely due to the lack of psychometrically sound measures for measuring identity/authenticity tendencies. Recent authenticity/identity scholars such as Wood et al (2008) have contributed to this area by developing sound measures for measuring such tendencies. Some of these measures include but are not limited to the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), Authenticity Inventory-Version 2 (AI2; Goldman & Kernis, 2002), Authenticity Inventory-Version 3 (AI3; Goldman & Kernis, 2004), Self-concept Clarity Scale, Authenticity of Self-Aspects Scale (Sheldon et al., 1997), Silencing the Self Scale (Jack, 1991; Jack & Dill, 1992), and the False Self Scale (Sippola et al., 2007).

2.4. Identity Crisis and Self Discovery in the Time of Testing

Bosch started a discussion on the ecumenical missionary paradigm with a short on *Mission in a Time of Testing*. Here Bosch saw how the meta-questions concerning the study of *missio Dei* have preoccupied modern day theology and several other disciplines (Bosch, 1991). This concern, according to Bosch (1991: 363), suggests the presence of an identity crisis and indicative of a subculture affecting almost *every* study discipline. Bosch (1991) associates this “paradigm shift” to the effects of western civilization, secularization, the collapse of colonialism, and the rise of liberation movements.

As this somewhat historic shift shook the world order, it was “unthinkable that the Christian church, theology and mission would remain unscathed” (Bosch 1991: 363). Hence, the outcome of the variety of meta-concerns about identity and culture outside the *walls* of the Church and the identity and *imago-Dei* related issues inside the *walls* of the Church would soon become, without doubt, critical and redefining issues at the centre of human discourse. Theological concerns which were once marginally suppressed are now beginning to resurface in “mainline Christianity and have, in a sense, effected a return to a pre-Constantinian positions” (Bosch 1991:363) of faith and understanding of God.

Bosch details in on how this “paradigm shift” has influenced the vision of different faith traditions:

Adventists recovered the long neglected expectation of the Parousia. Pentecostal and charismatic groups protested the loss of the gifts of the Spirit in mainline Christianity. The Brethren developed a church model without institutionalized or hierarchical offices. Baptist groups rejected infant baptism because this suggested the idea of automatic church membership and the absence of personal decision. Mennonites and Quakers distanced themselves from the church’s support for violence and war. Marxism challenged the church’s sanctioning of class differences and its tendency to be on the side of the rich and powerful. (1991: 363-4).

Beneath these cravings are deep-seated anxieties about God and a need to discover the self in relation to the mission of God. Even today, many of these elements of “paradigm shift”, “initiated by protest movements on the fringes of the *official* church” (Bosch 1991: 364) have been linked to an identity crisis of self-actualization. As the Christian church becomes saddled with this issue in relation to *missio Dei*, there is an identity crisis that needs to be addressed as more and more Christians wonder, “whether there is still any point in going to the ends of the earth for the sake of the Christian gospel” (Ibid. 364). It is on these grounds that the Christian-in-crisis has concluded, “The Christian mission and everything it stood for now belong to a bygone era” (Ibid. 365).

Contrary to this position, Bosch writes to remind us that the “Christian church is missionary by its very nature and it is therefore totally impossible to abandon the idea and practice of mission in some form or another” (1991:365). Therefore, “the mission of the church abides” says Bosch (1991:365), albeit challenged by the concerns of Christian identity formation in a world that is plunging into the future.

In the course of this change, the Christian youth is left within the *world* of this crisis to discover self in relation to what a Christian identity should be like. Therefore it is on this basis that a discussion around the phenomenon of identity crisis, in particular the subcultures of self and God images, is necessary to allow us “rediscover the essence of [our] missionary nature and calling” (Bosch 1991:365) in relation to our contemporary life.

Such rediscovery would have “to begin with a recognition of the fact that the [youth-in-mission] is today facing a world fundamentally different from anything it faced before” (Bosch 1991: 366). This crisis also calls for a new understanding of the mission of God in relation to *imago Dei*.

The *time of testing* is therefore a “period of transition, on the borderline between a paradigm that no longer satisfies and one that is, to a large extent, still amorphous and opaque” (Bosch 1991: 366). We owe to Bosch’s knowledge that “a time of paradigm change is, by nature, a time of crisis...a point where danger and opportunity intersect” (1991:366).

It from this that we pay close attention in this study to some elements of an emerging pattern of mission within the subculture of the youth-in-mission in an ecumenical missional paradigm.

2.5 Summary

Studies show how cultural and theological schemas and parent-child relationship influence our understanding of God, and can as well become an outlet through which individuals form

their authentic self behaviours (Barry et al., 2010). Attachment betrayal and abandonment can lead to a negative subculture of relationality with the self and close *others*. For example, early child abandonment potentiates the need for survival, which often leads to an anxious/ambivalent attachment orientation. On the other hand, relationship betrayal between a primary caregiver and a child tends to make the child position him/her-self for safety in future social relationships. The review of theories and theologies in this chapter has sought to explore existing and related trends relevant to the relationship between self and God image orientations in relation to the present discussion on Millennial identities. However, it is not clear if the cultural and attachment *history* of Christian millennials in this study have greater impact on their self and God image experiences.

Theological and theoretical interpretations of self and God-image related tendencies have so far not drawn consistent conclusions. Therefore, greater insight is needed on the propositions reviewed in this section, to understand the correlations between self and God image experiences of the respondents. The next chapter will explain the research methods used in this empirical inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

“Eventually everything connects—people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se.” — Charles Eames

“Colour does not add a pleasant quality to design - it reinforces it.” — Pierre Bonnard

3.1 Methods

To explore the self and God image experiences of Christian millennials in this study, it is necessary to form a research design. We begin by explaining the research paradigm and design.

3.1.1 Philosophical Foundation

The researcher undertook a constructivist approach to engage this study. This framework of understanding reports how different people conceptualize meaning in different ways, even in the same context of experience (Crotty, 1998). Research expert, Crotty (1998), acknowledged several assumptions of constructivism, three of which will be considered for this study: 1. Since human beings construct meaning to their world as they interpret their experiences, an open-ended questions are often employed by qualitative researchers to exhaust the richness of those experiences; 2. People’s interpretation of their world is grounded on their historical and social perspectives; 3. Meaning is generated in a social context, arising in and out of conversation with individuals of a community. In light of these constructivist assumptions, the interpretation of findings given to this qualitative study is therefore context-specific.

Scholars have applauded the philosophical advantage of the constructivism framework. Stake (1995) for example acknowledged that the central role a researcher plays is that of a *collector* and *interpreter* of knowledge. As a result, Stake believes that “knowledge is constructed rather than discovered...since the world we know is a particularly human construction” (p. 99). He then went further to define constructivism as “knowledge made up largely of social interpretations rather than awareness of an external reality” (Stake cited in Dodge 2011: 45). This study is based on the interpretations of the God-experiences and self-experiences of Christian Millennials who participate in this study. Of particular interest are ways the attachment and authenticity themes are played out in reality. These realities are grounded in the participants’ individual and shared experiences, which *vis-à-vis* reflects the constructivist epistemology.

As for analysis, the constructivist theoretical perspective supports Iris Murdock’s (1970) ‘just and loving gaze’ approach for understanding how the respondents interpret and made sense

of their self and God image experiences. Specifically, the researcher's agenda is to discover how the respondents feel about their relationship with God and how they experience themselves in relation to their attachment to God and authentic self-behaviours.

In interpretative tradition, researchers are advised to begin their study by exploring the study context through "actions and inquiry, as opposed to predisposed assumptions" (Dodge 2011: 45). Thus, this is exemplified in this study as the researcher attempts to understand how the participants make sense of their experience. In any case, this *meaning* is influenced and facilitated by the researcher, who acts as the *instrument* of inquiry.

The approach therefore is deductive, while the outcome of this strategy is descriptive (Merriam, 2002). Generally, this strategy was adopted in order to rely on theoretical propositions guiding the study. Yin (2009) in his seminal paper shows how deductive strategy allows the "evidence to be treated fairly, thus making compelling conclusions and ruling out any alternative interpretations" (Fitzer, 2010). Thus, 'how' and 'why' questions can be great guides in directing the case study analysis.

Based on this background, the researcher used a constructivist paradigm that assumes a 'just and loving gaze' to explore and comprehend the self and God image experiences of the respondents. This was specifically done by focusing on understanding and reconstructing the context-specific meanings that participants hold about the phenomenon under study (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Jones, 2002) by investigating on a deeper-level, their lived experiences and seeing the issue from a virtuous perspective (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006), through conversing with open-ended questions (Crotty, 1998).

The researcher conducted interviews with fifteen Christian Millennials and consistently analysed the interview data in order to understand and construct meaning to their self and God image experiences.

3.1.2 Research Questions:

- What narrative describes the respondents God image experiences in relation to their God attachment orientation?
- How does the attachment language in the respondents' narratives about their relationship experience with God correspond to their early attachment bond with their parents?
- How does dimensions of God images relate to dimensions of self-images?
- What narrative describes the respondents' self-image experiences in relation to their authentic self-behaviours?

- What kind of theology addresses the need for security in relation to the subcultures of self and God images during an identity crisis, in order to present an opportunity to which Christian Millennials can find themselves in the *imago Dei*?

3.1.3 Research Design

The study is a case study research. All aspects of the research design are connected albeit not rigid. This is clearly reflected in the *rubber band* analogy, which explains this compartmentalisation clearly. Maxwell's *rubber band* metaphor "portrays a qualitative design as something with considerable flexibility, but in which there are constraints imposed by the different parts on one another, constraints which, if violated, make the design ineffective" (2005: 6). Injecting this background to the case study methodology gives light to the characteristics and misconceptions of case study method, in relation to this study.

Case study researchers have recommended techniques for constructing such research successfully. However, to strengthen this qualitative study, the researcher has relied on the conceptualizations offered by Merriam (1988), Stake (1995), and Yin (2009). These researchers are considered as modern and most reliable case study methodologists of our time. Whilst the research expects to contribute to the burgeoning of knowledge on case studies, Flyvbjerg warns against misunderstandings of what case study research really is. According to him,

...theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge; one cannot generalize from a single case; therefore, the single-case study cannot contribute to scientific development; the case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building; the case study contains a bias toward verification; and it is often difficult to summarize specific case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006 cited in Dodge 2011: 46).

3.1.4 Case Study

Case study methodology is a unique technique of inquiry in which the researcher examine, on a deeper level, an activity, event, process, experiences of one or more individuals, according to Stake (1995). This strategy is time bound and involves steps the researcher must follow using variety of procedures over an estimated period. In this study, the phenomenon under inquiry was the self and God image experiences of Christian Millennials. The case for the current study were Christian Millennials between ages 18 – 34 randomly selected for face-to-face interviews who are active members of the youth groups within churches in Stellenbosch Western Cape, South Africa.

Case study explorers gather their information using a range of data collection techniques and for this study, the researcher collected data through in-depth interviews. The interviews were

conducted, recorded, and transcribed into word documents. Afterwards interview data were deconstructed for possible themes. An important aspect of case studies is the unit of analysis, which Yin (2009) and Merriam (1988) describe as the main area of focus in a research. Hence, the unit of analysis in view of this conversation were the Christian Millennials who took part in the study. Case study methodologist Yin (2009) outlines five aspects of a good case study research design: 1. Research questions; 2. Purpose of study; 3. Unit of analysis; 4. Rationale that links the data to the purpose of study; and 5. Criteria for interpreting study findings.

The first component of the case study design is to state the research questions. The “how” and “why” questions are most appropriate for the case study research. Specifically, the researcher explored how self and God images are played out in reality and why it requires our attention. Next are the propositions of the study. The purpose of this study was to understand the self and God image experiences of Christian Millennials in this study and the history of such experiences. The third aspect of an effective case study research design is the unit of analysis, which is the focus of a case study analysis (Yin, 2009). The unit of analysis is always tied to the research questions. Based on this understanding, the unit of analysis or cases to be studied are Christian Millennials from different churches in Stellenbosch Western Cape, South Africa. The fourth element of a case study research design is to connect the purpose of study to the collected data. This bridge is made at the data collection phase, as case study themes emerge. While analysing the collected data, theoretical propositions of the case study were matched with appropriate data information. Thus, the emergent themes served as answers to the qualitative research questions.

The last aspect of a good case study research design is the basis for interpreting the research findings. Although not in every case, while coding the data during the theme development stage, the researcher carefully extracted meaning from the findings to conceptualize ideas for practice and further research.

3.1.5 Participants

For an in depth understanding of the subject matter, the qualitative study applied random sampling ($n = 15$) in order to deliberately select fifteen respondents for face-to-face interviews. Fifteen of these respondents emerged from the different churches in Stellenbosch because of their age (18-34 years) and church participation (active members of their church’s youth group). The researcher believes, these “information-rich” persons could best answer the qualitative research questions (Patton 1990: 169). This research set allowed the researcher to bring to live the Self and God image experiences of the respondents in order to “represent the complexity of their world” (Creswell 2002: 194).

3.3.6 Data Collection Methods

Authors Green et al. (2006) and Yin (2009) have all emphasized the need for having multiple sources of evidence as a benefit of conducting a case study research, which in itself enhances the robustness of a study. Methods in research refer in general to strategies suitable for data collection and analysis in a particular study scenario (Prasad, 2005). In this case, triangulating multiple sources of data to ensure robustness and converging ideas within the findings that support the participants' understanding of the phenomenon is required. Triangulation in research is an important aspect of conducting a reliable case study (Yin, 2009; Stake, 2000). Converging different sources of data allows researchers to formulate a compelling story – one of human dignity that respects the context-specific meanings and meaning-making process of the participants. Seidman (1991: 7) agrees, "Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell [their] stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness". In respect to the methodology adopted for this research, which main aim is to construct meaning, the researcher also selected *interviewing* as the primary vehicle for data collection.

Ultimately, interviews are conducted carefully to construct a compelling, reliable case study. Interviews are structured conversations between the interviewer and interviewee, wherein the interviewee responds to the questions asked by the interviewer (Esterberg, 2002). In so doing, it is also important for the researcher to determine beforehand, the *gatekeeper* of the knowledge to be accessed. *Gatekeepers* are prospective case study participants/sources with the richest information and having in them the potential of addressing the research questions. The *gatekeepers* for the case study are the fifteen randomly selected respondents who are active members of the youth group in their different churches and are between ages 18 to 34.

Overall, fifteen *gatekeepers*/respondents were purposefully selected to participate in the interview process. These individuals were selected because the researcher wanted to understand, on a deeper level, their self, and God image experiences. Hence, the researcher's interview questions (see Appendix A) were constructed based on the research questions.

Prior to the face-to-face interviews, the researcher with the participants established rapport as they were informed that the discussion would be tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. This trust was important to allow the *gatekeepers* to open up the *door* to their world, to allow the researcher extract meaning from their experiences and find out what might be impossible to observe. Indeed, "we interview people to find out from them those things we can't observe" (Patton, 1980, p. 196).

While conducting the interviews, the researcher carefully listened and undertook a non-judgmental posture during the case study interviews to get the best out of their world. It was important to use open-ended questions as opposed to dichotomous or leading questions that often lead to a closed style of question to collect data during the interview process, as advised by Esterberg (2002). The interviews were conversational, as was the intent of this study.

To lighten up the curiosity of the participants, the researcher shared information about himself with the participants to establish trust and mutual understanding, which was an important aspect of an interview procedure to put participants at ease, and allow for an optimal flow of conversation. Interview is an important aspect of a qualitative research since it “allows us to put behaviour in context and provides access to understanding their action,” (Seidman 1998: 128).

The in-depth interviews allowed for identifying and soliciting knowledge from fifteen “key informants” (Patton, 2002), whose insights to the research questions were helpful in assisting the researcher articulate the phenomenon from the perspective of the informants. The study informants/respondents were interviewed between August 11, 2014 and August 20, 2014. For privacy and convenience, thirteen of the interviews were held in seminar rooms at the Carnegie Research Commons of the JS Gericke Library at the University of Stellenbosch. While at the discretion of the two other informants, their interviews were done at the McDonald restaurant at Eikestad Mall in Stellenbosch. All interviews were face-to-face and lasted for about 35 to 60 minutes. The interview conversations were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription (Merriam, 1998). The researcher also used handwritten notes during each interview to identify themes and keywords or highlight ideas of particular importance.

The researcher used semi-structured interview approach (Merriam, 2002) and a structured set of open-ended questions to probe and obtain informants’ self and God image experiences (See Appendix A for Interview Guide). When necessary, especially where participants are unable to produce reliable answers, the researcher probed participants using open-ended and follow-up questions to encourage them to elaborate for clearer understanding, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Esterberg, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The interview transcription began after the final interview on August 20, 2014, and was completed September 7, 2014. In order to ensure accuracy, each transcript was reviewed.

3.3.7 Data Analysis

A qualitative research study, according to Corbin and Strauss (1994), is known for its constant interaction between data collection and data analysis. For this purpose, data analysis followed the first three interviews. This was done the same day to enable the researcher identify themes

and theoretical patterns within the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Whilst some believe that qualitative analysis is a form of “intellectual craftsmanship” (Dodge 2011: 47), others believe there is no one way to accomplish a qualitative research, since it is all about making meaning. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) consider qualitative analysis as a creative process and not necessary a mechanical procedure. Stake on the other hand argues that qualitative research should exploit ordinary ways to make sense of a phenomenon. Stake reminds researchers, “There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis essentially means taking something apart”, (Stake 1995: 71). In other words, analysis is not just about understanding the way Christian Millennials make sense of their self and God image experiences, but also identifying and defining observable patterns that occur from that meaning-making process.

In the light of what has been said, one can conclude that qualitative data analysis provides “meaning to first impressions and final compilations,” (Dodge 2011: 48). This is an analysis that tells the story of the self and God image experiences of Christian Millennials in Stellenbosch. Esterberg recommends, “Getting intimate with data” (2002: 157). This approach allowed the researcher to immerse himself in the interview data to “load up...memory” (Esterberg 2002:157).

For this purpose, the researcher adopted the data analysis and coding procedures recommended by Creswell (2009) and Esterberg (2002). Both of which compel the researcher to “work intensively with the data, line by line, identifying themes and categories that seem of interest” (Esterberg 2002: 158). Creswell on the other hand mandated the traditional social science approach that “allows the codes to emerge during the data analysis” (2009: 187). Once the data from this research is taken to memory and examined thoroughly, the researcher identified and developed themes from the data.

Consequently, Creswell’s (2009) six steps to “interactive practice” in data analysis were followed. The steps include: 1) Exploring and organizing generated data. At this stage, the audio interviews were transcribed into word document transcripts; 2) “Read through the data” (2009:185). Esterberg calls this to “get to know your data”. Here the researcher reflected on the data collected to gain an overall understanding of what is happening and the ideas that the participants conveyed; 3) Coding the data via segmentation and labelling of text. Here the researcher began this procedure by organizing the texts data into categories, labelling each category with themes that connects to the phenomenon in question; 4) Developing themes via combining similar codes together. The themes that emerged were gathered together to form a holistic meaning and an idea that conciliate the theories in focus into a general proposition, in order to enable triangulation to take place; 5) Commixing themes by advancing how the description of selected themes are logically represented in the narrative, (Creswell 2009: 189);

6) This was done by applying a constructivist narrative to make sense of the meaning of the data (Creswell 2009: 189) in order to address the research questions. To add richness to the text, a visual data display alongside the interpretation helped to show relationships of the lived-out experiences in the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, the themes that emerged from this study came because of “my awareness of the healthy tension between my own biases and the participants’ own meaning-making processes” (Dodge 2011: 49).

3.3.8 Research Steps for Qualitative Study

The researcher followed a particular uniform protocol in order to ensure that the study data were adequate for the research goals:

1. Participants were contacted and invited to partake in the interview process.
2. Semi-structure in-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen randomly selected participants at their own convenient time and location.
3. The semi-structured interviews were recorded using a digital app and transcription started after the last interview; this lasted for over 2 weeks.
4. Interview data was thoroughly reviewed by the researcher.
5. Next, interview data was coded by the researcher for emergent themes
6. Gave the respondents pseudo names
7. From the emergent themes, the researcher created a narrative to form a holistic meaning and came up with a general proposition that integrates and confirms the theories used.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Before the data collection, informed consent was first obtained from the authorities overseeing the participated churches, who then gave the researcher access to their youth members. Any respondent who qualified for the qualitative interview procedure was given an Informed Consent Form to read and sign before the interview process.

Reference was not made to any individual or church name in the final report of the project. The researcher used pseudo names to bring the narratives to life. All information obtained about the respondents and their churches will remain strictly confidential. They will not be shared with others, including participant’s counselor, pastor, or university officials. However, the researcher was only legally mandated to share information to appropriate authority if he senses any indication that a participant is in danger to the self and others. All other information will be kept confidential. Although the results of this project will be used in professional journals, the researcher will remove any demographic information that would perhaps make participants or their respective churches identifiable. The researcher has also received

interests from the participated church denominations to have a copy of the research report, and will abide by this treaty.

A major aspect of the study is its understanding of self and God image experiences of young people within different churches in Stellenbosch. Since there are marked differences in primary theologies between the different church traditions, this might help enhance the study to show whether there are commonalities in the self and God image experiences of their specific younger members.

3.5 Summary

The epistemological and theoretical basis for the qualitative study was outlined in chapter 3. Notes were also made on the research methodology adopted to address the research questions and ways in which these techniques anchor the research designs and process of data analyses. The chapter provided readers with grounds for methodological decisions used for this study, which have helped to give light on the various experiences and complexities associated with the self and God image experiences of Christian Millennials in this study. Whilst chapter 3 explores the research methodologies and designs, Chapter 4 reports the results of the study, as we will see from here.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”
— Winston Churchill

“Individuation is a blessed curse. It opens the way to becoming one’s authentic self, and yet also the risk of alienation from the ‘tribe’.” — C.G. Jung

4.1 Background

With permission from the relevant churches, the researcher engaged fifteen Christian Millennials who were active members of their youth groups within their respective churches,

in what was an in-depth conversation on the nature of the self and God image experiences. Interview conversations with the respondents helped strengthen the overall outcome of the study and brought to life the lived-experiences of the respondents by offering a comprehensive integration and confirmation of the theoretical models used.

To have a better understanding of the self and God image experiences of the participants, the researcher developed an interview guide (see Appendix A) from the following research themes in order to attempt the research questions:

4.2 The themes I set out exploring were:

- God image experiences in relation to God attachment orientation
- The attachment language in their narratives
- Relationship between the dimensions of God attachment and self-behaviours
- Narratives on self-experiences and selfhood in relation to authentic self-behaviours
- Ways of staying true to self
- Ways of coping with the self and God image crisis

The qualitative research questions were answered in such a way as to construct a composition on how attachment and authenticity theories support the self and God image experiences of the respondents. Through the help of the interviewees, different kinds of information and themes were generated to develop narratives that fleshed the study themes. Some of the respondents spoke at length on one or more themes, whereas some made closely equal contributions on all the themes. The researcher acknowledges that the voices and perspectives of all the respondents were represented in the findings.

4.3 Interview Protocol Development

The contents of the open-ended questions (see Appendix A) consequently helped to elaborate and confirm previous empirical works done by attachment and authenticity researchers. The interview protocol was pilot tested on two Christian millennials purposefully selected outside the study sample. The pilot interview analysis helped the researcher to somewhat revise the order of the questions and improve the interview protocol questions.

During the interview sessions, respondents adequately reported their self and God image experiences, as will be seen from here.

4.4 The Self and God Image Experiences

The respondents reported a wide-range of self and God image experiences in relation to their attachment-to-God anxiety and authentic self-behaviors. Their responses are presented here *albeit* confronted with the challenges of redemption from the damaging obscenity of an early attachment-abandonment, an attachment betrayal, a depleting ego, and an attachment-separation/loss. These experiences evidently impact, to a great deal, on the self and God image orientations of young people, as attachment and authenticity literatures presage.

Anna Rizzuto (1979), a foremost Attachment scholar began a study on the *process of internalization* in her work *The Birth of the Living God*, where she studied 20 psychiatric inpatients as case studies for her research. Her study embraced a Freudian insight, concluding that God image and religious orientations are formed primarily during the early stages of life through the

establishment of a basic sense of trust or mistrust; (ii) “internalization of various other-representations and self-representations, based on how the infant and toddler was treated by early caregivers; and (iii) the development of a relationship with a —living God representation, through creative, symbolic interaction in the *transitional space* between the toddler’s inner and outer world, (Davis 2010: 117).

Rizzuto’s argument stirs around a pendulum of balance, and ideally teaches that self-representations (spurred by relational and emotional bonding with close “others”— attachment figures like God for example), help people uphold internal poise and calmness, or the opposite, conflict and insecurity. It is from this self-representation that individuals see and explore the world around them (Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Davis & Moriarty, 2008; Moriarty, 2006).

The researcher has since disowned all knowledge or complicity in regards to falsifying the following experiences of and responses by the respondents who participate in this study.

Damage has been done by the errors and broken connections of the past—a *rot* in the respondents’ souls—which was revealed to the researcher during the interview process. The very possibility of such an early-child desecration took the respondents several notches despairingly down in their God image experiences, and plumb the abyss of their identity crisis in self-depletion, although with a somewhat tendency of a promissory self, as will be discussed following. The respondents’ interview process confirmed the very most of what self and God image scholars have concluded and envisaged of: a youth subculture and perspective of “being” clashing with the authorities of the past (Janssen, 1994; Janssen & Prins, 2000).

The researcher continues in the same manner of conciliation, uniting different theological knowledge and psychological theories to open up on the emotional experiences, orientations,

and regulations enveloped within the framework of self and God images in relation to the attachment to God anxiety and authentic self-behaviors of the respondents.

4.4.1. Attachment to God Anxiety and God Image Experiences

Bets were placed on which of the respondents' early childhood experiences would take on attachment apparel, a parent-child potshot at innocent toddlers during their formative years, from where the child regulates his or her social relationships as they grow up. In most cases, the attachment crisis with caregivers had blighted the potential for a secure attachment relationship with God among the respondents. The respondents now provide stand-up, real-life narratives for the latest empirical staple of God image and attachment to God theorists' diet.

4.4.1.1. Early Abandonment and God Image Development

John Bowlby and Anna Ainsworth's attachment theory has become a popular framework among researchers for understanding God image and attachment experiences (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Noffke & Hall, 2007). Bowlby (1988) argues that the representations of the self in relation to close "others", developed from a parent-child relationship, are actively reflected in a child's social relationships even unto adulthood.

Attachment theory has been dissevered into four main models that uniquely explain God image development and dynamics from an attachment-based framework, namely: (a) the internal-working-model correspondence model (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992); (b) the emotional compensation model (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990); (c) the socialized correspondence model (Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999); (d) the implicit-relational-knowing correspondence model (Hall, 2004; Hall et al., 2009). An understanding of each of these models and how they are played out within the experiential undertakings of the respondents are of great importance in this qualitative study.

Real life events and situations such as divorce, separation, loss, betrayal, abandonment, illness, or the inability to practice affection, according to attachment theorists, can interfere with the natural bonding process between the child and his or her caregiver. This inconsistency or difficulty experienced in upbringing and early attachment bonding with an attachment figure, disrupt the attachment process, from where the toddler grows to develop a coping style that serves as a defence mechanism to deal with their attachment challenges. This also depends on which coping style has been most effective for their healing of the severity of abandonment they experienced during childhood (Gardner and Stevens, 1982). From the early beginnings,

such coping style metamorphoses into an insecure attachment tendency of self-reliance, distrusting others, or fear of dependence by others —usually the child adopts either an attachment-anxiety, attachment-avoidant, or a *disorganized* attachment style, (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Main and Solomon, 1986). On the other hand, if the toddler had a positive attachment relationship with his or her early caregiver, a case where access and proximity to a caregiver was consistent, a secure attachment system is developed in relation to close ‘others’, especially their DAF.

Consequently, when a parent does not or cannot respond with affection to a child’s emotional needs or fears, the child will grow up with either one of the three insecure attachment orientations. However, in bid to re-embrace what was missed during childhood, the child with an insecure attachment orientation may grow up even as an adult, seeking the bonding affection he or she missed during childhood in some other places, or embrace an extreme self-reliant tendency; hence distrusting others and having a disturbingly rich fear of reliance on close ‘others’. The researcher randomly selected respondents to explore and understand how possible attachment abandonment or a lack of intrinsic lovability may influence the respondents’ relationship experience with God.

In relation to the DAF, attachment theorists argue that early abandonment and parent-child inconsistency in the formation stages of an attachment bonding *tempt* children to grow up either wanting to *compensate* themselves for the relationship they did not experience with their early caregivers with a relationship with a DAF. Alternatively, some *correspond* their early attachment experience to their relationship with their DAF.

For the case study, the respondents exhibited both the *Correspondence* and *Compensation* models, as the study investigates their early childhood abandonment narratives in relation to their God image orientations. For the sake of virtue, in this section, the researcher explored the cases in this section from Iris Murdock’s (1970) lens of perception which she calls “just and love gaze” upon the “self”. Having a *loving gaze* at others’ lived experience allowed the researcher to see the case studies, in more positive terms, as refreshingly simple and agreeably direct. John McDowell (1979) and Philippa Foot (1988) consider this posture of writing as having an internal insight to virtue. Thereby having a virtue of benevolence which allows the writer to have a distinctive perspective on human experiences or see all of life in a certain, *just* way. Such mental posture of manifesting an internal virtue, is *prima facie* evidence that the researcher has become, at least to some *loving* extent, empathic to the internalized underpinnings of the respondents’ lived experiences, and therefore a loving person.

a. Compensating?

i. The emotional compensation model

The emotional compensation model proposed by Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) simply suggests that extended experiences with early caregivers who are farfetched, unavailable, insensitive, or inconsistent with relational or emotional contagion lead to the development of negative, internal working models of the self and attachment figures (cf. Davis, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). In relation to God attachment, Kirkpatrick in his thesis *kicks* that the consequence of this attachment orientation, is a manifestation of an intense attachment insecurity in their relationship with an attachment figure, for example a DAF, which serve as a substitute attachment figure (SAF) (Kirkpatrick & Shaver 1990: 315). The SAF here is “functionally used as an affect-regulation tool” (cf. Kirkpatrick, 1998; Davis, 2010) to down-regulate and compensate for an unavailable or inaccessible HAF. However, depending on necessity, the DAF substitutes for the emotional needs and satiate the attachment-related distress of the individual, in a way that assures security and safety, thereby down regulating for their HAF separation or loss. To illustrate this model in clear real-life experience, the researcher will make observations with the case study experiences of some of the respondents, who had emotionally *abusive* upbringing experiences and difficulties bonding with their early caregivers who were never accessible to them.

Growing up as a teenager, Jerome's father was having an alcohol problem, an unnecessary addiction that would shift his son's attachment *base*. Jerome is a responsible young man who is passionate about his education and making the best out of life. When Jerome was in Grade 11 and getting himself ready for his Matric exams, common sense demands that he would need the help of a caretaker to help him get through the daunting task of reading in preparation for a major exam. Often, he craves for the assistance of his father, whom he believes can help him with his schoolwork, and give some kind of guidance and emotional support in preparation to his matric exams, which would determine whether-or-not he would be accepted into the University. Sadly Jerome laments, “...*at that time my dad was like having an alcohol problem.*” According to Jerome, the unavailability of his father, traded for heavy alcohol consumption, grieved both him and the mum who was sick at that time and was emotionally unavailable for him as well. The father's opprobrious drinking act daunted Jerome's academic performance in school. However, more to that, the mental trauma he passed through at this time would soon make him to look for a compensatory attachment relationship with a DAF, Who will down-regulate his attachment hunger. At this point of emotional hunger, Jerome admits that it...

“...was big on me...because both of my brothers weren't there and lot of times I didn't know what to do when I did get home and then I would always ask my dad for help and you know he was not that father figure because I did get home and my dad will be drunk and sleepy and when he wakes up he doesn't say much—he just carries on drinking and sleeping and in that way.”

Jerome father's fiasco took a toll on Jerome as he turns elsewhere to find help and an attachment relationship to replenish the emotional abuse he experienced with his father. He turns to God, his DAF, to down-regulate his relationship expectations, by using the interactive means of prayer to communicate with a supposedly available DAF in order to gain relief and protection. For Jerome, this relationship was expressed with his DAF using an attachment practice of prayer: *"...through my prayer I didn't know where to turn to and I prayed a lot and thanks to God I am actually where I am today,"* says Jerome. Through prayer, an aspect of his religious behaviour, Jerome was able to relate with his DAF, a proximity relationship, which he admits, had truly contributed to the progress in his education today. Hence, for Jerome, the proximity relationship with his DAF through "prayer" serves as a substitute for his attachment need for intimacy and security with his parents who were not there for him. This confirms Peter Granqvist's (2010) understanding of prayer as an attachment-like relationship exhibited in the believer-God relationship.

Julie's case is no different. Although stressed about the pressure and criticism from her parents, which have created in her insecurity in her relationship with her early caregivers. This constant criticism will soon make her not to believe in her potentials, irrespective of how she felt on the inside. Although she acknowledged that her parents loved her anyway, regardless, *"I was pretty much on my own and was doing my own thing when I was growing up"*. According to her, this relationship difficulty with her caregiver was because she was *"...a middle child and I actually had a lot of gifts God gave me and it was always criticized"*. This constant pressure from her caregiver, led Julie to develop a religious coping mode that regulated her emotional distress with her parents, which according to her, *"I didn't realize it when I was growing up. I only realized it when I actually started building my relationship with the Lord and seeking His truth and what he actually expects of me"*. For Julie, truth about her "self" and gifting were far more important for her. Her parents deprived her of an emotional attachment *ego trip* that would affirm her potentials, and in bid to compensate herself for this need, she craved to relate with a DAF that would come to terms with her needs for self-affirmation and self-aggrandizement, to enable her maintain some kind of confidence with her "self" image.

According to Julie, this new relationship with her DAF was more like her comfort zone than anything else, a new position that saw her new attachment figure as a safe haven and secure base and one who always believed in her potential — a criteria her HAF (parents) failed to meet. Julie's early bonding difficulty with her parents will soon negatively influence her social relationships as well. Even though Julie substituted her attachment need with a relationship experience with a DAF, she still has trouble in her personal relationships.

“The thing that i think that actually got to me was when i was in a relationship in high school...it started up really good but it ended really bad. ...I don't have a lot of friends because i never really opened up to a lot of people but the Lord came and changed all that when i gave him the time to actually do that. So I am at a stage that i may be experiencing anxiety and it may have been so but He has taken me and i have grown through that and i can really say that He has given me a lot of peace. I think the Lord has actually been good to me – in everything i am doing i see the Lord in it.”

Now, although anxious about her relationship with God because she is unclear of what God's purpose for her future is, Julie ardently believes that *“whatever you go through God can heal, He can show you the way out of it but he can't guarantee that something bad is not going to happen. He is in whatever circumstances you are in...”*

For Julie, her fear of rejection because of the constant criticism of her parents towards her abilities when she was little, made her to seek approval from a different attachment source. Julie is often worried about her future and stressed about what God expects of her, which is an *internal working model* that she carries into her new relationship with God, notched into her subconscious by the machinery of her early childhood experience, from where she engages the world and her close “others” in exploration. Consequently, Julie is more likely to explore the world with an expectation of self-affirmation from human close ‘others’, as she repeatedly laments: *“I have a bit of certain stronghold...that people expect from you and what the world expect of you — is completely different from what the Lord says of you.”* Although Julie requires constant self-validation to stay healthy in her relationship with close ‘others’, this time she sees the validation of her DAF as something uniquely amazing — a purported sense of security and the very reason she swap her attachment reliance from a HAF (parents) to a DAF (God).

June's experience is closely related to Julie's, in that they both grow up in a farm away from friends, and of course, experienced an attachment-abandonment by their parents. June's case is a bit severe however, in the sense that her attachment insecurity appears to be more *avoidant* than *anxious*. She admits,

“I would say...i have come a long way in my relationship with my mum and dad. I would tell you that it happened that my mum and dad happened to live in a farm and for few years we had, drought and we almost got bankrupt. And my mother decided to go and work in London to support our family. She went when I was in grade 1 and she is still working there...so...yeah she is distant from me. But we communicate and we talk but it is not enough. And that is why i say i have been praying to God...when is the time going to come when....? I feel sort of abandoned, and because of that i don't want people to get close to me.”

June's coping style was also through religion, specifically prayer, as was the case of Jerome. Her mother's abandonment depression at the formative years of her youth has moulded in her an insecure attachment orientation in her relationship with close “others”. This confliction made her to often *go on her knees* in an attachment relationship experience with God, albeit insecure

with God sometimes (depending on the circumstances), especially when she does not get answers. She speaks for herself:

“I would describe my relationship [with God]...sometimes close sometimes quite distant — it depends on what circumstances i have. And it depends on how busy i am. If I am busy, i quite tend to distant myself from Him [and] when i have a few disappointments. Sometimes i don't easily understand the stuffs that has happened and why it is happening. I have learned at least that it doesn't get better so when i don't get answers i tend to step back and try to do it myself.”

More than anything, despite June's attachment insecurity, she wants her DAF to be there for her, as she admits, *“Yes i am anxious about my relationship with God. I wanted to be stronger but i tend not to get there. I want to have this relationship...and get myself again. I am not there where i wanted to be —I know it is important in one's life. I know what miracles He can do if he is in your life.”*

Notice, June seems to develop a *disorganized* attachment orientation in her relationship with God. On one hand, she is avoidant and dismissing and at the end of the *note*, she is both fearful and anxious. Main and Solomon (1986) describe the *disorganized* attachment style as both “fearful” and “dismissing” in the sense that an individual is both suspicious and dismissive of close “others” because the individual expresses a feeling of self-reliance due to fear of being hurt while avoiding close “others”. This conceptualization is best exemplified within the echoes of June's words: *“I keep people distant from me...I won't trust people. I have a distrust for trusting people. Sometimes I fear they would judge me for what have happened in the past. If you get to know me I will get to know a lot about you but you won't know a lot about me.”*

Another case to consider in this regard is that of Adam, a Pentecostal youth who had a disturbing relationship experience with his parents while growing up. He blames himself for allowing his amputated father fall off the stairs on Father's Day, which led to his death. A scenario Adam believes could have been averted if he was more watchful over his father, whose legs were amputated because of his diabetes. This incident happened when his father was trying to separate their neighbours who were fighting. Unfortunately, Adam's father slipped and fell off a three-storey building. That was a major turning point in his life. In bid to make up for the attachment relationship he tragically lost with his father as a result of his sudden death, he converted to Christianity, in view that he would compensate his tragic loss of a father figure with a relationship experience with a DAF that will become a “father figure” in his life.

“At that time I was not yet saved. I was looking for a "father" and that was part of the thing that led me to become a Christian. Because at that time my mother use to raise us alone. There was time when my grandmother said to us in midnight that we need to go [out of her house]. After that I sought after that love from a father. There came a time it was too heavy for us. God sent so many people to minister to me and I said Lord I am going to

try and see if this is the way. And really I found that...He is the perfect Father. The perfect example of what a father should be."

Neville on the other hand was living with his mum when he was little, and according to him, "My mum and I had a decent life according to my dad". When he was between 7 – 13 years old, he had his own fair share of life's tragedy. During this period, he was somewhat emotionally "abused" by his parents, and abandoned by his father who decided to do things away from his family. Neville complains,

"I can't really talk to my father because he is only doing things his ways — he kept me away from church because he is not the kind of guy that goes to places like that... During that time my mum and dad separated and I went back home. My mum started drinking and that held back my life. Like I say, I didn't really think about God. I think it all started between my parents, if they took my life differently as their child things would be better."

An encounter with his aunty was a turning point in Neville's life: "I went to my aunt one day in my primary school days to tell her about the abusive things I was experiencing in my life...and she took me in for all my primary school days. And at that moment... I realised...why can't my dad help me like other kids — I want to get away from the situation." Eventually, Neville's 'getting away from the situation' led him to encounter his DAF after he left his parent's house into the street during the divorce separation of his parents — an event that tore their home apart. Whilst he was walking through the past shadow of his abandonment experience, he discovered his DAF, and he says, "...from that point, it was then I started going to church, started relating with the people in church, getting closer to God. I said to myself this is where I want to be." Neville experienced his DAF through his religious participation in church, and with his religious "others".

Sharon is no better in her experience. In her situation, her mum never wanted her as a child after she experienced difficulty giving birth to her elder sister through surgery. This traumatic experience made her vow not to have any child in the future. Apparently, she could not live up to her vow and she took in the second time. Her conception made her furious and often led her to speak against the child in her womb. Eventually Sharon was born. However, this *strange* parent-child relationship was skewed from day one. Subsequent to Sharon's compensation episode, she claimed that she had a dream, after a prayer session in her church, which revealed a *strange situation* surrounding her birth. On getting to her house, Sharon confronted her mother about her past and she *spilled the beans* and told her all about it. Sharon narrates herself:

"My mum and I actually do not have that mum-daughter relationship... What happened is that...when my mother was pregnant with my older sister she almost died and she said she did not want to be pregnant again. My mum and dad got married after a year...and they had me. And my mum was pregnant with me and so she wished me dead. She was saying that..."I don't want this child". She was saying this and wishing that when she gives

birth to me I must die...something like that. So some time...I think I was sixteen or seventeen, so I discovered...in my healing process...our pastor discovered something about me and in that healing process i discovered that I had a dream about me in my mummy's womb and I was struggling and I wanted to come out. And I asked my mum what happened and what this dream is about and then she told me what happened and how she felt. And so that affected our relationship [up until] now."

This *strange situation* (Ainsworth et al., 1978), according to the confession of Sharon's mother started even before she was born. After her miraculous birth, she recalled what her mother told her: *"that moment she [her mother] was breast feeding me I turned my head...I didn't let her. So from day one we didn't gel..."* Indeed as Granqvist (2010) puts it, "attachment system is active from the cradle to the grave." In other to *compensate* for the attachment abuse she experienced as a child, Sharon embraced an attachment Figure that would replenish her early abandonment experiences. She shares how she had reconciled with her past through some sort of attachment to God affection:

"I made a commitment...I think when I was 13 years old...pastor started a community choir. But first my sister went, and then my mum went. We were all about 90 young children and we were all attending this choir group. I started loving the experience and up till today I am still standing today. In that emptiness that I felt I always say 'God i know you are going to fill this'. I spoke my heart out to God and I told God that he must help me through this because I can't handle it by myself. But what I know is that God must help me and he made me a stronger person... I made a decision and I said to myself am not going to let this limit me and am going to move forward and then God helped me through everything."

Wendy is inclined to be pert and modest, insufficiently majestic, emotional, sometimes positively rude, but boringly juvenile. Her early attachment abandonment came because of her parents' breakup as a child, which she fears was a repetition of what was happening to her daughter now. Surprisingly, both Wendy and her daughter share a common early abandonment experience: *"I was 10 years old when my dad left us to be with my mum's cousin. And my oldest daughter is also 10 years old when my husband left me. And I am like, is this some kind of punishment...the same thing is happening like a movie..."* Wendy's life took a new turn after the separation of her parents when she was 10 years old, equally affecting her relationship with her close and religious "others". However, it is of recent that she decided to have a relationship experience with her DAF, one who would heal the wounds of her past and grant her safety, security, and proximity. She confirms, *"For me I am converted to God now...and a lot of stuff happened"*. Gradually but surely, her DAF seems to nourish her attachment relationship needs, lavishing her with some sort of emotional guardianship from where she explores the errors of her past, the abundant life today, and an emerging hope in the self. In her words, in response to the role of her DAF in her life, Wendy has this to say, *"When I took God into my life it was life changing. Like every Sunday, I was in church and I use to teach Sunday schools. Now I can encourage people, express myself to people, and talk to people to have God in their lives."* For Wendy, her relationship experience with her DAF

has helped her cope with her distress, allowing her the effrontery to interact with people on both deeper and positive levels, sharing her testimony of a God experience with others. I go to *“anybody at my workplace and talk about God and they would sit and would listen. Because for them is like wow...we didn't see you as this person.”*

b. Corresponding or Modelling?

The correspondence or modelling model propose that an individual's attachment orientation with close 'others', usually caregivers or parents, serves as a model for their attachment to God or God image. It is important here to find out how the case study narratives identified in this section actually fit within the three *correspondence* models.

i. The internal-working-model correspondence model

This proposition was led by Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992: 25-62), who described the condition of an entire *internal working model* to correspond to both the embodied and disembodied relationship with a DAF. In other words, an individual's relationship orientation towards God is determined by their attachment relationship with early caregivers, on a correspondence level. Therefore, if Mr A had a secure, stable, healthy relationship with his caregiver for example, Mr A consequently will assume a similar orientation in his relationship with God. By contrast, having an insecure, unreliable, inaccessible, or unhealthy human attachment relationships may mirror in *vis-à-vis* with a person's attachment relationship orientation with God. Simply put, the way you relate with close 'others' is the way you relate with God.

June's experience explained in the compensation model could also fall in this category. After considering her relationship with her parents as inaccessible and unreliable, she tends to lean away from God, especially when she is faced with difficulties and perhaps does not access answers to her prayers immediately. Secondly, the way June is struggling to fix her relationship with her early caregiver (who is evidently not available since Grade 1 and thousands of miles away from her) is also reflected in her supposed relationship experience with God, where she also struggles to maintain proximity with her DAF: *“Yes I am anxious about my relationship with God. I wanted to be stronger but I tend not to get there. I want to have this relationship...and get myself again.”* In the same vein, she wished of a time when her relationship with her caregiver would be fixed, *“when is the time going to come when... [I can reconnect with my mum],”* the same way she laments over her relationship with God. Thirdly, her feeling of abandonment by her caregiver is reflected in an eagerness to abandon her close “others”, even her DAF:

“When I feel disappointment...I feel disappointed in myself....I distant myself from people and withdraw myself. When i distant myself from people i feel like I can stand on my own feet. I don't have to rely on somebody else they can't disappoint

me in the future or like abandon me again. ...In my life I have a few disappointments. Sometimes I don't easily understand the stuffs that has happened and why it is happening. I have learned at least that it doesn't get better so when i don't get answers from God i tend to step back and try to do it myself."

It is interesting to find out that June's lamentation also falls under both the correspondence and compensation models. This confirms Hall et al. (2005) argument that empirical foundations that are used to support the emotional compensation model are likely to fall within the correspondence model, more or less.

The second case of an internal-working-model correspondence model is that of Chris. A calm, unparticular, tough-minded Christian millennial, whose secure attachment relationship with his caregiver is mirrored in his emotional and theological reflections of his God image experiences. Chris considers himself to share things in common with his mum, even in his career as a system specialist. They always have a way of bonding, even far beyond the common forms of biology. Chris accounts of his strong emotional, career, and spiritual relationship with his mother, a standpoint from which he engages his DAF.

"...with my mother we share the same interest. We find things to do together. We find it easier to connect with each other. She owns her own business which is IT related, and I am a programmer so a lot of times I can actually help her in her business. Or she can tell me what she discovered which is interesting to me as well."

Chris further narrates the *internal working model correspondence* succinctly here:

"The same way I do with my mum where I feel a connection in the things we share so I would feel a connection with God doing His work, being part of what he is doing at the moment. And also with the counselling and receiving counselling from God the same way I would have gone to my mother for counsel."

Chris' attachment relationship orientation with his caregiver is reflected in the way he chooses to relate with God, Whom he considers stronger and wiser, the same way he perceives the mother. Chris' case best represents an *internal-working-model correspondence model* example, where his DAF mirrors in on the same level, with the relational attributes of his early caregiver.

ii. The socialized correspondence model

The third model is the socialized correspondence theory by Granqvist (1998, 2002). Petr Granqvist argues that extensive experiences with parents who are available, sensitive, responsive and religious as opposed to those who are inaccessible and unreliable often lead to the development of positive internal working models of the self in relation to close 'others'. This attachment posture often leads to a positive relationship experience with a DAF

(Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999). Mikulincer and Shaver (2004) describe the role played by the DAF here as that of a “security-enhancing attachment figure” (p. 174).

Growing up for Yebo, a 21-year-old Pentecostal millennial, with his mother has been so rewarding. He believes that her mother’s standards and way of relating with him has hugely influenced his perceptions and experiences of God. The spiritual life of Yebo’s caregiver, his mother, is a cornerstone in his experiences with God. He notes,

“I trust my mum; she’s been feeding me for 21 years now. Now I have to see certain stuffs that she told me and adopt standards of the kingdom of God. But sometimes the relationship with my mother affects my relationship with God positively and sometimes it can be negative. The first time when i got saved, and gave my life to the Lord it was just like...I was like asking myself “where am i going when I die?” My mum is sure of where she is going when she dies. I don’t want to be without her. I don’t want to be in a place where she is not. That brought me closer to God and closer to acknowledge of Him as my Lord and saviour.”

Raised in the Christian faith, Yebo is concerned about making heaven and being close to God at all cost because of the commitment of her mum to God, whom he wants to also meet even at the afterlife. His relationship with God assures him of this feat. As a result, God plays an important role for him in this regards as a “security-enhancing Figure” (an eschatological Assurer) albeit in relation to the afterlife. On the other hand, one could suggest that Yebo’s attachment relationship experience with his close ‘others’ is redolent of a double-barrelled security, one from his parents, and the other from his DAF. However, his relationship with his parents is leading him into a new relationship experience with a DAF—one that assures him of some kind of *security* on the afterlife to reconnect with his early caregiver.

Sipho may have embraced an attachment relationship with God because of the relationship he had with his *faith-minded* mother. In trying to figure out how his relationship with God started, he suggests, *“May be when I was a child...my mother made it a point that we go to church.”* While he acknowledged that his mother played a role in his spirituality at some point, he accorded his DAF relationship role to another close “other”, a priest in his church, whom he looked up to during the formative years of his youth. He adds, *“But at a certain stage...I met somebody in my life that I really was like — this man — I really wanted to be like this man. And that was when I decided to be close to God.”* Sipho’s has a relationship experience with God and a God image that is motivated by his human close “others”. These people in his life led him to discover God for himself, thereby providing him with some extra security, as he engages the world around him.

iii. The Implicit-relational-knowing Correspondence Model

This last model proposed by Hall (2004) took a more conciliatory approach. This is an outcome of the continuous, consistent mixed results, which has emerged from studies on both the

compensation and correspondence models. Implicit-relational-knowing theory gives a substantial research support for all the three previous models (Davis, 2010). In reconciling the IWM correspondence model, emotional compensation model, and socialized correspondence model, Hall (2004) together with his colleagues (Hall et al., 2009) proposed a gestalt-spurred *modelling* framework known as the *implicit-relational-knowing correspondence*, which unifies the earlier discrepant findings. In their proposition, Hall and his colleagues argue for the need for discretion to recognize how/when not to identify with close “others”, in this case, a DAF. Hall et al. (2009) reason that people’s experience with human attachment figures help them develop what they called a *gut-level* knowledge to perceive how to interact with other humans or with specific relational partners, for example a DAF (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1998). This knowledge skill allows an individual to develop a corresponding *implicit-relational-knowing* in regards to relating with God. In other words, the relational bent is on an implicit level as opposed to an explicit religious related functioning such as church participation, religious commitment and so on, which does not possess an intrinsic loyalty.

An individual within this category for example, who has a negative or positive relational experience with his human close “others” (parents for example), tend to experience God regardless, in either a secure or insecure way at an *implicit* level without necessarily devoting to an explicit religious or spiritual symbol, like going to church.

Regardless of the early childhood experience, Hall et al. argue that empirical foundations used to support the emotional compensation model could also be potential empirical narratives for understanding his *implicit-relational-knowing correspondence* model. For example, cases Jerome, Julie, June, Neville, Sharon, and Wendy, who had insecure attachment relationships with their caregivers and at some point in their lives reported a sudden religious conversion or an increased attachment to God tendency following their interpersonal crisis, are potential narratives for Hall et al.’s (2005) model. This is because such re-arrangement seems to reflect “the operation of characteristic affect-regulation strategies” (Hall et al, 2005; Moriarty & E. B. Davis, 2008; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008).

In light of this, the researcher believes that the emotional compensation narratives earlier discussed support the theoretical underpinnings of Hall et al.’s (2005) implicit-relational-knowing model. The researcher concurred to this proposition because at some point, each of the case study respondents at the compensation spectrum had some kind of implicit *gut-level* decision to either accept or live independent of God’s influence. They choose to relate and interact with God instead. This intentionality in the place of a relationship with God notched in them experiences about God, even though bared open to the researcher as narrated earlier. They related with their DAFs, irrespective of their religious involvements and teachings or early

childhood experiences and difficulties. Therefore, on this basis their attachment functioning with their DAFs were internally established.

Whilst the cases in the emotional compensation category support Hall et al.'s model, the narrative of Maddie, a freshman student at the university best describes this gut-level-headedness. Although Maddie has a secure attachment relationship with her caregiver, regardless of this relationship, she choose to experience God on her own terms since God was, for her, the only person that is *"truly 100% understanding...there is nobody who knows you like He does"*, says Maddie. According to Maddie,

"I want to get close to God and have a perfect relationship,...now...I realized how much that I need him. Both of my parents are Christians so they motivated me to also be a Christian. They don't force me to have a relationship with God."

Slightly, Maddie's experience also supports the *socialized correspondence model*. Her secure attachment relationship with her religious caregivers, who seem to have a positive relationship experience with God, motivated Maddie to want the same kind of experience for herself.

However, it will be a *just and loving gaze* to approach her case by considering how she realized how much she needed God on her own, independent of the *aroma* of religiousness emitting from her close 'others'. So therefore, the researcher considers Maddie's case to add to the minuscule empirical research on Hall et al.'s (2005) *implicit-relational-knowing model* because of her *gut-level* decision to relate with and experience God more effectively than she ever did.

4.4.2. Caregiver Reflection of God and Images/Concepts of God

First starters, God images and God concepts do not mean the same thing. Hoffman (2000) reasons that the *God image* is a person's "experimental understanding of God" and has more to do with emotions. On the other hand, Lawrence (1997) understood *God concepts* as a person's cognitive understanding of God—what a person learns about God through perception, learning, and reasoning—a cognitive action skilfully done through religious-related learning and gathering. Although different in their merit, Hoffman (2000) believes that both constructs develop adjacent to one another, but through different patterns. The difference however is in the way they are developed: the God image is through what we experience whereas the 'God concept' is through what we are taught.

It was important to bring to knowledge the relationship between the images and concepts of God because the researcher saw both the God images and God concepts of the respondents developing head-to-head to one another, and sometimes parallel to each other, as one *acted out* as some kind of therapeutic regulating mechanism against the traumatic mode of the other. They consistently regulated each other as the respondents explored their relationship with

God in light of the attachment relational criteria offered by attachment experts (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Granqvist, et al., 2010). The defining criteria of a strong and enduring attachment bond are characterized as:

- Proximity and maintenance of closeness,
- Safe haven,
- Secure base,
- Response to separation and loss,
- Perceiving an attachment figure as stronger and wiser

The researcher carefully looked at the respondents' God image experiences and attachment to God in light of these attachment criteria. Their narratives about God showed that their relationship with God, through an attachment language, corresponds to the above attachment bond characterization. Respondents therefore were asked to describe God using adjectives and then relate an experience they had where God play-out in those ways, (Main, Goldwyn, & Hess, 2003). Whilst narrating their experiential relationship with God through their different narratives, in light of their prescribed adjectives, respondents were able to provide an understanding Bruner (1983) calls a "relational dynamics", which is an interpretation bordered by "the history of an interaction dynamics of a given relation" (Bobb 2013: 57). The adjectives decoded into words were either broad or religious metaphors (such as: provider, rewarder, true friend, loving, counselor and so on) which the researcher judged as less helpful in understanding their attachment language. However, the story embedded within each of the verbalized adjectives gave a much clearer clue to their attachment cues. The researcher then drew from Corbin and Strauss' (2008) deductive content analysis to explain the relational patterns consistent with the attachment criteria given by Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2008), whilst remaining loyal to the attachment behavioral styles earlier conceptualized by Ainsworth (1985).

The researcher mechanically selected appropriate stories consistent with the attachment criteria and language categories above. The goal of the researcher at this point was to ensure that the coding protocol reflects consistency with the five theoretical categories offered by Granqvist and his colleagues (2008; 2010), within the context of the God concepts and the religious language used by the respondents to describe these relational experiences.

The study shows that the respondents often start with a *God concept*, which is their cognitive understanding of God. However, at some point they navigate into an emotional-laden explosion of anxiety, especially when asked how God has played a role in their life through their preferred adjective using real-life experiences. At the same time, the respondents showed gratitude towards God for playing a role in their life as an attachment Figure.

The respondents' narratives, so far, are consistent with Granqvist and Kirkpatrick's (2008) theoretical definition of attachment relationships. The researcher will then explore these experiences in more depth, giving cogent indications of the consistency of their stories with the theoretical characterizations of an enduring affectional bond.

Additionally, what is interesting in this section is to see how the respondents use their religious language and God concepts as a *coping* mechanism to "maintain itself over time and to test its actual life over against what is most essential to it" (Dykstra 1986: 170). This was a means through which the respondents socialize with God and a means by which they continue to reform, regulate and revitalize the self in the place of fear and anxiety (Ibid: 170).

4.4.2.1. Connected but Conflicted: God as a target for proximity seeking

a. Connected

It was important to start discussing this section with a short note on religious language or if you like, God concepts, which informs every other aspect of the experiences of the respondents in this study. The concept of religious language, according to Craig Dykstra (1986), is an indication of a religious faith, a certain level of connectedness/identification with a DAF within a community of faith. Dykstra puts it this way: "Religious faith as a way of life is borne, necessarily, by language and each distinct way of life necessarily has a language of its own," (1986: 170). This somewhat *connectedness* though expressed through language, indicates a relationship experience with a DAF. You cannot for example be close to someone if you are not *connected* to that person in some kind of way and evidently, communication is the hallmark of every successful relationship, (Arnold & Boggs, 1999).

The theory of *closeness centrality* in social network analysis is a very important concept that could be applied here to understand how language and metaphors portray a level of "connectedness" or "proximity" between individuals and their close 'others'. Proximity between and their DAF can be measured the same way closeness is measured in a graph representing a social network by how close a vertex is to all other vertices in the graph (Okamoto et al., 2008). A vertex in graph theory is the central unit from which graphs are constructed. The vertices in a graph are supported by edges, which support one vertex to another. From this point of view, vertices are treated as "featureless and indivisible objects" in the graph theory (Chartrand, 1985) the same way language is communicated using featureless and indivisible symbols and metaphors in human relationships. The edges of the vertices (just like the symbols or metaphors used in communication) support the different language vertices (communication patterns) that make up the representation of a graph (relationship experience). Therefore, just like the edges that support the vertex in a graph serve as the

edges that link the vertices, the different communication or language patterns used in an attachment relationship experience with a DAF are expressed using metaphors and symbols (language) in attachment relationships. Figure 4-1 gives a picture of a vertex.

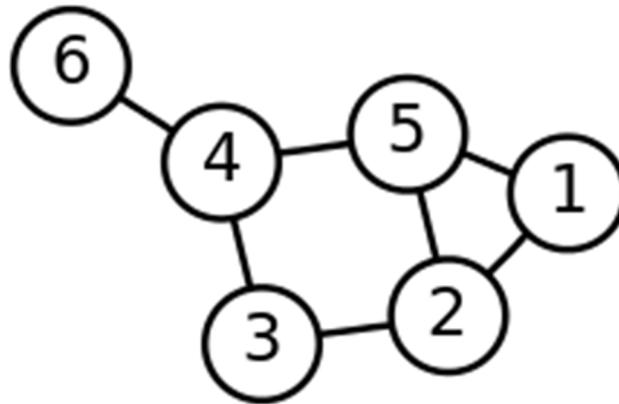
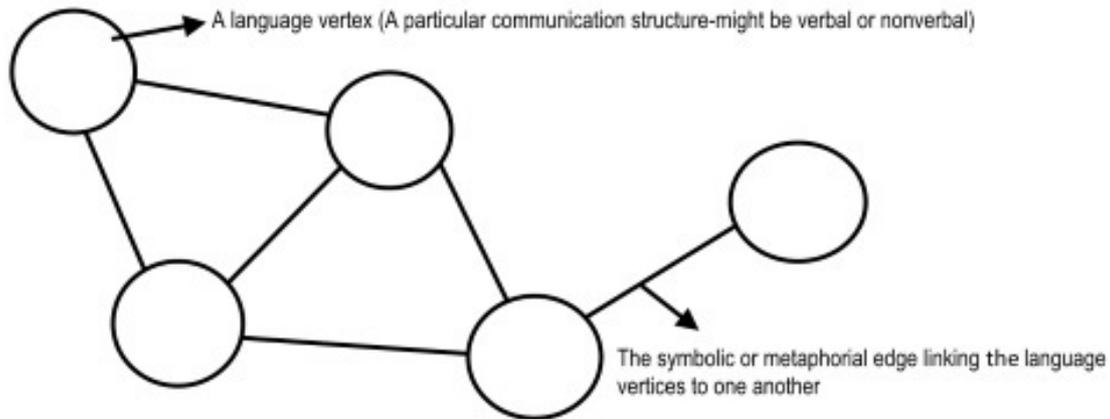


Figure 4-1: Graph with 6 vertices and 7 edges

Closeness centrality concept therefore refers to *indicators* (symbols and meta-metaphors) of a God (image) experience, which constitute the language structure of a given faith community in a relationship experience of its member (Drystra, 1986). These conceptual and metaphorical *indicators* suggest an identification and proximity with God. Without these *indicators of God* that make up the relationship experience with God there is no socialization, and therefore no closeness nor a relationship experience with God. Louw (2000) saw symbols playing an important role in helping a sufferer see God's proximity in the place of suffering. According to Louw, vocabularies justify and explain God's presence and purpose to an individual in suffering.

At an individual level, one's indicator of closeness or connectedness in a relationship experience with God can be captured through *centrality*. Conceptually, *centrality* is a straightforward practice, which could also mean *connectedness* —the extent to which a perceiver tends to see their DAF in a dyadic relationship. Centrality is also seen as closeness, degree, betweenness, information, and power (Okamoto, K et al., 2010). This understanding is conceptualized from the Social Relations Model as a “perceiver” and “relationship” effects in dyadic relationships (Back & Kenny, 2010). Base on the Social Relations model, the researcher might not be interested in the third aspect of this model called the “target effect”, which reflects, in the context of this study, how the respondents is seen in general by their DAF, since apparently their DAF appears inaccessible in the embodied form.



Using the graph theory and the concept of closeness centrality in social networks, the diagram here represents how relationship experience is practiced in closed relationship

Figure 4-2: Graphical representation of closeness in an attachment relationship experience (using graph theory)

In light of this theorem, the researcher tries to come to grips with how the respondents' degree of closeness, betweenness, and connection with God, as reflected in their "vertices" or symbolic and metaphorical languages that represent their *proximity* status in their relationship with God. The respondents confirm their proximity with God through the following language "vertices":

"My relationship with God is in the perfect condition." - Andy

"...I trust in God with my whole life. God definitely exist you just wonder why bad things happen to such good people. Sometimes this shakes the way I feel about God but I still have a personal relationship with Him and I feel that i trust him." - Cara

"I feel good in my relationship with God generally because of His grace for me." - Charlie

"I experience him and I feel that He empowers me to do things that otherwise i cannot be able to do....I feel I depend on God to help me through.... I feel he is my rock and foundation." - Chris

"I do feel connected to God but i mean I am sort of...this idea of me not knowing who I really am...is depressing to me not knowing what God wants me to do." - Jerome

"My relationship with God, depends on how you see it, but I think is really strong. I really love the Lord with all my heart." - Julie

"I would describe my relationship...sometimes close." - June

"I think I've got a good relationship with God. It is a personal relationship, even though I belong to a denomination." - Siphon

"I feel quite secure [in my relationship with God]." - Maddie

The respondents claim they are somehow *connected* to their DAF. A relationship experience that is sometimes *close, good, personal, really strong, connected, secure, good, trusting,* or

in *perfect condition* definitely portrays some kind of symbolic and metaphorical *edges* used to describe their language *vertices*, thereby confirming a certain level of centrality, proximity, or betweenness with God. The data therefore supports that the respondents used language *vertices* to describe and confirm their *connectedness*, regardless of the degree of intensity between the *vertices* in a relationship graph. Therefore, however quaint that may seem, we assume the respondents are *connected* in their relationship with their DAF.

b. Conflicted

According to attachment theory, due to the abandonment distress with early caregivers and parent-child difficulties associated with upbringing, insecure individuals tend to grow up to either having an attachment-avoidant or attachment-anxiety disposition in their relationship experiences. Whereas in some cases, some individuals within this category might as well adopt what Main and Solomon (1986) call a disorganized attachment style — a motley of both the attachment avoidant and anxiety contagion.

The respondents for the interviews correspondingly indicated an attachment-insecurity, discharged as an anxiety syndrome in their relationship with God as would be seen from here. Most importantly, they signalled their God image conditions using either the *Hellenistic, metaphysical, imperialistic, hierarchal, or patriarchal* God image schema in relation to Louw (2000) cultural and theological hermeneutics.

The respondents do not deny a proximity relation with God as seen previously. However, their early abandonment phenomena — installed in their attachment system during their formative years — had fostered in them an anxiety tendency towards close “others”, which was evidently played out fully in their bonding experience with God. Although they believe to have some kind of relationship with God, this sort of *connectedness* often clashed with their inclination to insecurity.

The respondents seem to be connected to God, evidenced by their use of several affirmative language “vertices” (such as sometimes close, good, secure, personal, really strong, connected, good, trusting, in perfect condition and so on), which suggest a possible relationship with God. At the same time this relationship is in conflict, and somewhat infected, with the errors of the past, or as Janssen (1994:37) puts it: “authority of the past”. This sort of confliction with their past have given them a default insecure orientation toward future relationships. Sadly, this time their relationship with God is not spared either, in this regards.

Although they seem *connected* with God, it took a different turn when the researcher probed the respondents to examine the condition of this relationship connection. It was on this *note* that their internal God image conditions, in relation to maintaining proximity with God, were *convulsively* discharged in red, hot, emotion-laden decibels that they were *positively* ugly.

The study looks carefully, from here, at the different attachment anxieties and confictions imbedded within the respondents' relationship connection with God.

i. Connected but worried of abusing His love by putting God aside

Andy is a strong-minded Pentecostal who claims to price his relationship with God above all things and thinks his relationship with God is in a perfection condition. His priority in life is to cultivate a good relationship with God. According to him, *"that is the first thing I put above all things"*. Apparently, Andy is aware of his relationship with God, which he finds dignifying to share with people. He believes that his relationship with God is of utmost important to him because God has demonstrated His love towards him in a tremendous way, and all he had to do is to respond to that love through his loyalty. This love, he claims, motivate everything he does.

Regardless of Andy's love for God, he worries in his relationship with his DAF, especially when he fails to keep up with the moral requirement of his DAF. An act he fears is an indication of abusing God's love towards him. In this instance, Andy sees God as "an authoritarian Father" (Louw 2000:7). In Andy's words, *"I would worry in my relationship with God when I am so conscious of my love for God, especially when I sin against God. I can sin and just go free because He loves me no matter what."* Andy uses some kind of religious language *vertex* to regulate the guilt of his "sinful nature", owing to the fact that his DAF loves him no matter what. This seems to be a biblical reflection drawn from 1 John 4:8 and Psalm 91:14 respectively, speaking about the loving nature of God. Psalm 91:14 in particular reveals why Andy believes he could be vindicated by such kind of love. According to Crosby of the *Biblical Research Institute*, this is an error of modern theology, which according to him, "tends to emphasize God's love at the expense of His holiness," (Crosby 1990: ¶3).

A committed Christian, Adam loves God although he thinks he is not doing enough due to his busy schedule to recompense for the love God had lavished towards him. Hence, as a result, he is worried that his relationship with God is dwindling, an insinuation that God is not happy with him for not getting intimate with Him anymore as he used to. He sees God in *Patriarchal* terms. Adam admits,

"At the current moment with these studies, this work...it is a bit challenging for me. Because when I work everybody sleeps, when i sleep everybody work. So it is a bit turnaround for my world at the moment. And for my studies... it is difficult to manage and sacrifice a bit of time to really spend time in intimacy with God and...most of the time [it]

happens on my off days and most times at work to seek intimacy with him because I want to be more like Jesus. That is my desire. At this current moment I realize that, i am not where I should be [in my relationship with God]. I think there is more I can do to delve intimately with God and make time for God. I feel I am not doing enough to give God more time, so i feel God is not happy with me because I am not making out time for Him. ...I use to operate at a certain level of intimacy with God but that time I was not working. There was more time i could spend with God at that time. I feel I need to come to that place again where I seek Him more and do more for Him. Because sometimes is a bit heavy and tiring — is really challenging for me.”

At every point, the respondents use some kind of religious language as a coping mechanism to either intensify their need for God or regulate their anxiety in their relationship experience with God. Regardless of Adam’s busy schedule, he is convinced that he needs to “*be more like Jesus*”. A classical teaching among Christians, “modelled by Jesus as he grew and developed the disciples into the leaders of his Church” (Grahn 2011: ¶3).

Sharon on the other hand, does not deny of her relationship with God rather she feels she is “*putting God aside and always putting other people first.*” A condition she feels has made her to drain backwards in her relationship with God because the things she uses to do before and how she felt about God has changed negatively. This made her worry about her relationship with God because she felt like she had disappointed God somehow. She sees God in patriarchal terms, saying, “*I was worried...because I felt like I disappointed God. Would I be able to be that person God made me the first time [I came to Him]...the one that did everything for God.*”

ii. Connected but no personal relationship with God

Sharon also worries because she feels that her relationship with God is not intimate. Because she considers her music ministry in the church as something sacred, she desires a more personal relationship with God. She is encumbered trying to achieve this feat because she feels she gives so much attention to people than to God. She acknowledges, “*For sometimes, I was [trying to] impress other people and always putting other people first. Then I discovered I was going backwards in my relationship with God.*” After stressing about her challenge in maintaining proximity in her relationship with God, she uses some kind of metaphoric vocabulary to reassure herself of her closeness in God, saying “*...I know God will somehow carry me through*”.

Cara is very insecure in her relationship with God, although God means so much to her. She admits this herself,

“I feel like is very insecure.” Moreover, her reason for this is clear and simple: “*I think you have to like have that personal relationship with Him. Like you know study the Word of God and have a personal relationship with Him to like be able to pray anywhere and anytime....So I think God means so much to me...*”

Besides, part of the reason why she is sort of disoriented about having a relationship with God, according to her, has to do with the *problem of evil* — why bad things happen to good people. She is traumatized when she “wonder if He [God] is really there when stuff happen[s].” Cara shared a story of a fellow first year student who died in a train accident and another who tragically fell from a tree during his student initiation rite and landed to the ground with his head. She marvels, “You know, I sometimes wonder why this is happening. Furthermore, I trust in God with my whole life. God definitely exist you just wonder why bad things happen to such good people. Sometimes this shakes the way I feel about God but i still...feel that I [can] trust him.” Regardless of her plight, she also stressed that she had experienced God’s goodness in her own life, and for that, “Because something bad happened it wasn’t necessarily something bad. Because I actually came to the good [understanding] of it,” Cara reasons.

Marvin is a young Roman Catholic, struggling with a relationship anxiety with God, because of his supposed prayerlessness. He feels he is connected to God in some way but doubts if he has a legitimate relationship with God, especially when he compares his prayer life with that of others. According to Marvin, “I worry because I am not prayerful that is why I am not close [to God].” When the researcher asked him why he was not prayerful, this was his response: “Sometimes I see no need...sometimes if I go to church on Sunday sometimes a week might go by without me saying anything. The worry just comes in when times goes by [and] I haven’t said a prayer.” It might be difficult to deflate “prayer” as a form of religious language. Within the study of religion, there is a general position on prayer as a form of religiosity expressed through linguistic convention. William James (1902) reasons that, religion is established on the subjective experience of an invisible DAF (cf. Wallace 1966: 52). A similar position seems to enthuse Tylor (1873:371), as he argues that prayer actually begins as spontaneous utterances that degenerate, sometimes, into traditional religious formulas and languages.

Since prayer is an aspect of religious interaction between an individual and their DAF, would it not be appropriate to call “prayer” in this regard a form of religious language since it is used in religious communication. The goal of prayer is to initiate some kind of interaction between people and God, one that would (or should) in any case occur (Shelton 1976; Atkinson 1989; Gill 1981; Hanks 1990, 1996a; McCreery 1995).

Therefore, it is legit for respondents to be reassured of their relationship with God through “aural means” — an indication that God has not forsaken them (Peek 1994: 475). Besides, a relationship with a DAF does not necessarily assure that an individual can interact with that DAF (Basso, 1990; Peacock and Tyson, 1989). In the case of Marvin, although he acknowledges having some kind of relationship with his DAF, the obstacle in this relationship

experience with his DAF is in his inability to pray, as he would have loved to. Here, the researcher sees the absence of a religious self-regulation distressing Marvin's relationship experience with his DAF.

iii. Connected but feel I am not strong enough

Charlie apparently loves God and feels 'good' about her relationship with God because of the grace of God she claims to have experienced amid her confliction. Her fear is that she is not strong enough for God. She is afraid that she might "*go back to the world*" and forget all about God because of the things that are happening in her life. However, she finds comfort using a religious teaching (referenced to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 on worrying about tomorrow) to down-regulate her fears. She comforts herself using a religious teaching drawn from the Bible, as she reasons, "*You know sometimes stuff happens and you know I feel anxious. I think it is human to feel that way and sometimes stuff happens and we worry but God says in His Word that you must not worry.*" Charlie was trying to refer to the bible text in Matthew 6:25: "*Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life...*" Although Charlie was not open as to what she meant by "*stuff*", but she labels her conflicting experience as an "*attack of the enemy*" in her life, which made her anxious and insecure in her God image experience. Hence, acknowledging that she is not strong enough for such "*attack of the enemy*". Then question arises as to which enemy's attack? Apparently, Christians often use religious languages to associate dystopia — extreme conditions of life — as a crafted handwork of the devil. It is not surprising that Charlie may be referring to the devil. Clearly, she expresses two logical religious languages as a response to her attachment anxiety in her relationship with her DAF.

Wendy is in her early thirties and separated with the husband against her own will. Although she is separated with her husband, whom she claimed domestically abused her, she is hoping that someone day God will reunite them again. Nevertheless, she seems concerned that God may not honour this request since her best friend lured her husband away from his marital home. A part of her repels the husband for leaving his kids. In addition, although she wishes to have a peaceful home because of her children, she is hesitant about accepting her husband back because of the history of domestic abuse she suffered when they were together. She is troubled in her relationship with God. However, after getting words from her pastor and members in the church to trust God to have her "abuser" back into her life (a bargain she is worried might truly be the intention of God for her), she is now traumatized about the take of God on the matter. Wendy feels she is not strong enough to experience such trauma again even though it might be the will of God. This decision-making trauma causes her setbacks and distress in her relationship experience with her DAF, which in her opinion is discomfoting, and thus a challenge in assuming a proximate position with her DAF.

"I have been through a lot of stuff, abuse both mentally and physically and with my kids also they have been through a lot. Every time I ask God why why why? Like this morning...another girl in our group in church told me to trust God that I will get my husband back. My pastor told me to put my ring back...every time I take my husband back he comes and abuses me even in front of my kids...and am asking God what must I do. That's my biggest challenge because everyone in church is like God says this in the bible. ...everyone is pushing me and that's my biggest worry: what am I going to do?"

Regardless of her attachment anxiety, Wendy comforts herself saying, *"He [God] is like my pillar of strength"*, a biblical metaphor often used to describe the God of the bible as the source of strength. Wendy down-regulates her fears using an assuring religious metaphor that represents her DAF as the fundamental force behind her strength, and therefore would handle any challenge that comes her way. This apparently might also mean accepting the *spoken-will* of her DAF, which she feels is the *"voice of the people"*.

iv. Connected but worried for not getting what I hope God would give me

A self-reliant, do-it-my-own-way kind of Millennial, June believes in herself and feels confident about fixing her needs on her own if not attended to by her DAF. Recall, June's position in her relationship with God falls under the *emotional compensation* attachment model, which was her response to her early abandonment crisis. After her attachment separation from her mother who left her for London at Grade 1, she had grown up to become more self-reliant, anxious, and avoidant in her social relationships, especially with her DAF. Insecurity in her relationship with God comes when she asks God for something and is not done. When she does not get an immediate answer to her request from her DAF, she drains in distress and as a result avoids her DAF, thus tending to deal with her cravings all by herself. She concurs, *"In my life I have few disappointments. Sometimes I don't easily understand the stuffs that has happened and why it is happening. I have learned at least that it doesn't get better so when I don't get answers I tend to step back and try to do it myself."*

Sipho is a committed Roman Catholic, he has no doubt about his relationship with God but it really gets tough to maintain this bond especially when is *"a matter of expectations...getting to a situation where you would expect that this and that would happen. You set plans at times and they are not materialized. Like...how can this be? What kind of a God are you? I have done this and this and this."* This according to Sipho gets to the grain of his soul, making him to burst in pain during prayers. *"At times my prayers are not normally formal prayers. I get very personal...I talk to him. Sometimes I feel like shouting...like this cannot work. What kind of God are you?"* However, although it is difficult for him to understand the "workings" of his DAF, he has developed a logical defence mechanism in response to his attachment-anxiety in his relationship with his DAF. He says, *"I have come to a defence mechanism whereby I have decided to find meaning in everything. Whether it is positive or it is negative."*

A major concern for Siphon however, was his childhood dream of becoming a priest, which according to him, may not be possible anymore. Siphon narrates his story,

“I have always wanted to be a priest...in fact I should be a priest by now considering when I went to the monastery. When I started in 2004, my superiors wanted me to do education and not to pursue philosophy and knowledge. And I fought against it because I wanted to be a priest. After I had made my final vows the question of education came up again, and I was told now you are going to do it. I had an option to say no I am not going to do that I am going to go home or say I am not leaving the monastery but I am also not going to do education I will rather sit here. I was advised to do education maybe that's what God wants you to do, maybe that's your vocation...., if I have fought this idea for 10 years and it comes up under the 11th year...may be God is trying to tell me something. I have cried about this. I have talked to God about this. I have even swore to people about this. At a certain stage I came to a point I was like,...find meaning in this situation. May be that's where I will be good. May be that's where He [God] wants my services. After that, I came to a point where I adopted two principles: What will Jesus Do? What does he want me to do?”

Siphon acknowledges that it might not be the will of God for him to be an ordained priest, and as a result, he has decided to find meaning in his situation—a supposed religious accent inspired by two questions, imbedded in them are religious reflections of some sort that are therapeutic to his attachment-anxiety in his God image experience.

Wendy is worried about her relationship with God, who seem to be happy in seeing her suffer and had sworn to queue series of ordeals her way. She wants ease from the challenges of life. *“A lot of times I am worried about stuff...is like I have this huge problem. When that is finished, then there is another one, then another. So I asked God, why is this stuff happening?”* Regardless of her situation, she is committed to dealing with her issues since she believes her DAF is her *source of strength*.

A compassionate Christian Millennial, Cara believes that her DAF does truly exist. Although she trusts her DAF, she is infuriated as to *“why bad things happen to such good people”*, which often endanger the way she feels about her DAF, and to a greater extent, her trust in her DAF. She is not happy with her DAF for allowing her experience events that saddens her, and therefore not experiencing what she bargained for in her attachment-relationship with God (her DAF). In any case, she uses some form of religious accent to cope with and regulate this traumatizing experience. Now, instead of worrying about her relationship with God, she began to see what God's plan for her was from those ordeals. In Cara's cognitive understanding of God, she now believes that God has a good plan for her; a biblical reflection drawn from Jeremiah 29:11 – *“For I know the plan I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope”*.

v. Connected but unclear about my purpose

Living a purpose-driven life seems to be another challenge for the respondents. A majority of them are not sure about their purpose, in relation to what their DAF expects of them.

Jerome for example, is connected with God in some way, but he is confused about what God wants from him. Whereas Julie wishes that God should come, lead the way for her since she is future-blinded. For the emotionally pert, Pentecostal Yebo, he believes that his college program is not rightly positioning him to please God. He is a system analyst student, but often thought he would be better pleasing God if he was studying theology. Yebo claims his heart is in the kingdom of God and wants to deliver his best to God.

June on the other hand is troubled because of her future, and worried if she would be able to support her family after studies. The attachment separation experienced by June seems to play a major role in this confusion. Recall, her mother left her for London when she was just in Grade 1 because she needed to support her family financially. It however happens that the same condition that led her early attachment figure to abandon her is now a “*torn in her flesh*”, as she grows up worrying about the same thing her caregiver was concerned about that led to their separation.

The following words show the respondents’ uncertainty about their future in relation to their relationship experience with their DAF:

“I am not sure what God has or what my plan is in God's eyes like what I'm I going to do or what am i on this earth to do because i mean we all have this general sort of plan to proclaim the word of God and spread the gospel but i feel like there could possibly be a little more for me but am not sure what that is. Because I am not sure, what my purpose is i get a little worried about my relationship with God. I do feel connected to God but i mean am sort of...this idea of me not knowing who i really am...is depressing to me not knowing what God wants me to do.” - Jerome

“...I want to know that my happiness is solely dependent on what is strong [referring to her DAF] and always there and what is fundamental and the Lord must come and lay the basis. I am stress of what God expects of me because of a misinterpretation of that due to circumstances I've been through growing up...” - Julie

“My concerns are very much with the fact that this is my last year in college and I've come to the point where i am actually discovering myself. Actually...I came to the realization that this IT that I am studying that i don't have a passion for it. I don't even love what I am studying for.... I am worried because i have found that whenever you don't have the love for something it affects how you respond on that something. It all traces back to where i want to do everything to glorify God. I want to deliver to God...my best. My heart is in the kingdom of God.” - Yebo

“I am not there where I wanted to be – i know it is important in one's life.... I think money plays a vital role. I am worried that i will get in a stage where i can't one day provide for my family – I worry about that. I don't worry about having a big house – I am worried about providing for my family one day.” - June

The respondents presented their cases using a religious accent to either support their concern or comfort their emotional bubble. Jerome for example, although worried about God’s plan for

his future, he uses a religious metaphor “...voice of God”, which for him might actually be a channel through which his invisible DAF speaks to him. *“I listen to what others are saying because i am looking for sort of a sense of direction...the thing is that God speaks from a lot of people and i am listening to try and find who these people are – may be they are the voice of God,”* Jerome believes.

June’s use of religious concept about a God that uses imperfect people to do great things serves as a coping mechanism for her God attachment anxiety. She had learned to strengthen and reassure herself of a bright future from the biblical story of Rehab, the prostitute in Joshua 2; a religious chronicle she learned in a Sunday school class. She has this to say,

“There was one year that was the year i decided to care not about what people said about [me] because of what they taught me in Sunday school. They taught me that...God uses imperfect people for His kingdom...He doesn't use perfect people. And...i remember well is about the prostitute Rehab who led the spies in..., if you go along history, she was the great grand mother of Jesus. That means so much to me...to show that God uses a woman with no status...i think at that time she was nothing.”

vi. Connected but difficult to stay hooked to God all the time

Staying in relationship with God was one thing, but steadfastness and being faithful in such relationship is a challenge for most of the respondents. The following verbal confessions evidently portray such discomfort:

“Some days i feel like really distant...like i feel like am here and he is there – we don't feel like a package. I'm worried like is difficult for me to feel connected with him all the time. Like i believe in God and i know i have a relationship with him...But sometimes i just feel he is so far away from me - like how could i so small have a relationship with something so big [and] out of my reach.” - Maddie

“You know i am not that so prayerful personally. But then i take it that...whatever small time i get if i can say what's on my mind then i think i leave everything to God...not how long i can say something. But sometimes a day might go by without me saying prayers...i ask myself ‘am i so close?’” - Marvin

“...i started to realise that seriously i am putting God aside and always putting other people first. I worry because the things i used to do and how i felt about God everything changed....I was worried because...i felt like i disappointed God.” - Sharon

“There are certain times when i am on fire for the messiah, when am full of faith, and there are times when am just lukewarm based on something that came up. May be like...yesterday and all the time i have been fighting against giving in.... When i reach the stage where i want to go forward, it [he was referring to pornography] always stands up and the thought of that being there it overwhelms me. If that thing come again...i watch the porn. But sometimes i really really really try hard just to withstand it. I feel guilty, feel like a failure...that feeling you have when you wrong someone that means so much to you.” - Yebo

Remotely, the respondents do not deny their relationship with God but more or less, they are concerned about maintaining a relationship an attachment Figure that can't be seen nor touched. Their DAFs seem unrealistic to some of them. As a result, they took on the posture

of attachment-anxiety in their relationship experience with God, an orientation that seems to cause them to be either lukewarm, less prayerful, or sin-friendly in their relationship experience with God. They saw God being very far away from them, and *pro forma* related more to HAFs instead of their DAF.

Overall, the respondents portrayed, in one form or the other, God as a target for their proximity seeking. This does not however make their relationship experience with God perfect since they, even in such sense of closeness, had some kind of confliction or case against God. Such emotional anxiety in their relationship experience with God often erupt negative God images, which in most cases were inhibited and down-regulated using some form of therapeutic God concepts or religious language.

Lastly, on a positive note, proximity to God was also experienced in relation to nature in a way that meets the preferred criteria of an attachment bond. Julie believes for example that when she do *“things like juggling, racing and so on...I love God more because that's when I see God in nature. It is an outlet through which my anxiety is suppressed.”* For Cara, her relationship with God is more convincing through outlets of nature. Cara experiences God more when she is in contact with nature. She comments,

“Like, i am living in the Strand [a town in South Africa close to a beach] and is like you know there is a beach there and everything there. And actually me and my mother walk on Friday and the winds was so beautiful...i think God speaks to me through such beautiful scenery as well. Like i don't know how anyone can see that there is no God, if you see that you must know there is a God —there is a feeling that you experience. Because i love nature, i love to walk and stuff like that so i think God speaks to me through that very powerfully.”

Beck and McDonald (2004) had earlier stressed on the power of nature in bringing individuals closer to their DAF, and believes that attachment relationship is also experienced as personal, in relationship and nature.

4.4.2.2. God as a response to separation and loss

Again, what was interesting in this section for the researcher was to see how the respondents use religious language and God concepts as defence mechanism to cope and reinforce themselves over time in relation to their God image anxiety. An action taken in order to test their actual images of God over against what is most essential to it (Dykstra 1986: 170). Concepts of God and religious language, a means through which the respondents socialize with their DAFs, and a means by which they continue to regulate and reinforce themselves in the place of fear, abandonment, and confliction in their supposed attachment to God (Ibid: 170).

Of note, respondents under the *emotional compensation model* seem to relate with their DAF as a response to their early child separation or loss. In the place of separation or loss, they compensated their abandonment and fear with a relationship experience with a DAF.

After emotionally losing his father and mother as a teenager, Neville's anxiety is the very reason he is not afraid of death, but rather signals that he is afraid of life, (Moltmann, 1997). According to him, there was no role model in his life, *"There was no person around me to prevent and uplift me. I found myself...in the drugs."* His separation experience with his parents got him into drugs and gangsterism; a negative coping style he adopted to deal with his attachment separation with his parents. After almost losing his life to gangsterism, following an incident where he was stabbed more than five times, he found himself for days in the hospital. This particular incident changed his life for good. At that point he realised the greater need to turn away from gangsterism, a supposed coping style he thought would satiate his attachment separation with his parent. This *implicit-relational-knowing* that led him to turn to a DAF, was a deliberate action to respond to a separation confliction.

Following his gangster attack that left him hospitalized for days in the hospital, Neville had a life-saving experience with a DAF that changed his life. According to Neville, he was not supposed to still be alive. He now sees God as *"Life"* because in his own words, *"I am still here. I know He is a creator"*. Neville believes that his DAF saved his life when he was stabbed. This was a miracle performed by his DAF, Neville claims. According to Neville, this event contributed to his devotion to his faith in a bid to somehow interact more with God (his DAF), as a response to his emotional separation with his parents. In Neville's words, *"I realized there is God. If you fall on your knees and ask God to change your live...as it was in the beginning why can't it be now?"*

Sharon now sees God as both *"caring and love"*, after a supposed *strange* separation episode with her mother. She now found love in her DAF, which seem like a compensatory response to her emotional loss with her mother. Now according to her,

"These days i can experience God in my life... in supernatural ways i experience God and he shows me his love and his caring towards me. I don't know but sometimes it amazes me and it knots me out of my feet. I know it is not by might nor by power but by the spirit."

Again, Sharon uses a religious language ("it is not by power nor by might but by the Spirit of the Lord") drawn from Zachariah 4:6 to relight her relationship experience with her DAF. Hence serving as a response to her separation crisis with her mother, which for her is now refurnished with a loving relationship with her DAF —a supposed relationship founded on grace, and not by her merit.

After her father left his marital home for her wife's cousin, Wendy is having an abandonment crisis and finding it difficult to trust anybody, even in her church. However, in some miraculous way, she drew closer to God, her DAF, through the agency of the local church and can now relate to God as a "father figure". Consequently, this was a response to her father's separation, but now she feels light and strengthened in her God image experience. She now relates more with her DAF in many ways. She explains, "*My church is drawing me closer to God. I can talk to God like God is right here...I can feel His warmth inside of me. I can do anything...I can praise him as I like...I can pray anytime to him. I can sing to God and I will feel God.*"

4.4.2.3. God as a secure base and a safe haven

The respondents seldom fail to use some kind of religious language or God concepts to describe their attachment relationship with God. This time, they used linguistic conventions that either describe God as some kind of safe haven or a secure base to whom they can run to in times of distress. This coping mechanism allowed the respondents to test their actual traumatizing emotional experiences with God (God images) over what is most essential to it: their therapeutic God concepts (Dykstra, 1986). More so, themes of God concepts and the religious language used by the respondents were used as an agency through which they relate and communicate with God, thereby rekindling and re-informing themselves of God's power over their ephemeral affliction. "God as a secure base and safe haven" is here discussed in the order of the God concepts and metaphors used by the respondents to describe these attachment criteria.

Louw describes "God concepts" as an aspect of "metaphorical theology", which is a conscious attempt to "take the meaning-dimension of God-languages and contexts seriously" (2000: 49). Metaphorical theology understands the process of naming God in human existential issues. It is from here that Louw (2000) guides us in his discussion of metaphorical theology in relation to God-images. He opens up on four metaphors or God concepts from the Scripture that depict God in our God image anxiety and crisis. These God concepts, according to Louw, convey the "meaning of compassion, help, and consolation in terms of God's involvement" (2000:50) in our experience, namely: *shepherd, servant, wisdom, and paraclete*.

The Hebrew origin for the word "Shepherd" came from the word to "rule over the earth" (Gn. 1:26), even though not in terms of exploitation. Shepherding is a more subtle form of rulership that implies "sensitive and compassionate caring" (Louw 2000: 50). This was man's mandate over the earth, to care and shepherd it. This instruction also corresponds to God's likeness as he cares and shepherds his own creation. Psalm 23 speaks of this: "The Lord is my shepherd,

I shall not want". Revealing God as a shepherd in our God image experience feeds the void of protection, provision, and direction in terms of God's faithfulness and grace (Louw, 2000). It is within this context of *God concept* that the Old Testament people experienced a secure attachment relationship "within God's shepherding care" (Ibid. 50).

The *wounded healer* is another God concept used to relate to God as a *Servant* within the extensions of our God image placements. It reveals God's identification with our experience in a very unique way. Christ brings to fore this concept in his "vicarious suffering" on the cross (Lous 2000: 52), as he takes the place of suffering for others as a "Servant of God's redeeming work" (Ibid. 52) in relation to our early abandonment betrayal, sin, loss, and illness. The implication of the *servant* concept to pastoral care and God images "convey[s] the idea of sacrifice and identification with suffering human beings in need" (Ibid. 52). A *servant* God concept vocabulary in relation to our God image experience shows how identifying and communicating with Christ's "vicarious suffering" leads to healing and recovering.

The *wisdom* model is an insightful way of addressing God image crisis by looking at the experience from an unusual, new God concept. Perhaps we have been seeing the God image crisis from a wrong angle and as a result, we are unable to deal with the crisis effectively. By allowing ourselves to see our experiences in a radically new way using God concepts that speak to our experience, "we discern, through this very seeing, how it may be resolved or that it is not a problem after all" (Capp 1990: 169).

The word 'paraclete' is often used for the Hebrew *naham*, which means "sympathy" and "comfort". In other words, emphasis is made here to use concepts of God that expresses sympathy, compassion, and caring (Louw 2000: 56). A common example is that of Psalm 135:14. A *paraclete* concept of God is often used to encourage, strengthen, and guide the self towards healing and finding meaning in its experience (Braumann, 1978).

I will briefly discuss how respondents saw God in light of these themes/concepts as a secure base and safe haven.

a. God, the Provider

Theologians generally believe that God revealed Himself as Jehovah Jireh (God will provide) in relation to the biblical Abraham. This was referenced to where Abraham was praying in expectation for God's provision of a lamb for his sacrifice. Theologian Clayton Coombs (2013) writes that after God had asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, he was convinced about shading the blood of his only son in spite of the circumstances. Abraham believed that somehow, "God himself will provide a lamb", in response to his son Isaac, who wondered asking, "Father, we have brought fire and wood...but where is the lamb for sacrifice?" At the

very last minute, after Abraham had bound his son Isaac on the altar, ready to slough Isaac to death, according to biblical historians, God showed up for Abraham and provided him a lamb for the sacrifice. It was within this context, that Abraham called the place “The LORD will provide” or in the Hebrew rendering, “Jehovah Jireh”.

The theme of *God as a Provider* comes strongly in the respondents’ narratives as they speak about their limitless hope in God who seems to be their Provider in times of dystopia, a lens from which they see God as a secure base and some sort of safe haven. The response from Julie supports this claim:

“...I have to trust him and I have to see who He is and believe him. He says that he guards my heart and he loves me enough and he would provide. God is good. God is what you anticipate.... God is whatever you need him to be. He says that he is whatever you feel at that stage...whatever you go through...he adapts to be whatever is sufficient for you. I had an opportunity at my department to do my Masters for next year and I asked the Lord about it whether I should do it. And I got peace with the fact that God has really provided but then the thing is i knew this thing about horse riding that I really wanted to do so i ask him...it is ok, it is fine I have to do the Masters but when am I really going to do this other things that I want to do and just like when I look up i saw this banner for a horse riding club like right in front of me. And I have been walking pass that same side lots of times and I never saw it. And i just knew that's it. He opens your eyes in many ways. He is sufficient for you.”

God’s goodness and faithfulness in times of desperate needs seem to be another way to accent her safeness in relation to God who acts as her Provider. Julie saw her DAF acting as her provider in many ways, an action wish ultimately models her DAF as a safe haven and secure base.

b. God, the Rewarder

In spite of Jerome’s abandonment affliction caused by his father’s alcohol problem, he has decided to explore his DAF from the lens of safety and as some sort of safe haven. Jerome sees his DAF someone who rewards and requite those that truly have a loving relationship with Him. Jerome explains:

“God rewards, and He is very rewarding and loving. He has actually acted as a Rewarder for me. For example, my dad was like it was my Grade 11 – so it was like close to the end of Grade 11 and my results were to be sent to Stellenbosch University for provisional acceptance and at that time my dad was like having an alcohol problem. So that was big on me.... because both of my brothers weren't there and lot of times I didn't know what to do – I did get home and then I would always ask my dad for help and you know he was not that father figure because I did get home and my dad will be drunk and sleepy and when he wakes up he doesn't say much - he just carries on drinking and sleeping.... And through my prayer I didn't know where to turn to and I prayed a lot and thanks to God I am actually where I am today. He is a rewarder.”

c. God, the true friend

Most of the respondents understood the safety and security they experience in relation to their DAF within the context of friendship. This appears to be a biblical concept of God who is seen

as a true Friend (cf. John 15:15; John 15:13-14; James 2: 23; Proverbs 18:24). According to Siphon, Marvin, and Yebo, God is a true friend. God for them, is someone nearer to them than their HAFs — a friend who can also play the role of an avenger on their behalf, and sometimes helps them pass (life and academic) *exams*.

For Yebo, God being a true friend is an act of faithfulness. Indeed, the greatest evidence of true friendship is faithfulness or loyalty, says Samuel Mills (2014: ¶11). In reality however, what does it mean to be a faithful friend? A faithful friend will stick by the side of a friend through thick and thin to a better or bitter end. The respondents illustrate in light of their God image experience with their true Friend:

“God is somebody I can bond with...somebody very near than a father. A friend. Again I've got an incident whereby I felt God answered almost immediate. I was in a situation where I was fighting with somebody that had power over me and couldn't do anything. And actually through the danger of my life he said things to me that I didn't even answer a word. I actually cried. You know the following morning that guy could not talk...his voice couldn't come out and he had a hand that was swollen and his veins were block. He was taken to all different kind of doctors. He was told there was nothing wrong with you. If it continues we will have to amputate you. For me that was a sign...you know God protects his own. I was powerless at a time. He is someone closer that i can always fall back to.”
- Siphon

“I will say God is a true friend. I will bring it in a sense that you know most times we take friends as people we come to in times of need and all that. By true friend I mean someone who is there the time that you need them most. The most important bit of it is each time I'm like heading to may be do something that determines an important step in my life...mostly in my education. The major exams that transfer me to different levels...I find myself tending to be more prayerful at that time. And what happens is that I normally succeed.” - Marvin

“There are times in my life, based on how i wanted to do stuff. At that time i say i felt something telling me to just tell the truth. And the bible says that 'He is always with us'. And on that word, i responded and actually i was thinking that people would be mad at me in this situation but in actual fact they just said it's alright. God is faithful. And i was like "wow" – so that is just a proof of God being in a situation.” - Yebo

True friendship in light of these narratives became a precursor through which the respondents experience their DAF as both a safe haven and secure base.

d. God, the Father of love

Conceptually, among theologians, God is represented in the bible as the Father of love who had lavished so much love to the world (Bonhoeffer, 1967; Moltmann 1974/1981). Bonhoeffer's theology of the crucified and suffering God suggests that God's weakness and suffering in “the world come of age” is reflected in His love. From the assumption of true love, Moltmann argues that “The theology of the divine passion is founded on the biblical tenet, ‘God is love’”, (1981:61). According to Moltmann (1974/1981), God's love is real love vulnerable to suffering and emotional conflict. For,

...a God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved. Suffering and injustice do not affect him. And because he is so completely insensitive, he cannot be affected or shaken by anything. He cannot weep, for he has no tears. But the one who cannot suffer cannot love either. So he is also a loveless being (Moltmann 1981: 222).

In light of this understanding, the respondents portrayed God (their DAF) as compassionate and empathic to their experiences, an attribute of love of which they find commensurate to being a safe haven and secure base. The respondents open up on their DAF, as the Father of love:

"...my parents...love me really much and due to the circumstances they grew up they can't help it but to be critics. ...you see they have these academic expectations of you and that you have to work hard. The other thing is the course I am studying is really challenging...but the Lord came and changed all that when I gave Him the time to actually do that. I didn't realize it when I was growing up I only realized it when I actually started building my relationship with the Lord and seeking His truth and what he actually expects of me." - Julie

"I know He is a Creator. He is life because i am here still. If not because of Him, I won't be here. He gave me a second chance by turning my life in a better way — I am blessed and i've been blessed. I was stabbed five times, then I realized there is God [I'm evidence of His love]." - Neville

"God to me is caring and He's love. These days I can experience God in my life... in supernatural ways I experience God, He shows me His love, and He is caring towards me. I don't know but sometimes it amazes me and it knocks me out of my feet." - Sharon

"...I feel I depend on God to help me through the situation. I feel He is my rock and foundation." - Chris

Regardless of the lens from which the respondents experience their DAF as safe and secure, the cases support that the respondents socialize with their DAF within the context of safety and security—albeit described using corresponding God concepts and religious language.

4.4.2.4. God Perceived as Stronger and Wiser

Drawing from the God concept models cited in the previous pages, the researcher continues to trail the use of God concepts and religious language by the respondents to either describe or inhibit their emotional crisis in their God image experiences. Representing God as Stronger and Wiser clearly illustrates the *wisdom* model, and partly the *paraclete* model.

In the words of Louw (2000:55), *wisdom* “embraces practical skills and is linked to human creativity”, and focuses on questions “about the art of life (how must I live?), morality (how should I act and deal with my neighbour?), as well as piety (how should I act in the presence of God?)” (2000:55). The important of the wisdom model lies in the fact that it helps one to imagine how God views the God image problem, and so therefore considers it from God's perspective. This allows us to use God concepts that remind us of “God's active involvement” in our experience (Louw 2000: 56). This model is often humbling and paradoxical because it

brings our anxiety and stupidity to light and at the same time helps us to overcome our folly and weakness (Louw, 2003; Capps, 1990).

The following are subliminal experiences and responses that commonly fall under the attachment language category developed by Granqvist & Kirkpatrick (2008). Recognising God as *Stronger* or *Wiser* is an attachment criteria that conceptualizes the emotional experience of the respondents in relation to their God attachment. Here, the researcher engages the respondents to see how they perceive God as *Stronger* and *Wiser* from the *wisdom* and *paraclete* models.

a. All-knowing and Powerful Love of God

Although June admits that her life is not what she had hoped it would be, and as a result, she is not comfortable in her attachment relationship experience with God because of future expectations from her to support her family. Regardless of her emotional turmoil, she somehow perceives God to be *Wiser* than her comprehension. Drawing from her Sunday school lesson on the biblical figure Rehab the prostitute, she is ever more convinced that what God says about her future is *wiser* and therefore reassures herself of a better end. The biblical story on Rehab, according to June, *“means so much to me...to show that God uses a woman with no status...”* June has mixed feelings about losing her sister to a car accident, an incident that happened on Sunday morning on their way to church, which has also contributed to her anxiety. Notwithstanding, she defends God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil:

“I see Him as a higher power. Someone who needs to be respected. God is a President and a Power to respect. For example, when He takes people by accidents and diseases but again He is loving. And he is mighty when there is hurricane and storms and hunger but he is also good when He sends rain for the drought. My sister has died. And also my grandparents have died. We were on a big accident as well and i was involved in the accident. The lady who was involved got very hurt and her whole personality changed. She was in a coma for about two years and half. It made me question ‘why she?’ Because the accident happened on our way to church...it is quite interesting.”

June has a profound understanding of her DAF. Irrespective of her confliction, she somehow managed to see a clearer picture at the end of the tunnel, as she conceptually imagines her DAF as an all-knowing, wiser, and stronger figure who, regardless of how she feels about her present confliction, has a much wiser and positively stronger agenda for her.

Julie on the other hand, sees herself from the all-judicious eyes of God irrespective of what the world expects of her. She believes that God is *Wiser* in all regards and therefore she tries to see herself in light of God's perception of her. *“I try to see myself in the light that God sees me and I am actually loving myself. He sees me as his daughter, as precious, as worthy and valuable whereas i didn't see that before,”* says Julie.

Since God is all-knowing, and manifests Himself to Yebo in many ways, Yebo then is happy with himself because God is happy with him. *"I am pleased with myself because God is pleased with me"*, he claims. This is a reflection of someone who has submitted to the powerful loving arms of God. Although Yebo admits that he sometimes feels guilt and fear due to his inability to keep up with the moral demands of his DAF, he is however encouraged because he is sure that God is pleased with him and will not despise him because he understands (his weakness). In this context, God's love is powerful and beyond human comprehension, even in the midst of a moral depravity. Powerful not in the sense to *knock down* but powerfully loving, loving regardless of a moral *disorder* because He is an all-knowing High Priest. A *High Priest* in the person of Jesus who has been conflicted just like Yebo is in conflict while on the cross and was tempted to spill out his "God image anxiety" in this words, *"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"* which means, *"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"*

It is clear however that Jesus himself was struggling with his attachment experience with God the Father, whom He saw at that point, as a Divine Attachment Figure. The four words that speak of Christ's God image vulnerability points to his emotional crisis on the cross. But at the same time, as Christ became aware of God's presence and identification in his affliction on the cross and of the nature of his relationship with God the Father, he submitted to the will of God the Father as he *cloths* himself in God's covenantal promise of *resurrection*, hence seeing God the Father as all Stronger and Wiser. On this basis, God is therefore powerful in His loving and suffering (Moltmann, 1981).

b. God, the Pillar of strength

First, Sharon starts by saying, *"...I know God will carry me through...it is not by might nor by power but by the spirit."* Sharon uses a religious language to inhibit her traumatic God image experience. She gave this response after narrating her abandonment confliction.

Growing up as an "unwanted child" was difficult for Sharon. In spite of her abusive upbringing, she tries to relate with God, who intervenes for her and had made her a stronger person. Sharon sees God as a *Pillar of strength* in her life, someone much stronger who had stood for her and helped her through everything.

Point-blank, *"He is like my pillar of strength"*, says Wendy. She continues, *"I can face now any battle because I know I have God."* Wendy narrates why she perceives God as Stronger in her life,

"I went to court last week and I asked God to give me strength because I was like a weakling. Because every time I face my husband in court I will get in tears and I will be scared. But last time before I went to court, I started to pray and I was feeling anxiety and I always ask God to please guide me. That the words that would go out let it be only His

words. And that morning when I stood up I asked God to guide me through this thing...I have to face this and I can't postpone it all the time. In my bag I have my bible...I anointed myself with oil before I went in. And I was standing there and he was coming with his girlfriend there...and I greeted them...I never greeted them. ...I was sitting there beside him in the court...and I was facing him and the judge said 'wow...the last time you couldn't get the word out of your mouth.' After the court...he said I don't understand you. So...for months I could stand by him and talk to him and just be myself."

So far, the researcher have tried to portray how the respondents' God image experiences fall under the attachment language criteria of Granqvist & Kirkpatrick (2008). Granqvist and Kirkpatrick argue that the defining criteria for an attachment relationship should be characterized by maintaining closeness/proximity with an attachment figure (AF), seeing the AF as a safe haven and secure base, seeing the AF as a response for separation and loss, and perceiving an AF as stronger and wiser.

Clearly, early-child relationship with caregivers potentiates attachment interactions and gene survival in the attachment system. This attachment system lay the foundation for IWMs of the self and close 'others' in attachment relationships. This development makes individuals to expect some kind of "felt-security" in close relationships, especially in long-term romantic and God relationships (Bowlby, 1973). The research data collected support that the respondents' God image experiences correspond to the four main attachment language criteria of Granqvist & Kirkpatrick (2008), albeit, using religious language and God concepts that often fall under Louw's (2000) metaphorical theology to regulate and inhibit their traumatic God image and attachment experiences with God.

4.4.3. Selfhood, Authenticity, and Self Regulations

There is a confusion surrounding the concept of authenticity, selfhood or the "Trinitarian self" in modern culture, with majority of young people either striving to attain an authentic self-behaviour (authentic living) or claiming to have it, (Rosenbloom, 2011). In any case, what exactly does Wood et al. (2008) mean by having an authentic self-behaviour?

Wood et al.'s (2008) "authenticity", has been described by Davis (2010) as expressing emotions that are consistent with one's physiological state, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions —powerful enough to express an individual's selfhood. *Authenticity* is a "self-experience that is embodied in the conscious awareness" (Ibid. 51). Wood and his colleagues describe this aspect of "self" as the "congruence between experience as consciously perceived...and...behaviour" (Wood et al. 2008: 386). Authentic self-behaviour in other words involves being true to oneself in accordance to one's relative values and beliefs. The

respondents selected for the case study interviews were selected in order to understand how their selfhood and self-regulations is manifested in relation to their “authenticity”. Such “self” manifestation is more easily activated within the circumference of close “other” relationships and the human environment (Wood et al. 2008; Schmid, 2005).

Aspects of Wood et al.’s theory therefore show how influences from psychodynamic, existential and attachment theories shape an individual’s “self” tendency. Winnicott (1965), Horney (1951), and Masterson (1981) gave instances of such environmental and attachment influences to include but not limited to not good-enough mothering, depleting narcissism, early child abandonment, peer pressure and so on. This position of *authenticity* implies the need for a unitary, coherent, durable, stable, autonomous, rational, unique to the person, masterful, and agentic conceptualization of the self (Vitz, 2006; Vitz & Felch, 2006). Authenticity details on a person’s embodied nature of self-experiences, which includes “actual physiological states, emotions, and schematic beliefs” (Wood et al. 2008: 386) [and I include, an individual’s preferred religious state].

Wood et al. (2008) made emphasis on the centrality of the organism in psychology. This idea was borrowed from the humanistic theory (Rogers, 1959; Wyatt, 2001) and it is known as the “psychological locus of all human experience” (Davis 2010: 40). Therefore, the quality of expressing a congruity between the actual (external/internal) experiences and behavioural [I chose to add, religious] expressions corresponds to a “true or core self” (Kernis and Donald, 2006; Wood et al., 2008; David, 2010). Congruity is often a psychological concept used to indicate the degree of consistency between Wood et al.’s three-fold authenticity criterions (borrowed from Barrett-Lennard’s, 1998): “(a) a person’s primary experience, (b) their symbolized awareness, and (c) their outward behaviour and communication” (Barrett-Lennard’s 1998: 82; Wood et al., 2008; Davis, 2010). In other words, “congruence” between these experiences can drive one towards self-actualization and becoming a fully functioning individual (Wood et al., 2008; Davis, 2010). However, absolute consistency may not be totally brought to fore, but for its worth, reflects how closely one’s personal [attachment] experience, awareness of an experience, and outward behaviour [and I add, religious experience] relatively mirror one another to form a “self” image. This understanding of selfhood is no different from the Trinitarian self, which according to Grenz has a three-fold interface: *Essential Being*, *explicit Self-existence*, and *Self-knowledge* (2007: 27). The first form was seen as a “pure, abstract Being”, and describes God as an essential being. The second thresholds the grand entrance of an abstract self into the human existence in the person of “the Son”. The third dimension of the Trinitarian triangle is described by Grenz as the Self “passing into self-consciousness” (Ibid. 28). According to Grenz, this *moment* however in the Trinitarian relationality “marks the completion of reconciliation within reality” (2007: 28). Therefore the

congruity between these God *persons* or characters of God presents the authentic, absolute quality of God: *imago Dei*.

To achieve *congruity* therefore, there is some kind of fluctuation within the self to bring to bear and live out its divine given purpose in an eschatological future (Grenz, 2007), as the self begins to cope within the confines of its placements and crisis through splitting also known as self-fragmentation (Jeroncic, 2011).

Such splitting of “self” manifests as a consequence of an experience with an attachment figure (DAF or HAF or SAF), alcohol or drug dependency to a plethora of traumatic struggles around intimacy and sexuality, perversions and promiscuity, and so on (Masterson, 1981). At the core of each extreme is a huge misunderstanding of time and future (Drystra, 1997). This was called eschatological or promissory “self” tendency by Moltmann (Jeroncic, (2008), which is manifested in this present study by the respondents using regulated hyphenated labels of “self” otherwise known as *splitting*. Splitting is a tendency of self-creation which thresholds through what Jeroncic (2011) calls self-fragmentation — a coming together or activation of both *futurum* and *adventus* to create self. This process of splitting as described in Masterson’s (1981) theory on the borderline syndrome is a hyphenation process whereby intense ambivalent feelings of emotions and thoughts are separated from each other in one’s consciousness, forming fragmented particulars of the true self, in relation to close “others” and one’s environment.

Martin and Baresi (2006) did a thorough study on *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self* where they presented readers with cultural factors and events that resulted to the demise of the unified self by the end of the twentieth century. They argue that “self” must be understood mostly within the compass of compound concepts such as “self-image, self-conception, self-discovery, self-acceptance, self-reference, self-modelling, self-interest, self-consciousness..., and self-actualization”, (Ibid, 297).

According to Martin and Baresi (2006), toward the threshold of the third millennium, “the unified-self had died the death if not of a thousand qualifications, then of a thousand hyphenations”, (Ibid, 297-8). Jeroncic, paraphrasing a sentence from the iconic movie *Matrix* describes this self-image as a “desert of the real [self]”, (2012: 244). Among others, Foucault concurs to the demise of the “objective and transcendental self” in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, stressing that “self” is “decomposed into a number of disjointed parts, which Foucault describes as “interplay to ‘manipulate ourselves,’ and to be manipulated, ‘into a million shapes’ (Foucault 1994: 231).

Ideologically, Jacques Lacan (2001) calls this self-decomposition a “unified ego”, a camouflage he used to conceal the denial that “self” is indeed ‘split’. This customization of self, though mirrored into images, is encumbered by its self-creation of reality (Freud, 1913/1950: 244). More so, such self-creation of reality, as observed during the interview process with the respondents, shows “that the mirror functions as a lure” (Jeronicic 2012: 245) and signals an understanding of the self in relation to DAFs, past authorities (caregivers), the environment, and religious identity. This self-creation tendency relates the respondents in a complex way to an entire new way of relationship [with self] (Dykstra 1986: 170). One that they hope would be foundational to and assumed in every relationship activity they engage in, whilst adapting coping *splits* of self-creation and self-regulation to deal with their different conditions— given that the “self” fundamentally amounts to a deceptive figment in absolute “discordance with his own reality”, (Lacan 2001: 2).

This is *splitting* or *self-fragmentation* is a coping mechanism that covers the traumatic and intractable formlessness of the human *ego* (self). It is on this basis that Lacan (2001) rejects any notion of a unified authenticity or self-image for the simple reason that such “ego [is] constituted in its nucleus by a series of alienating identifications” (2001: 97). Lacan’s (2001) understanding of Wood et al.’s (2008) authenticity as a “mirror stage” makes it reasonable to discuss the respondents’ selfhood in hyphenated terms.

Kierkegaard describes this self-creation as a “false sense of wholeness,” unaware to the fact that they are only imitations of the true self (Kierkegaard 1989: 87). Jeronicic (2012) calls this act “self-fragmentation”. Moltmann describes this false sense of self in his work as a contemporary character of selfhood, one “paralyzed by a chilly apathy” (Moltmann 1997: 21). Moltmann’s theological anthropology suggests that human beings suffer from a chronic lack of wholeness. This epidemic falsity of selfhood has fuelled urgent need for “new religious symbols, cultures, social orders, and changing political forms” (Moltmann 1976: 2), which often dislocates the actual condition into multiple points of self-investments known as *multiphrenia* (Gergen 1991: 73-80). As a result of this splintering orientation, the self ‘acts out’ and becomes the *norm* depending on what is required in the moment and the peculiarity of a situation, rather than “responding to what self has come to define as her internal standard” (Jeronicic 2012: 247). It is on these grounds that Jeronicic (2012) calls selfhood a “kaleidoscopic or protean self”. Moltmann however believes that this experience is peculiar to the contemporary world since “we live more fragmentarily and experimentally than our fathers and mothers did. We live, as it were, no longer in cathedrals but in tents” (Moltmann 1978: 41).

It is important to add that this self-dispersant tendency is not easily detectable, as Jeronicic (2012) argues. This is true because the fact that some people incidentally fail to believe based

on emotion, intuition, or indefinite grounds does not mean that they are not knowledgeable of what is happening within them. Hence, a sense of fragmentation is not in itself, as Kierkegaard (1989) puts it, evidence that “the whole concept is but a mirage”.

Therefore, on this ground, it might be difficult to label these self-fragments of *wholeness* under the guise of self-deception. Based on this understanding, the researcher agrees with Soren Kierkegaard’s (1989) position on this, as he believes that the whole self- concept and images used by the respondents in this study to describe their authentic self-behaviours are not in themselves a proof that their whole experience “is but a mirage”. Therefore, the researcher chooses to abide by the self-creating experiences of the respondents as true. Moltmann (1990) acknowledged self-creation as a characterization of a postmodern self —an understanding of Wood et al.’s (2008) authenticity —that is conceptually tied to individualism, authentic living, justice and a fracturing community. As a result of this conceptual sense of *being*, Moltmann reasons (1990:269), the “depleted narcissism of modern men and women relates everything to their own selves, allowing them to dethaw ...relationships, making each of us the artificer of his or her own life, and exposing us to the pressure of growing competition”. This self-searching, isolated individual, within this context, becomes perverse of what a person truly is. Douglas Meeks (1974: 27) calls this “social death”, a situation where the individual is no longer moved by misery.

Base on this background, the researcher engaged with the respondents’ narratives from a ‘just and loving gaze’ to see how they manifest this “protean” representation of the self. The findings also show how the understanding of selfhood was influenced by the respondents’ attachment depression, depleting narcissism, self-dystopia, and their borderline abandonment crisis. As a result they created self-images which represented their personal experiences, outward behaviours and religious stance —although camouflaged to represent their authentic self-behaviours. However, based on the conviction of Jeroncic (2012) and Kierkegaard (1989) we therefore chose to believe their self-images and God-images are captivations that mirror the “capture”.

4.4.3.1. Self-fragmentation and Splitting: A Coping Mechanism

Based on the rigorous theoretical reflections above, this section offers concluding convictions concerning the self-depleting representations of Christian millennials in this study as a response to their identity crisis. The researcher introduces the theoretical perspective of Masterson (1976) on borderline dilemma, to allow us understand how abandonment distress also plays a role in the self-creation tendency of the “self”.

According to Masterson (1976), “self” defend itself against traumatic eruptions of abandonment distress, using a coping mechanism known as “splitting” — a primary way of behavioural “acting out” (Dykstra, 1997). This borderline situation often cause the self to disintegrate into a self-depleting tendency known as “splitting”, which “describes an emotional process whereby intense contradictory feelings are separated from each other in one’s consciousness” (Drystra 1997: 30). From here, the researcher attempts to see how the respondents relate to their “self” experiences in relation to their abandonment depression and conflicting environment within the conceptual framework of *splitting*, and thereby fragmenting the “self” into what Jeronicic (2012) describes as a “kaleidoscopic or protean self”.

In order to flesh out the concept of *splitting* some more, it might be helpful to cite Masterson’s (1988) reflection on this type of coping mechanism. According to Masterson, an individual who adopts *splitting* as a coping mechanism for his or her confliction will

...go through life relating to people as parts – either positive or negative – rather than whole entities. ...he [or she] will never create a single unified self-concept that he [or she] recognizes as himself [herself] in both good and bad aspects. Instead, he [she] will continue to see a “good” self that engages in immature, clinging, passive, unassertive behaviour and a “bad” self that wants to grow, assert itself, be active and independent” (1988: 79).

To this end, *splitting* is thought to eventually harden the respondents into “a consistent lack of tolerance for ambivalence, anxiety, and ambiguity” within the context of their self and God image experiences (Drystra 1997: 31; Pruyser, 1975). With a degree of sympathy for this position, the researcher will then engage the respondents to see how *splitting* is factored within their self-creation potential.

a. The Borderline Self: A Response to Separation and Abandonment Crisis

According to Drystra’s *Counselling the Youth* where he argues that during the developmental period of children prior to their puberty stage, along with the increasing social and peer pressures for separation from their caretakers, most children face what he calls “a second major separation experience from their parents” (1997: 31). This is a period of emotional conflict, which has the power to precipitate a borderline disorder/syndrome in a child. Borderline disorder is developed in a child when the child tries to build new defences or some sort of “acting out”, or “acting in”, although damaging and worsening the feelings of abandonment [they already feel], which they adjust to in order to cope with the many new cases of belongingness and environmental separation experience (Drystra, 1997). The concept of the borderline self is an essential feature in every child often marked by impulsivity and fluctuation of relationships, social affects, and self-image. Also often replayed in early adulthood and happens across a selection of contexts.

Masterson outlines clinical symptoms of the borderline self. It involves some sort of “destructive acting out”, an internal conflict externalized through outlets of tension and feelings of dependency such as intense fears of abandonment, irritability, anger, devaluation of others, passivity, impulsivity, and fluctuation between positivity and great disappointment. Most notably, most individuals having the borderline syndrome learn to express their needs for help most likely through acts, since “the pattern of family communication involves acts, not words” (Drystra 1997:32). Such acts when dispensed callously on others, often lead to series of misbehaviours with the intention of breaking the ice of “unawareness and indifference” of close ‘others’.

After an early separation experience with her mum since Grade 1, June is struggling to cope with her borderline self. Her borderline self is reflected in her God image experience as well, where she indicates instability in her relationship with God. She notes, *“I would describe my relationship...sometimes close sometimes quite distant — it depends on what circumstances I have”*. Part of this feeling of instability in close relationship is traced to her separation experience with her early caregiver who left her for London since Grade 1. Masterson describes the borderline self as a condition that is an outcome of the “terrible tragedies...inflicted on many children during their early developmental years which plant time bombs that go off later in life” (Masterson 1981: 186-87). June seems to have a sense of reality that unconsciously exude some kind of impulsive layers of agitation against her close ‘others’ with clauses like *“...it depends on how busy I am...”, “I keep people distant from me...”, “I won’t trust people,” or “I have distrust for trusting people.”*

Without forethought, June erupts in anger over her separation experience, *“I feel sort of abandoned, and because of that I don’t want people to get close to me... I don’t have to rely on somebody else they can disappoint me in the future or like abandon me again.”* June’s presupposed borderline self is “acting out” and “acting in” through outlets of anger, agitation and supposed fear of abandonment. Her “acting out” or “acting in” is her symbolic way of breaking the supposed vacuum of unawareness of her close ‘others’ who, apparently, seem not to understand why she acts out in strange, aggressive ways.

Although people close to June are not aware of her “acting out”, she is fully aware of her borderline self —that there is something wrong with her, saying, *“I have people close to me but there is like this barrier between me and them [her borderline self], and they won’t notice it but for me I notice it.”* June’s unnecessary agitation and fears toward her close ‘others’ due to her abandonment confliction make her a candidate of the borderline self.

On the other hand, Siphon, a thorough, tough-minded religious enthusiast claims to be independent and true to self. However, when probed further by the researcher, Siphon’s

instability in his relationship with God and experience with self eventually *busted* between the lines of his high positive regard and great disappointment for his sacerdotal vocation in the church. According to Siphon, *“I communicate with God almost on daily basis. I get very personal...I talk to him. [But] sometimes I feel like shouting...like this cannot work. ‘What kind of God are you?!!!’”* Siphon shows an alternating instability and irritation in his close relationship experience with his DAF, by ‘acting out’ in a way that portrays God (his attachment Figure) as *too close but far away* due to a possible fear of abandonment. Siphon’s borderline self, seems to manifest its vexation by breaking the vacuum of unawareness of his DAF who seem not to be aware of his confliction.

Yebo’s mother means so much to him and probably, one of the main reasons he is having a relationship with God. He is constantly in intense fear of separation from his mother, of which he admits, *“I didn’t want to be without her. I didn’t want to be in a place where she is not. That brought me closer to God and closer to acknowledge him as my Lord and Saviour.”* Because of this fear of losing her mother, Yebo is “acting out” and “acting in” through submerging himself in religion (because her mum is also religious). This is because he wants to re-live his life with her mother in the afterlife. Although he is not always irritated like June and Siphon, he suffers from instability and a prolonged dependency in his relationship with close ‘others’, a case Masterson (1981) calls the “narcissistic orally fixated character structure”. This has showed up in Yebo’s experiences and encounter with people as he experiences ego defects that make him tend to crave for immediate satisfaction and relief from tension by way of associating with people who would boost his ego.

Yebo admits he does not like people that will bring him down, since his ego is nothing to write home about; the very reason he goes to church to engage with people that will nourish his depleting ego. Indeed, what Yebo does not like about people is *“...this whole point of judging someone. They don’t know why you are where you are, they don’t know how you got to where you are, and they don’t know how you feel about where you are, and now they make all kinds of judgments and assumptions and actions against you — that’s basically what I don’t like.”* Yebo “acts out” his frustration by fluctuating back and forth on the *borderline* of instability.

Wendy is “acting out” passively because of her separation experience with her romantic partner and as a result, she seems not to trust anyone, even her pastor — a position of the self that signals a borderline disorder. She opens up, *“I don’t talk to anybody about myself. The friends I use to have are not my friends anymore because of my split with my husband. I withdraw myself from people.”* More than that, her separation experience with her husband, which was a similar experience she had with her dad who left her when she was 10 years old, played a major role in her “destructive acting out”. This experience eventually made her to

adapt a poor impulse control, showcased through her poor frustration tolerance especially when people tend to relate with or treat her inconsiderably. Wendy reasons,

“Because a lot of people judge me. They would tell me why did you do this and why did you do that. And then my answer will be: they don't know what I and my kids went through. Now for me and my husband we've separated. For me I was so depressed before...I went into the hospital a lot. That was with my kids. They faced bullying at school, and my oldest daughter was raped at school.”

Empirical cases cited above suggest a borderline self syndrome, which in Masterson's (1981) understanding, exacerbates the feeling of abandonment and often result to unstable patterns in close relationships. Borderline disorders quite often develop to stormy and dramatic attachment tendency towards close “others”, a condition that frequently shifts to and fro from great admiration and love in social relationships, to devaluation or intense agitation and resentment towards the same idealized close ‘others’.

This first phase of *splitting* as observed by the researcher was described in Masterson's (1976) *borderline self* as a self-depleting process whereby intense ambivalent feelings of emotions and thoughts are separated from each other in one's consciousness, forming fragmented particulars of the self, in relation to close “others” and borderline experiences.

b. The Promissory Self: A Response to Self-Dystopia and the Borderline Self

As the immature, reality-based, borderline self becomes strengthened through the “splitting” process of an abandonment crisis, hence self-creating different destructing masterminds in its ‘acting out’, Masterson (1981) argues that the individual at some point of his or her grieving process, expresses certain “signs of health emerging in the decreasingly polarized, increasingly nuanced self” (Drystra 1997: 33). Self, then, is adjusted to euphoric expressions of spontaneity, joy, hope, vigour, excitement, even religiousness. A ‘sense of self’ Moltmann (1976) calls ‘the promissory self’ —a mastery sense of being that an individual, in fantasm, is entitled to experience. The researcher saw this as some sort of promissory *stand up* that blocks the immediate conflicting future of the borderline self to inspire an emerging hope.

Recall, before the promissory reprise, is the “borderline” experience (discussed earlier) at life's dark spaces, which Moltmann calls “self-dystopia”. “Dystopia” simply means a “dark,” “bad,” or “unfortunate” place, a conceptual ‘placelessness’ of ordinary existence. The respondents' self-dystopia or borderline self is partly caused by their anxiety over future needs and expectations in relation to supporting their family, having a good academic grade, having a good career, being criticized, maintaining a good relationship with close “others” and so on. They lament:

"I think money plays a vital role. I am worried that i will get in a stage where I can't one day provide for my family — I worry about that. I don't worry about having a big house – – I am worried about providing for my family one day. And they influence me and with that they want me to have an education. I want to be able to get a work one day. I think this kind of affects me" – June

"The expectations people have of me...not that I have not lived up to the expectations they have of me. A lot of people have believed in me and they told me I will be so successful...It is more of the expectation everyone has of me — I sort of try to please way too many people." - Jerome

"I'm a middle child and I actually have a lot of gifts God gave me and it was always criticized. And my family...my parents they love me really much and due to the circumstances they grew up they can't help it but to be critics." – Julie

"I am not sure if I am going to pass this year. That is one of the concerns that I have based on mistakes that I have made in the past. It is affecting my result." - Yebo

A common knowledge among the respondents is their dystopia or borderline experience stuck on some kind of future expectation. Jeroncic (2012) argues that such distortion of "self" expresses itself from alcohol or drug dependency to a plethora of anxiety over success and expectations. At the core of each extreme is a grand misunderstanding of time and future. However, with this evidence we can then confirm that indeed the respondents are walking through the *valley of the shadow of the dark*.

After been reduced to boredom, passivity, and eruptions of absurdities and confusions due to cultural expectations and attachment dilemmas, self-fragmentation or splitting in this context, according to Jeroncic (2012), receives a "negative valorisation". It was here that Moltmann introduces what Bosch (1991) calls a 'creative tension' known as the *promissory self*, an ideological response to self-dystopia and the borderline self, after "self" had been reduced to a "weak" state due to its external and internal crisis.

The promissory self, Moltmann (1976) argues, is the effect of the *creative tension* between what he calls the "pneumatologically-informed and eschatologically-driven account of self-integration that envisions a non-violent re-gathering of fragments," (Jeroncic 2012: 248) and "fragmentation defined as a negative reflex of late industrial capitalism and fragmentation as a fundamental demarcation of 'being-in-the-world', (Ibid. 248). It is on this account that Moltmann calls this *creative tension* a "weak" metaphysics embodying some sort of inclination to be kind, benevolence, penultimate, and peaceful —a transformed vision of a transformative self that "does not remain victim to the social, moral, or cause-effect forces which determined its historical situatedness", (Thiselton 1996: 128)

Sharon first shows the indication of a promissory self despite her attachment distress with her mother. In her words, she sees an emerging hope in the midst of her confliction with these words,

"I feel like God is making a way for me every day. I see God's hand in everything in my life and that's why I am privileged to know today that God is with me every step of the way and I don't have to be afraid of whatever that might come my way. I need to know that my life is in God's hands...."

It is in this context that the researcher narrates the promissory experiences of the respondents, here understood from the framework of Moltmann's (1976) eschatological reprise—a blocked future and an emerging hope.

With a glimpse of an emerging hope, irrespective of their historical and conflicting situatedness, the respondents forecast a transformative vision of the "self". This new emerging self seems overburdened with protean *self-positives* as seen in the words of the respondents below:

"I see myself as a very enthusiastic person." - Yebo

"I see myself as a good man with a gentle spirit, always inspired by the things of God and to do what God really wants of me. So my life is actually on a way to pleasing God."
- Andy

"[I see myself as] ...a learner. Honest. Giving and trying to do my best. I love teamwork very much." - Adam

"I am a friendly person. I love animals. I love beautiful sceneries. I love adventure stuff. I love to go places. I love to see new places. I love meeting new people. I am a family person and i think i am a kind person. I try to be friendly." - Cara

"I am a caring person. I love to see people grow up. I love to empower people." - Chris

"I love people. I love spontaneous things. I see myself mostly as a child of the Lord which is the foundation." - Julie

"I love to be positive." - June

"I think i've got a very good sense of the self." - Siphon

"I'm an over-achiever. I believe in myself and I always try to be the best I can be." - Maddie

"I see myself as an independent person. Someone who is open-minded and can relate with anyone." - Marvin

"I am just plain and simple. Like to enjoy life." - Neville

"I like to relate to people, communicate with people. I guess I'm a people-person. I am a very motivational person when it comes to encouraging people. I like to communicate."
- Sharon

The respondents disclose their *promissory* self-image identity here, which does not in any way suggest a misconception of their true self-representation since selfhood is often mirrored into the very definition of self-fragmentation (Jeroncic, 2012), authenticity (Wood et al., 2008), or the postmodern self, (Moltmann, 1976). This means that a sense of fragmentation is not in itself, as Kierkegaard (1989) puts it, evidence that "the whole concept is but a mirage".

On this account, we then choose to assume that the respondents' promissory self-representation carries within it self-seeking *positives* that entail being enthusiastic, honest, learners, friendly, whit, spontaneous, independent, open-minded, team players, and all of the above.

c. The Hyphenated Self: A Response to an Emerging Hope

We discussed signs of lost hope and dystopia among the respondents, including legitimate expressions of abandonment, anxiety, loss, uncertainties, and premonitions of insecurity. The “*promissory self*” fostered an indication of an emerging hope, which Dykstra calls “an activation of both *futurum* and *adventus*.” This “promissory self” seems to mature to a transforming “self”, showing evidence for both a blocked future and an emerging hope. *Futurum* suggests a sense of *becoming a self*, whereas *adventus* points to an actualization of *coming to self*. According to Dykstra (1997), this forms selfhood is an aspect of authenticity or self-actualization Wood et al. (2008) refer to as the consistency between an individual's personal experience, symbolic awareness of an experience, and outward behaviour and communication — which supposedly mirror one another to form a self-image, some kind of self-hope. According to Jeronicic (2012: 249), this kind of hope towards self-construction shows a theological anthropology that pithily resonates a “coming to ourselves in hope”.

From this light, Moltmann (1975) reasons that such coming-to-hope of the self, as it is with the perceptions and ideological framework of all living organisms or ‘open systems’, has an ‘anticipatory character’. Given that a penultimate construction of self emerges as the respondents try to self-regulate their abandonment depression or borderline-related crisis, thereby initiating some sort of nascent hope in relation to self. The researcher saw the respondents display such estrangement, from any future experienced as hopeless and childish to resign their lives in a utopian escapism of the self, neglecting careful preparations, necessary planning, and self-control to deal with the historical embeddedness of their abandonment and borderline related crisis, hence, leading the respondents to a hopeful yet dramatic oscillation between these extremes.

Such fluctuation in self-value or self-position to self-construction manifests in the respondents as fundamentals that suggest an emerging hope amidst crisis. This next phase of *splitting* substantially thresholds through what Dykstra (2014) describes as a coming together or activation of both the *futurum* and *adventus* to construct self.

In light of this conceptualization, the researcher will then discuss the respondents' transforming construction of the self, manifested within their conceptual *futurum* (future) and *adventus* (present) using hyphenated-self outlets.

Moltmann (1996) distinguishes between *futurum* and *adventus*. *Futurum* paradigm emerges out of the past. According to Moltmann (1996) the future is not evident but in process to overcome the past —the past therefore is not reproduced in relation to the future. In other words, memories of the past are not resourceful in this regards but rather obstacle, as self tends to adapt a radically future-oriented perspective. On the other hand, *adventus* is an arrival or *coming to self* in the “transcendental conditions of time” (Ibid. 22). As expected, the conditions of *adventus* instigate some sort of surprise for the “astonishingly new”. *Adventus* is therefore “the coming of the future to the present”, says Moltmann (1996: 22). The researcher observes how the respondents’ self-construction is regulated within these two ‘self’ categories.

i. *Futurum* — Becoming self

▪ *Leadership*

Part of the *becoming self* tendency portrayed by the respondents is seen in their passion for leadership. Some of the respondents sort to overcome their conflicting past by showing interest in leadership and serving others. Without necessary preparation and though ignorant of what this new responsibility might entail, most of the respondents either thought they possess some kind of leadership quality or want to lead others through their teaching, serving, and mobilization.

Chris for example, is anxious about his relationship with God and seems not to “...agree with how God wants to do some things”, he relates. This ‘imposed’ Sovereignty of God often makes him to want to *throw in the towel* and find an easy way out. Instead of trying to see, what God wants him to learn from a situation, in his words, “I get stuck on why this thing is happening...?” Chris further admits that he is not allowing God to have the overruling power in his relationship experience with Him, saying, “I am stubborn in my relationship with God.” Chris also seems to suffer from a low self-esteem and therefore he “...can’t allow a person too close in [my life] to see who I really am because I feel if they get to know me they might not really like me that much”, says Chris.

In contrast, Christ then tries to recompense his self-esteem with a bold futuristic vision of the self as a “teacher” without considering the consequences. According to Chris, “...I always try on the outside to be the example and teach by being a good example of what it is like to follow Jesus. But I know my own failures so I do not want people to know that failure. But I am open to the perspectives of other people...to learn from them.” Two themes emerge from Chris’ narrative. One is the regulation of his low self-esteem with some sort of *futurum* in light of

teaching, humility, and serving others. Next is his continuous use of religious language, as some form of springboard for his inspiration in relation to his supposed leadership tendency, which he claims was an exemplification of what it truly means to be like Jesus, his DAF.

Irrespective of her abandonment experience, which partly mediates her borderline self, Julie is very positive about having some sort of leadership quality. According to her, *“I think I have leadership qualities. But I rather lead through example than being someone that leads. I like serving...I rather serve than may be organizing. I can organize if I must. If I do something I do it because I want [to] and not because of what people say.”* Julie is passionate about serving others. She thinks, therefore, she believes she is a leader. It conveys some kind of *becoming self*, in an attempt to regulate the critiquing errors of the “leaders” in her own life, her parents (who were always acerbic towards her), for a more service-oriented kind of leadership as a response to her identity crisis. Again, religious language plays a role here for Julie as she inspires herself saying, *“There is a scripture that says...you can do all things....”*

Sharon on the other hand started her interview by asserting that she was a leader. She insists, *“As a leader, that's the person i am —am everywhere. I am part of so many things now.”* Although without a deep understanding of what leadership really entails, Sharon believes that part of being a leader is by participating in so many things at the same time. This appears to be a part of the “becoming self” experience that leads to self-discovery. Sharon often regulates her borderline and attachment crisis with some sort of *ubiquitous* presence in her *futurum*, which for her, is an evidence of leadership.

- *Inspiring and Positive Self-image*

Even with their negative self-image experiences, the respondents tend to adopt a positive self-image or *futurum* in response to their past-experiences. June speaks, *“I love to be positive. I don't like negative people around me. I feel the emotion strongly when people are negative and down. I want to cheer them up —why down and sad. I hate it if people like wake up and grumpy...I hate that....I love people.”* Recall, June had an early abandonment experience with her mother who left her since she was in Grade 1. After congealing in agitation and anger over her separation experience with her mum, June is regulating her poor frustration tolerance with a loving, positive self-image that have chosen to love and inspire other people to be happy.

Whilst being assertive and purposeful, Siphos is becoming more aware of his sense of ‘self’. He says, *“I think I have got a very good sense of the self.”* After his ambition to become a priest was crushed by his superiors at the monastery, a dream that was supposedly inspired by his childhood role model, he is now more self-asserting and positively confident than he

was in the past. He seems to be overcoming his conflicting past with a more positive self-image. He agrees,

“...I don't realise myself in relation to others [anymore]. I just know I am and if you want to fit in my definition of who I am that's [fine by me]. I am me and if I should live my live I should live it the way I should live it and live it to the full potential of myself.”

Although he does not know the implication of this new *futurum* posture of the self, he seems to have embraced this new self-image to regulate the pain of the past.

- ii. *Adventus* – Coming to self
 - *Independent and Open-minded*

The respondents seem to be neutral in their overall *standing* and not controlled by external forces at this stage. This is a deliberate attempt to conquer their previous identity crisis, where we saw them involving in some kind of prolonged dependency, passivity, or poor frustration tolerance in relation to others and the self. Irrespective of their past, the respondents account the following:

“I see myself as an independent person...I was in a stage when what people thought of me mattered a lot. I have overcome that because I just realised, why should everyday I say something, why worry what people think. Then i moved out of that circle and then I realized that people just don't care.” - June

“I see myself as an independent person. Someone who is open-minded and can relate with anyone. So long as you are ready to relate with me. If you are not ready I don't care!” - Marvin

“Only when you realised who you are as a person you would be able to reach certain things. Dependence that swallows up the uniqueness of a person is bad. So until you realize that...only then you can truly realize your own personal qualities.” – Sipho

- *Authenticity and True to Self*

The respondents disclosed their *coming to self* in terms of authenticity and being true to self. In the past, Sipho had a high dependency profile but now staying true to himself in relation to his close ‘others’. *“I say what I want to say...I think I've got a very good sense of the self,”* says Sipho. Marvin on the other hand admits, *“I like being true to myself. I don't like living a lie. Look at it as the right thing for myself.”* Neville's *coming to self* is factored on gender. He believes he has to be true to himself because he is a “man”. He feels, *“Because i am a man i believe in myself...by following my own way”*. Sharon's love for people and her past-experiences had made her to adapt to an authentic living tendency. Sharon feels she is an *“individualized person”* who is committed to her own values in respect to others because, although it was not

so in the past, “*I have the ability to change people's lives*” — a candid opinion of herself that was absent during her early attachment separation and borderline experiences. Regardless, she reasons, “*I have my values and i commit myself to my values and i stand by my values.*”

Overall, the respondents exhibited two aspects of the hyphenated self, which was regulated as their response to an emerging promissory self — a coming-to-hope of the self. So far, the data make it possible to sympathize with Drystra (1997) and Jorencic (2012) on the concept of *splitting* in the hyphenated self, which is here empirically discussed and categorized as the activation of both *futurum* and *adventus* to construct self.

For starters, the social-cognitive reflection of Kernis and Goldman’s (2006) authenticity or selfhood includes the need for autonomy: orderliness, self-organization, and self-integration. This self-directed character of self-creation among the respondents is described by Moltmann as an emblem of human existence lived out through an individual’s lifetime, where “*being human means becoming human in this process*” (1990: 269).

Therefore it is on this ground that Moltmann (1974:2) suggests a theological anthropology of selfhood or authenticity that serves as a precursor to self-knowledge and self-healing in order to “live and to make [one’s self] recognizable to other people”, although not in absolute terms. This leads to the next *splitting* stage identified by the researcher during the interview process: the religious self.

d. The Religious Self: A Response to “Weak” Self-Integration

Moltmann’s *promissory self* keeps reinventing itself, showing up as a “not-yet-fully-realized ‘eccentricity’” (Kesley, 2009). Moltmann (1974) admits that the human person is never formed into wholeness and incapable of an inward self-realization. It is “never something which he has completely at his disposal” (Moltmann 1974: 265). The human person is therefore prone to incompleteness and fragmentation, which Moltmann believes, is an inescapable human lot.

Moltmann (1974) understood “weak” self-integration as the compounding of the decomposed self. Farley (2001) reasons that the teleological nature of this compounding metaphysics provides self with the needed impetus to commence a cruciformly new adventure of transformation from “above” which eventually breaks down the baggage that holds the ‘self’ down at its borderline and attachment placements. Therefore, it was on this note that Thiselton argues that such kind of “weak” integrated-self is revived and strengthened by means of a cruciform repute, manifesting as a “transformation from the failed or distorted ‘image’ of humanness into the ‘image’ of Jesus Christ” (1996: 128).

From this light, the researcher opens up on the next splitting and self-fragmentation experience called the *cruciform or religious self* —an emerging image of hope which, in the words of Moltmann, leads to “true self-liberation” (1974: 266). This (for me) is the *survived self*, or as Muck (1998) puts it, the “responding self”, nuzzled within the “weak” logic of integration.

The respondents’ self-realization in response to their “weak” self-integration took on a religious posture, as they transformed, adjusted, and regulated the self to overcome its internal and external confliction.

Before the observations, it is important to sketch a discussion with a short note on the three main features of the *religious self*, which, Muck (1998:114-121) suggests [as I also believe] is “capable of meaningful relationship”, namely: *Mediating transcendence*, *Multidirectional*, *never-ending journeying*, and *Chosenness to choose*.

The first fundamental feature of the religious self, *mediating transcendence* shows a transcendent connection of some kind. Muck (1998) argues that Christians in general call this dimension “God”. Illustrating from an economics power model, Muck argues that within the society, “we must have a transcendent reference point, a court of final appeal that we do not control or even fully understand” (1998:116). Given that, individuals tend to vent their frustrations to a transcendent being of some sort, who is often identified by many as “God”. The second dimension of the “religious self” portrays itself in a *multidirectional*, *never-ending journeying*. Muck calls this the “dynamic element of personality” (Ibid. 116). He sees this as *journeys* easily symbolized as meta-metaphors of a particular state of situatedness.

The last dimension of the religious self is coined from a Reformed thought on the concept of chosenness. Muck (1998) calls this *chosenness to choose*. Though undergoing some kind of *journeying*, from Moltmann’s promissory self to Jeronicic’s (2012) hyphenated self and to Muck’s (1998) religious self, this concept of *chosenness*, according to Muck journeys through radical shifts to choose the its life in relation to a covenantal promise.

The researcher will observe and categorize from the respondents’ responses, empirical examples that support Muck’s (1998) religious self (see Table 4-1).

The concept of *religious self*, according to Craig Dykstra (1986), is an indication of a religious faith, a certain level of connectedness with God. Dykstra puts it this way: “Religious [self] as a way of life is borne, necessarily, by language and each distinct way of life necessarily has a language of its own.”

The researcher saw how the *religious self* (see Table 4-1) of the respondents is pervaded with therapeutic God concepts and religious language, used as some sort of spiritual pathway to gain relief from their confliction. And secondly the *religious self* (see Table 4-1) was seen as a self-regulating agency or coping pattern through which the respondents dealt with their “weak” self-integration.

Although Don Russo (1986) argues in his response to Dykstra against attributing the *religious self* as some form of clue to selfhood, a condition, which he suggests does not carry any weight of meaning. This is because, “the trouble with most religious [self] is that it is highly impersonal and the relationships tend to be between persons and things (structures, institutions, even God!)”, (Russo 1986: 191). For Russo, self-images are “real” experiences rooted in reality and the existential moment they represent, and therefore have nothing to do with religion, nor its fascinating metaphors. In other words, “there is no relationship between language and action” (Russo 1986:192), a social activity which he sees common in the society.

Regardless of Russo’s view, Moltmann’s theological anthropology on self-construction in relation to the concept of “social Trinity” and Trinitarian self (as discussed in chapter two) is seen in full light in this study.

The case studies support that being true to self or authenticity is strongly associated with several indicators of self-regulations and wellbeing, of which having a *religious self-image* is one of them. Authenticity experts had earlier reported similar results. Goldman & Kernis (2002) for example reported trait authenticity associated with “greater life satisfaction and self-esteem”. Wood et al.’s (2008) authenticity predicts, “Increased subjective well-being and decreased stress”. Sheldon et al.’s (1997) authenticity is associated positively to extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness. Menard and Brunet (2011) reported a positive relation to well-being at work. While the study done by Kernis and his colleagues (2008) suggest authenticity to positively relate to “higher mindfulness and lesser verbal defensiveness”. Hence, scores of studies suggest that being true to one’s self inspire a motivation to have a healthy, regulated, secure relationship with God and the self.

In summary, Moltmann (1974) concludes from a MacIntyreian position that the human nature is formed from the ‘direction of its life’ as seen from the self-regulating experiences of the Christian Millennials in this study; be it from the direction of pain, crisis, hope, or religion.

4.4.4. Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the identity crisis of Christian millennials in relation to the subcultures of self and God images. The result showed how God plays a major role as

an Attachment Figure for the respondents, a position from where the respondents experience their self and God images. Secondly, the researcher saw the respondents adopting a coping mechanism of splitting and self-fragmentation to inhibit and down-regulate their negative self and God image experiences. The study also shows that the identity crises of the respondents were often related to some sort of attachment abandonment and borderline syndrome.

Next, chapter five will provide readers with discussions and implications on the findings, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

Table 4-1: The *Religious self* Images of the respondents (according to Muck's classification)

Mediating transcendence	Multidirectional, never-ending journeying	Chosenness to choose
<i>I am pleased with myself because God is pleased with me</i>	<i>He provides. He is a father. Sometimes when i miss my own father...i see the love of God keeping me and providing for me and protecting me and not let anything harm me.</i>	<i>Because I am the man and the priest of the house...it makes me to want to lead and live a life that is pleasing to God and take leadership roles</i>
<i>I try to see myself in the light that God sees me... There is a scripture that says...you can do all things but even with all this, if I don't have love, I am nothing</i>	<i>I know it is not by might nor by power but by the spirit.</i>	<i>He loves me no matter what</i>
<i>...I cried every time and God managed to come through for us until we received our own house. When i met Christ that time he healed me of that hurt i had in my heart over the years.... I want to be more like Jesus</i>	<i>I will say God is a true friend. By true friend i mean someone Who is there the time that you need them most.</i>	<i>God created you who you are and why should you hide it. And God uses imperfect people for His kingdom...He doesn't use perfect people.</i>
<i>"...i know God will somehow carry me through... In that emptiness that i felt i always say 'God i know you are gonna fill this'. I spoke my heart out to God and i told God that he must help me through this because i can't handle it by myself. ...and then God helped me through everything that's why i say he is caring and lovable.... I feel like God is making a way for me every day. I see God's hand in everything in my life and that's why i am privileged to know today that God is with me</i>	<i>He is like my pillar of strength</i>	<i>God loves the women more because if you watch in church you will see.</i>

<p><i>every step of the way and i don't have to be afraid of whatever that might come my way. I need to know that my life is in God's hands...."</i></p>		
<p><i>I am very close to God. I communicate with God almost on daily basis.</i></p>	<p><i>...there was a lot of attack of the enemy in my life</i></p>	<p><i>I feel good in my relationship with God generally because of his grace for me</i></p>
<p><i>...i started to live with it because i know God will somehow carry me through.</i></p>	<p><i>God rewards, and he is very rewarding and loving. He has actually acted as a rewarder for me.</i></p>	<p><i>I feel loved by God because i am his bride.</i></p>
	<p><i>God is a father to me, the father of love and he has showed me in many ways that he is alive</i></p>	
	<p><i>God is love and love as pure as gold can never be anything but love</i></p>	
	<p><i>God is authentic.</i></p>	

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

“We are all so blinded and upset by self-love that everyone imagines he has a just right to exalt himself, and to undervalue all others in comparison to self. If God has bestowed on us any excellent gift, we imagine it to be our own achievement, and we swell and even burst with pride.” — John Calvin

“The hardest part of getting past a broken bond is learning to trust again.” — Unknown

5.1 A Coping Missional Hermeneutic: Redeeming the fragments and the broken connection

The researcher will discuss and conclude this section by introducing a bespoke framework that will enable the youth-in-mission redeem the broken connection in their identity crisis in relation to their attachment to God experience and fragments of self-discovery. This framework is an integrative approach that includes but not limited to dealing with the challenges of self and God images among the younger generation of Christians from the perspective of *missio Dei*. This approach works across the spectrum of different approaches to the troubled youth, as it takes seriously the historical situation and direction of their stories, purpose of their experiences, the influence of their social location, and their prophetic engagement with the character of God.

5.1.1 Concluding From the Fragments

So far, the researcher has attempted to explore empirically the theoretical questions and common themes that emerged from the understanding of the nature of self and God images in the preceding sections. Precisely, the role of self-fragmentation, self-awareness, self-regulation, religious language, God concepts, attachment separation, abandonment betrayal, attachment-anxiety, symbolization, and borderline schizophrenia in the experiences and subcultures of selfhood and the God image among Christian Millennials have all come to light in this study.

Theories of theological anthropology, attachment to God, and authenticity are effective explanatory frameworks for understanding the subcultures of self and God images of any particular group. The case study procedure used in this study has helped the researcher to understand the relations between self-images and God-images by providing us with a unique narrative that explains how such relations play out in reality. The Christian Millennials who participated in the empirical study utilized all of Granqvist and Kirkpatrick’s (2008) attachment language criteria in their God image experience. Therefore, conceptualizing God, as an *Attachment Role Model* with the potential of being a safe haven, secure base, target for proximity seeking, or stronger and wiser.

Additionally, the God image conditions of the respondents, in most cases, signalled an action propelled by an attachment conflict or abandonment crisis, which reflected both the correspondence (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver 1992; Granqvist, 1998, 2002; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Hall, 2004; Hall et al., 2009) and compensation models of the God image development (Kirkpatrick, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990).

The hallmark of the qualitative case study was the coping defence mechanism of splitting or self-fragmentation adopted by the respondents to deal with their abandonment crisis as they tried to self-regulate and self-invest the self to discover 'self'. Specifically, the researcher observed the concurrent utilization of some sort of religious language and God concepts by the respondents to regulate and sometimes inhibit their *traumatic* images of self and God, as they relate with God and self-fragment through all the stages of self-discovery, in hope for some kind of redemption and hope.

Frankly, individuation has, in this study, proven to be a "*blessed curse*," an oxymoron which according to Jung (2009), "...opens the way to becoming one's authentic self". Howbeit *oxymoronic*, Jung warns that it puts the individual at "risk of alienation from the 'tribe'".

Consequently, whilst Christian Millennials self-construct to discover themselves in fragmenting new ways, the challenge with this self-reproduction, according to Jung (2009), is that they might be at risk of losing themselves in the end as they relate with close *others*. The findings therefore evidently support the theoretical underpinnings of Wood et al. (2008), Drystra (1986), Masterson (1981) Moltmann (1974), Muck (1998), and Jung (2009) respectively.

To discuss the findings, a reflection on Walter Benjamin's (1968) "redemption of fragments" appears timely, as a pathway to developing a theology from the overall study. Benjamin understands the meaning of history as a whole through its fragments, ruins, and fractures. A Benjaminian perspective sees reality or text shattered into fragments, therefore making it possible to disabuse any deception that understands totality to be more meaningful.

How then can we construct a theology that can see and fix the broken and shattered fragments of the past in relation to our self and God images from the context of *missio Dei* and *imago Dei*?

The task therefore, based on this question, is not only to devote ourselves fully into these fragments, but understanding "how" to do so by relating to them as hermeneutical *monads* of truth, though without making any final conclusions of them whatsoever (Jorencic, 2011). David Tracy (1999) *flesh* out this point in his Book *Fragments*, where he concurs that "truth is always only mediated through fragments, reality cannot be apprehended or even defined in terms of

all-explanatory abstractions”, (p. 183). Such “fragments”, in the words of Tracy (1999), “carry [in them] their own sense of potency and provide us with a hint of redemption” (Ibid. 183).

A Benjaminian framework not only view history as fragments or understand it hermeneutically, but rather sees the human experience with God and self as an incomplete phenomenon that makes the discovery of the promissory fragments anti-teleological from the perspective of the mission of God (Benjamin, 1968; David, 1999). This is done in hope to see these existential *fragments* as “saturated and auratic bearers of infinity and sacred hope, fragmentary of genuine hope in some redemption, however undefined” (David 1999: 173).

It is from this light that the researcher finds a fair degree of understanding from a Benjaminian perspective, as he discusses these fragments of self and God images as “a crisis and an opportunity for mission”.

5.1.2 The Crisis: Externalizing an Internal Conflict

Both Masterson (1976) and John Bowlby (1969/1982/1973) were open-minded with one another as they share common knowledge owing to Freud’s (1988) earlier psychodynamic proposition on social relations. Freud’s (1988) object relations argument understood the phenomena of “love relations, separation anxiety, mourning, defence, guilt, depression trauma, emotional detachment, sensitive periods in early life” (Bowlby 1988: 2) as the threshold to social relationships. This line of thought informs their argument about social relations which, according to them, is sparked by a person’s emotional and behavioural representations of close *others*, which guides their self and God image functioning, (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000; Davis, 2010).

This mental representation of self in relation to others is what Bowlby calls “internal working models” (IWM). These IWMs, according to Bowlby and Rizzuto (1971), initially develop through early childhood experiences with parents. The IWMs remain open to modification and specification across a person’s lifespan, especially when it encounters an identity crisis through contact and dealings with attachment figures and the social environment (Bowlby, 1988; Siegel, 1999, 2007, 2012; Davis, 2010; Masterson, 1976; Drystra, 1997).

IWM crisis informs an individual’s social relationships. It is at this point that attachment and authenticity (selfhood) converge. As the identity crisis becomes evident in relation attachment figures, social, and religious environment, the youth-in-mission has to find ways of surviving and coping with their crisis of identity. Moltmann (1974) and Grenz (2007) acknowledged the relationality within the Trinity mirroring on the relationality within selfhood, as the different

persons within a being relates to its self, its now, and its future. This identity crisis within the structural and subcultural qualities of the self to engage in a relationship between its purpose and the mission of God in the context of community performs an important task of helping the self to discover its *imago Dei* and divine given goal in an eschatological future as a self-in-mission (Moltmann, 1974; Grenz, 2007; McDonnell, 2009).

This triadic nature of the "social trinity" as it relates to selfhood and God images is central to attachment and authenticity orientations about the "fragmentary" nature and survival of self in relation to its identity crisis.

Study shows that early abandonment experiences (Ainsworth, 1978) coupled with borderline encounters (Masterson, 1976), does in fact, influence the identity crisis of the respondents. These experiences represent and orient (a), their attachment disposition towards God and (2), the key domain for their self-regulation and self-fragmentation crisis in relation to God, self, and the social environment, (Barry, Nelson, Davarya & Urry, 2010).

Moltmann had earlier called these *experiences* self-dystopia. A term he used to describe Masterson's borderline self. Although both concepts share much in common, most evident among them is that they express a state of confliction and an identity crisis. Masterson and Moltmann saw the self and God image experiences as an identity crisis that encompass life's dark moments. Both Masterson and Moltmann agree that this is a time of a depleting narcissism among the youth-in-mission, which plumb them into self-discovery—a journey with the potential of self-creation to satiate the self's *ugly*, conflicting situation.

At this stage, the 'self' experiences some kind of destructive 'acting out' while relating with the environment and attachment figures like friends, family, God and so on. According to Drystra, such internal conflict, presented in this study as an identity crisis, is externalized by

...the young person and its tension discharged in the environment; there is typically some environmental separation experience, often quite hidden like divorce, sudden death or separation with a loved one; there is often a history...involving prolonged dependency or passivity, poor frustration tolerance, impulse control, or reality perception; typically the caregivers, are themselves equally terrorized by abandonment depression, and therefore perceive their children as parents, peers, or objects, clinging to them to protect them against their own fears of separation, (1997: 31).

Such 'acting out' often leads to self-discovery, which origin erupts from a defence mechanism Masterson (1976) calls *splitting* or *self-fragmentation* Moltmann (1974), as opposed to the psychological defence of *repression* often seen applied to life's traumatic distress in order to forget a painful thought, feeling or experiences.

Splitting is an identity crisis but also a coping mechanism (dealing reasonably with difficulty) that involves a "radical alternation between two extreme or caricatured selves, with neither

self fully determining one's identity" (Drystra 1997: 30). A person employing *splitting* can be both loving and idealizing on one hand, and at the same time all hating and denigrating on another, says psychologist Morris Eagle (1987).

However, an individual applying *splitting* defence to its identity crisis will go through life *splintering* the 'self' and at the same time "relating to people as parts —either positive or negative – rather than whole entities" (Pruyser 1975:36). Such fellow, according to Pruyser (1975), will be unable to maintain consistent, healthy commitment in their relationship with others, especially when they are frustrated or irritated. Moreover, due to their poor frustration tolerance level, they will have difficulty maintaining a positive image of their close "others" especially when they are not physically present for them. Such condition will make infertile the tendency to create a single unified self-concept that he/she recognizes as himself or herself in both good and bad moments. Pruyser argues that such radicalization of the 'self' makes the individual prone to "a 'good' self [identity crisis] that engages in immature, clinging, passive, unassertive behaviours and a 'bad' self [an opportunity] that wants to grow, assert itself, be active, and independent", (Pruyser 1975: 36, 40).

With satisfactory empirical evidences, the researcher have shown how the respondents' identity crisis manifest in their attachment relationship with God and in some cases with close "others", where they find themselves struggling with undue, immature worries whilst building their relationship with God. They also portrayed unassertive behaviours of avoidance, anxiety, and unnecessary panicking without necessarily understanding that peace with God and 'self' comes through perseverance and endurance, which produce in us character and hope, which according to the biblical Apostle Paul (cf. Romans 5:1-5), does not disappoint.

On the other hand, the "bad-self", continues in an unending struggle of wandering and self-discovery, developmentally disjoined, and challenged by hyper-selectivity (Pruyser, 1975).

Drystra believes that such self-creation potential (identity crisis) of the "bad self", although not in all cases, eventually hardens the 'self' into "a consistent lack of tolerance for ambivalence, anxiety, and ambiguity within the borderline youth" and faith (Dykstra 1997: 31). Relatively, the study showed otherwise and presented us with an opportunity. The respondents *subtly* switched to a cruciform direction, looking for saneness and comfort by regulating the 'self' with religious-related symbols and languages as a therapeutic and coping mechanism against their identity crisis and its confliction.

5.1.3 The Opportunity: Towards a Coping Missiology

Hunsberger's (2011) proposition for a missional hermeneutic took a turn on missiologists, as he sees the bible as an *opportunity* that not alone provide the basis for mission but also elaborates on the missionary nature of the church. He proposed a much more profitable way of seeing the missional basis of the bible by ensuring that the bible itself is all about God's mission.

In an attempt to define the nature of the *Missional Hermeneutic* of the Bible, Hunsberger (2011) first presents the bible as the product of God's mission (i.e. *missio Dei*) for dealing with identity crisis.

This missional perspective converges a swelling tide of imagination, arising from the emphasis of the story of *missio Dei*, which can be surmised within the context of "Creation, Fall, Israel, Jesus the Messiah, Church, and New Creation" (Russell 2014: ¶3). The scriptural story starts and ends with the revelational portrait of what the future new creation in God should look like.

The story of God's mission to the world starts with the creation story. God created the heavens and the earth. Creation was wittingly crafted in the *imago Dei* as the pinnacle of God's artistry. Human beings functioned in the image of God over the rest of God's creation. From the earliest beginnings, "humanity was created for the missional purposes to represent God before creation by reflecting God's character [in a community in transition], with one another and with the world" (Russell 2014: ¶4).

Like the history of any identity crisis and existential issue (for example, self and God images), the missional intention of God was flawed by the Fall, an error of the past, which has been corrected by the emergence of Jesus the Messiah through the nation of Israel to rebuild the *missio Dei* through the Church to the world. The Church through their mission to the world is in the process of igniting the world (both as salt and light) through the image of God as new creations.

The opportunity that lies in this missional intention of God, is discussed from here in this study as a *coping missional hermeneutic*, in response to identity crisis. This *opportunity* calls God's people back to God's mission as a missional community that embodies God's image before the world.

A *coping missional hermeneutic* takes God's people back to the *task* for failing to live in God's character, as the people of God. Most especially, this perspective announces the confronting effect of God's love over the nature of self and God images to ensure a new promissory self, emerging out of God's identity framework.

It is against this backdrop of God's intention that Hunsberger (2011) writes in his proposition for a *Missional Hermeneutic* to remind us of the mission of God to the world, a mission borne out of perfection to purify and strengthen in character, those who are within their ontological confines of experience.

Hunsberger brings to bare a *missio Dei* redefined at the aftermath of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, in order to restore humanity from its awful ontological nature to re-announce and extend God's redemptive power to the nations.

Hunsberger (2011) argues that this *opportunity* starts with coming to grips with the big story of the Scriptures in relation to our ontological and pathological placements (identity crisis). A missional hermeneutic therefore seeks to shift people to draw close to the *missio Dei* and understand their lives as part of the big picture of the Scriptural story of God's redemption.

A *coping missional hermeneutic* therefore beckons on us to interpret our identity crisis (for example, self and God image anxieties) in light of God's perspective by doing the following.

Each of the coping missional perspectives discussed below tends to have a gravitational pull toward what (I believe) is the most fundamental aspect of what makes our experiences missional, and our identity crisis, an opportunity for mission.

With caution, none of these perspectives is sufficient on its own to provide a robust interpretation of our identity crisis.

5.1.3.1 The Missional Direction of Our Experience

Hunsberger (2011) starts with an emphasis, "the framework for biblical interpretation is the story it tells of the mission of God and the formation of a community sent to participate in it" (2011: 310). Wright (2006) in his book "The Mission of God" explained this more clearly, as he offered an elaborate rationale for interpreting the Scripture from the perspective of the mission of God as the heart and essence of the biblical narrative. This is a shift from what the bible means *to* the reader to what the bible is *for* the reader. It is an understanding that includes the "missional basis of the bible", and excludes the "biblical basis for mission" (Wright 2004: 103, 106). In terms of Scripture interpretation, an understanding of the mission of God "provides the framework, the clue, the hermeneutical key for biblical interpretation", (Hunsberger 2011: 311).

It is against this background that a recommendation is here given to interpret our self and God image experiences in light of the mission of God, which, in and of itself, is the core of our

experience. A coping missional hermeneutics first starts with an emphasis for understanding the “missional basis” for our existential issues. It draws our attention to the character and intention of God over our experience. Interpreting any specific ontological image requires attending to God’s redemption story of which the ontological image is part of. “The parts must be read in light of the whole” (Husburger 2011:311).

Wright writes, “The God the Bible renders to us, the people whose identity and mission the Bible invites us to share, and the story the Bible tells about this God and this people and indeed about the whole world and its future” (2004: 108-109). For this reason, I argue that mission does provide us with the hermeneutical framework of reading meaning to our traumatic experiences in order to organize our account of God’s mission for our lives. This position answers the ‘*Why*’ and ‘*Where*’ questions in Louw’s (2000) account on the meaning of suffering. According to Louw (2000), this becomes the quest for an understanding of God’s identity in terms of the *explanation* and *intention* of our self and God images from God’s *showroom*.

Having a missional direction in our self and God image story does in fact reveal “our deep longing to locate God in our human history in terms of providence” (Louw 2000: 16). In asking, “Where is God in my experience and what is His will?” we tend to encounter the presence of God by envisioning our experiences in light of God’s story for the world. This frame a sense of a coping *art* on which a coping missional hermeneutic embarks upon as one explores his or her experiences and all that lies behind it in relation to God himself and his mission to the world. Such posture allows us to rest on the promise of the ultimate mission of God to bring us all back to the image of God as new creations in Christ.

Over all, a *missional direction* of our story allows us to see the urgency of reading meaning to our helpless and meaningless experiences, as we include the mission of God to our world (Goheen, 2008). It starts foundationally by understanding the meaning of the phrase *missio Dei* in a personal, transformative way that transcends the traditional understanding of the phrase in terms of *sending* —“in reference both to the mutual sending among the persons of the Trinity, and to God’s sending of Israel and the church” (Hunsberger 2011: 312).

Brownson (2002) gave a much clearer light on this *direction*. He argues that the shared identity our experience imparts in our community or cohort “cannot be fully grasped and embodied apart from the actual practice of participating in God’s mission to the world” (Brownson 2002 cited in Hunsberger 2011: 313). Engaging in such act will not erase our sense of collective identity but rather it “transforms it in pervasive ways, so that the quality and character of the life of the people of God becomes, in itself, an embodiment of the good news they are called to proclaim”, (Ibid. 313). This transformative process of growth and change produces in us a

kind of “dislocation,” which Brownson argues, “accompanies the experience of being called and sent” and generates in us a critical principle by which our coping missional hermeneutics becomes evidently self-correcting and redemptive.

5.1.3.2 The Missional Purpose of Our Experience

Ultimately, the goal of biblical interpretation is to “fulfil the equipping purpose of the biblical writings” (Hunsberger 2011: 313). The foundational stream of a missional hermeneutic starts within the “arena of biblical theology”, therefore the second stream “pertains to the character of the biblical literature itself” (Ibid. 313). If the first approach to a missional hermeneutic has to do with scriptural narratives that recognize the core of *missio Dei*, then the second should correspondingly deal with the purpose and aim of those writings; emphasizing its “authority by virtue of their formative effect” (Ibid. 313).

Guder made this case in his writings as he contends that, “Jesus personally formed the first generation of Christians for his mission. Afterwards, their testimony became the tool for continuing formation” (2004: 62), which motivated their writings with the intention of equipping churches for witness (Guder, 2007).

It is not my intention to go into details on how the writings and testimony of the first generation of Christians equipped the church for God's mission. Rather it is to draw our attention to the character and purpose of our self and God image experiences, which should reckon to be the *products of*, and *witnesses* to God's mission for the world. The testimony from our existential experiences should be the benchmark of God's faithfulness in his mission to the world. The missional purpose of our experiences looks at the fundamental task of addressing the challenges arising in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns. It invites us into the process of discipleship that consists of joining Christ's followers as we journey through our earthly ministry via the path of the cross (Guder, 2007; Hunsburger, 2011).

In this preparation of forming self and soul for *imago Dei* and *missio Dei*, we are shaped into the character of God. Ultimately, the purpose of our experience and testimony is to contribute to the continuing formation of this missional identity. This formation happens as the powerful story of God's grace upon us is told within the ‘community in transition’ (Guder, 2004). Indeed, our experiences are necessary to “‘equip’ God's people for missional purposes.” (Goheen 2008: 92).

As we open up discussions for a coping missional hermeneutic for scores of theologians, a continuing work is required in order to elaborate more on the way in which each existential

issue can be understood from the perspective of this divine purpose to form and prepare the people of God in and for their witness (Hunsberger, 2011). Louw's (2000; 2008) books have much to say along these lines of thought as well.

5.1.3.3 The Missional and Cultural Locatedness of Our Experience

The researcher will from here, discuss two aspects of Hunsberger's (2011) *Missional Hermeneutic* ("*Missional engagement with cultures*" and "*Missional Locatedness of the Readers*") as one concept since both focuses on community, culture, and location.

Hunsberger contends, "The approach required for a faithful reading of the Bible is from the missional location of the Christian community" (2011: 314). This is a movement away from the purpose of the Scripture to looking at "the character[s] of a missional hermeneutic from the other side of the coin —from the position of the community being thus formed" (Hunsberger 2011: 314). Barram (2007) understood a missional hermeneutic as more than a linguistic interpretive structure of the *missio Dei* from the Scripture. As for Barram, a missional hermeneutic is an approach to Scriptural text rooted in the conviction of God's mission in and for the world. This entails reading the Scripture as a community called into and caught up by God's purposes here on earth. Barram further argues that the Christian community in the New Testament were caught up in the mission of God for the world as they read the bible from their social location (Barram, 2006; 2007).

In the same vein, we argue that our understanding of our despairing self and God image experiences should also move away from its general purpose to look at the practical issues within our community that might trigger such experience. It pays attention to diversity and the history our existential issues. An appreciation of Louw's cultural God-image schemata should be considered for this purpose in order to collectively wage a war against whatever mishandling of "cultural difficulties" that might have stirred its ugly face on us. Capps (1990) positions our mind to mishandling difficulties in his book on *Reframing*. Capps understood existential issues as problems created due to mishandling manageable difficulties. He argues that such kind of problems can either be managed or maintained by understanding principles of *simplification*, *utopianism*, and *paradox* within the context of community.

Ideally, managing cultural difficulties that points to our cultural God image schemas can be a step towards the right direction in understanding our displacedness within a community of *missio Dei*.

The main approach to locating ourselves in our identity crisis would be to aim at faithfully emphasizing the cultural and *missio Dei's* roles within God's purposes. A *coping missional hermeneutic* therefore should consciously and persistently approach the existential issues of individuals within a community by bringing their self and God image stories and shared experiences to a range of critical, *located* questions. Questions that points to the church's foremost missional purpose in empowering and liberating those that are down and broken within the contextual community. This portrays the calling and the practical nature of the task of *missio Dei* within a 'community in transition'. It is my conviction that the faith community has a major role to play here.

The line of thought here is to understand in which ways our existential issues model engagement with culture. This can start by asking critical questions such as: How does our understanding of the Ubuntu philosophy in the African context affect the way we experience God? How does our understanding of God's transcendence help us experience God? How does our understanding of God as a monarch and head of the powerful church establishment invade our personal understanding of God as a true friend? How does the emphasis on position and differentiation within our community order impede a healthy understanding of God? How does portraying God as a public idol and the Manager of the kingdom stock exchange hinder people from experiencing who God truly is? How does our understanding of depression and quest for freedom distort our understanding of the *missio Dei*? How has the circle of parental abuse and apathy affected the way our children relate to God, self and others as they grow up?

These contiguous questions will set the path to healing open for those who are willing to consider the terms.

5.1.3.4 The Missional Prophetic Voice of Our Experience

What does it mean to have a *prophetic* voice? Ultimately, the humanity of biblical authors is not covered or hidden, but revealed in most cases. You could point to the self and God images of biblical authors. This aspect of a coping missional hermeneutic has profound consequences in a prophetic interpretation of person-centred events. According to Chung, the "historical condition in which the biblical writers lived plays a role in shaping their view of the Word of God" (Chung 2012: 134) and (I add) the mission of God. A prophetic-missional dimension of biblical hermeneutics penetrates into the word-event and language-game in terms of "our appropriation of the meaning of biblical narrative" (Ibid. 134).

Scores of theologians in the past have actually discussed the term *prophetic* on a state-based level, referring to the Old Testament and New Testament usage of the term (Capps, 1990; Bosch, 1991). The researcher here argues that the term *prophetic* can as well be used on a personal, relational level. In regards to self and God images, having a missional prophetic voice in our experience can mean relating to our emotional situatedness in terms of God's perspective and mission. It has more to do with distancing oneself from the socio-historical and psychodynamic limitations of one's milieu in order to shape and stabilize our world order in terms of God's order.

Louw said it best, "suffering is a lack of vocabulary to interpret" (Louw 2000: 17). Our emotional security is threatened when we fail to grasp an achieved understanding of order and the meaningfulness of our self and God image experiences. At the experience of the limits of human ability, a prophetic voice that reminds us of our standing with God in terms of his covenant and purpose for us can disabuse the threats of nothingness and helplessness in our experiences. When insight becomes inadequate, such prophetic, promissory voice relates our insecurity and hopelessness to a world of order that stands for *missio Dei*.

Against self and God image crisis, which are contrary to the subject matter of *imago Dei*, a *coping missional hermeneutic* becomes not only the socio-critical but also a person-centred approach in communicating the prophetic dimension of the *missio Dei*. This will be done in relation to our existential situatedness. Hence, reminding us of God's love and presence over our emotional crisis as we journey through his 'mission' for us, and indeed, the world.

Having a missional prophetic voice involves having a *missio*-logical or religious identity that engages in linguistic *conventions* that down-regulate and reframe the interpretation of self and God images within the character of God to bring about an eschatological future from God's *home address*.

McCullogh and Willoughby, in their seminal paper on *Religion, Self-Regulation, and Self-Control* describe religion as a "psychological force that can influence the outcomes of individual human lives" (2009: 69). The scope of such impact also includes strengthening and redeeming health-related, emotional, and social traumas associated with the self, as the study has shown. However, the relationship between religiousness and well-being and positive social behaviours, according to McCullogh and Willoughby, may be associated to "religion's influences on self-control or self-regulation" (Ibid. 69). Carver and Scheier (1998) developed an interesting theory on self-regulation to this account. They propose that religion can serve as a tool that facilitates: a). self-control; b). how goals are selected, pursued, and organized; c). self-monitoring; d). self-regulatory strength; e). proficiency; f). positive well-being and authentic self-behaviours.

With a fair degree of sympathy, the researcher agrees with the theoretical proposition of Carver and Scheier (1998), as evidenced in the empirical study. The respondents' exhibited positive *prophetic* motivations and God concepts, some kind of religious coping mechanism used to down-regulate their experiences with God and self. McColloch and Willoughby (2009) call this self-regulation. They understand it as a process by which "a system uses information about its present state to change that state" (Ibid. 71). Other writers explain this concept further.

Baumeister and Vohs (2004) for example, reason that "self-regulation" emerge when an individual tries to "exert control over his or her own responses so as to pursue goals and live up to stands" (Baumeister & Vohs 2004: 500). Barkley on the other hand simply sees this process as "any response, or chain of responses, by the individual that serves to alter the probability of the individual's subsequent response to an event and, in doing so, functions to alter the probability of a later consequence related to that event"(p. 68). In common sense, self-regulation can therefore be seen as a deliberate attempt to override or adjust a present condition in pursuit of a desired future (Carver & Scheier, 1998). The *present* is represented by attachment dilemmas and borderline experiences 'acting out' as some kind of self-dystopia and processed into the promissory, *prophetic* self. This was a stage where 'self' regulates into an emerging hope by blocking the *present* through some kind of *splitting*. This emerging hope was somewhat diffused through its strong religious and *prophetic* accents, using biblical languages, metaphors, and images to conflict its confictions. This has been referred to in this study as the *religious self* (or if you will, the *prophetic self*), a concept that was empirically discussed from Muck's (1998) three-faced framework of the religious self.

Whether this self-regulation strategy was *meaningful* or not is not the concern of this study. Besides, the study shows that such *emerging hope* down regulated the traumatic experiences of the respondents; thereby acting as some kind of *therapy* for them.

Prophetic concepts about God in the bible were often used by the respondents, making it hard for them to loss control of their self, while remaining conscious about their conflicting past. This prophetic dimension of self-regulation only served as an agency to pursue the promissory self and facilitate some kind of self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, and a positive well-being in the place of danger.

Whilst this remain a context-game for scholars in the field philosophy of religion, it is important to draw the reader's attention to the potency of *prophetic* religious language and God concepts. Drystra (1986) describes this process better:

If religious faith is a distinctive communal form of life based in a relationship with a reality that transcends it, then religious language is absolutely indispensable....Just as with any other community, people signal to one another what they are doing and why through language. In order to carry out their ordinary, everyday, face-to-face relationships, the members of the community must speak to each other. This speaking will ordinarily be no different than the wider culture's common discourse. But, in order to express the ways in which these ordinary relationships are imbedded in and connected to its distinctive way of life and its transcendent ground, this discourse will occasionally contain images which, in perhaps very subtle ways, make the relationship apparent.

The languages of faith and God used by the respondents indicate some kind of relationship with God, who they try to 'get' involve, even though through subtle ways, into their contextual situations using both symbolic and prophetic concepts of God to fascinate God into action. An action that helps them to regulate and re-produce the 'self' overtime by testing their actual self and God image experiences over/against what is most essential to it—God concepts or the prophetic missional voice. It is a means through which young people represented in the study socialize with God, as they continue to self-discover in a self-creation infinitum, wandering in search and counterbalancing the self in the place of fear and anxiety.

Drystra (1986:173) asks, "Is there anything especially powerful and truthful about biblical images [and concepts] from a faith tradition which, when gathered into language and used in our speech, forms [and heals] us particularly well as persons?" Apparently, just like any way of life is marked by some kind of language of its own, the *religious self* or *prophetic self* is borne out of a religious faith to convey a sense of hope and security in a way that replaces self and God image difficulties.

Question then arises as to "Why religious language?" Does religion truly inspire hope and some sort of liberative power? Perhaps requiring further empirical scrutiny, but the empirical study shows how God concepts and religious language play very important self-regulatory roles as coping mechanism against self and God image crisis.

In contrast, Don Russo sees religious language and metaphors as some kind of hoax, something unrealistic and highly impersonal and therefore does not describe reality (especially when they are taken out of context from the bible) because "there is no relationship between language and action" (1986:191), a social activity which, according to Russo, is common in the society.

Regardless, there is no need to argue Russo's claim. Clearly, it would be difficult to say whether the "religious or prophetic self" expressed in this study by the respondents both in their relationship experience with God and their self-discovery process (using religious metaphors, language, and God concepts) does actually describe reality.

The main concern should however be, whether we see reality and interpret it through the *filter* of religion. On that note, the answer would be both yes and no, but mostly depending on the person involved. If we apply Wittgenstein's (1953/2001) understanding of religious experience as a language-game, Russo's argument stands no chance. The study data supports that the way the respondents related to their self and God image crisis using a *prophetic missional voice* is indeed the background against which the claims of the redemptive power of the "religious or prophetic self" make sense. These relational channels, Wittgenstein says, "give the [prophetic] words [concepts, metaphors or language] their sense". It is on such note that Wittgenstein warns that the mistake most people make "is to look for an explanation where we should see the facts as primary phenomena. That is where we should say: this language game is played." (1953/2001: 653).

However, in terms of the *language-game* (if I may) used by Millennials in relation to their self and God images, the study has shown so far how the respondents in the study responded to their crisis — attachment anxiety, borderline depression, abandonment, abuse, separation, depleting narcissism, and etcetera — using prophetic-religious *filters* in relation to *imago Dei*. This cruciform attitude enabled them to have the character of promise and an emerging hope amid their internal confliction.

However, this *imago Dei* act of self-regulation in relation to the *mission-Dei* appears to be a never-ending journey towards seeing 'self' darkly. Be it as it may, this makes it possible to move closer to the mission of God by satisfying the 'self' with *prophetic* metaphors and concepts about God that both represent and redeem the self and God image reality.

Ultimately, the way in which the respondents opened up their world is through language, represented in metaphors. Dan Stiver (2001: 111) believes that in metaphors we live by (George & Johnson, 2003). Stiver (2001) concurs with Ricoeur (1981) saying that metaphors naturally help to understand the nature of narratives, since one of the task of understanding a narrative is to understand the language used by the narrators. Indeed everyday experiences are entrenched within symbolic and prophetic concepts, metaphors or languages from which people live, think, and perceive things. The polysemic nature of language provides relative meanings that disclose 'a world'. According to Capps, such ostensive order of metaphorical, *prophetic* voice helps in "providing a model for the understanding of life and what happens in the world of human action" (1984: 24-25) as seen in the narratives of the respondents in this study.

Therefore, on this basis, we argue that having a prophetic missional voice and applying the coping missional hermeneutic in the interpretation of our identity crisis, can redeem and transform us as the people of God. This approach can help us reinvent and reinvest 'self'

within *imago Dei* as a “community in transition” in hope of an emerging future, albeit unplanned and weakly.

5.2 Conclusion

So far, the researcher has attempted to engage the reader in a study on the self and God image experiences of Christian Millennials. The study is a comprehensive, yet an unfinished business that applies both attachment and authenticity theories in its explorations to uncover the “lived world” of the respondents who were part of the study. The researcher has exhaustively given account to the self and God image experiences of the respondents in the study. An explanation that led to an introduction of a coping missional hermeneutic that will enable future researchers and pastoral care workers to engage more critically and responsibly with their “living human documents” in order to inspire timely solutions that resolve the concerns of diversity, healing and attachment separation. Solutions that entail healing, hermeneutical processes that allows us change the frame of our *internal working models* to the pattern of the *imago Dei* in order to tell our stories from the perspective of *missio Dei*.

In relation to pastoral care, a missional approach to self and God image crisis enables the self to be cognitively immersed with conceptual understanding of *imago Dei* in relation to the mission of God which promises love, safety, security, and identification with his creation. The coping missional hermeneutic here suggested in this study helps to *power* a regulation of the self and God images in view to alter its traumatic self-experiences with the knowledge of the character of God. After a *missio*-logical understanding of God's mission and solidarity in our crisis, a *deflection* is then made towards a *vertically* meaningful redemption. This new missional shift within the context of *interpretation*, *purpose*, and a *prophetic voice*, enables the human *system* to find itself within the character of God on the basis that the "structure of thought and the structure of reality mirror each other" (Grenz 2007: 26). Give that, the self realizes “itself in the world process in accordance with a movement that corresponds to dialectical logic: (Ibid. 27). According to Grenz, this movement of self as well as its interaction and reasoning with religious language or God concepts, "creates the various stages of its own history as it passes through them" (2007:27). This makes it possible to see God as an “Attachment Role Model”, one who is ever loving and present, and whose affection provides safety and security. This is a missional review that sees the self and God image crisis as an opportunity for the Christian mission.

Therefore, as was done in this study, a missional theology of hope that presents God as an “Attachment Role Model” was a necessary academic journey that relates God to the conflicted

Christian Millennial as one who possesses whatever attachment language category necessary to *walk* in a relationship experience with them.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Since the researcher's "knock on the door or the arrival of a questionnaire in the mail signals the beginning of an activity that the respondent has not requested and on that may require a significant portion of his or her time and energy" (Babbie 1995:448). Hence, it was challenging to extract the entire information required from the respondents regarding the subject matter. This was because most of them were students and the overload of social and school engagements of the respondents, to some extent, militated against the availability of some of the selected participants who were supposed to be part of the study.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Future research endeavours that would focus on the following are welcomed:

- The researcher would suggest a prospective study that uses Louw's God image schemas to explore the relationship between God image and gender from a perspective of hope.
- There is also a great need to specify and develop further studies from a coping missional hermeneutic that would inspire an *imago Dei* character that allows one to interpret and deal with specific existential issue in accordance with *missio Dei*.
- Another important study-investment in relation to this study is to see how the different faith groups are sensitive to the abandonment and borderline signals of its Millennials in view to develop a support system for a youth-faith relationship.
- Exploring ways gender or denominational affiliation plays a role in the God image experience of young people can also be an important task.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol Questions

- **How do you feel about your relationship with God?**
 - Tell me about your relationship with your parents?
 - How has your relationship with your parents affected your relationship with God?
 - How has your relationship with God affected how you feel about yourself?
 - In your own words, can you describe God for me, and why is God X?

- **Tell me about yourself**
 - How do you see yourself as a person?
 - What are the things that influence you as a person and why?
 - And how has it influenced your relationship with God?

- **Is there anything else you would like to tell me before we end the interview?**

APPENDIX B: Ethical Clearance Approval Letter



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Approval Notice **Stipulated documents/requirements**

18-Jun-2014
Counted, Victor V

Proposal #: HS1025/2014

Title: Millennial identity, Attachment, and God Image Tendencies within the Reformed, Roman Catholic, and Pentecostal Churches in Stellenbosch Municipality

Dear Mr Victor Counted,

Your **Stipulated documents/requirements** received on **18-Jun-2014**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **18-Jun-2014** and was approved.
Sincerely,

Clarissa GRAHAM
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

APPENDIX C: Religious Institution Cover Letter and Informed Consent Form



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

“For Religious Leaders/Authorities”

Millennial Identities as Emerging Ecumenical Missional Paradigm: A Critical Study of Culture as a Crisis and Opportunity for Mission

You are asked to participate in a study conducted by VICTOR COUNTED, from the department of Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University. Ultimately, the results of this research will contribute to the thesis of the researcher who is an MPhil student in Religion and Culture at Stellenbosch University. Your church was selected as a possible site in this study because your church and/or youth group meet the requirements of my research focus. Among others, your church is located within Stellenbosch, has a substantial number of young people of your denomination who are between the ages of 18 and 34 years. If you decide to participate, will provide information that will help pastoral care providers, researchers, and lay Christians to better understand how young people feel about God and themselves. Please note that the Stellenbosch University, ethics committee, which ensures that projects like this do not harm individuals, has approved this research.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how young people feel about themselves and their relationship with God in order to help churches to better provide for their spiritual needs.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. To respond with a letter of approval from your church, reflecting my name and my research title, which gives me permission to do the research with your youth group?
2. Help me access and recommend youths from your church that are active members of the youth fellowship group and are between ages 18 – 34.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This research is considered a medium risk research. Chances are that some of your youths might experience some emotional discomfort while answering questions about their experiences and relationship with God. However, if there is anything that makes them uncomfortable or that might inadvertently upset them, they are free to discuss this further with their church leader and can stop

completing the questionnaire or the interview, should they participate in the latter as well. They can discuss this with their spiritual leader/priest/pastor. In any case, if they would like to also speak to a psychologist, they may contact, free of charge Ms. Murial Brent, who is a Clinical Psychologist at this address:

Eikestad Mall, Andringa Street,
Stellenbosch 7600
Practice no. 8640327.
abrent@absamail.co.za
021 843 3761

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no monetary benefits for participating in this study. However, the researcher believes the study questionnaires will help the participants express how they feel about God and their selves. Secondly, the findings in this study will provide information that will help pastoral care providers, researchers, and lay Christians to better understand how young people feel about God and themselves, and also how their church's theology mediate this construct. Even so, the findings will help the church upend the declining membership of youths in the church.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

I want your decision about participating in this study as a church to be absolutely voluntary. No payment will be made for participating in the study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with your youth group or church will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. By law, I mean, the only information I would be legally mandated to share is any indication that a youth is thinking of harming him- or herself or someone else, or that he/she is engaging in some sort of child or elder abuse. In any case, confidentiality will be maintained by keeping the names of your church and youths anonymous. All data will be password-protected in the researcher's computer and will not be shared with anybody, including the youths' counselor, pastor, or school officials. Access to the research data is only restricted to the researcher and his study leader.

The results of this study will be used in professional publications and/or presentations, but I will remove any information that would make youths from your church and/or your church identifiable.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your youth group can choose whether to be in this study or not. If they volunteer to be in this study, they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. They may also refuse to answer any question(s) they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw them from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. For example, if they experience any cognitive and/or emotional setback while answering the self-report questionnaires.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any question or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact one of the following persons:

- Prof. D.X. Simon, Supervisor: 021 808 3636 or DSimon@sun.ac.za
- Victor Counted, Principal Investigator: 0824253733 or 18443818@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Your church may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to _____¹ by _____² in _____³ and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent that the youth group in our church may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Representative	Signature of Representative

Date Signed

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ and/or [his/her] representative _____. [~~He~~/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

Signature of Investigator	Date

¹ Name of church or church legal representative
² Name of Investigator (Victor Counted)
³ The language in which the information was presented

APPENDIX D: Participant (Youth) Cover Letter and Informed Consent Form



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

“For Christian Millennials”

MILLENNIAL IDENTITIES AS EMERGING ECUMENICAL MISSIONAL PARADIGM: A CRITICAL STUDY OF CULTURE AS A CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSION

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by VICTOR COUNTED, from the department of Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University. Ultimately, the results of this research will contribute to the thesis of the researcher who is an MPhil student in Religion and Culture at Stellenbosch University. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you and your church meet the requirements of my research focus. Among others, your church is located within Stellenbosch, has a substantial number of young people of your denomination and you are part of your church's youth group, and between the ages of 18 and 34 years. If you decide to participate, will provide information that will help pastoral care providers, researchers, and lay Christians to better understand how young people feel about God and themselves. Please note that the Stellenbosch University, ethics committee, which ensures that projects like this do not harm individuals, has approved this research.

10. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how young people feel about themselves and about their relationship with God in order to help churches to better provide for your spiritual needs.

11. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

I ask for an interview with me. The interview will be completely voluntary and will take place at a time and place convenient for you. If it is impossible to have the interview in person you might be asked for a telephone interview and all interviews will be recorded, but no one but me will have access to either the recorded interviews. If you would like to see the written version of the interview you are welcome and simply need to ask me for it.

12. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This research is considered a medium risk research. Chances are that you might experience some emotional discomfort while answering questions about your experiences and relationship with God. However, if there is anything that makes you uncomfortable or that might inadvertently upset you and you want to discuss this further you may stop completing the questionnaire or the interview, should you participate in the latter as well. You may discuss this with your spiritual leader/priest/pastor. In any case, if you would like to also speak to a psychologist, you may contact, free of charge, Ms. Murial Brent, who is a Clinical Psychologist at this address:

Eikestad Mall, Andringa Street,
Stellenbosch 7600
Practice no. 8640327.
abrent@absamail.co.za
021 843 3761

13. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Your answers will provide information that will help pastoral care providers, researchers, and lay Christians better understand how young people feel about God and themselves, and also they can better serve you in light of this.

14. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your decision to participate in this study will be absolutely voluntary. No payment will be made for participating in the study.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your youth group or church will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Your name and that of your church will not be mentioned in the report thesis that will be written on the study. All data will be password-protected on my computer and will not be shared with anybody, including your youth counselor, pastor, or school.

16. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose to participate or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any question(s) you do not want to and still remain in the study, or I may withdraw your participation if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

17. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any question or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact one of the following persons:

- Prof. D.X. Simon, my supervisor: 021 808 3636 or DSimon@sun.ac.za
- Or myself, Victor Counted: 0824253733 or 18443818@sun.ac.za

18. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to _____⁴ by _____⁵ in _____⁶ and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent that the youth group in our church may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ and/or [his/her] representative _____. [~~He~~/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English.

Signature of Investigator

Date

⁴ Name of participant or legal representative

⁵ Name of Investigator (Victor Counted)

⁶ The language in which the information was presented