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Oral Presentation O3.3

WOMEN AND GOD

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Many studies have shown that the transition into college can lead to stress and that stress can lead to depression in both men and women (e.g. Lopez & Gormley, 2002). Depression cripples both men and women. The lifetime risk of major depression is 10-25% for women and 5-12% for men (Greenspan, 2001). Mild symptoms rob men and women of energy needed for academic and social pursuits (Beeber, 1999). Depression results in poor over-all functioning, emotional behavioral problems and low self-esteem (Reinherz, Giaconia, Hauf, Wasserman & Silverman, 1999). Individuals with depression also have more problems in intimate relationships with friends and family (Reinherz et al., 1999).

This exploratory study, which launches a more in-depth investigation of Magee's (2001) unexpected finding about prayer journals, ultimately seeks to understand how to promote resiliency against threats to healthy development among college-aged women. This is a narrow inquiry guided by two research questions: (1) what role does belief in God play in the psychological and social development of college-aged women who self-identify as Christian; and (2) also, what is the relationship between prayer journals and depression.

Preliminary findings, based on survey data from college-aged women who self-identify as Christian, provide a framework to more fully understand the role that one's spiritual beliefs play in young adult women's psychological and social development. Discussion of findings included an interpretation of the relationship between one's perceptions of happiness, and unconditional love/joy.