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# Attachment, Forgiveness, and Generativity in Midlife

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Attachment, Forgiveness, and Generativity in Midlife

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology

George Fox University

In partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology

In Clinical Psychology

Newberg, Oregon

April, 2017

Attachment, Forgiveness and Generaltivity in Midlife

by Chad R. Christensen

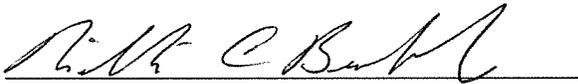
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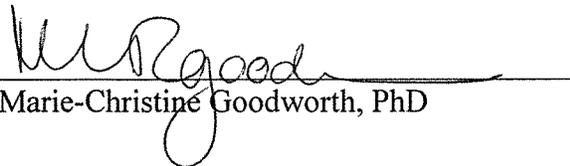


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## Attachment, Forgiveness, and Generativity in Midlife

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**Abstract**

Current literature suggests secure attachment and forgiveness are positively correlated. However, to date, the relationship of adult attachment, forgiveness, and generativity has not been explored. In this current study, middle-aged adults, ages 45-80 from the George Fox University Alumni were surveyed to explore attachment (anxious and avoidant), generativity, and forgiveness. Since generativity is a prosocial trait, synonymous with altruism, suggesting one's selfless service and concern for the well-being for others, it is predicted that generativity will have a positive relationship with forgiveness, and secure attachment. Further, multiple regression statistics were used to explore which of the independent variables (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity) has the greatest effect on the dependent variable of trait forgiveness.

Results indicated that there was a medium positive relationship between forgiveness and secure attachment, between generativity and secure attachment, and between forgiveness and generativity. Multiple regression found that each of the independent variables (anxious

attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity) were significant predictors of forgiveness with anxious attachment being the strongest predictor of forgiveness

*Keywords:* forgiveness, attachment, insecure attachment, secure attachment, generativity.

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## Chapter 1

### Literature Review

The field of attachment was established in the 1950s with the work of John Bowlby, an English researcher. While attachment is a difficult area to research because of problems inherent in operationalizing such a complex construct, considerable research as well as theories in attachment abound.

Erikson described a sequence of eight developmental stages covering the entire lifespan (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). The first (trust versus mistrust), sixth (intimacy versus isolation), and seventh (generativity versus self-absorption/stagnation) stages focus largely on relational issues. A person who fails to resolve the trust versus mistrust crisis, often related to early attachment, can perceive the world as unpredictable, threatening, and unsafe (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Such a person would likely be insecurely attached to his caregiver, which could lead to insecure attachments throughout adulthood, resulting in difficulties responding to offenses with forgiveness (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010; Horwitz, 2005; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000).

Failure to resolve the intimacy versus isolation crisis could also lead one toward stagnation (instead of generativity), fear of emotional connecting, and avoidance of being in committed relationships (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). The stagnation crisis is characterized by living a more selfish lifestyle and worrying less about the well-being of others. Thus, when relational developmental stages are unmet, one's level of attachment, forgiveness and

generativity may be negatively affected. However, since forgiveness requires showing empathy toward the offender, an individual who is highly generative would be predicted to have an increased ability to forgive and more secure attachments (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

### **Forgiveness**

Within the last decade and a half, psychologists and researchers have begun to give serious attention to the construct of forgiveness. While there is no consensus around a universal definition of forgiveness, definitions frequently agree on one core feature: when people forgive, what they think of the perpetrator becomes more positive and less negative (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Other researchers suggest that forgiveness consists of resolving the anger associated with the hurt and possibly continuing a relationship with the perpetrator (Barnes, Carvallo, Brown, & Osterman, 2010; Burnette, Davis, Green, Worthington, & Bradfield, 2009; Burnette, Taylor, Worthington, & Forsyth, 2007; Horwitz, 2005; McCullough & Worthington Jr., 1999; Yaben, 2009). Forgiveness can be further explained by an act and extension of pardoning or releasing another from injury or debt (Augsberger, 1996). Augsberger (1996) explains that a release of debt through forgiveness is constantly available if we freely choose it. Forgiveness is a process that requires adult skills, maturity and a commitment to work toward reconciliation. This is opined to be one of the highest experiences of being human (Augsberger, 1996).

Jacinto & Edwards (2011) described forgiveness as a process that occurs in four different stages, including recognition, responsibility, expression, and re-creating. Recognition includes becoming aware of an unforgiven offense and how it is negatively influencing one's life. The second stage of responsibility involves recognizing one's personal responsibility to forgive, and

coming to the awareness that others are imperfect. Next, the stage of expression involves encountering the negative feelings that unforgiveness triggers and being able to work through the emotions. Finally, the stage of re-creating recognizes being caught in a pattern of incomplete forgiveness and having a new direction in the future.

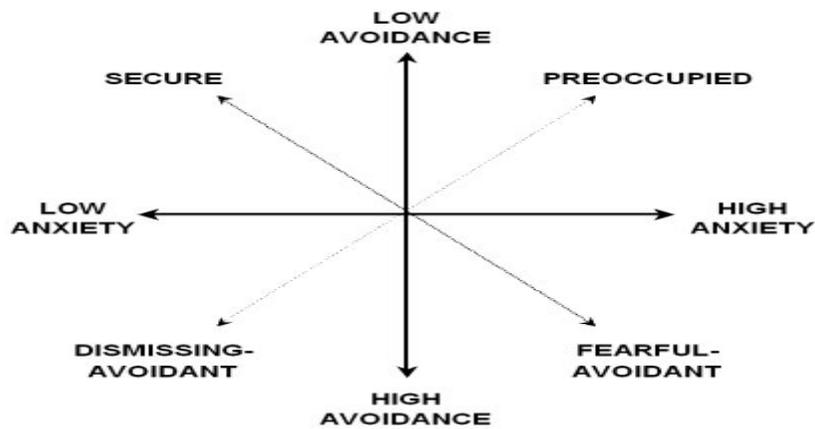
Many researchers ignore the religious roots of the concept of forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington Jr., 1999). Within Christian faith traditions, forgiveness of sin includes confessing guilt and asking for the forgiveness of God. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus parallels divine forgiveness and one's forgiveness of others. In his last words he empathized with his offenders, asking God to forgive them, for they knew not what they had done (Luke 23:34). A majority of Christian sects tend to view forgiveness as a biblical command, referring to Matthew 18:22, in which Jesus answers the question of how often one should forgive with the response "seventy times seven," implying that the answer is always (Gold, 2010).

In one study investigating offenses that had gone unforgiven, Rapske, Boon, Alibhai, and Kheong (2010) recognized that a person's capacity to forgive might not depend on the harshness of the offense, but on the differences of people's forgiveness thresholds. Some individuals have higher thresholds before being unable to forgive while others may resist forgiving others of small offenses that exceed their individual thresholds (Ashy, Mercurio & Malley-Morrison, 2010; Burnette et al., 2009; Rapske et al. 2010). Forgiveness also requires the ability to tolerate negative emotions in recognizing and experiencing the pain, communication of emotional feelings, thinking differently toward the offender, and regulating one's own emotions (Lawler-Row, Younger, Piferi, & Jones, 2006).

**Adult Attachment**

Longitudinal studies have shown a 70-80 % connection between attachment of infancy and that of adulthood (Horwitz, 2005). Yet, 20-30 % of adults may experience changes in attachment styles from infancy into adulthood (Finkel, Burnette, & Scissors, 2007; Horwitz, 2005). Changes in attachment include a combination of variables, including changes in relationships, situational events, and many other factors (Finkel et al., 2007; Horwitz, 2005).

Adult attachment has been found useful in evaluating within the avoidant and anxiety dimensions (Givertz & Safford, 2011). Figure 1 below displays adult attachment as stemming from combinations of high versus low avoidance and high versus low anxiety. Attachment avoidance reflects the extent to which an individual is uncomfortable with closeness and prefers emotional distance. Attachment anxiety reflects the extent to which an individual craves closeness and connection with others but worries about not being valued (Givertz & Safford, 2011). People scoring low on both dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) are said to have secure attachment while higher scores on either or both dimensions reflects a greater likelihood of insecure attachments.

**Figure 1. Adult Attachment: Anxiety and Avoidance**

\* Shaver & Fraley (2010). Self-report measures of adult attachment.  
<http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/measures/measures.html>.

**Securely attached adults.** According to the Adult Attachment Interview, securely attached adults can talk more openly about their life experiences, good or bad. Their ideas are logical and show signs of insight, awareness, and reflection (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Not all recall their early experiences as positive and some had even been abused. However, these adults came to terms with their early experiences and can answer questions about their relationship to their parents and early childhood experiences with enough detail without giving too much information. Those in the secure category were also able to monitor their thinking, summarize answers, and clearly let the interviewer know when they had completed their answers to questions about their attachment experiences (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

**Insecurely attached adults.** Insecurely attached children in the laboratory study mentioned by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978) showed a variety of avoidant responses

also seen in adults, such as being oblivious to attachment figures and focusing on other objects (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Horwitz, 2005). When avoidant patterns are developed and maintained throughout adulthood, one may have difficulty sustaining meaningful relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Barnes et al., 2010; Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006; Horwitz, 2005).

Some of the challenges insecure adults have to sustain meaningful relationships became evident in a study in which Lawler-Row et al. (2006) conducted interviews of adults who were betrayed by a loved one. Blood pressure and heart readings were measured and compared between securely and insecurely attached individuals. The researchers found that when participants talked about a relationship in which they were betrayed, insecurely attached adults took significantly longer to return to normal heart rate and blood pressure readings (Lawler-Row et al., 2006).

### **Attachment and Forgiveness**

An adult's ability to deal with relationship distress may vary depending on their attachment orientation (Yaben, 2009). Individuals classified as having a secure attachment style report higher levels of forgiveness across a variety of studies. Securely attached adults have a greater ability to harness and regulate their emotions. This can contribute to improved relationships and can be predictive of secure attachment (Burnette et al., 2009; Burnette et al., 2007; Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004; Lawler-row et al., 2006; Wang, 2008; Webb, Call, Chickering, Colburn, & Heisler, 2006).

Wang (2008) studied attachment and forgiveness among college students in Taiwan and found securely attached college students experience less hostility, less anger and greater ability to forgive others. Because letting go of anger is a major component of forgiveness, it is easier for

securely attached persons to forgive those who had hurt them (Burnette et al., 2007; Lawler-row et al., 2006; Wang, 2008).

However, it is not surprising that forgiveness becomes less probable among adults who are preoccupied in their style of attachment (Finkel et al., 2007). Those experiencing a preoccupied type of attachment anxiety do not believe that forgiving will lead to a better relationship outcome (Finkel et al., 2007). Additionally, dismissive-avoidant individuals would be low in the capacity to forgive because they show a pattern of detaching themselves from people who have disappointed or frustrated them (Horwitz, 2005). Insecurely attached individuals develop an early distrust of closeness, resulting in difficulties sustaining healthy and meaningful relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Barnes et al., 2010; Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006; Horwitz, 2005). The difficulty insecurely attached individuals have to forgive others was evident in a study in which Lawler-Row et al. (2006) performed forgiveness assessments of victims who had been betrayed. Results revealed that insecurely attached individuals had a greater desire to avoid the offender and were less likely to work through the conflict in ways that would lead to forgiveness (Lawler-Row et al., 2006). In addition, insecurely attached individuals were less likely to regulate their emotions, which contributed to an impaired ability to forgive due to holding on to negative emotions (Burnette et al. 2009).

### **Generativity**

The concept of generativity versus stagnation was introduced over 50 years ago by Erik Erikson and is the seventh of the eight stages of human development, associated with the middle adult years (Urien & Killbourne, 2011). It can be understood as the capability of producing or

creating good, increasing one's education, serving others, political activity, volunteerism, and striving to create good for one's future and for future generations (Urien & Kilbourne, 2011).

The middle-aged adult focuses time, energy, and resources on raising children, building communities, teaching skills, passing on traditions, working for positive social change, and engaging in a wide range of endeavors to promote the development of the next generation (Brelsford, Marinelli, Ciarrochi, & Dy-Liacco, 2009; McAdams, 2006; Urien & Kilbourne, 2011). In contrast, adults that are unable to rise to the challenges of generativity may experience what Erikson called "stagnation" or self-preoccupation (Brelsford et al., 2009; McAdams, 2006; Urien & Kilbourne, 2011). Stagnant individuals may feel they cannot generate successful outcomes that will leave a positive mark on their world (McAdams, 2006).

Shaped by family, work, civic, religious, and friendship roles, generativity is expressed through a wide range of activities and commitments. It has been shown to predict solid parenting styles and is associated with active involvement in children's schooling, friendship and social support. Generativity has also been associated with participation in politics, religious involvement, volunteering, positive personality characteristics, and higher levels of well-being (McAdams, 2006).

### **Generativity and Attachment**

Both attachment and generativity are powerful influences on behavior throughout adulthood. Sigmund Freud suggested secure attachment (love) and having generative traits (work) is what predicts one's happiness (Erikson, 1950/1963). For Freud, love and work are powerful methods by which we try to be happy and keep suffering at bay. Erikson also considered adult attachment and generativity to be highly related. According to Erikson's

developmental stages, young adulthood should be a time to establish and strengthen the bonds with those who will accompany one throughout life. This is what Erik Erikson would refer to as “intimacy.” In addition, the generativity characteristic later in life is highly related to attachment (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

### **Summary**

Prior research (Burnette et al., 2009; Burnette et al., 2007; Horwitz, 2005) has established a positive relationship between attachment and forgiveness. The stronger the attachment, the more likely the individual is to manage the forgiveness process. This relationship is logical in light of the larger body of attachment research, which establishes that securely attached individuals have many advantages in the arena of mental health and wellness. However, most, if not all studies exploring these topic areas were conducted with young adults between the ages of 18 to 25. The middle aged adult population has rarely been investigated when studying the forgiveness experiences of securely and insecurely attached individuals. Further, a question that has not been investigated is the relationship between attachment, forgiveness, and Erikson’s midlife developmental task -- generativity.

Since research demonstrates that attachment is correlated with forgiveness and that attachment is correlated with generativity (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010), it seems reasonable to expect that forgiveness and generativity are correlated as well. However, there is no research stating whether or not generativity is correlated with forgiveness. As a result, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship of adult attachment, generativity and forgiveness in a population of middle aged adults. Additionally, analysis was undertaken to determine which of

the following; anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, or generativity, are stronger predictors of one's level of forgiveness.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The survey was sent to a random selection of George Fox University Alumni who were predicted to be between 45-60 years of age based on having graduated between 1977 and 1992. George Fox University is a liberal arts and sciences Christian university, located in Newberg, Oregon. In the 1980s, enrollment was estimated to be in the 500s and currently is around 3,900 students. The sample population included those between the ages of 45-80. Participants below the age of 45 were eliminated from the data set for scoring. The respondents included 223 of 1,356 working email addresses with a response rate of 16.4 percent. Sample characteristics can be seen below as shown in Table 1.

#### **Research Questions**

**Research Question #1.** What is the nature of the relationship between secure and insecure attachment on forgiveness in middle aged adults? The expectation was that forgiveness would be positively correlated with secure attachment.

**Research Question #2.** What is the relationship between secure and insecure attachment and generativity in middle aged adults? Since generativity is associated with prosocial traits (as is secure attachment), it was expected that the relationship between generativity and attachment would be positive.

Table 1.

*Sample Characteristics*

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender - female	130	58.3
Gender- male	92	41.3
Education – BA/BS	97	43.5
Education – MA/MS	77	34.5
Education – Doctoral	26	11.7
Education – Some grad school	23	10.3
Ethnicity – Caucasian/White	212	95.1
Ethnicity – Multi-ethnic	5	2.2
Ethnicity – Latino/a	3	1.3
Ethnicity – Other	1	.4
Marital status- Married	176	83.0
Marital status- Divorced	16	7.5
Marital status- Single	12	5.7
Marital status- Widow	8	3.8
Age 31-44	10	4.5
Age 45-60	178	79.8
Age 61-80	34	15.2

Notes:  $n = 223$

**Research Question #3.** What is the nature of the relationship between generativity and forgiveness in middle aged adults? It was hypothesized that generativity and forgiveness would be positively correlated.

**Research Question #4.** Which of the independent variables (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity) is the best predictor of forgiveness?

### **Procedure**

After receiving approval from the university's institutional review board, data was collected via Survey Monkey. Participants were contacted according to the method Dillman (1991) recommends, which includes an email in advance before the actual survey is emailed. The survey, on average, took 5-10 minutes to complete and was comprised of the Experiences in Close Relationships Revised (ECR-R) scale, Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS), Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS), and single items regarding Prayer, Spirituality, and Religiosity. The participants were sent a survey link and asked by the researcher to carefully read and agree to the informed consent. By proceeding with the survey, it was assumed that participants consented. Participants were asked demographic questions, single items related to prayer, religiosity, and spirituality, and then questions regarding forgiveness, attachment (experiences in close relationships) and generativity (one's willingness to be a productive and caring individual).

### **Measures**

**Loyola Generativity Scale.** The 20-item Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) was used to assess the core elements of generativity. Responses ranged from 0 (*never applies to me*) to 3 (*very often or nearly always applies to me*). Total scores range from 0-60 with higher scores predicting one who is more generative. This measure exhibits high test-

retest reliability scores (.73), high internal consistency scores (.83), and low correlations with social desirability (McAdams, 2006).

**Experiences in Close Relationships Revised (ECR-R).** Adult attachment was measured with the Experiences in Close Relationships Revised Scale (ECR-R), which measures adult attachment styles of anxiety and avoidance. The participants were presented with 36 items. Of the 36 items in the ECR-R, 18 items were related to anxious attachment, and 18 items were related to avoidant attachment. The participants rate their experiences in close relationships on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The scores in each domain (anxiety or avoidance) range from 18-126 on each scale. A lower score on both scales (anxiety and avoidance) would suggest secure attachment. Whereas, a high score in either scale (anxiety or avoidant) suggests an insecure attachment. Test-retest reliability of the ECR-R over six weeks is .86 (Shaver & Fraley, 2010);  $\alpha$ -coefficients were .93 for attachment anxiety, and 0.90 for attachment avoidance.

**The Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS).** The Trait Forgiveness Scale (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrot, & Wade, 2005) measures trait forgiveness using a 10-item scale. This scale measures an individual's nature to forgive personal offenses over time and across an assortment of different situations. Each item is rated from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The scores range from 10-50 with 50 being the highest score, suggesting one who is more able to forgive others of an interpersonal offense across time and various situations. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .80, .78, .79, and .74. In addition, Rasch items separation reliabilities were .95, .97, .96, and .90 (Berry et al., 2005).

**Statistical Analysis**

The statistical analysis was completed using SPSS for demographics of gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and marital status. Pearson Product Correlations were used to determine the relationship between forgiveness, adult attachment and generativity. Multiple regression analysis was used to answer which independent variable (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity) is the stronger predictor of forgiveness.

### Chapter 3

#### Results

The sample means and standard deviations in the various scales collected are reported in Table 2. To look for the relationship of the variables examined, the researcher used Pearson Product Correlations, using an alpha level of .01. Multiple Regression was also used, with an alpha level of .01, to predict the amount of trait forgiveness (dependent variable) that is contained within the independent variables of (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity).

Table 2.

*Sample Means and Standard Deviations*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Religion (1-5)	4.20	1.07
Spirituality (1-5)	4.53	.71
Prayer (1-5)	4.21	.91
Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS)	39.42	6.21
Anxious Attachment	28.25	19.78
Avoidant Attachment	43.97	20.13
Generativity	40.41	8.30

Notes:  $n = 223$

In response to the first research question, *what is the relationship between secure and insecure attachment in forgiveness*, attachment anxiety had a medium negative correlation with forgiveness ( $r(165) = -.451, p < .01$ ) demonstrating that as attachment anxiety increased forgiveness decreased. Avoidant attachment also had a medium negative correlation with forgiveness ( $r(165) = -.440, p < .01$ ) demonstrating that as attachment avoidance increased forgiveness decreased (Table 3), indicating that an individual scoring high in anxious and avoidant attachment would score lower in levels of trait forgiveness (one's ability to forgive personal offenses over time and across different situations). In other words, according to this study, forgiveness is positively correlated with secure attachment and negatively correlated with insecure attachment in middle-aged adults as hypothesized.

Table 3.

<i>Correlations</i>	Forgiveness	Anxious Attachment	Avoidant Attachment
Anxious Attachment	-.451		
Avoidant Attachment	-.440	.419	
Generativity	.376	-.345	-.403

Notes:  $N = 223$

In response to the second research question, *what is the relationship between attachment and generativity in middle-aged adults*, generativity had a medium negative correlation with anxious attachment ( $r(165) = -.345, p < .01$ ). This demonstrates that as attachment anxiety

increased generativity decreased. Also, there was a medium negative correlation with avoidant attachment ( $r(165) = -.403, p < .01$ ) demonstrating that as attachment avoidance increased generativity decreased. Thus, according to this study, one who is more generative would have a more secure attachment as hypothesized.

In response to the third research question, *what is the relationship between generativity and forgiveness*, results yielded a positive medium correlation ( $r(165) = .376, p < .01$ ). This demonstrates that as forgiveness increased generativity also increased. This indicates that those who are more generative are also found to be more forgiving.

In response to the final research question, *which of the independent variables (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity) is the greatest predictor of the dependent variable (forgiveness)*, forward multiple regression was conducted. Regression results indicated an overall model of the three predictors (anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and generativity) that significantly predict forgiveness ( $R^2 = .289, F(1, 165) = 21.91, p < .001$ ). This model accounted for 28.9% of the variance in forgiveness (Adjusted  $R^2 = .275$ ).

In addition, while anxious attachment appeared to be the strongest predictor of forgiveness ( $\beta = -.321, t(165) = 14.69, p < .001$ ), avoidant attachment ( $\beta = -.197, p = .013$ ) and generativity ( $\beta = .165, p = .025$ ) were also significant predictors of forgiveness.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion**

This study reviewed literature regarding forgiveness, adult attachment, and generativity in middle aged adults. Because research suggests forgiveness and secure attachment are positively correlated, and that generativity is commonly positively correlated with a secure attachment style, this study sought to explore whether generativity was also positively correlated with forgiveness among middle-aged adults.

Four research questions were explored. The first was if forgiveness would be positively correlated with secure attachment in middle-aged adults. This research question was answered as there was a significant relationship between forgiveness and a secure attachment style in middle-aged adults. Research has indicated that individuals classified as having a secure attachment style have a greater ability to harness and regulate their emotions which can be predictive of forgiveness (Burnette et al., 2009; Burnette et al., 2007; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Lawler-row et al., 2006; Wang, 2008; Webb et al., 2006). In addition, securely attached individuals experience less hostility, less anger and greater ability to forgive others (Burnette et al., 2007; Lawler-row et al., 2006; Wang, 2008). This seems reasonable as securely attached individuals hold a more positive view of themselves and others than those insecurely attached. Also, securely attached individuals have the maturity and cognitive flexibility to handle the difficulties that are common to adult relationships. Anxiously attached individuals typically have a skewed view of relationships and may not believe that forgiving another would lead to a better

relationship outcome. Furthermore, avoidant-attached individuals may be low in the capacity to forgive because they show a pattern of detaching themselves from people who have disappointed or frustrated them.

The second research question was whether the relationship between generativity and attachment would be positively correlated in middle-aged adults. This was found to be true among the middle-aged adults sampled in the present study. The more generativity one reports, the more securely attached one also reports. These two variables have not been quantitatively researched in past studies but have been considered powerful influences on behavior throughout adulthood. Erikson considered adult attachment and generativity to be highly related. Securely attached individuals tend to be more satisfied in their relationships; they feel more connected, and are able to offer support to those with whom they share a relationship. Similarly, this relates with generativity as it is understood as producing or creating good, investing in future generations, serving others, and passing on traditions.

The third research question was whether generativity and forgiveness in middle-aged adults would be positively correlated. This was confirmed in the present study; adults who reported higher generativity reported higher forgiveness levels. Even though no prior studies have examined the relationship between forgiveness and generativity, since research demonstrates that attachment is correlated with both forgiveness and generativity (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010), it seems reasonable to expect that forgiveness and generativity are correlated as well. Generativity is commonly described as a prosocial characteristic that may include activities such as church attendance and involvement in religious and spiritual activities, which are highly

correlated with forgiveness. Generativity is also said to be an act of giving back to the earth, community and/or important individuals throughout life (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

In response to the final research question, this was the first study to indicate that individuals who are anxiously attached may be less able to forgive, compared to those of an avoidant style of attachment, or individuals who score lower in self-reported generativity. Individuals with an anxious style of attachment typically hold unrealistic relationship expectations. They tend to be desperate to form a fairy-tale bond with others and hope close interpersonal relationships will fill a void that they feel. Thus, anxiously attached individuals may be less willing to forgive because they do not believe that forgiveness will lead to a positive relationship outcome.

Taken together, these results appear to support the proposition that forgiveness requires empathy. We know empathy requires the ability to get beyond oneself and to see from another's perspective and it's possible that one way middle-aged adults demonstrate the ability to get beyond themselves is through generativity. However, what this study demonstrates is that those who are less anxious in their style of attachment, appear more likely to forgive than those possessing high scores on generativity or low avoidant attachment styles. This indicates that individuals who are more anxiously attached may have greater difficulty achieving interpersonal forgiveness than those who are less generative (stagnant) or more avoidantly attached. As stated previously, anxiously attached adults may hold a fairy-tale idea of relationships, not believing that forgiving will lead a positive relationship outcome.

**Limitations**

There are limitations in this study that should be noted. A limitation of multicollinearity should be mentioned. Multicollinearity is a problem that arises when there exists correlations among independent variables in a regression analysis. Essentially, since attachment (anxious, avoidant) and generativity are correlated, they are overlapping constructs. Yet, the danger of multicollinearity is most relevant for variables that correlate at .80 and higher. The independent variables in the present study yielded medium, not strong correlations.

Another limitation is related to the study's participants. Given that the participants were highly educated and religious; the results may not be generalizable to all middle-aged adults. Because most the participants reported higher education (BA/BS, MA/MS degrees) and higher religiosity than the general population, participants may have been more generative, since church attendance and higher education are theorized by some researchers to be predictive of higher generativity (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Thus this sample may have been more securely attached and forgiving than the general population which would limit the generalizability of the results.

Finally, since the data collection method used self-report measures, the scores received from participants may have been unduly affected by social desirability and thus may not have been a completely true reflection of the characteristics in those participants.

**Areas for Future Research**

Since this study primarily included middle-aged adults (45-60), future studies could test the hypothesis among other populations, such as college students and those from a minority or diverse background. Clinically, an assessment of a patients' level of forgiveness, attachment, and

generativity may adequately inform the clinician to consider appropriate intervention strategies.

Future studies may include an examination of process-based interventions to promote interpersonal forgiveness, therapist interventions specializing in attachment theory, and psychoeducation.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, the aim of this study was to examine the relationship between forgiveness, adult attachment and generativity in middle-aged adults. Forgiveness had a moderately significant relationship with secure attachment, and moderately significant relationship with generativity, suggesting that the higher level of reported forgiveness, the more securely attachment and generative one is. Moreover, attachment also had a moderately significant relationship with generativity. Thus, higher levels of self-reported secure attachment also predict higher levels of generativity. A unique finding in this study was that an anxious style of attachment appeared to more strongly predict forgiveness than generativity or an avoidant style of attachment. Thus, one who was less anxious in their style of attachment appeared more likely to forgive than those possessing high scores on generativity or low avoidant attachment styles.

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**Appendix A**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

Chad R. Christensen

201 West Edgewood Drive Newberg, OR 97132

Direct: 208-994-8293 Email: christensenc13@georgefox.edu

**EDUCATION**

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- 2013 - Pres.    **George Fox University** Newberg, OR  
*Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology: **APA Accredited***
- Doctoral Candidate of Clinical Psychology
  - Anticipated Completion: May 2018
  - Dissertation: “The Relationship of Attachment Generativity and Forgiveness in Midlife”
- 2015            **George Fox University** Newberg,  
OR *Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology: **APA Accredited***
- Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology
- 2012            **Northwest Nazarene University** Nampa, ID  
*Graduate Department of Counselor Education: **CACREP Accredited***
- Masters of Science in Clinical Counseling
- 2008            **Brigham Young University** Provo, UT
- Bachelors of Science, Sociology

**SUPERVISED CLINICAL EXPERIENCE**

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- 2016 – Pres.    **Northwest Family Psychology** Vancouver, WA
- Population: Adult, Adolescent and Child Forensic
  - Low SES to middle class individuals from suburban and rural communities.

- Perform clinical interviews for a variety of forensic evaluations including bilateral child custody, parenting capacity, criminal responsibility and competency evaluations.
- Scoring, interpreting and writing results for a variety of assessments including personality, intelligence, cognitive and neurological assessments.
- Supervisor: Nicole Zenger, Ph.D.
- Group Supervisor: Jeff Lee, Ph.D.

2013 - Pres. **Cedar Hills Hospital** Portland, OR  
*Intake Admissions Therapist*

- Perform structured intake interviews for admitting hospital patients.
- Arrange inpatient hospitalization for individuals presenting with chemical dependency, acute mental illness, suicidal ideation, chronic pain, PTSD, and complex medical concerns.
- Screen referrals from local hospitals and emergency departments for inpatient treatment and appropriate program placement.
- Respond to crisis calls, set up assessment appointments and make referrals.

2014 - Pres. **Cedar Hills Hospital** Portland, OR  
*Utilization Review Management*

- Present acute clinical criteria to third party payers such as BCBS, Tricare and Optum insurance companies for inpatient authorization of psychiatric, chemical dependency, and military patients.
- Serve as a liaison with medical staff and other clinical hospital departments.
- Complete weekly Medicare chart audits to ensure compliance and ethical standards are met.

2015 – 2016 **Oregon State Hospital** Newberg, OR

- Population: Adult Forensic
- Perform individual therapy and legal skills groups for the purpose of competency restoration.
- Assessments including personality, intellectual, memory/learning and malingering assessments.
- Scoring, interpreting, and report writing.

- Attend monthly didactic trainings including neuropsychological assessment, guilty except for insanity, and competency evaluation.
- Supervisor: Nicole Ball, J.D., Ph.D.
- Group Supervisor: Brian Hartman, Psy.D.

2014 -2015     **Physician's Medical Clinic**     McMinnville, OR

- Individual psychotherapy and psychological assessment for ages 6-90 in primary care.
- Administer, score, and write assessment summaries of chronic pain patients including: PHQ-9, Upload Risk Tool (ORT), Stop-Bang Questionnaire, Duke, SOAPP, and West Haven-Yale Multidimensional Pain Inventory to assess areas of risk.
- Short-term individual therapy (30 minute-sessions) utilizing CBT, ACT, Mindfulness, and Interpersonal interventions.
- Bi-weekly group psychotherapy with chronic pain patients addressing alternative strategies of managing chronic pain.
- Consultations with physician's regarding chronic pain, diabetes, medication compliance, suicidal ideation, anxiety, depression, relational conflicts, attention and school related problems.
- Supervisor: Kristie Schmidlkofer, Psy.D.
- Group Supervision: Laura Fisk, Psy.D., and Caitlin Speck, M.A.

2013 – 2014     **Pre-Practicum I & II**     Newberg, OR

- George Fox University
- Individual outpatient person-centered psychotherapy with volunteer undergraduates
- All sessions video recorded and reviewed with supervision
- Report writing, case presentations and consultations with supervision
- Supervisors: Carlos Toloyo, Psy.D.; Joel Simons, M.A

2012 - 2013     **Intermountain Hospital**     Boise, ID

*Program Therapist/Case Manager- Intensive Care Unit*

- Individual brief solution-focused psychotherapy for patients on the intensive care unit with acute psychiatric illness, chemical dependency and co-occurring disorders.
- Group CBT psychotherapy for intensive care unit patients.
- Perform case management duties including discharge planning and pre-discharge suicide and homicide risk assessments.
- Solution-focused family therapy sessions for adults and adolescents addressing the following: follow-up care, conflict resolution, impulse control, depression, suicidal ideation, and medication compliance.
- Supervisors: Gina Pratt, LCPC and Lara Marsters, LCPC

2012

**Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections**

Nampa, ID

*Clinical Counseling Internship*

- Perform testing for juveniles including MMPI-A, SASSI and GAIN assessments.
- Report writing of assessment findings.
- Participate in treatment team meetings discussing the assessment findings and appropriate program placement for each juvenile.
- Co-facilitate weekly psychotherapy groups for inpatient juveniles addressing co-occurring disorders using CBT and DBT.
- Supervisor: Valerie Zuniga, LCPC

**RELEVANT TRAINING/EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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2013 - Pres.

**Clinical Team/ Case Conference**

Newberg, OR

- Weekly faculty facilitated small group case review and clinical mentoring
- De-identified client case presentations, discussion and assessment: Using bio-psycho-social, Bronfenbrenner, and ADDRESSING models of conceptualization coupled with chosen theoretical orientation of the presenter.

2013 - 2014

**Student Mentor**

Newberg, OR

- Provide weekly guidance for incoming clinical psychology students.
- Work both independently and as part of a team with fellow Peer Mentors.
- Educate new students about various resources and student services available at George Fox.

2016- Pres. **Student Supervisor** Newberg, OR

- Meet weekly with a 2<sup>nd</sup> year psychology student.
- Provide weekly support in the development of clinical skills.
- Interact with the student supervisee in a manner that facilitates their self-exploration, problem solving ability and confidence.
- Live observation from a seasoned faculty member two times per semester to evaluate my supervision progress with my assigned student.

## RESEARCH

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2014 - Pres. **George Fox University** Newberg, OR

### *Doctoral Dissertation*

- Examining interpersonal forgiveness among middle-aged adults between the ages of 45-60.
- **Current Status: Full Pass**, Defended 4/5/2017
- Chair: William C. Buhrow, PsyD. ([bbuhrow@georgefox.edu](mailto:buhrow@georgefox.edu)).

2015 - 2016 **Cedar Hills Hospital** Newberg, OR

### *Supplemental Consultation Project*

- Investigating employee burnout among Cedar Hills employees.
- Administered the Copenhagen Burnout inventory and the Abbreviated Maslach Burnout Inventory in an online and paper survey.
- Scored and analyzed using SPSS.
- Presented the results to hospital administrators to inform intervention strategies for employee retention.
- Supervisor: Marie-Christine Goodworth, Ph.D ([mgoodworth@georgefox.edu](mailto:mgoodworth@georgefox.edu)).

2011 - 2012 **Northwest Nazarene University** Nampa, ID

### *Student Research Thesis: Forgiveness, Adult Attachment and Generativity*

- Exploring differences in predictive levels of interpersonal forgiveness, adult attachment, and generativity in midlife.
- Use of Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), Experiences in Close Relationships- Revised (ECR-R) and Loyola Generativity scale (LGS).
- **Thesis Completed: June 2012, Full Pass**

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS

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- 2016        **Forensic Evaluation: Guilty Except for Insanity**  
*Oregon State Hospital- Amanda Davies, Psy.D.*
- 2015        **Forensic Evaluation: Competency to Stand Trial**  
*Oregon State Hospital- Amanda Davies, Psy.D.*
- 2016        **Forensic Evaluation: Child Custody and Parent Capacity**  
*George Fox University (Grand Rounds)- Wendy Bourg, Ph.D*
- 2016        **Assessing & Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR)**  
*Cedar Hills Psychiatric Hospital- Shanna Branham, LCSW*
- 2015        **Neuropsychological Assessment and Evaluation**  
*Oregon State Hospital*
- 2013        **Using tests of Effort in Psychological Assessment & Assessing Mild Cognitive Impairment and Dementia**  
*Paul Green, PhD; Mark Bondi, PhD, ABBP/CN*  
*Northwest Assessment Conference- George Fox University*
- 2012        **Effectiveness with Inpatient Populations**  
*Motivational Interviewing two-day training*  
*Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections*
- 2014        **DSM-V: Changes in Form and Function**  
*Jeri Turgesen, PsyD; Mary Peterson, PsyD*
- 2014        **Updates and changes with the WISC-V & WJ-IV**  
*Northwest Assessment Conference- George Fox University*
- 2014        **Working in a Veterans Administration hospital using Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure Therapy**  
*David Bell-Adaskin, PsyD*
- 2014        **Understanding and Treating ADHD, Learning Disabilities in DSM-V**

*Erika Doty, Psy.D; Tabitha Becker, Psy.D*

2014

**Behaviorist Boot Camp**

Intense multi-day training for brief behavioral interventions and consultations within a primary care setting- *Joel Gregor, PsyD, Dr. Ojimaau, PsyD, Jeri Tergusen, PsyD.*

2015

**Afro-Centric Counseling**

George Fox University: *Marcus Sharpe, PsyD; Dannette Haynes, LCSW*

2014

**Homosexuality, Clients, and Therapy**

George Fox University: *Erika Tan, Psy.D*

2014

**“Face Time,” In an Age of Technological Advancement**

*Doreen Dodgen-Magee, Psy.D.*

2013

**Integrated Primary Care Psychology Now and the Future**

George Fox University- *Brian Sandoval, PsyD; Juliette Cutts, Psy.D. - Salude Medical Center*

2013

**Idaho Counseling Association Annual Psychotherapy Conference**

2012

**Use of Adlerian Psychotherapy in Practice**

Adlerian Psychotherapy two-day Conference

**HONORS AND AWARDS**

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2012

Essay scholarship winner, Idaho Counseling Association

1995

Eagle Scout Award- completed with 40-hour community service project

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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2013 - Pres. American Psychological Association (APA)- Student affiliate

2010 - Pres. American Counseling Association (ACA)- Student affiliate

**REFERENCES**

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*References Available Upon Request. Please contact me at [christensenc13@georgefox.edu](mailto:christensenc13@georgefox.edu) to request professional, academic, or personal references.*