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# The Influence of Spiritual and Emotional Intelligence on Romantic Relationships of African Americans

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Abstract

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African Americans

by

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MS, Walden University, 2013

MS, University of Southern Mississippi, 1996

BS, University of Southern Mississippi, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Social Psychology

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## Abstract

The use of religion-based spirituality was examined as a factor in strengthening and increasing emotional intelligence and regulation, facilitating relationship choices and maintenance, and as a key factor in the decision-making process of dating and partner selection among African Americans. The theoretical framework for this study included Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, on which both theories of spiritual and emotional intelligence stand, and Bowlby's theory of attachment. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze relationships between spiritual and emotional intelligences and attachment styles among African American adults. In a criterion-based purposeful sample of 98 African American participants aged 27 and older, a negative correlation was found between high levels of spiritual and emotional intelligence in African Americans and attachment styles, meaning secure attachment styles were found in African Americans with higher levels of both spiritual and emotional intelligence. The study contributes to the validity and reliability of the SISRI, SSEIT, and the ECR-R among African Americans. Scores on these instruments in the study were within normal range. The information in this study may serve as a foundation for future studies on the importance of religion-based spirituality and the strengthening of emotional intelligence to facilitate successful romantic and marital relationships among African Americans, leading to stronger families and communities.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful Mother, Yvonne Smith Henderson, without the support of whom this would not have been possible. To my three beautiful daughters Lenita, Kirklyn, and Courtnee, whom have been all around me and as supportive of me as possible while growing, learning and loving through this process. To all my friends, Sorors, and family, especially my cousin Dr. Mia Smith Bynum, whose love and support guided and strengthened me so much throughout my journey. Most of all to the only wise God, who has given me everything I have and has blessed me so much through this process I could never thank Him enough, even if I had 10,000 tongues. A very special thanks to the members of the Prayer Team at Word of Life Church for all your love, prayers and support through difficult and challenging times. Thanks to everyone near and far, who was a part of my journey, I could not have done this without all of you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This chapter of the study will begin with a discussion of the importance of the study in the field of social psychology as a contribution to minority studies on such significant topics as romantic relationships, emotional intelligence (EI), and the emerging area of spiritual intelligence. Next, the Background section will give a brief overview of some of the literature on the use of religious coping among African Americans to positively affect emotion and self-regulation and emotion management, ending with again focusing on the need for the study.

### **Need for the Study**

It is generally known that the psychological and emotional strength of many African Americans comes from the communal focus on spirituality and religion. Assari (2014) noted positive religious coping used among African Americans and Caribbean Blacks with multiple chronic medical conditions and depression had a positive effect on their psychological well-being and health, although there were some differences due to ethnicity. Boulware and Bui (2016) asserted that African Americans often apply both positive and negative religious coping when experiencing trauma and loss in efforts to find relief and comfort. From the times of slavery to the present, religion or spirituality has been one principle way African Americans have coped with distress, meeting amongst themselves and speaking freely. Hayward and Krause (2015) posited that coping with discrimination for African Americans requires adaptive coping strategies to alleviate the mental, emotional, and physical discomfort that accompanies it. Religious coping became a strategy for survival and adaptation, influencing the development of

psychological constructs, cognitive and emotional processes, social interactions, and observable coping systems among African Americans today, whether effective or ineffective. Hayward and Krause found that, among African Americans and Caribbean Blacks, the use of religion is a common coping mechanism that yields both positive and negative results, depending on how it is applied in a life situation.

The goal of this study was to research how emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence influence some African Americans in their dating and mate choices, and if these components can facilitate more satisfying, sustainable long-term romantic relationships. Pargament and Koenig (2000) asserted that religion and coping have been effective at helping to maintain emotional and physical well-being in those who chose to use it. This provides a foundation for further studies on the effectiveness of the application of spiritual and religious principles to one's life during challenging circumstances, to regulate emotions, and in conjunction with other coping techniques to improve psychological well-being. This study may lead to positive social change by showing others how to use their spirituality more effectively in an area of life that evokes powerful emotion like dating, romance, and the pursuit of life partners. Jones (2014) argued that marriage offers support and resources for people and “protection” for psychological well-being, which includes spiritual/religious coping and support systems as well as other community resources unavailable to unmarried individuals.

Poor partner choices, ineffective dating, and mating styles can be linked to emotional distress and difficulties such as depression and anxiety, and in some cases, divorce and the breakdown of the family, which is all too rampant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

among African Americans as well as other ethnic groups in the U.S. population at large. Lapp (2014) interpreted a survey conducted by Amati and Previti of 208 divorced people concerning what they cited as reasons for divorce. Of these respondents, 22% reported infidelity as the reason, drinking or other substance abuse was reported by 11%, loss of love by 4%, and financial problems was reported by 2% (Lapp, 2014), all of which could be caused and/or exacerbated by emotional distress, poor coping, pre-existing psychological, physical, or emotional issues prior to the marriage, and lack of compatibility.

The use of spiritual and emotional intelligence before entering relationships and during relationships can promote healthy relationship choices, better emotional management and regulation, and more positive coping, problem solving and decision-making styles, thereby effecting positive social change in the community. According to Jones (2014), the idea of covenant marriage, initiated in Louisiana in 1997, requires couples to commit to both pre- and post-marital counseling, just to reduce early divorce and produce more sustainable marriage relationships. Jones asserted that these marriages offered more support for spouses at risk for depression and a variety of psychological stressors that tend to weaken traditional marriages. Moreover, Jones postulated that religion creates a “safety net” experience of support which decreases psychological distress, marital issues, and personal life conflict by helping individuals to focus on inner strengthening and self-empowerment.

## **Background**

Successful social interactions and academic performance were found to be related to high levels of emotional intelligence in preschool- kindergarten aged African American children from communities of low socioeconomic status (SES; Humphries, Keenan & Wakschlag, 2012), which provides evidence that some African Americans can demonstrate emotional intelligence, even in difficult life circumstances. Furthermore, Marks, Tanner, Nesteruk, Chaney, and Baumgartner (2012), in a qualitative study on African American marriage and families, found faith, religion and spirituality to be a common coping mechanism among these families in a review of past research. Marks et al. conducted this study to depart from the typical “deficit perspective,” which often focuses on negative issues of African American families and communities. The study focused on the strength of spirituality and faith among intact families with both parents in the home by interviewing 30 married couples across nine states to understand the meaning of religion in their lives, and how it helps them to cope and function in the face of life's challenges.

Krageloh, Chai, Shepherd, and Billington (2012) found religion and spirituality are commonly used as coping mechanisms; and that people with little to no identification of spirituality tended to have more maladaptive coping skills and lower levels of emotional functioning in difficult life situations. In other words, the use of religion and spirituality in one's life can help to strengthen emotional management and coping skills in life's challenging situations. Brabec, Gfeller and Ross (2012) postulated that one's EI not only includes the ability to manage emotions, but also includes certain social abilities

such as the ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others, to engage and interact socially and emotionally appropriately, and to cope with problems and effectively make decisions. The direction of different relationships (especially marriages or romantic) can be affected by the expression of certain emotions (Keltner & Lerner, 2010).

An important goal of this study was to explore how the use of spiritual intelligence to improve emotional management, regulation, coping, problem-solving, and decision-making skills among African Americans may influence EI, thereby leading to more satisfying romantic relationships as well as better dating and long-term relationship choices, and more satisfying lives in general. These issues have not been sought or answered in prior studies and can pave the way for new and future studies in social psychology concerning SI and EI among African Americans as well as other ethnic groups. Results of this research may also extend to other types of studies concerning life management and choices in which emotional regulation and management are vital, not just romantic relationships. Keltner and Lerner (2010) asserted that emotions can influence multiple cognitive processes, including problem-solving, decision-making, judgment, evaluations, and perceptions of one's social environment, hence the importance of a study such as this one seeking to answer questions about the influence of SI and EI on one's life choices in terms of romantic relationships.

This study was needed because it was a focus on romantic relationship behaviors among African Americans, an insufficiently studied population in social psychology; and close relationships, and emotion are important areas of focus in social psychology (Clark



& Lemay, 2010; Keltner & Lerner, 2010). The study was also needed because EI is a young area of research in psychology, and researchers have not focused much on in EI in African American adults or African Americans in general. In addition, this study is a departure from deficit perspective research, which tends to focus on negative aspects of African American culture, community, and family problems (Marks et al., 2012). Finally, the study was needed because the use of religious coping, which is common among African Americans (Hayward & Krause, 2015; Krageloh et al., 2012), to effectively manage emotions, regulate self, improve decision-making and problem-solving in romantic relationships, addressed an untapped area in social psychology, and provided a foundation on which future research can be built.

### **Problem Statement**

EI has not been specifically studied in African Americans in the context of dating or romantic and marital relationships. Research on African American families has shown less intact families, more unmarried women, and more single mothers. Myers (2004) explained that “the slave system and race caste system has impacted the structure and the functional relationship of family life among Blacks in such a manner to produce a matriarchal family system in a patriarchal society” (p. 64). According to Washington (2010), approximately 72% of children born in African American families were born to unwed mothers. This is an astronomical number in comparison to only 29% of Caucasians and 17% of Asian Americans (Washington, 2010). Huffington (2013) maintains that 68% of African American women who had children in 2012 were unmarried, according to the U.S. Census.

Jordan-Zachery (2009) maintained that families without fathers present are considered “fragile families”, meaning they are at increased risk for poverty, stressful relational patterns, economic difficulties, and broken families. These factors further contribute to the stress of boys being reared in these homes and presents them with challenging environments in which to develop into emotionally well-balanced individuals. To date, there have been few studies about the dating and mate selection processes of African Americans, in terms of the maintenance of healthy relationships and how one's emotional intelligence is a factor in this process. One goal of this study was to determine if African Americans with higher levels of EI or those who regularly tap into their spiritual intelligence make better dating and romantic relationship choices and are more likely to sustain healthier long-term marital relationships than those with lower EI or those who do not use their spiritual intelligence regularly to manage emotions or engage in the maintenance of a regular spiritual life other than periodically or for crisis management.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine African American relationship dynamics, emotions, and spirituality in a way they have not been previously studied, according to current relevant psychology literature, to contribute to minority research in social psychology as well as to develop a research base that can be built on in the areas of EI and SI. Furthermore, in this study, I examined the validity of the use of the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT; Schutte et al., 1998) and the SISRI (King, 2008) with African American participants, since these measures of EI and

SI coping have not been used exclusively with African American populations. The goal was to determine if results apply to the larger population, as is important with inadequately studied groups (Creswell, 2009). SI and EI are independent variables (IVs), and attachment styles are the dependent variable (DV) measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000), which detects whether a person's attachment style is secure, avoidant, or anxious.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

RQ1        Is there a relationship between SI and attachment styles?

RQ2        Is there a relationship between EI and attachment styles of African Americans?

*H*<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between levels of SI and attachment styles, nor EI and attachment styles.

*H*<sub>1</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of SI tend to have more positive or secure attachment styles.

*H*<sub>2</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of SI tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

*H*<sub>3</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of EI tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

*H*<sub>4</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of EI tend to have more secure attachment styles.

## Theoretical Framework

EI is an individual's ability to process emotions and related cognition in a way that keeps the person healthy and functioning appropriately socially, emotionally, and occupationally (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). EI affects the health of one's social, dating, romantic, and marital relationships. Hertel, Schutz, and Lammers (2009) found that people with borderline personality disorders and substance abuse disorders demonstrated impairment in EI in comparison to individuals who do not have these disorders, which contributed to poor life choices and patterns of unstable relationships. Keltner and Lerner (2010) contended that emotions can influence multiple cognitive processes, including problem-solving, decision-making, judgment, evaluations, and perceptions of one's social environment. In other words, one's decisions, perception, and judgments can be greatly influenced by precipitating emotions.

Koole (2009) argued that emotional regulation causes people to redirect or manage the flow of their emotions. Malouff, Schutte and Thorsteinsson (2014) asserted that people with higher levels of EI experience greater satisfaction not only in romantic relationships, but in their social lives in general. Furnham (2009) posited that interpersonal intelligence is one's ability to successfully manage relationships and keep them stable, whereas intrapersonal intelligence is one's ability to regulate one's own emotions in the context of relationships, according to Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences. EI theory is an extension of Gardner's theory, which posited there are nine distinctive types of intelligence people can possess (Schaffer & Kipp, 2014).

Emotional regulation and management, both important components of EI, are often facilitated by one's SI. It is common when used in proper balance, a person's spiritual life can aid him or her with effective problem solving, decision-making, and coping skills to maintain psychological and emotional health. According to Kaur, Sambasivan and Kumar (2013), spiritual intelligence has a positive relationship with EI, and EI facilitates the taking of psychological ownership, a key component in showing compassion toward others and accepting responsibility for one's own behavior. Accepting responsibility for one's behavior is important in the maintenance of healthy long-term successful and satisfying relationships. Kaur et al. found a positive relationship between psychological ownership and the display of positive, caring behaviors toward others among nurses when administering patient care.

As previously mentioned, the ECR-R is a survey that evaluates close relationships in adults by evaluating attachment styles. Bowlby (1982) held that attachment styles were developed in one's family of origin and tended to remain consistent over one's life as secure, avoidant, or ambivalent. Later research found that attachment styles can evolve, shift, and change over time due to relational interactions in adult life (Dinero, Conger, Shaver, Widaman, & Larsen-Rife, 2011). Mikulincer, Shaver, and Pereg (2003) further emphasized the evolution of attachment styles in their research, including findings on the development of ways to improve insecure attachment styles developed in childhood through purposeful interactions.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of the study was quantitative. Quantitative research is consistent with the use of survey methods, which I employed in the study to learn about EI and the spirituality of participants of the study, and how these two factors are involved in coping, decision-making and problem-solving. The secondary focus of the dissertation was to use a set of instruments on a population they have not been used on before, to contribute to validity and reliability of these instruments with other ethnic groups, specifically African Americans. The SSEIT is a revised version of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, a 33-item inventory developed based on the research of the 1990 Salovey and Mayer model of EI (Schutte et al., 1998). The SSEIT and the SISRI (King, 2008; Schutte et al., 1998) for spiritual intelligence had not been used with African Americans before in a study, although the SEIS has been used with a group of South African nurses (Bester, Jonker, & Nel, 2013). This SSEIT was used in this study rather than the SEIS to measure EI.

### **Definitions**

*Spiritual intelligence (SI):* In this study, I use this term interchangeably with the term spirituality or religious coping about the use of spiritual principles, connection to and worship of God/ Higher power in everyday life to govern themselves by to manage their lives (Krageloh et al., 2012; Ronel, 2008). This study does not address spirituality apart from religion, although some practice spirituality separately.

*Emotional intelligence (EI):* EI in this study, as defined by Schutte et al. (1998), includes three key components being measured in the SSEIT thought to be practiced in

everyday life: (1) appraisal and expression of emotion, (2) emotional regulation, and (2) emotional utilization.

*SES* is an acronym for socioeconomic status.

### **Assumptions**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), approximately 47% of the population adhere to some type of Christian faith; and it is not specified what percentage of those people are African American. Approximately 12 million people are members of such Christian church denominations as African Methodist Episcopal (AME), AME Zion, Church of God in Christ, National Missionary Baptist Convention, all of which are predominantly African American church denominations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). It is also not known what percentage this large number is of the whole population. In 2017, African Americans made up about 13% of the U.S. Population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), which is a little over 41.7 million people. The 12 million members of those few above named predominantly African American church denominations comes to roughly 29% of the African American population at large, which is a small number. Looking at the above information further justifies the need for more studies concerning the effectiveness of spirituality and religion in the lives of African Americans as coping tools.

One assumption of the study was that many African American people tend to rely on spirituality not only as way to cope with difficulties in life, but also as a central foundation from which to draw strength, make important decisions, and build their lives. The findings of this study support this with African American participants scoring

relatively high in spiritual intelligence. Brown et al. (2013) maintained that African Americans were more likely to adhere to religion-based spirituality as a coping mechanism due to societal and economic disadvantages such as poverty and disenfranchisement as a group. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), about 79% of the U.S. African American population identified as being Christian, which comes to a significant portion of the larger group.

According to Cox and Jones (2017), there is evidence of growth in non-Christian religious groups such as Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus, though collectively they still only make up about 1% of all religious groups in the U.S.. There has also been a rise in those who are “undeclared” in their religious status in recent years, agnostic or atheist. Cox and Jones found about 24% of the U.S. population claims no particular religious affiliation, noting the majority of these responders being between the ages of 18 and 29. Cox and Jones also found 67% of Black Americans identified as Christian, 19% identified as unaffiliated, 6% as Catholic, 2% as Muslim, and less than 1% identified as other Christian traditions. The findings of this study align with this research as well as the statistical assumptions that African Americans are predominantly Christians, and religion-based spirituality is an important part of African American culture, tradition, and lifestyle.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The study addressed how spiritual intelligence is used as source of emotional regulation, a key component of emotional intelligence (Kaur et al., 2013; Krageloh et al., 2012; Bester et al., 2013). I chose this specific focus to determine how effectively



spiritual intelligence is used as a coping, and emotional regulation or management tool among African Americans who regularly tap into spiritual intelligence by engaging in such spiritual practices as prayer, meditation, attendance of weekly worship services, or using devotional or inspirational readings, and who use SI as an important foundation for decision-making and problem-solving in their lives. This focus was also chosen to determine whether those who regularly engage in spiritual practices have better emotion regulation and management skills than those who do not, thereby improving chances of better dating and mating choices and more satisfying romantic relationships.

In this study, I explored the use of the SISRI, an instrument for measuring SI, the SSEIT, and ECR-R, (Fraley et al., 2000) on African American populations, which has not been done in the past. This would be the evaluation of validity of these scales on this population. The goal was to determine if results may be generalized to the larger African American population, so that future studies may use these instruments or even feel encouraged to use others like these with African American populations (Creswell, 2009).

The population of the study included African Americans varying in marital status, aged 26 and older, both male and female. People under the age of 26 were excluded because there has not be enough valuable dating or marriage experience by that age; and this study did not focus on youth perspective. Emotional maturity and regulation can be more of an adjacent issue with people under the age of 26, which could have completely changed the dynamics of the study. Although emotional regulation is a component of EI and another topic that could easily be studied in conjunction, I did not investigate it in depth because it was not the focus of the study. Moreover, spiritual maturity in those who

choose a spiritual path is part of one's personal growth and should be reflected in relationship choices. Comparing the differences in participants who choose to adhere to spirituality as a regulator and coping tool to those who do not was one focus of the study to determine if there is a difference in the satisfaction with life in general as well as romantic relationship choices and sustainability.

### **Limitations**

There was potential for personal biases in that I have been a therapist for a significant period and understanding those with lower levels of EI and the struggles of poor choices also included some lack of spirituality and religion or other effective coping tools in times of distress. There are some who are extremely spiritual among African Americans, which is an example of how spirituality can have negative effects on people's lives. Hayward and Krause (2015) found such issues as negative church interactions and overconsumption of "religious media" demonstrated negative effects of religiosity in the lives of African Americans. It was also important to explore how relationships and life satisfaction in general can be affected by such issues among African Americans who engage in these behaviors or have had those interactions. This study does not address overuse of religion or spirituality to negatively effect individuals in their lives and coping styles.

This study did not address or discuss spirituality outside of organized religion, although there are groups of people who practice types of spirituality in this way for inner balance and wholeness such as mindfulness, meditation, and yoga. This study was

specifically focused on spirituality developed out of religious practices, customs, and doctrine. However, people of any spiritual practice could participate in the study.

### **Significance**

The project was unique because it addressed how African Americans effectively manage and function in healthy relationships due to higher levels of EI despite difficult circumstances or other issues (e.g., low SES or family challenges, absent parents, etc.) and use spirituality to strengthen emotional regulation and EI. The study may show a potential for teaching or improving skills to deepen or strengthen EI as an intervention to help groups of African Americans in vulnerable situations or at-risk for potential problems. Findings can be a foundation for training or interventions designed to improve peer, social, marital, or family relationships, thereby having a positive impact on African American communities and future research in these areas.

### **Summary**

The primary goal of the study was to determine whether African Americans with higher levels of EI experience more satisfying long-term relationships and make better dating and mating choices, and how spirituality plays a role in undergirding these choices for those who choose to adhere to a strong spiritual life. The secondary goal of the study was to evaluate the validity of the SSEIT (Bester et al., 2013; Krageloh et al., 2012) with African American populations, in hopes that these results would be generalizable to the larger population. In this chapter, I provided the theoretical foundation for the study, as well as research questions and hypotheses. Chapter 2 will provide a review of relevant literature for the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of SI and EI on experiences in romantic relationships among African Americans. The problem is that African Americans are an insufficiently studied population in the field of Social Psychology, in such areas as romantic relationships and attachment styles. EI and SI are both young fields in psychological research and have been researched little among African Americans. Creswell (2009) asserted the importance of increasing research on understudied populations.

Platts, Tyson and Mason (2002) reviewed the tenets of John Bowlby's attachment theory in a study on how adults continue to relate with the same styles they learn from birth and become accustomed to parental and caregiver relationships ranging from secure to insecure attachments. Platts et al. argued that attachment styles evolve over time, becoming more complex in adult relationships because relationships shift from parental/caregiver and child to companionship with the sexual component added, thereby building on a person's existing attachment style. Dinero et al. (2011) posited that children who grew up among parents with maladjusted relationships tend to repeat those patterns of poor relational skills in their adult marital relationships. Simons and Simons (2009) maintained that African American teens form relational schema by their adolescent years, which are foundations for romantic relationships, and attachment styles are the most known types of relational schema. Relational schema are defined as constructs people

maintain about how they relate to themselves, develop and maintain relationships with others (Simons & Simons, 2009).

According to Simons and Simons (2009), African Americans are dating and cohabitating more than getting married and are having more unstable relationships than Caucasians. Schindler, Fagundes and Murdock (2010) found that those with attachment avoidance rather than attachment anxiety were less likely to enter committed dating relationships, and those who had success in previous dating relationships were more likely to commit in future relationships, as well as have the desire for commitment in their relationships. Schindler et al. asserted that little research has been conducted on the process that occurs from initial attraction to commitment in romantic relationships concerning attachment styles. Schindler et al. maintained that those with avoidant attachment styles reported reluctance to commit in romantic relationships, whereas those with attachment anxiety styles reported ardent desire to fall in love and commit in their relationships.

This was a correlational study that examined the roles of SI and EI on attachment styles in romantic relationships among African Americans. In the review of literature, I establish a foundation regarding the influence of SI on EI. Next, the influence of emotional regulation and dysregulation on close relationships is examined as well as the influence of SI on relationship management. Finally, I examine attachment styles, emotion regulation, and the possible influence of spirituality on attachment styles in the context of the development, maintenance, and sustainability of close relationships.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I conducted the literature search mainly through Academic Search Complete in the Walden Library, Google Scholar, Science Direct in the Walden Library, and articles downloaded from my prior course readings as well as other places in the Walden Library Database such as ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX with Full Text. Key search terms included *African Americans*, *emotional intelligence*, *spiritual intelligence*, *religious coping*, *attachment styles and romantic relationships*, *dating and spirituality*, *marriage and religion*, and *emotional intelligence and African Americans*. There was no specific span of years searched; the focus was on the body of research related to the topics of interest. There was a preference for peer-reviewed literature within the past 5 years. However, the theoretical foundation research on EI, SI, and attachment theory of course predates the past 5 years back into the 1990s. Some of the sources used are government-published records, web articles, and student conference papers found in the Walden database, but most of the literature search for this study was for peer-reviewed publications, most from journals, and some from textbook compilations such as the Handbook of Social Psychology.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There were three theories used in this study: (1) emotional intelligence theory, (2) spiritual intelligence theory, and (2) attachment styles theory as it applies to adult relationships. According to Schaffer and Kipp (2014), EI originates from building on Gardner's 1993 theory of multiple intelligences, which posits that there are as many as nine different types of intelligence possible within people. Furnam (2009) maintained that

both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are necessary for successful emotion regulation and for being able to relate successfully to others in relationships, as postulated in Gardner's earlier theory. Malouff et al. (2014) suggested that EI includes such skills as effective emotion regulation, as well as perceiving and understanding the emotions of self and others. Furthermore, Mayer et al. (2008) postulated that EI represents one's ability to process, assess, and apply information concerning the emotions of one's self and others when appropriate in life and relationship situations and knowing when to do so.

SI can be described as one's capacity to understand self, others and the world with a focus on God, and living one's life accordingly (Ronel, 2008). Ronel (2008) asserted that SI includes (1) the use of spirituality to regulate self and emotions, (2) reliance on spiritual readings and personal experiences, and (2) understanding of such principles as faith, love, hope, forgiveness, loving others, humility, and the application of morality to balance one's life. According to Ronel, spirituality can refer in general to a broad range of rituals and practices, one of those references being God-centeredness (faith in God) or what is known as theism.

According to King (2008),

spiritual intelligence is defined as a set of mental capacities which contribute to the awareness, integration, and adaptive application of the non-material and transcendent aspects of one's existence, leading to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, recognition of a transcendent self, and mastery of spiritual states. (p. 56)

Furthermore, King postulated that SI includes four essential components: (1) the capacity to critically contemplate meaning and purpose in life, events, death, and existence, (2) the ability to find meaning or purpose in one's personal experiences and strive to discover and live toward a life's purpose, (3) an identification with nonmaterialism or a transcendental self as well as others, and (4) one's ability to enter and exit higher states of consciousness (i.e., prayer, meditation, worship, glossolalia, etc.). SI theory is established on the earlier work of Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, as well as the work of Salovey, Mayer, and Goleman on EI (King, 2008; Ronel, 2008).

According to Mikulincer et al. (2003), attachment theory originated with John Bowlby, beginning in 1969 through the early 1980s, during which the framework for the theory was built. Mikulincer et al. maintained that Bowlby's theory provided a conceptual framework for how people develop styles of relating in close relationships, especially with significant others, and that the theory provided insight into the desire for closeness, as opposed to reluctance to bond with others, and highlighted the significance of personal life experiences for emotion regulation over the course of one's life. Furthermore, Bowlby's theory emphasized the benefits of close relationships with others, including the feeling of emotional safety and physical protection (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Dinero et al. (2011) posited various social interactions influence attachment styles, as indicated by attachment theory.

Dinero et al. (2011) asserted that people who are caring, sensitive, and responsive toward each other in family-of-origin relationships are more likely to form secure rather than insecure attachment style, although relationships lacking the presence of the



aforementioned characteristics increase the likelihood of one's development of insecure attachment styles. Mikulincer et al. (2003) maintained that past research has indicated parent-child relationships heavily influence attachment styles later expressed in adult relationships across the lifespan. Brumbaugh and Fraley (2010) posited that although most individuals desire romantic relationships with partners having a secure attachment style, individuals with insecure attachment styles can appeal to potential partners by engaging in successful dating practices that help them to connect with others. Some examples of such characteristics include a good sense of humor, engaging conversation, and showing the capacity for warmth (Brumbaugh & Fraley, 2010). In other words, to attract secure partners, those with insecure attachment styles can present themselves as secure by displaying similar personality characteristics in the dating process.

### **Previous Similar Applications of Theories Used in This Study**

SI, as mentioned earlier, has been researched in the past as an extension of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (King, 2008; Ronel & Gan, 2008). According to Sahebalzamani, Farahani, Abasi, and Talebi (2013), SI facilitates psychological well-being and leads individuals to become more goal-oriented because of seeking purpose and meaningfulness of life and understanding of the world around them. In a study to examine the relationship between SI, psychological well-being, and purpose in life among Iranian nurses, Sahebalzamani et al. (2013) conducted a study examining the relationship between SI, psychological well-being and purpose in life among Iranian nurses. Findings indicated a positive correlation between having high levels of SI and

being focused on one's purpose, as well as between higher levels of SI and psychological well-being.

Emotional intelligence has also been researched in the past as an extension of Gardner's theory on multiple intelligences (Malouff et al., 2014; Mayer et al., 2004; Mayer et al., 2008). Mayer et al. (2008) stressed the importance of distinguishing EI from other types of intelligence, stating it is an individual's ability to process information in relation to one's emotions and the emotions of others, and to use this information in effective problem-solving and decision-making. Mayer et al. (2008) asserted EI is “reasoning validly about emotions and then using emotions in the reasoning process” (p. 505). Riley and Schutte (2003) investigated emotional intelligence in substance and alcohol abusers and found low emotional intelligence to be a significant determinant of these problems. According to Riley and Schutte (2003), prior research also suggested a positive correlation between low EI among substance abuse treatment clients in comparison to therapists. Riley and Schutte (2003) also suggested it is unknown as to whether these

According to Van Rooy, Alonso, and Viswesvaran (2005), EI scores were found to be higher among minorities groups and women than men and tended to increase with age. Furthermore, Van Rooy et al. pointed out minority group EI scores are likely higher due to mitigating life circumstances. Mayer et al. (2004) posited EI consists of the perceiving emotion, using emotion to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and finally the management of emotions. Mayer et al. postulated individuals with higher levels of EI generally are more effective problem solvers than others, tend to choose

careers involving helping or leadership of others, and tend to seek solutions rather than conflict, being more open and agreeable than most. Moreover, individuals with high EI also score high in other areas of intelligence (i.e., verbal and social), solve problems using less cognitive effort than others, and avoid patterns of self-destructive behaviors such as substance and alcohol abuse when facing life difficulties (Mayer et al., 2004), all of which are pertinent to the maintenance and sustainability of long-term relationships.

Attachment styles in adults tend to manifest as anxious or avoidant (Li & Zheng, 2014; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005), according to how much one worries as to whether his or her partner might be available in times of distress, or mistrusts a partner in a relationship, respectively. According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2005), attachment insecurity is precipitated by one's perception of his or her partner's unavailability, which propels him or her to seek physical and emotional connection with the partner to ease the insecurity. Mikulincer et al. (2003) maintained individuals unable to develop secure attachment styles due to availability of the partner or attachment figure, results in “secondary attachment strategies”, which are a negative variation of one’s attachment system. Secondary attachment strategies are ways individuals develop to regulate emotion to relieve distress because proximity seeking did not bring them the relief they were seeking, as this is the primary way to comfort distress when an attachment figure is unavailable (Mikulincer et al., 2003).

Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) argued “deactivating strategies” are employed to decrease anxiety and disengage one's attachment system when proximity seeking does not alleviate distress. This allows one to alleviate distress and regulate emotion by

denying the existence of emotional connection or lessening the intensity of feelings toward attachment figures, which causes the development of avoidance attachment styles (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). The proximity seeking of one's partner for comfort in relationships when the partner is perceived unavailable can be considered “hyperactivating strategies”, but only when there is excessive engaging in the proximity seeking, which also facilitates the development of anxious attachment styles (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In other words, people can enter a relationship with one attachment style developed with parents and caregivers in childhood which can shift due to interactions with romantic partners in adult relationships (Dinero et al., 2008). For example, a person with a secure attachment style who had a consistently available caregiver can develop an avoidant or anxious attachment style because of perceived unavailability of a partner in an adult relationship, to relieve distress and regulate emotion (Dinero et al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

### **Rationale for the Choice of Theories**

Marks (2003) in a qualitative study, interviewed 76 very religious Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Mormon men and women, all married, to determine how their faith community, religious practices and spiritual beliefs influenced their marital relationships. Among these different religious couples, eight common factors were discovered (Marks 2003). Those factors included: 1) the influence of clergy, 2) active participation in the faith community, 3) a consistent prayer life, 4) the practice of being connected within one's family and the importance of family and faith traditions, 5) the importance of marital fidelity, 6) to promote strengthening of marriages and keep families together and

discourage divorce, 7) being on one accord with one another in religious beliefs/ being equally yoked, 8) faith in God/spiritual doctrine as foundation and support for marriage and family (Marks, 2003). Religion has a positive influence on the regulation of emotion, which is essential to Emotional intelligence, as mentioned previously (Kaur et al., 2013). Ross, Handal, Clark, and Vander Wal (2008) maintained that certain types of religious coping lead to healthier psychological adjustment and functioning across cultures, as indicated by past research. Marks (2014) asserted past research consistently indicated same-faith marriages showed stability and more marital satisfaction.

Attachment theory as developed originally by Bowlby, indicates that people develop a style of relating to significant figures in their lives through their relationships with parents and primary caregivers in the first few years of life, and these “attachment belief systems” later become the foundation for how individuals relate to significant others in adult relationships (Stevenson-Hinde, 2007). Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) posited attachment styles in adult relationships either manifest as anxious or avoidant, in turn effecting emotion regulation as well as relationship dynamics between partners, depending on which style each partner displays. Those with secure attachment styles seek proximity of caregivers, as do those with anxious attachment styles (Dinero et al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). However, those with anxious attachment styles tend to engage in “hyperactivating strategies” of their attachment belief systems to decrease anxiety, while those with avoidant styles engage in “deactivating strategies” of their attachment belief systems to relieve distress or prevent further distress. These can both be considered negative relational styles of emotion and self-regulation regulation, creating a

negative effect on romantic relationships (Dinero et al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver 2005).

### **Relationship of Research Questions and Hypotheses to Theories Used**

This study explored the relationship between spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence as independent variables, and how these two interact or one influences the other to affect the ability of people to maintain successful romantic and long-term partnerships with others. Attachment styles are the dependent variables of the study and are measured in terms of how they are affected by the one's emotion regulation, an integral part of emotional intelligence (Dinero et al., 2008; Mayer et al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005), which in turn affects relational dynamics. It is a goal of this study to determine how spiritual and emotional intelligence effect attachment styles, thereby influencing the sustainability of romantic relationships among African Americans. As previously mentioned, religious coping, improves psychological well-being (Kaur et al., 2013; Krageloh et al., 2012; Sahebalzamani et al., 2013). Parks (2007) asserted a focus on spirituality in times of difficulty and distress, is a common practice among African Americans. Past research has also suggested higher scores on emotional intelligence among African Americans in comparison to Caucasians (Rooy et al., 2004).

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

#### **The Influence of Spiritual Intelligence/Spirituality on Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence (EI) theory holds that some have the can process emotions, related thoughts and information more effectively than others (Mayer et al. 2008). Religion and/or spirituality are frequently used across cultures to calm and manage

emotions and can be thought of as a method of emotional regulation. According to Parks (2007), research has shown African Americans exhibit common folk beliefs during times of crisis, stress and trauma, including spirituality, verbal confessions, dreams and ritual. Moreover, Parks posited the coping skills facilitated through African American traditional spiritual practices and beliefs are critical for psychological survival.

Prince-Paul (2008) asserted people tend to focus more on spirituality, quality of life, strengthening relationships, forgiveness and finding resolution and peace when faced with terminal illnesses or when nearing an “end of life” situation. In other words, people have time to focus and work on self-regulation, emotional regulation, improved communication and relationships with others when they see an expected end to their lives. As part of the finality they face, spirituality and emotional intelligence work together within the person as coping tools to help the person bring closure to important life issues, as well as to pursue peace during an important time of transition for them. Prince-Paul found a positive relationship between spiritual and social well-being, in end-of-life patients, with spiritual well-being being the strongest predictor of both the best quality of life and communication with others.

Taylor, Rapplelea, Fang, and Cannon (2013) conducted a study on the value emerging adults place on pre-commitment behaviors, which included all types of interactions between daters before making commitments. Both past and more recent research indicated religion/spirituality served as a foundation for emerging adults and served as a source of support and guidance although college students may not attend religious or spiritual services as frequently as they did before leaving home (Taylor et al.,

2013). In other words, college students have established faith and spirituality by the time they leave home though they may not attend spiritual services often, and the foundation of their spirituality is often used as a source of strength in their lives in times of need. Furthermore, decision making and attitudes in relation to romantic relationship formation tend to be guided by the spiritual perspective and strength of emerging adults rather than determined by adherence to specific religious doctrine (Taylor et al., 2013). Religious doctrine can have a strong influence on dating and mate choices for those who choose to adhere to them as adults, and the pre-commitment behaviors have changed considerably in today's electronic "cyber-climate", in which different kinds of contact and even intimacy boundaries might be crossed between people without them having ever seen each other in person. Finally, Taylor et al. (2013) asserted the value system of emerging adults has a significant influence upon the acceptable "pre-Relationship" behaviors for couples, meaning what is accepted early on or in the beginning of a relationship sets the tone for future relationship dynamics, behaviors, patterns and cycles.

### **The Influence of Emotional Regulation on Close Relationships**

According to the CDC (2017), approximately .32% of Americans were divorced in 2016. About .69% of adults in U.S. Households were married (CDC, 2017). That means a fairly large amount of the U.S. population is unmarried. This also shows a slight decline in the amount of overall divorces the past few years, and some increase in marriages (CDC, 2017). Malouff et al. (2014) posited personality characteristics affect one's partner choices, relationship behaviors and satisfaction, and the responses of their partners in a relationship. Keltner and Lerner (2010) maintained emotions influence



multiple cognitive processes, including problem-solving, decision-making, judgment, evaluations and perceptions of one's social environment. In other words, one's decisions, perception and judgments can be greatly influenced by precipitating emotions. The direction of different relationships (especially marriages or romantic) can be affected by the expression of certain emotions (Keltner & Lerner, 2010). When there are not effective ways to process emotions, relate to others and react to relationship experiences, people are less prepared/equipped for long-term relationships (Gordon-Simons et al., 2014; Keltner & Lerner, 2010; King et al., 2012; Manee, 2013).

There are a variety of factors that can affect the way people perceive, relate to and interact with one another. Clark and Lemay (2010) posited “people desire partners who are distinct from themselves” (p. 908). In other words, people look for some differences or contrasts in relationship partners. However, these same contrasts can later be factors in relationship difficulties. Clark and Lemay (2010) asserted prior research indicated people look for those who compliment them rather than those they can compare themselves to socially, because this allows each person to expand and grow in his or her own right within the relationship and prevents the emotional turmoil of competition between partners and facilitates positive feelings within each partner.

### **The Influence of Emotional Dysregulation on Close Relationships**

Koole (2009) argued emotion regulation causes people to redirect or manage the flow of their emotions; and the training of how to regulate emotions is facilitated in people by caregivers as children. Emotional dysregulation is the inability or failed attempts to control or regulate emotions and/or negative affect, which may or may not

lead to negative or even destructive behaviors (Manee, 2013). Bradbury and Shaffer (2012) found that individuals maltreated as children had difficulties with both emotion regulation as adults and satisfaction in romantic relationships. Emotional dysregulation refers to the mismanagement of emotions, maladaptive coping skills, and ineffective ways of recognizing and processing one's own as well as the emotions of others (Weiss et al., 2012). Furthermore, Weiss et al. (2012) maintained emotion dysregulation also includes one's difficulty governing behaviors in relation to emotions and psychological distress, and an inability to regulate emotional incitement.

Sanford (2010) postulated that perceived threats and perceived neglect are two reasons people experience relationship conflict and later determine to end relationships. Perceived neglect is the perception that a partner is not invested in the relationship emotionally. Perceived threat involves the perception that a partner is being critical, negative or blaming toward the other (Sanford, 2010). The decision to continue a relationship long-term requires the employment of problem-solving of both partners as well as effective emotion regulation to maintain a healthy relationship and healthy individual emotional and psychological well-being. Sanford (2010) posited underlying concerns of perceived threats and perceived neglect perpetuate emotionally charged behaviors in relationships.

Mutual responsiveness among partners is essential for success in close relationships (Clark & Lemay, 2010). Mutual responsiveness can be fostered by the facilitation of empathy, and improvement of emotion and self-regulation. Appropriate emotional responses occur from a partner being able to understand the other person's

emotional experience or empathize with them (Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2011). Keltner and Lerner (2010) maintained emotional responses and actions in various life situations are determined by cognitive appraisals and measured according to prior ideas and desires. In other words, people measure what is happening in their lives against what they desired to happen and respond accordingly emotionally after appraisals have taken place.

Mikels, Maglio, Reed, and Kaplowitz (2011) maintained dual process theory suggested cognition and affect lead people to “optimal” or “best” decisions, meaning affective or emotional decisions (gut) reactions are thought best by many, but cognitive (appraisal-generated) decision are considered optimal. In other words, emotional decisions are not those among the best thought through. Among “gut” reactions or emotional decisions are usually premature choices to end relationships as well as begin relationships too quickly, emotional acting out in relationships or patterns of “emotional dysregulation”. Emotional dysregulation according to Manee (2014) is believed to facilitate impulsivity as well as risky sexual behaviors in young people, both of which are unhealthy coping behaviors and sure to cause problems with romantic partners.

Bruyneel, Dewitte, Franses, and Dekimpe (2009) proposed the “depletion hypothesis”, which holds that decision-making during periods of negative affective experiences lead to a state of depletion due to the person's attempt to regulate his or her own emotions. In other words, a person comes to a place of emotional exhaustion from risky decision-making after trying to facilitate his or her own emotion regulation. A good example of the depletion hypothesis in action would be such unhealthy coping mechanisms as chronic cheating in relationships or sexual addictions to relieve

relationship problems then inadvertently lead to more stress or other negative behavioral choices. This could be considered impulsive or compulsive such as alcohol, substance abuse or gambling to relieve emotional distress related to difficulties in a long-term relationship or marriage.

Bruyneel et al. (2009) argued the “mood repair” hypothesis suggests people attempt to improve negative affect with behavioral choices or decisions. Some of the same choices can be made to repair mood or healthier ones depending on the person. Bruyneel et al. asserted emotionally distraught people tend to make risky choices with finances and other impulsive choices that might make them feel happy. In other words, people engage in certain behaviors to improve or lift the mood, when it is negative, which could include a wide range of activities, depending on such factors as personality, background and preferences, etc., of the person experiencing negative affect. Manee (2013) found a positive correlation between risky sexual behaviors in young people and emotional dysregulation; and asserted that treatment for these individuals should focus on the improvement of emotion regulation.

### **The Influence of Spirituality/Spiritual Intelligence on Relationship Management, Wellness and Functioning**

Marks et al. (2008) asserted socioeconomic status is often a barrier to marriage or the idea of marriage among African Americans of lower SES, due to their notion that marriage symbolizes success. According to Marks et al., African American families and couples are strengthened both socially and economically through faith communities. The study conducted by Marks et al., was a qualitative study in which 30 African American

couples were interviewed (N=60), some of which were remarried, since they were purposefully seeking those with successful, strong, happy marriages. Educational levels of the couples in the study ranged from advanced graduate degrees to GEDs (Marks et al., 2008). Only about three of the 30 couples in the study reported that both spouses were not religious, the median income being \$58,400, which surpassed that of the median income of Caucasian families, since both partners were employed in these families (Marks et al., 2008). According to Marks et al., past research indicates about 84% of African American parents report having a religious/spiritual affiliation.

Lincoln, Taylor, and Jackson (2008) conducted a study on singles to determine correlates of marital satisfaction among African Americans in comparison to Black Caribbeans. Parental relationships of African Americans were determined to have more influence on marital satisfaction, as SES (socioeconomic status) was found to influence the satisfaction of Black Caribbean marriages (Lincoln, Taylor & Jackson, 2008). One focus of the study was to determine elements of sustainability in relationships/marriages, marital expectations and facilitators of fulfilling relationships (Lincoln, Taylor & Jackson, 2008). Lincoln et al. (2008) asserted the diversity of social and background differences among Black Americans in the U.S. accounts for the contrasts in romantic relationships, including the lineage of Black Caribbean immigrants in certain areas of the country.

According to Brown, Taylor and Chatters (2013), there are some differences in the spirituality and religious involvement of Black Caribbean and African Americans, which also account for variety in marital and family life structure to some extent.

According to Taylor, Chatters, Mattis and Joe (2010), unmarried Caribbean blacks born in the U.S. reported less participation in religious services than those who immigrated, and those originally from Haiti. Those from Jamaica demonstrated more attendance than those from Trinidad and Tobago, as did older people and women (Taylor et al., 2010). Depending on the denomination of the followers, some showed more commitment than others, such as Pentecostals and Seventh-Day Adventists than Baptists (Taylor et al., 2010). Brown, Taylor, and Chatters (2013) reported past research indicates 4 in 10 Black Americans reported daily prayer although they did not regularly attend worship services. Brown et al. (2013) posited that African Americans demonstrate a consistent desire to connect to God/Higher Power, even when they reported lack of consistent attendance and participation in religious services in more than 6 months. Brown et al. (2013) theorized that African Americans likely adhere to religion as a coping tool due to socioeconomic disadvantages and marginalization as a group, decreasing the likelihood of departure from age-old methods of coping, even in the absence of attendance and participation in weekly services.

Marks et al. (2008) asserted participation in faith communities was a particularly important component of healthy African American marriages, especially when the husband was actively involved. Past researchers also asserted the importance of religious compatibility on the sustainability of Black marriages (Marks et al., 2008). Parks (2007) posited humans desire to find meaning in stressful and/or difficult life events, and African American folk beliefs and healing practices have been traditional coping strategies to help them find meaning as well as closure in difficult, traumatic and stressful life events.

Religion and spirituality in African American communities include folk beliefs such as confessions of faith, rituals, spirituality and dreams (Parks, 2007). According to Jones (2014), “religiosity guards against depression for those who are actively involved in faith-based communities” (p. 191).

### **Attachment Styles, Emotion Regulation and Spirituality**

Gordon-Simons, Simons, Landor, Bryant and Beach (2014) contended attachment styles developed in one's family of origin have significant influence upon the health, well-being and sustainability of adult relationships as supported by current and past research. Parental relationships establish the foundation for future close relationships (Gordon-Simons et al., 2014). Gordon-Simons et al. asserted loving, nurturing parental figures, who communicated in a positive way with their child, set the foundation for this child to have loving, stable adult romantic relationships. Gordon-Simons et al. suggested that strict parenting which includes violence and/or physical punishment is associated with negative romantic partner interactions in adulthood. Jones (2014) maintained research has consistently shown contrasts in results of marriage and mental health of Blacks and Whites due to the protective resources of faith-based participation and community support not available to Whites. Furthermore, Jones (2014) asserted the influence of marriage on mental health, both of which are dealt with through a variety of tools in African American churches from touch and /or support groups, to prayer, praise and celebratory worship rituals, and personal testimonials all when members experience distress, and overcome difficulties.

According to Parks (2007), “traditional forms of healing offer curative practices based on the idea that remedy is one process where mind, body and spirit are the resource for transformation, self-knowledge and well-being” (p. 137), which can be adaptable to whatever religion one is practicing. For example, the reading of books on healing, and meditation on certain scriptures, confessions and prayers to bring about this type of transformational oneness would be how this is done in Christian practices, whether one is seeking physical, or emotional healing from a broken or difficult place in life. Parks (2007) suggested African Americans typically pass down their practices for psychological well-being and healthful coping through religious practices, stressing the effectiveness of community support and spiritual coping strategies to their loved ones, children and families.

Some examples of these behaviors include “repast” after funerals, which encompass meeting with loved ones, friends and family to reminisce over family times and food is brought to have a meal/reception and spend time together and bring comfort to those who have recently lost a loved one. This coping strategy and the language is common among African Americans, but may not be known among others, and is a “cultural code” for traditional beliefs to help others cope and comfort them, and extension of religious practices, as they often occur in connection with a church or religious facility following the burial of the loved one (Parks, 2007). Parks (2007) posited beliefs and practices based on spirituality cultivate peace of mind, problem-solving techniques and decision-making skills. Prayer is a meaning practice of spirituality among African Americans that relieves distress and is a powerful coping tool used for illness to support



and comfort self and others in various life situations, providing the transcendental experience of contact with a supernatural God (Parks, 2007).

### **Summary**

Past research consistently shows many African Americans consistently use religion and spirituality as a coping tool in life and relationship situations and in the management of emotions. Research has also shown there is a correlation between higher levels of emotional intelligence or emotional well-being and the consistent practice of religion and spirituality among both single and married African Americans, especially when they are actively involved in religious communities. However, these studies are in a variety of different fields of study, and they have not been studied in Social Psychology, using the SSEIT, SISRI, and the ECR-R in this study with African Americans.

While it is known that African Americans tend to pass down their spiritual and religious beliefs and practices for generations (Parks, 2007), the impact these practices or beliefs have on attachment styles is not known, as attachment styles developed in one's family of origin have a significant influence on adult romantic relationships (Gordon-Simons et al., 2014). Past research has demonstrated a significant difference in White and black marriage and mental health issues, due to religious practices, regularity of participation and community support (Jones, 2014). Moreover, it is not known whether African Americans with problematic adult romantic relationships have a history of insecure or avoidant attachment styles which also lead to poor emotion/self-regulation and low levels of emotional and spiritual intelligence.

This study aimed to examine the experiences of African Americans within romantic relationships, whether they do or do not have a partner currently with the ECR-R Inventory, while also measuring these same individuals on spiritual and emotional intelligence. The goal was to examine African Americans relationships between these components, relationships, spirituality and emotional intelligence, to see where there were positive and negative correlations between the different variables or no relationships at all, particularly among African Americans who measure at different levels of spiritual and emotional intelligence. Two other goals of the study were to see if levels of spiritual and emotional intelligence show differences in relationship variables; and to determine if these self-report surveys, which include the ECR-R, the SISRI and the SSEIT are valid for African American populations, considering the differences found in African American and Caucasians marriages and mental health based on past research (Jones, 2014). Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used to execute the study.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the role of SI and EI on the sustainability of African American romantic relationships within the field of social psychological studies. Second, this study aimed to evaluate the validity of measures previously unused with African American populations: the ECR-R, the SSEIT, and the SISRI (Fraley et al., 2000; King, 2008; Schutte et al., 1998). Creswell (2009) maintained that investigating studying of understudied populations in various academic disciplines is important, which was also a goal of this study. Most research for the literature review for this study was not found in psychology journals, but in journals of other fields of study such as Religion, Family Studies, Religion and Health, African American Studies, and Sociological and Human Ecology Studies. According to APA (2015), women and minorities are still less likely to be admitted to doctoral programs in psychology than White males, which continues to lessen the likelihood of published minority studies in the field of psychology.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The independent variables of the study are SI and EI. Dependent variables of the study are attachment styles. As established in Chapter 1, this was a quantitative correlational study, designed to help understand the relationships between SI, EI, and attachment styles among African Americans; how these two factors influence dating and mate selection; and the sustainability of romantic relationships. I developed this study to

contribute to the validity of previously unused measures ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000), SISRI (King, 2008), SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998) with African American participants.

Creswell (2009) asserted the importance of understudied populations across academic disciplines. African Americans are an insufficiently studied population in the field of social psychology, as well as dating, mate selection, and romantic relationship sustainability. According to APA (2015), although ethnic and gender representations increased between 2005 and 2013, minorities still represented less than 20% of the psychology workforce. This number does not include those who might be employed in research positions, which is a percentage of this number, lessening the likelihood as well of published studies in psychological studies on African American populations.

In research, African Americans are frequently studied from what is known as the deficit perspective (Marks et al., 2012), which tends to focus on negative aspects of African American relationships, families, choices, and community issues. The focus of this study was a departure from the deficit perspective and an examination of romantic relationships, an important area of research in social psychology. There are qualitative studies about African American marriage (Marks et al., 2008), sociological studies (Jones, 2014) on EI in African American children, which are a departure from the deficit perspective (Humphries et al., 2012), and studies on religion and coping (Krageloh et al., 2012; Pargament & Koenig, 2000) across various academic disciplines, none of which are in social psychology, as have been researched in the review of literature in this study.

## **Population**

The population for the study consisted of 100 African American participants aged 26 and older, gathered by Qualtrics, a research company I used. There was not be an age limit for the Walden Participant Pool to collect data from Students. It took about 4 months to collect data from only 26 students in that platform, when I found out about Qualtrics and requested permission through IRB to use Qualtrics to complete data collection.

## **Sampling and Sampling Procedure**

The sampling for the study was a convenience sample, which is a nonprobability design (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008), because I had access to the Walden participant pool, being registered with the pool, and as a graduate student at Walden University. The sample was drawn from students in the Walden database who elected to participate in the study initially but this method proved too time consuming, as only 26 students had completed the study over a 6-month period. I completed data collection through Qualtrics, using a criterion-based purposeful sample. The gender of the 26 participants from the Walden participants was not available, so those participants could not be used in the final analysis.

## **G Power Analysis**

*[4] -- Wednesday, August 05, 2015 -- 15:42:54*

z tests - Correlation: Tetrachoric model

Options: Exact r

Analysis: A priori: Compute required sample size

Input: Tail(s) = Two

H1 corr  $\rho = 0.1$

$\alpha$  err prob = 0.05

Power (1- $\beta$  err pro2) = 0.8  
 H0 corr  $\rho$  = -0.1  
 Marginal prop x = 0.6  
 Marginal prop y = 0.3  
 Output: Critical z = 1.9599640  
 Total sample size = 540  
 Actual power = 0.8003059  
 H1 corr  $\rho$  = 0.1000000  
 H0 corr  $\rho$  = -0.1000000  
 Critical r lwr = -0.2396407  
 Critical r upr = 0.0396407 Std err r = 0.0712466

Above is the G-Power analysis that was conducted for the study.

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

I used three survey instruments in the study: (1) the SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998), (2) the SISRI (King, 2008), and (3) the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000). The SSEIT is a 33-item instrument designed to measure EI (Schutte et al., 1998). The SISRI is a 24-item instrument designed to measure the level of SI of a person. The SISRI is designed to measure awareness of four suggested components of SI: (1) critical existential thinking, (2) personal meaning production, (3) transcendental awareness, and (4) conscious state expansion (King, 2008; King & DeCicco, 2009).

The SISRI was appropriate for the current study to determine whether participants could critically contemplate their life's purpose and meaning in their existence, gather meaning from their life experiences, and identify transpersonal patterns of themselves and their relationships to the physical world, and whether they possessed the capacity to enter higher states of consciousness during such rituals as prayer, meditation, and worship (King, 2008; King & DeCicco, 2009). According to Fraley et al. (2000), the ECR-R is based on item-response theory and is used to measure adult attachment

relational dynamics, meaning how adults relate and attach to one another in relationships. Finally, the SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998) was developed to measure EI based on the 1990 Salovey and Mayer model of EI. EI includes emotion regulation, self-regulation, emotion management, recognition of emotions in one's self and others, and the utilization of emotions in problem solving (Brabec et al., 2012). This instrument was appropriate for the study because EI should be considerably useful in successful romantic relationships, and according to past research, those with higher EI have more satisfying relationships and greater life satisfaction in general (Malouff et al., 2014).

The secondary goal of the study was to evaluate validity and reliability of those instruments with African American populations. Van Rooy et al. (2005) asserted the recognition of the differences in predictor scores among ethnic groups on measures such as EI. Minority groups such as Hispanics and African Americans have proven to score differently on EI instruments according to past research (Van Rooy et al., 2005). Van Rooy et al. discussed the use of EI instruments for personnel selection processes, which is a common process for certain types of employers. There have also been gender differences reported in EI scores (Van Rooy et al., 2005).

In Van Rooy et al.'s (2005) study, the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was administered to 275 undergraduate students, 50 of whom were African American. The EIS was a previous 33-item instrument (Schutte et al., 1998), as were the SEIS and the SSEIT, which were used in this study. This measure of EI was also based on the 1990 Salovey and Mayer model, like the SEIS and the SSEIT (Van Rooy et al., 2005). According to the results of the study (Van Rooy et al., 2005), Blacks and Hispanics

scored higher than Whites on the EIS. African Americans scored lower than Hispanics, but still higher than Whites (Van Rooy et al., 2005).

King, Mara, and DeCicco (2012) found there was a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence on one of three different measures of EI. King et al. (2012) administered the SISRI-24 (King, 2008), Spiritual Intelligence Self- Report Inventory, Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS), the Assessment Emotions Scale (AES), and the Multidimensional Emotional Empathy Scale (EES) to 420 Canadian adults in a study to determine the relationship between these two factors. Bivariate correlational analysis revealed significant correlations on overall scores and sub-scale scores of the SISRI and the AES, with no significant relationships found overall or between the sub-scales of the SISRI, and the TMMS or EES (King et al., 2012). According to King et al. (2012), the AES measures both intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence, both mentioned earlier as part of Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence, the theoretical foundation from which emotional intelligence theory is built (Furnam, 2009; Schaffer & Kipp, 2014). These findings suggested the development of spiritual intelligence is closely related to the development of one's interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Furnman, 2009; King et al., 2012).

The ECR-R is quite expandable for researchers, having the flexibility to be adapted to the culture of the participants in a given study. Kooiman, Klassens, van Heloma Lugt, and Kamperman (2013) established construct validity of the Dutch translation of the ECR-R in a study with 262 outpatient mental health participants. Kooiman et al. (2013) reported evidence of construct validity as well as test-retest



reliability of the Dutch translation ECR-R over time, being consistent with past research reliability and construct validity studies of other translations of the test. According to Kooiman et al. (2013), the ECR-R has consistently proven to be an instrument shown consistently reliable to demonstrate attachment styles in adult relationships, and how these styles affect those relationships.

Nilforooshan, Ahmadi, Fatehizadeh, Reza Abedi, and Ghasemi (2013) investigated the role of personality and attachment styles on relationship dynamics, emotional responses, and marital quality. Nilforooshan et al. (2013) posited four attachment styles are based on adult attachment theory of anxious or avoidant styles of relating in relationships (Li & Zheng, 2014; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). According to Nilforooshan et al. (2013), the four attachment styles most frequently seen in adults are: 1) secure, 2) dismissing avoidant, 3) fearful avoidant, and 4) preoccupied. These four attachment styles are like those originally theorized by John Bowlby for parent-child relationships developed in one's family of origin (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Findings of the study indicated that test-retest reliability of the ECR-R was proven over a three-week period when administered to 262 Iranian married couples to assess attachment styles in their relationships (Nilforooshan et al., 2013). High scores on the test indicated stronger likelihood of avoidance and anxiety type attachment styles among the couples tested (Nilforooshan et al., 2013). Chronbach's alpha results showed scores of .88 on attachment avoidance, and .89 on attachment anxiety (Nilforooshan et al., 2013).

Rozvadsky Gugova, Heretik, and Hajduk (2014) investigated the psychometric properties of a Slovakian version ECR-R including 921 adults, to check for concurrent

and convergent validity, by comparing the scales and results with those of the NEO-FFI, and the EMBU, respectively. The EMBU stands for Eгна Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran, which literally translates memories of my upbringing or childhood (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014); and the NEO-FFI is a test that measures the Five Factors-Big Five personality traits originally designed by Costa and McRae in the 90s (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014). In the first study, the Slovak version of the ECR-R was administered to 921 adults aged 18-55 (mean and median age around 30), who lived in various regions of Slovakia (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014).

Results indicated that men tend to experience more avoidance in close relationships, whereas women experience more anxiety (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014). No significant differences in results were found between single and divorced participants, which could have been attributed to the very small sample of divorced respondents in the study (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014). Sub-scales for both Anxiety and Avoidance were found to be reliable on the Slovak ECR-R in both studies (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014). There were significant gender differences found on the Slovak ECR-R on Attachment Styles in both studies which consisted of four identified styles secure, preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful (Rozvadsky Gugova et al., 2014).

### **Operationalization**

According to Sahebalzamani et al. (2013), SI is one's capacity to question the purpose of life, while examining his/her connection to the world around him/her. Four core components of SI have been proposed (King, 2008; King & DeCicco, 2009). These include being able to 1) examine meaning/purpose of life, 2) employ existential thinking,

3) having spiritual cognizance or awareness, and 4) the ability to move from one spiritual state of consciousness to another (King, 2008; King & DeCicco, 2009). Kaur et al.,(2013) postulated spiritual intelligence and spirituality are strongly linked to caring behavior in healthcare professionals, particularly nurses. Spiritual intelligence was measured in this study by the SISRI (King, 2008; King & DeCicco, 2009). This is a 24-item inventory comprised of statements designed to measure certain mental abilities, cognitive processes, and a wide variety of behaviors (King, 2008).

The score is calculated by summing the scores of the four sub-scales, which is divided into the four areas 1) critical existential thinking (CET), 2) Personal Meaning Production (PMP), 3) Transcendental Awareness (TA), and 4) Conscious State Expansion (CSE) (King, 2008). There is one reverse scored item which must be taken care of before summing the sub-scales (King, 2008). The score ranges from 0-96, with higher scores representing higher levels of spiritual intelligence as well as higher levels of intelligence within the sub-scales (King, 2008). One example item from the SISRI-24 would be: 21) I have deeply contemplated whether there is some greater power or force (e.g., god, goddess, divine being, higher energy, etc.). Respondents choose a response between 0-4 in a Likert scale, 0 being not at all true of me and 4 being completely true of me with other numbers falling somewhere in between (King, 2008).

Mayer et al. (2004) posited along with other researchers that EI is the efficient, effective use of emotions and intelligence to manage one's life, relationships, decisions, and problems. This variable in this study was measured by the SSEIT (Schute et al., 1998), a 33- item self-report inventory developed based on the 1990 Salvey-Mayer model

of EI. The test contains four sub-scales: emotion perception, utilizing emotions, managing self-relevant emotions, and responding to other's emotions (Schutte et al., 1998). Scores are obtained by adding the scores of scales, and then summarizing those scores to obtain the total EI scores of respondents (Schutte et al., 1998). Possible choices for participants are on a Likert scale from 1-5, 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree, other responses being in between (Schutte et al., 1998). Here's a sample item from the SSEIT: 1) I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.

Attachment styles, originally defined by Bowlby and later further researched by his protege Ainsworth, indicate the way individuals attach to or connect with another person in the development of a relationship (Dinero et al., 2011). Dinero et al. (2011) postulated attachment styles are influenced by social interactions according to attachment theory. In other words, one's social interactions as well as his/her developmental background can affect the way he/she attaches or connects with others in close relationships. Mikulincer et al. (2003) maintained attachment styles developed in association with one's family of origin do influence close relationships during childhood and can affect a person throughout the lifespan. According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2005), attachment styles in adult relationships are generally manifest along the dimensions avoidance and anxiety in close relationships.

These dependent variables in the study were measured by the ECR-R, a 36-item self-report inventory, which assesses high levels of attachment-related security as low scores on anxiety and avoidance scales (Fraley, Brennan, & Waller, 2000). The two sub-scales on the inventory are divided into 18 questions regarding avoidance, and 18

indicating anxiety, for the sum of 36 (Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000). This inventory is appropriate for this study to measure the attachment styles of participants in relationships in relation to their Emotional and Spiritual intelligence, and how these variables interact with each other. According to Fraley, Brennan, and Waller (2000), respondents can choose on a scale from 1 to 7, for each of the 36 items to indicate a response ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree.

The first 18 items contain questions that reflect attachment-related anxiety, while items 19-36 reflect attachment-related avoidance (Fraley et al., 2000). The scores of the ECR-R are calculated by averaging a participant's score for items 1-18, and then averaging the score of items 19-36 (Fraley et al., 2000). High averages on the first half represent tendencies toward anxiety, and high averages on the second half represent attachment-related avoidance (Fraley et al., 2000). Low averages on both sub-scales represents attachment-related security in close relationships (Fraley et al., 2000). An example item of the inventory is: 1.) I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Software used for the analyses in the study was SPSS. To test the following hypotheses, the chosen method of analysis is shown in the table below.

### **Hypotheses and Statistical Analyses**

#### Research Questions and Hypotheses

- RQ1. Is there a relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and attachment styles?
- RQ2. Is there a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and attachment styles of African Americans?

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between Attachment styles, Spiritual Intelligence, and Emotional Intelligence.

H<sub>1</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more positive or secure attachment styles.

H<sub>2</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

H<sub>3</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of EI tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

H<sub>4</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of EI tend to have more secure attachment styles.

Table 1

*Hypotheses and Statistical Analysis Used*

Measures/Hypotheses	<i>SISRI-24</i>	<i>SSEIT</i>	<i>ECR-R</i>	<i>Statistical Analysis</i>
H <sub>0</sub> There is no relationship between SI, EI, and attachment styles.	IV	IV	DV	Multiple Regression
H <sub>1</sub> African Americans with higher levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more positive or secure attachment styles.	IV	IV	DV	Multiple Regression
H <sub>2</sub> African Americans with lower levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more avoidant or anxious attachment styles.	IV	IV	DV	Multiple Regression
H <sub>3</sub> African Americans with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence tend to have more secure attachment styles.	IV	IV	DV	Multiple Regression
H <sub>4</sub> African Americans with lower levels of Emotional Intelligence tend to have avoidant or anxious attachment styles.	IV	IV	DV	Multiple Regression

### **Threats to External Validity**

According to Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (2008), representativeness of the sample could be an issue in the study, meaning how well the sample of respondents in the study represent the population it is expected to be generalized to. The students expected to participate in the study were from the Walden Participant Pool and from those selected by Qualtrics representative of African American adults in romantic relationships, marriages, single, divorced or widowed than the average college campus. At Walden, approximately 37.8% of the student body is African American, and about 61.9% of students are between age 30-49, meaning regardless of ethnicity, more than half the student body are adults over the age of 30 (Walden, Office of Institutional Research, 2014). The participants selected through Qualtrics were specifically targeted to fit the population of the study, but the population contained significantly more females than males, which could pose some threat to the validity of the study. One other issue that could present as a threat to external validity are reactive arrangements, which occur when the experimental setting alters the outcome because of ways in which it differs from the natural setting (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). This was not an issue in this study, since an experiment is not being conducted in a laboratory, and no natural settings are being altered.

### **Threats to Internal Validity**

Experimental mortality or the dropping out of participants before the completion of the study could occur (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008), that could influence the outcome, or cause bias in results. In this study, spiritual intelligence is the independent



variable that should influence Emotional intelligence, while attachment styles are a mediating variable in the study between experiences in relationships, the other dependent variable. The only way there could be a control group in the study would be to use the spiritual intelligence test as a pretest, to separate participants into those who score higher or lower on the measure, then making those whose scores are lowest the control group, then administering the other two self-report instruments to both groups, to determine how spiritual intelligence influences or does not influence the other factors in the study.

Random assignment of participants can be an extrinsic factor affecting internal validity according to Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (2008) and can affect the study depending on differences between members of the participant groups prior to selection other than spirituality that could explain differences that occur in attachment styles, emotional intelligence, and styles of relating to others. This is known as selection effects and can make it difficult to tell whether the differences in participant's latter scores are a result in the influence or lack of influence by the independent variable or the effects of selection (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and process of this study included clearly explaining in the IRB application where files will be kept with information concerning the participants, all of which will be electronic, since the study was be posted in the Walden Participant Pool to recruit respondents and was also posted in the Qualtrics platform to reach participants there. Permission had to be requested though IRB to go through Qualtrics once the Participant Pool proved to be time

consuming and ineffective for the recruiting of participants to complete the study in a timely manner. All surveys and recruiting materials have been stored on a cloud accessible only to the researcher by password protection. Confidentiality was explained to participants within the questionnaire platforms, and was visible to participants as well as the informed consent, once they signed up for the study. Participants were also made aware they could back out of the study at any time without penalty. No participants names were recorded, and original data is stored in the researcher's personal Microsoft One Drive password-protected files for future reference for up to 5 years.

Participants were notified of consent for the study in the survey platform before answering any questions, allowing them to view and read before beginning the process, to understand if the study in any way caused them psychological or emotional distress, they could have sought support by contacted Walden Student Support by clicking on Student Assistance Program, accessible to students on the home page under the Student Services tab, in the bottom right corner. Qualtrics participants were given also a list of available resources for outreach as well in the event other services were needed in the event of emotional/psychological distress. Exclusion and inclusion criteria were also included were also included in consent information for the study for participants to review before beginning the surveys. Exclusion criteria were students below the age of 26, to increase the likelihood of more reliable romantic relationship reporting in the study. Appropriate permission for the use of each existing survey/data collection tool were obtained in advance before moving on to IRB portion of the study. There were no additional transcribers, statisticians involved in the data collection portion of the study

other than this researcher and the staff with Qualtrics research company, that recruited the participants for the surveys.

### **Summary**

This study was completed using quantitative methods of data analysis. Participants first completed the SISRI (King, 2008) the SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998), and the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000), broken into sets of questions from each survey, which took an average of 25-30 minutes per participant to complete, to examine the relationships between SI, EI, attachment styles, and experiences in romantic relationships. Chapter 4 will contain the research findings.

## Chapter 4: Data Collection, Analysis and Results

### Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of EI and religion-based Spirituality of African Americans on attachment styles in romantic relationships. In other words, this study aims to determine whether EI and religion-based spirituality influence dating, mate selection, and relationship maintenance and sustainability positively or negatively. A secondary purpose of the study is to evaluate validity of the three measures the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (Schutte et al., 1998), and the SISRI (King, 2008) with African American participants, since these measures of Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence coping have been used mostly with Caucasian populations. This also serves to contribute to a minority contribution to literature in social psychology that has not been previously done.

### Data Collection

The present study was conducted to assess the impact of religion-based Spirituality | Spiritual Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence on attachment styles of African Americans in romantic relationships. One hundred African American adults aged 27 and older of various marital status volunteered for participation in the study through Qualtrics. The sample consisted of 18 males and 80 females. Two cases were not used in the analysis, since their gender was unspecified ( $N = 98$ ). Thirty nine percent of participants were 27-37 years old, whereas 29% were aged 38-48, and 32% were aged 49 and older. The mean age of participants was 29.3, ( $SD = .844$ ). There were considerably

more female participants than male, which is likely not representative of the true male to female ratio in African American community.

### **Results**

Scores on the SSEIT (Shutte et al., 1998) had a mean ( $M = 124.98$ ) in this study, indicative of higher EI among these participants, thus supporting past research that minorities and women tend to have higher scores of EI (Van Rooy et al., 2004). Scores on the SISRI (King, 2008) were also in the higher range, with a mean ( $M = 81.64$ ), which further supports past research that African Americans tend to rely on spirituality/religious coping to navigate life (Dinero et al., 2008; Kaur et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2013).

Scores on the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000) were close to the original norms, means on both subscales being Avoidant ( $M = 3.37$ ), and Anxiety ( $M = 3.395$ ). Scores being low on these subscales of the ECR-R indicated that most participants in the study fell in the Secure Attachment Style range, with an overall mean of 3.40 (SecAs, the new created variable) to run Multiple Regression for the study. According to the Fraley et al. (2000), there is no true score for secure attachment, but certain ways to arrive at one for dissertation purposes. In this study, a new variable SecAS (Secure Attachment Styles) was created simply by averaging the scores of Avoidant and Anxious to use attachment styles as one variable in the multiple regression analysis. Low scores on both Avoidant and Attachment subscales of the ECR-R, indicate secure attachment styles in participants (Fraley et al., 2000).

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of EI and SI on attachment styles. Two initial dependent variables (DVs) were Avoidant and Anxious,

the two subscales of the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000). The two DVs Avoid and Anx were averaged into a mean to create the variable SecAS. According to Fraley et al. (2000), low scores on either scale indicate Secure Attachment Styles for participants. The overall mean score for this study was 3.40 for both Avoid and Anx, indicating most participants of the study had Secure (AS).

EI levels were measured by the SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998), with SI being measured by the SISRI (King, 2008). From a review of the analysis, I was able to determine a negative correlation between EI and SI scores and Attachment Styles (AS), that is, lower scores on AS mean high scores on EI and SI; and lower scores on EI and SI would mean high scores on the two subscales of AS, Avoidant and Anxious. This indicates a person has a secure attachment style, while EI and SI scores are high. Some results from the preliminary analysis are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics*


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Variable	Mean	SD
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Avoid	3.301	1.114
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Anx	3.47	1.433
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EI	124.98	16.76
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SI	81.64	15.59
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Descriptive statistics of the study were as follows: SI had a mean score of 82.32 out of a total possible raw score of 96, with a standard deviation of 16.16, where  $N = 98$ ; and EI had a mean score of 124.98 and SD of 16.76. This indicates African Americans in the study showed relatively high scores in of SI. In terms of EI, means across large groups on the SSEIT were generally about 124, with scores 111 or lower considered *low*, and 137 considered *high*. An SD of 13 is considered in normal range. In this study, SD was 17, having a difference of about 4 points than what has been seen in Caucasians who

take this survey (Malouff et al. 2014). Table 1 also shows some descriptive statistics of the variables.

### Statistical Assumptions

The variables EI, SI, age, gender, and marital status were all tested in SPSS for multicollinearity. Collinearity statistics tests found significance is SI with  $p = .042$ , which was less than .05. VIF of SI was 1.00 and the tolerance was 1.00; EI with significance of .115, tolerance at .565; marital status significance was .190, tolerance at .998; gender with significance of .685 and tolerance at .999; and age with significance of .657 and tolerance at .935. Table 3 shows these results:

Table 3

#### *Multicollinearity Statistics*

Variable	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
SI	.042	1.00	1.00
EI	.115	.565	1.77
Marital Status	.062	.062	.998
Gender	.685	.999	1.001
Age	.657	.935	1.070

Skewness and kurtosis were analyzed on the IVs and predictor variables to check for normal distribution (see Table 4). Skewness of SI was symmetric, at .197, and



kurtosis was platykurtic, with a value of  $-.087$ . Skewness of EI was slightly negative, at  $-.239$ , and kurtosis was leptokurtic at  $.321$ . Skewness of gender was negative at  $-1.66$ , and kurtosis was leptokurtic at  $.769$ . Skewness of marital status was negative, at  $-.671$ , and kurtosis was platykurtic at  $-1.29$ . Skewness of age was symmetric at  $.134$ , kurtosis was platykurtic at  $-1.588$ . Table 4 below displays these statistics.

Table 4

*Skewness and Kurtosis Statistics*

Variable	Skewness	SE of skewness	Kurtosis	SE of kurtosis
SI	.197	.241	-.087	.478
EI	-.239	.241	.321	.478
Gender	-1.66	.244	.769	.483
Marital status	-.671	.241	-1.290	.478
Age	.134	.241	-1.588	.478

**Findings with Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Past research indicated that spirituality/Spiritual Intelligence, in particular religion based, has been used as a powerful coping tool for emotion and self-regulation (King, 2008; Ronel, 2008). The research questions and hypotheses of this study were as follows: RQ1) Is there a relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and attachment styles?

RQ2) Is there a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and attachment styles of African Americans?

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between attachment styles, spiritual intelligence, and emotional intelligence.

H<sub>1</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more positive or secure attachment styles.

H<sub>2</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

H<sub>3</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of EI tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

H<sub>4</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of EI tend to have more secure attachment styles.

The research questions and hypotheses of the study focused on the relationship between Attachment styles and spiritual and emotional intelligence of African Americans in romantic relationships. The null hypothesis of the study is that there is no relationship between (AS) attachment styles, (SI) spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence (EI). The findings of the study disprove the null hypotheses, since Attachment Styles were found to influence levels of SI and EI in participants in the study. Hypothesis 1 states that African Americans with higher levels of SI tend to have more secure AS. The results of the study found that the mean Anxiety sub-scale score of African Americans in the study was 3.47, with an SD of 1.433, and an SE of .1433, meaning anxiety among

these participants was low, and they have relatively secure Attachment styles. The results are addressed in relation to each hypothesis listed below:

**H<sub>0</sub> Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between attachment styles, spiritual intelligence, and emotional intelligence (RQ1 and 2).** The null hypothesis was rejected, because the findings of the study prove negative correlation between Emotional Intelligence by scores on the SSEIT (Schutte et al., 1998) and Spiritual Intelligence by the SISRI (King, 2008); and Attachment Styles by the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2012). Higher scores on measures for EI and SI among participants of the study were found to have Secure Attachment Styles, which manifested in lower scores on the ECR-R (Fraley et al., (2012). Higher scores on the two subscales of the ECR-R, Anxious and Avoidant, indicate a participant(s) fell into the category of having either an Anxious or Avoidant Attachment styles, and the EI and SI measures on the SSEIT and SISRI, fell lower than average among those participants, respectively (King, 2008; Schutte et al., 1998).

**H<sub>1</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more positive or secure attachment styles (RQ1).** The mean score in this study was 81.64, which is considered a moderately high score on the SISRI (King, 2008). The mean ECR-R scores on the subscales Avoidant were 3.30, and Anxious was 3.47, indicating the negative correlation between these two variables. Lower scores on the two subscales of the ECR-R indicate Secure Attachment Styles, while higher scores would indicate either avoidant or anxious Attachment styles (Fraley et al., 2000). This proves

that individuals with Secure Attachment Styles have higher levels of spiritual intelligence. Hypothesis one was accepted.

**H<sub>2</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles (RQ1).** Seven participants scored between 59 and 39 on the SISRI (King, 2008), being the lowest scores for SI. The highest range of scores on the ECR-R (Fraley et al. 2000) fell between 4.06-4.50 among 6 participants on the Avoidant subscale, with the mode being 3.09. Highest scores on the Anxious subscale fell among 17 participants between 5.06 and 6.44, with the mode being 1.00. This indicated there were nearly three times as many participants in the study with Anxious Attachment Style types than Avoidant type Attachment styles in the study. These numbers are about 23.5% of all participants in the study, which scored lower on both scales, indicating secure Attachment Styles, while scores on the Spiritual Intelligence measure was high. Without further specific information on those with lower scores of Spiritual Intelligence, the researcher cannot definitively say Hypothesis 2 was proven.

**H<sub>3</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of EI tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles (RQ2).** Findings of the study indicate a significant relationship between SI and Attachment Styles, and EI and Attachment Styles, where  $p < .05$ . Attachment Styles was computed into a single dependent variable (SecAS), by getting an average score of the two subscale means for Avoid and Anxiety before running the Multiple Regression Analysis. Low scores on both or either subscale indicate Secure Attachment Styles in participants (Fraley et al., 2000). Hypothesis 3 could not be confirmed in the study because further study would be needed to determine more about

those who had Anxious attachment styles, or a separate study with a different population such as participants with Anxiety and/or Mood Disorders to examine different patterns in their Attachment styles and relationships. The results can be seen below in Table 5.

Table 5

*Secure Attachment Style ANOVA*

SecAS	F Sig	<i>df</i>	<i>M</i>
EI	3.41	.0372	2.33
SI	3.41	.0372	2.33

**H<sub>4</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of EI tend to have more secure attachment styles (RQ2).** The mean score of EI in this study was 125.00, with highest scores falling between 156.00 and 161.00, which are considered moderately high to high scores on the SSEIT, the measure of emotional intelligence used in the study. Overall the mean score of Attachment Styles measured by the ECR-R (Fraley et al. 2000), was 3.40, which indicates the average scores were demonstrated secure attachment styles. As explained earlier, low scores on Avoidant and Anxious subscales of the ECR-R indicate secure attachment styles. There is no subscale for Secure AS, however a variable was created as mentioned above, averaging the means of the two subscales to run the Multiple Regression Analysis, with Secure Attachment Styles (SecAS as the DV). Highest scores on the ECR-R in the study on Anxious ranged between 3.88 – 4.50, still moderately low;

and between 4.89-6.44, being slightly higher on the Anxious scale, indicating there were more participants in the study with somewhat anxious Attachment Styles than Avoidant. The number of participants falling into that group was about 18.4% of the group, N=18. This information is above in Table 4. Hypothesis 4 was confirmed in the study.

### **Summary**

EI, SI and three others were the independent variable of the study, and could be causal in this study, but would require further studies on African American spirituality and Emotional Intelligence to establish (Rudenstam & Newton, 2015). The other three IVs were Marital Status, Age and Gender, which were all examined to determine which could be the best predictor variable of Attachment Styles. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Rudenstam and Newton (2015) asserted the discovery of relationships between variables and establishing the existence of causal relationships facilitates social change by manipulating those variables found to be influential to others. Scores on the subscales of the ECR-R were slightly higher than the norms, but very close numerically; with Avoidance having an overall mean score of 2.92, SD 1.19 and Anxiety having a mean score of 3.56, SD 1.12 (Fraley, 2012). This is significant, since surveys and most standardized tests are not normed on African American populations, unless written or created for the population. Table 6 below illustrates a comparison of the ECR-R norms and findings of this study (Fraley, 2012). Chapter 5 will provide a further, more in-depth analysis and examination of the findings in the context of the theoretical framework presented in the proposal, describe the limitations and recommendations for further research, implications for positive social change, and conclusions for the study.

Table 6

*Comparisons of ECR-R Sub-scale Score Findings with Norms*

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Subscale	Norms M	This Study M	Norms SD	This Study SD
Avoidance	2.92	3.301	1.19	1.114
Anxiety	3.56	3.47	1.12	1.433

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## Chapter 5: Interpretation of Findings and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose and nature of this study was to determine whether spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence impacted the attachment styles of African Americans in terms of romantic relationships, including dating, mate selection, and relationship sustainability. After conducting the surveys, it was determined that both SI and EI influenced Attachment Styles in African Americans and had a significant relationship. Findings also indicated, in keeping with prior research, that minorities tend to score higher on measures of EI and tend to rely more heavily on religious coping to navigate life (Brown et al. 2013; Hayward & Krause, 2015; Malouff et al. 2014).

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of the study disconfirmed the null hypothesis, confirmed Hypotheses 1 and 4, but Hypotheses 2 and 3 were inconclusive without more information about specific participants who scored higher on the Anxious subscale/had lower levels of EI (Hypothesis 3) and those who scored lower on SI (Hypothesis 2). According to Hayward and Krause (2015), both Caribbean Blacks and African Americans use religion as a common coping mechanism, achieving both positive and negative results in different life situations. Past research has indicated African American families of low SES have used spirituality/religious coping to help them prevail in challenging circumstances, which helped to strengthen psychological well-being (Marks et al., 2012). Krageloh et al. (2012) found that people with little to no spirituality or religious identification in their lives tended to have maladaptive coping skills and struggled more emotionally in challenging



life situations. This research lends to the presence of coping skills that can also be helpful and applicable in romantic relationships, as well as life in general. According to Malouff et al. (2014), people with higher levels of EI experience more satisfying romantic relationships and social lives. Past research indicates that although SES is important, it is not a factor of SI or EI in African Americans, and in fact may lend to resilience and psychological well-being found in those with a deeper sense of spirituality used in daily life (Brown et al., 2013; Jones, 2014; Krageloh et al., 2012; Parks, 2007).

Malouff et al. (2014) asserted that people with higher levels of EI experience greater satisfaction in their social lives as well as in romantic relationships, which was supported also by the findings of this study. Furnham (2009) posited that interpersonal intelligence is one's ability to successfully manage relationships and keep them stable; Platts et al. (2002) examined Bowlby's attachment theory and noted that adults continue to relate in the same styles developed during their upbringing with their family of origin, Moreover, Dinero, et al. (2011)

These were the original research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1) Is there a relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and attachment styles?

RQ2) Is there a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and attachment styles of African Americans?

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between levels of SI and EI and attachment styles in African Americans.

H<sub>1</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more positive or secure attachment styles.

H<sub>2</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of Spiritual Intelligence tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

H<sub>3</sub>: African Americans with lower levels of EI tend to have more anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

H<sub>4</sub>: African Americans with higher levels of EI tend to have more secure attachment styles.

### **Examination of Findings According to Theoretical Framework**

The null hypothesis was not supported by the results of the study, Hypotheses 1 and 3 were supported, since the results showed a negative correlation between higher EI and SI scores and scores on subscales of Attachment Styles (ECR-R Avoidant and Anxious) in African Americans. The negative correlation between these variables indicates also as EI and SI scores lower, AS scores would be higher. Mikullicer et al. (2003) also highlighted the significance of personal life experiences on emotion regulation over the course of one's life. In other words, attachment styles are the foundation for one's emotional management system in relationships (Mikulincer et al., 2003). According to Shaver and Mikulincer (2003), having appropriate relational bonds with key attachment figures facilitates effective coping, emotion regulation, and psychological well-being.

Mikulincer et al. (2003) contended that Bowlby's theory of attachment styles provided a conceptual framework for how people develop styles of relating in close relationships, especially with significant others, as well as provided insight on the desire for closeness as opposed to reluctance to bond with others. According to Mayer et al.

(2004), EI includes one's ability to manage emotions and related cognition in a way that facilitates healthy relationships, social lives, and the ability to work well with others. Keltner and Lerner (2009) posited that emotions influence multiple cognitive processes. Attachment styles (AS) are one's way of being able to connect and relate to others, but can shift in adult romantic relationships, due to unavailability of a partner to relieve distress or regulate emotion (Dinero et al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Emotion regulation is part of the thread of people's experiences, causing them to transition from secure to anxious or avoidant, or from any one of the three to another (Dinero et al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In past research, EI scores have been higher among minorities and women and tend to increase with age (Van Rooy et al. 2004). This is also supported by the findings of this study with minority participants and more female than male counterparts in the sample.

Kaur et al. (2013) asserted that religion positively influences emotion regulation; and as mentioned previously, emotion regulation of partners in relationships is a way of coping with or relieving distress (Dinero et al., 2008, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Coping with distress and the regulation of emotion are important relational and social skills (Dinero et al., 2008). According to Ross et al. (2008), religious coping facilitates healthy psychological well-being and emotional adjustment across cultures. Taylor et al. (2013) maintained that college students tend to continue in the faith and spiritual traditions they were raised in to successfully cope with life away from home, though they may not regularly attend religious services. The findings of this study showed participants aged 27 and over to have secure attachment styles, scoring high in the areas

of both SI and EI, indicating these African American participants had secure attachment in relationships and social situations, and were skilled at emotion and self-regulation/self-management using spirituality and/or religious coping in various relational, life and/or social situations.

### **Limitations to Generalization of Results to Larger Population**

In alignment with past research, the findings of this study are generalizable for the most part to the African American population, with some exceptions, such as members of the African American population who might be incarcerated or have mental illnesses, intellectual disabilities, a history of substance abuse, or other maladaptive behaviors and negative coping patterns. Humphries et al. (2012) asserted that some African American children show resilience in challenging life circumstances through their demonstration of higher levels of EI, supporting the generalizability to the African American population at large. As mentioned earlier, this study further supports past research findings on religious coping/spirituality being common among African Americans, (Krageloh et al., 2012; Hayward & Krause, 2015) to effectively manage emotions, regulate self, improve decision-making. Also, further supported in the study were the validity and reliability of the SSEIT, SISRI, and ECR-R, as scores in this study were close to, though they differed slightly from the norms (Fraley et al., 2000; King, 2008; Schutte et al., 1998).

However, according to Lapp (2014), 22% of African Americans in a qualitative study on divorce reported infidelity as the reason, whereas 11% reported drinking or other substance abuse problems as the reason, 4% reported loss of love, and 2% stated financial problems contributed to the breakdown of the marriages. All the reasons

mentioned in that study could be caused and/or exacerbated by emotional distress, poor coping, pre-existing psychological, physical, or emotional issues prior to the marriage, and/or lack of compatibility. Hertel et al. (2009) found that people with borderline personality disorders and substance abuse disorders demonstrated impairment in EI in comparison to others, which contributed to poor life choices and patterns of unstable relationships. Krageloh et al. (2012) found that religion and spirituality are common coping mechanisms in challenging life situations and that people with little to no identification of spirituality tended to have more maladaptive coping skills and lower levels of emotional functioning in difficult life situations. In other words, this supports the limitations of the results of this study in terms of what pre-existing factors might be affecting the African American populations given the surveys; the results might differ due to coping difficulties and other possible psychological and/or emotional challenges.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on past research, as well as the results of this study, African Americans tend to score higher on measures of Emotional Intelligence, while also relying more heavily on spirituality/religious coping for self- and emotional management in challenging life situations (Dinero et al., 2008; Hayward & Krause, 2015; Krageloh et al., 2012; Van Rooy et al., 2004). This is a foundation for more research on how these strengths among African Americans can be used to improve negative trends or decrease community and social problems among African Americans. One pervasive issue among African Americans is the significant number of further advanced females than males in terms of education and careers, leaving challenges for finding suitable mates within

African American communities. Further research toward things that improve and strengthen psychological and emotional well-being can give scientists more of an opportunity to narrow that gap, increasing the likelihood of healthier relationships, more long-term and healthier homes existing in African American communities, thus producing much needed positive social change. More research on EI, SI and Attachment Styles can ultimately move researchers toward improving relationships among African Americans, while providing community and social problem solutions.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The findings of this study as well as further research on African Americans in the areas of EI, SI and Attachment Styles can have a significant impact on individuals, families and the African American community, in terms of building stronger individuals, relationships, and families. At the individual level, more research on the value of EI and the importance of religious based and spirituality-infused coping to navigate life challenges and can help African Americans to focus on solutions, self-improvement and self-empowerment by learning about emotional and self-regulation. Bhullar, Schutte and Malouff (2012) found in study about EI that participants from Australian and Indian cultures scored higher, and demonstrated tendencies toward better psychological well-being, in relation to their collectivist cultural practices that help to reinforce and strengthen EI. Bhullar, Schutte, and Malouff (2012) found in another study on Trait EI that people with higher levels of EI showed stronger and more effective coping skills for psychological distress, meaning EI itself can be used as an effective way to reduce

emotional distress. Topics for future research leading to helping African Americans improve and increase EI could effect positive social change.

Learning more about EI and spiritual/religion-based healthy coping application to everyday life can be helpful to African Americans starting individually, then transcending to family, organizational and societal levels. More psychologically well individuals produce healthier families, work environments, communities, thus affecting society at large in terms of the piece African Americans fill in. Marques, Allevato, and Holt (2008) maintained the facilitation of EI in both employees and managers can promote healthier work relationships between co-workers, with managers, and more long-term job satisfaction. It is well known that problematic job situations can lead to such psychological distress for individuals, it affects work performance, satisfaction, personal and family lives of employees, satisfaction, personal and family lives of employees. Marques et al. (2008) also advocated spirituality at work has become a new and important integration in the past twenty years, helping employees, managers and teams to feel more connected as well as a sense of belongingness in the workplace.

Li and Zheng (2014) further elaborated on past research on the influence of EI and Attachment Styles on psychological well-being, going a step further to include the oncept of global self-esteem. According to Li and Zheng (2014), global self-esteem was introduced in research in the mid 1960s and can be described as one's positive or negative feelings or thoughts about self. Global self-esteem, EI and Attachment styles all have a significant impact on the emotional and mental health of individuals and their family relationships (Li & Zheng, 2014). This further supports that more research on EI,

Attachment Styles and how these components effect self-esteem, improve individuals, relationships, families, and organizations, thus effecting community at large and positive social change.

### **Conclusions**

This study found that Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence among African Americans has a negative correlation between these two IVs and Attachment Styles (DV), meaning, as EI and SI scores increase, AS scores are lower, indicating secure attachment styles. This also confirmed Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4, which each stated there were negative correlations between EI, SI and Attachment Styles, and that scores would move in opposite directions lower on AS and higher on the other two and vise-versa. The null hypothesis was rejected, which stated there was no relationship between any of the variables. Further research in the areas of this study could prove valuable and effective for African American communities at the individual, family, organizational and societal levels, facilitating stronger relationships, more positive self-esteem, more emotionally healthy families thereby impacting positive social change.



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