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Does forgiveness matter? A study of spiritual transformation among survivors of significant interpersonal offenses

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DOES FORGIVENESS MATTER? A STUDY OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

AMONG SURVIVORS OF SIGNIFICANT INTERPERSONAL OFFENSES

by

Jessica Marie Schultz

<u>An Abstract</u>

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Psychological and Quantitative Foundations
(Counseling Psychology)
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisors: Professor Elizabeth M. Altmaier
Associate Professor Saba R. Ali

ABSTRACT

Significant interpersonal offenses have considerable consequences for the victim, and these sequelae can be both negative and positive. Spiritual transformation and forgiveness are two processes that may follow a significant interpersonal offense. Spiritual transformation, which includes both spiritual gain and spiritual decline, is an important experience for many individuals following a highly stressful event. Likewise, forgiveness is one way that individuals may cope with the negative effects of being the victim of an interpersonal offense. Both spiritual transformation and forgiveness are related to physical and mental health. Given the prevalence of interpersonal offenses, the mental health link, and the personal importance of religion and spirituality to many individuals, it is imperative to understand these processes. However, the extant literature offers very little about the relationship between spiritual transformation and forgiveness.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of forgiveness in experiencing spiritual transformation following significant interpersonal offenses. Participants were 146 individuals that had been "significantly wronged" by another person. Participants provided information on demographic variables, religious and spiritual importance, event-related distress, forgiveness, and spiritual transformation. Descriptive data are presented as well as correlates of spiritual transformation. Results showed that spiritual growth was positively related to religious and spiritual importance but not forgiveness variables. Event-related distress and avoidance, one component of unforgiveness, were positively related to spiritual decline. Regression analyses revealed that forgiveness did not uniquely account for a significant amount of the variance in spiritual growth after controlling for demographic variables, religious and spiritual importance, and event-related distress. Rather, religious and spiritual importance accounted for a significant amount of variance in spiritual growth. Forgiveness uniquely predicted spiritual decline after accounting for demographic variables, religious and

spiritual importance, and event-related distress. This study suggests a complex

relationship between spiritual transformation and forgiveness. Results are discussed

within the context of implications for clinicians and researchers alike.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee
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To Patrick
We made this dream work.

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ABSTRACT

Significant interpersonal offenses have considerable consequences for the victim, and these sequelae can be both negative and positive. Spiritual transformation and forgiveness are two processes that may follow a significant interpersonal offense. Spiritual transformation, which includes both spiritual gain and spiritual decline, is an important experience for many individuals following a highly stressful event. Likewise, forgiveness is one way that individuals may cope with the negative effects of being the victim of an interpersonal offense. Both spiritual transformation and forgiveness are related to physical and mental health. Given the prevalence of interpersonal offenses, the mental health link, and the personal importance of religion and spirituality to many individuals, it is imperative to understand these processes. However, the extant literature offers very little about the relationship between spiritual transformation and forgiveness.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of forgiveness in experiencing spiritual transformation following significant interpersonal offenses. Participants were 146 individuals that had been "significantly wronged" by another person. Participants provided information on demographic variables, religious and spiritual importance, event-related distress, forgiveness, and spiritual transformation. Descriptive data are presented as well as correlates of spiritual transformation. Results showed that spiritual growth was positively related to religious and spiritual importance but not forgiveness variables. Event-related distress and avoidance, one component of unforgiveness, were positively related to spiritual decline. Regression analyses revealed that forgiveness did not uniquely account for a significant amount of the variance in spiritual growth after controlling for demographic variables, religious and spiritual importance, and event-related distress. Rather, religious and spiritual importance accounted for a significant amount of variance in spiritual growth. Forgiveness uniquely predicted spiritual decline after accounting for demographic variables, religious and

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Being wronged by another person is a normal part of life. These interpersonal offenses range from slight offenses with minimal consequences to significant offenses with considerable consequences to the victim. Historically, psychology focused on the negative consequences of traumatic events such as interpersonal offenses (Affleck & Tennen, 1996; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Recently, the growth of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) has promoted research into more positive sequelae of interpersonal offenses including forgiveness and spiritual transformation. These constructs are important to individuals; in Gallup Polls, 94% of Americans thought it was important to forgive, 96% of Americans believe in God or a universal spirit (Gallup & Jones, 2000), and 86% report that religion is at least fairly important in their lives (Gallup & Castelli, 1989). However, little is known about the relationship between forgiveness and spiritual transformation among victims of significant interpersonal offenses.

In their struggle with highly stressful or traumatic life events, people may experience posttraumatic growth. Posttraumatic growth is defined as positive change following one's experience with a highly stressful life event that exceeds baseline functioning (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1999, 2001; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Posttraumatic growth has been documented following a range of events including illnesses and health conditions (Cordova, Cunningham, Carlson, & Andrykowski, 2001; Tallman, Altmaier, & Garcia, 2007; Tallman, Shaw, Schultz, & Altmaier, 2010), sexual assault (Frazier, Conlon, & Glaser, 2001), and combat (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001). Posttraumatic growth has been categorized into several major domains: new possibilities, relating to others, personal strength, appreciation of life, and spiritual change (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). While the role of religious and spiritual factors in posttraumatic growth has been examined (Shaw, Joseph, & Linley, 2005), little specific attention has

been paid to the domain of spiritual change. In fact, scholars have called for greater research into posttraumatic changes in religion and spirituality (O'Rourke, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2008; Park, 2004).

For the purposes of the current study, spiritual transformation is defined as positive or negative changes in spirituality following an experience with a highly stressful life event. These changes may occur in one's spiritual worldview, goals and/or priorities, sense of self, and relationships (Cole, Hopkins, Tisak, Steel, & Carr, 2008). Spiritual transformation is a two-component construct with positive changes known as spiritual growth and negative changes known as spiritual decline. Spiritual transformation is distinct from constructs such as spiritual maturation, spiritual development (Wink & Dillon, 2002), and religious conversion (Paloutzian, 2005) in that spiritual transformation represents a dramatic change in spirituality following a highly stressful life event.

While the literature on spiritual transformation is in its infancy, more attention has been paid to spiritual growth than to spiritual decline. Spiritual growth has been documented following a range of stressful life events including illnesses and health conditions (Ironson, Kremer, & Ironson, 2006; Pakenham, 2007; Sears, Stanton, & Danoff-Burg, 2003), terrorist attacks (Milam, Ritt-Olson, Tan, Unger, & Nezami, 2005), and war (Erbes et al., 2005). Interpersonal offenses have also triggered spiritual growth. In a longitudinal study of sexual assault survivors, 45% of participants identified spiritual growth that was maintained at least one year post-assault (Frazier et al., 2001). Other researchers have also documented spiritual growth following sexual assault (Kennedy, Davis, & Taylor, 1996; Knapik, Martsolf, & Draucker, 2008).

Spiritual decline has been shown to occur following highly difficult life events. In a study of individuals who experienced a range of high degree stressors (e.g., natural disaster, witnessing someone being seriously injured, being in an accident, physical assault), 16.7% endorsed spiritual decline (Falsetti, Resick, & Davis, 2003). Sexual assault, a significant interpersonal offense, has been widely documented to lead to

spiritual decline among some individuals (Fater & Mullaney, 2000; Hall, 1995; Rosetti, 1995). In the same longitudinal study by Frazier et al. (2001), 23% of participants identified spiritual decline that was maintained at least one year post-assault. Thus, highly stressful events may trigger both spiritual growth and spiritual decline in individuals.

As expected, spiritual transformation is associated with religion. Spiritual growth has a positive relationship with religious variables (e.g., religious coping, religious attendance and participation, religiosity; Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008; Smith, Pargament, Brant, & Oliver, 2000). However, spiritual decline is negatively associated with religious variables (Cole et al., 2008).

Spiritual transformation has links to health. Spiritual growth is positively related to well-being including positive affect (Erbes et al., 2005), role and social functioning (Frame, Uphold, Shehan, & Reid, 2005), life satisfaction (Pakenham & Cox, 2008), and global mental health (Frame et al., 2005). Spiritual growth is negatively related to psychological distress (Frazier et al., 2001) and depression (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). On the other hand, spiritual decline is negatively related to well-being, including increased levels of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Frazier et al., 2001). Spiritual decline may lead to significant psychological distress (Mart, 2004).

Given its prevalence and relationship to overall well-being, spiritual transformation is important for psychologists to understand. Yet, little is known about the form and process of achieving spiritual transformation following a highly stressful life event. Moreover, less is known about processes that precede spiritual transformation (Joseph, Linley, & Harris, 2005). Forgiveness may be one such way that individuals cope with difficult interpersonal offenses which may be related to spiritual transformation.

Throughout history, forgiveness has been described as a means for victims of hurtful actions to integrate those experiences into their lives. Forgiveness is an intrapersonal process that involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in which a person releases a negative stance of unforgiveness and may adopt a positive or prosocial stance toward the offender (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; Worthington, 2005). Forgiveness is distinct from constructs such as reconciliation, condoning, excusing, and forgetting (Wade & Worthington, 2005). Thus, forgiveness represents a pro-social, victim-focused, strengths-based, resilient response to interpersonal offenses. Forgiveness also has strong relationships with both mental and physical well-being (Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Toussaint & Webb, 2005).

There is a complex relationship between religion and forgiveness. The world's major religious traditions include teachings on forgiveness (Rye et al., 2000), and religious individuals claim to be more globally forgiving people (Edwards et al., 2002; Poloma & Gallup, 1991). Religion may foster forgiveness through teaching worldviews that value forgiveness, providing role models, offering teaching and parables, and encouraging emotions such as empathy and compassion (McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2005; Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005). However, religious individuals are no more likely to forgive a specific offense, a phenomenon known as the *religion-forgiveness discrepancy* (McCullough & Worthington, 1999).

A prominent theoretical model suggests that forgiveness is a process that incorporates four major phases (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). These phases include 1) the uncovering phase in which the individual develops insight into the psychological and social impact of the interpersonal offense, 2) the decision phase in which the individual understands forgiveness and makes a decision to pursue it, 3) the work phase in which the individual changes emotions and cognitions toward the offender, and 4) the deepening phase in which the individual develops increased meaning and further reduction of negative emotions. The deepening phase provides the opportunity for individuals to

discover a changed sense of purpose from their experience with the interpersonal offense. It is possible that this may take the form of spiritual transformation.

Conceptually, spiritual transformation and forgiveness appear to be related. Both constructs are processes that occur following significant interpersonal offenses and are ways through which individuals cope or search for meaning. Empirically, both constructs are strongly related to religious and spiritual variables. However, very little is known about the relationships between forgiveness and spiritual transformation.

Limited evidence suggests that forgiveness and posttraumatic growth are related. While posttraumatic growth is not the focus of the current study, spiritual growth as one component of spiritual transformation is conceptualized as a domain of posttraumatic growth. In a study of individuals associated with the Oklahoma City bombing, there was no relationship between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth (Fischer, 2006). In a writing intervention study, participants in a condition who wrote about the benefits of an interpersonal offense reported significantly higher levels of forgiveness than those in a control condition and those in a condition that wrote about the traumatic features of the event (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). Finally, in a study of Israeli adolescents exposed to terrorism, forgiveness was associated with posttraumatic growth in religious Jews; however, unwillingness to forgive predicted growth in traditional and secular Jews (Laufer, Raz-Hamama, Levine, & Solomon, 2009).

Spiritual growth has been reported following participation in interventions designed to promote forgiveness. Rye and Pargament (2002) found that 26% of the participants (all of whom had been hurt by a romantic partner) in a forgiveness intervention that integrated religious themes qualitatively reported spiritual growth as a result of the intervention. Similarly, participants in a forgiveness intervention who had experienced a variety of interpersonal offenses reported significant gains in spiritual growth from pre- to post-intervention (Luskin, Ginzburg, & Thoresen, 2005). These

studies suggest that forgiveness may impact spiritual growth within an intervention; however, the process is unclear.

This study seeks to evaluate the relationships between forgiveness and spiritual transformation in people who have experienced significant interpersonal offenses. Given the importance of these constructs to individuals and their links to well-being (Erbes et al., 2005; Frazier et al., 2001; Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Toussaint & Webb, 2005; Weinrib, Rothrock, Johnsen, & Lutgendorf, 2006), it is important to understand their occurrence among a diverse group of adults in a non-experimental setting. This is the first study to directly examine the role of forgiveness in spiritual transformation.

The purpose of this study was to further understand factors related to spiritual transformation. The role of demographic variables (including religious and spiritual variables) and event-related distress were examined. The relationship between forgiveness and spiritual transformation was also investigated. Specific research questions were

1) What factors (including forgiveness variables) are related to spiritual transformation?

2) Does forgiveness explain a significant amount of variance in spiritual transformation after controlling for demographic and offense-related variables?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will synthesize the existing literature on spiritual transformation and forgiveness relevant to the current study. Posttraumatic growth will first be introduced to provide a foundation for understanding spiritual transformation. The definition, process, and domains of posttraumatic growth will be described.

Spiritual transformation, which is the focus of the current study, will then be presented. An extended discussion of the definition will be included due to divergence in the literature. Spiritual transformation consists of two factors, spiritual growth and spiritual decline, and both will be reviewed. Demographic and psychological variables related to spiritual transformation will be presented. Situations in which individuals have experienced spiritual transformation will then be discussed with special attention paid to interpersonal offenses that have served as a catalyst to spiritual transformation since significant interpersonal offenses are targeted in the current study.

The literature review will then transition to examining forgiveness. As establishing a definition of forgiveness has been an ongoing debate in the literature, various definitions will be presented followed by the definition of forgiveness used in the current study. The health benefits of forgiveness, mental and physical, will be briefly discussed. The relationships between forgiveness and religion and spirituality will then be presented before moving to a review of the existing literature on forgiveness and spiritual transformation and rationale for the current study.

Posttraumatic Growth

Psychological literature on the impact of traumatic or stressful life events has been criticized for its sole emphasis on negative consequences (Affleck & Tennen, 1996; Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998). As Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) state, "The main focus of

work in psychology, medicine, and related disciplines, has traditionally been on the ways in which traumatic events are precursors to highly distressing and sometimes severe sets of psychological and physical problems" (p. 2). The positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) spawned interest into strengths, resiliency, and well-being. Recently, attention has been given to the possibility for positive changes following stressful life events. Scholars suggest that through adversarial experiences, individuals may rise to a higher level of functioning than prior to the event (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Definition

Posttraumatic growth is defined as positive psychological change(s) resulting from experiences of and struggles with highly stressful life events (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1999, 2001). Importantly, posttraumatic growth is not simply a return to baseline functioning after a difficult life experience; rather, posttraumatic growth represents a transformation that exceeds baseline functioning (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Terms such as benefit-finding (Affleck & Tennen, 1996), stress-related growth (Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996), adversarial growth (Linley & Joseph, 2004), thriving (Ickovics & Park, 1998), flourishing (Ryff & Singer, 1998), positive by-products (McMillen, Howard, Nower, & Chung, 2001), and positive psychological changes (Yalom & Lieberman, 1991) have also been used to describe the general construct of posttraumatic growth. However, the term posttraumatic growth is used in this review as it captures the significant threat of the stressor that catalyzed growth and represents the nature of growth as both a process and outcome rather than simply a coping mechanism (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Model of Posttraumatic Growth

Posttraumatic growth has been conceptualized as both a process and an outcome (Park & Helgeson, 2006). That is, posttraumatic growth may be a process that leads to

other outcomes such as decreased psychological distress, or it may be an outcome of coping with the triggering event. In order for posttraumatic growth to occur, an individual must experience a highly stressful or difficult life experience (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This event does not have to meet the criteria established in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM; APA, 2000) for a trauma, but it must challenge the individual's general assumptions about the world, including beliefs about benevolence, predictability, and controllability (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Posttraumatic growth does not occur as a result of the trauma; rather, growth arises out of one's struggle with the event.

The predominant model of posttraumatic growth has evolved over the past decade to include both theoretical concepts and empirical research (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 2004). The model suggests that posttraumatic growth follows the experience and struggle with a stressful life event that challenges the individual's basic beliefs about oneself and the world. The individual then engages coping resources and experiences intense cognitive processing of the event. The model suggests that this persistent cognitive processing leads to posttraumatic growth. Personality factors such as extraversion and openness to experience as well as social support may also influence the process. Finally, the model proposes that posttraumatic growth may be connected to development of general life wisdom and the production of a new, coherent life narrative.

The concept of posttraumatic growth is not met without skepticism. Some suggest that posttraumatic growth is an illusory concept in which individuals report growth following adversity by mildly exaggerating positive views of themselves and others, inflating one's sense of personal control, and engaging in unrealistic optimism (Maercker & Zoellner, 2004; Taylor, 1983; Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower, & Gruenewald, 2000). Moreover, Wortman (2004) suggests that psychological distress is more pervasive and significant for many individuals following a traumatic event than any

experience of posttraumatic growth, and illusory growth may be reported for self-preservation or defensive reasons. Still, the literature has evolved to consider a two-component model of posttraumatic growth (Maercker & Zoellner, 2004) that provides for both veridical and illusory posttraumatic growth in a variety of contexts.

Individuals experience posttraumatic growth following a range of difficult life experiences. Illnesses and health conditions (Bower, Kemeny, Taylor, & Fahey, 1998; Cordova et al., 2001), bereavement (Cadell, Regehr, & Hemsworth, 2003; Polatinsky & Esprey, 2000), sexual assault (Frazier et al., 2001) combat (Britt et al., 2001), and terrorist attacks (DeRoma et al., 2003; Woike & Matik, 2004) are among the stressful life events that have resulted in growth for the individuals who experienced them.

<div align="center">Domains of Posttraumatic Growth</div>

Several areas of posttraumatic growth have been identified and categorized. Qualitative analysis yielded three original domains of posttraumatic growth: self-perception (e.g., awareness of vulnerability and recognition of self-reliance), interpersonal relationships (e.g., increased expressiveness, compassion, empathy, and effort in relationships), and philosophy of life (e.g., altered priorities, or spirituality; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Later factor analysis of the widely used Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) identified five major factors of posttraumatic growth: new possibilities (e.g., developing new interests), relating to others (e.g., sense of closeness with others), personal strength (e.g., feeling of self-reliance), appreciation of life (e.g., appreciation of each day), and spiritual change (e.g., better understanding of spiritual issues).

Spiritual change is one important domain of posttraumatic growth. While some attention has been paid to religion and spirituality in this area (Shaw et al., 2005), multiple scholars have called for increased consideration of the role of religious and spiritual variables in achieving posttraumatic growth (Hill & Paragment, 2003; Shaw et

al., 2005). Furthermore, O'Rourke and colleagues (2008) suggest that more attention needs to be paid to changes in religion and spirituality following crises (i.e., spiritual transformation).   Additionally, Park (2004) suggested researchers focus on understanding the domain of spiritual growth as one aspect of posttraumatic growth. The current study heeds these calls in examining spiritual transformation and forgiveness following significant and traumatic interpersonal offenses.

Spiritual Transformation

The study of religion and spirituality in psychology has garnered increased attention in recent years. There has been a significant upward trend in the past 35 years in the number of published articles addressing the topics of spirituality and religion (Weaver, Pargament, Flannelly, & Oppenheimer, 2006). However, there remain significant gaps and limitations in the spiritual transformation literature. This section will review the construct of spiritual transformation.

Definition

Spiritual transformation is a generalized construct that has been defined in several ways. For example, Schwartz (2000) suggested spiritual transformation is "a dramatic change in religious belief, attitude, and behavior that occurs over a relatively short period of time" (p. 4). Within this definition, spiritual transformation may involve a shift from one religion to another, a change from a nonreligious life to a religiously committed life, or a strengthened commitment within the same religious tradition. In an effort to offer a culturally-nonspecific, process-oriented definition, Pargament (2006) defined spiritual transformation as "a fundamental change in the place of the sacred or the character of the sacred in the life of the individual" (p. 18). Similarly, Hill (2003) called spiritual transformation a "process of change within the self, frequently accompanied by strong feeling, toward an identity with something sacred through which meaning is discovered" (p. 89). This conceptualization of spiritual transformation suggests the search for

meaning is a major impetus for spiritual transformation. All of these definitions capture spiritual transformation as constituting a profound change in self beyond simple maturation that produces distinct consequences to oneself (e.g., changes in habit, worldview, and behavior). Terms such as a *born again experience* in the Christian tradition and a *quantum change* (Miller & C'deBaca, 1994) have also been used to describe this construct.

While the term *conversion* has been used interchangeably with spiritual transformation by some scholars, religious or spiritual conversion represents a separate construct. Spiritual conversion is a "distinct process by which a person goes from believing, adhering to and/or practicing on set of religious teaching or spiritual values to believing, adhering to, and/or practicing a different one" (Paloutzian, 2005, p. 331). Conversion may be a gradual change or a sudden event in which there is a dramatic shift in identification with the sacred (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996; Pargament, 1997). Therefore, conversion is distinct from spiritual transformation in that conversation is a change from one religious or spiritual way of being to a *different* religious or spiritual way of being; spiritual transformation encapsulates conversion but also includes phenomena such as intensification, strengthening, or repositioning of one's spiritual commitment.

Spiritual transformation must also be distinguished from spiritual development or maturation. Individuals generally become more spiritual as they age (Argue, Johnson, & White, 1999), and this may be a normal component of lifespan development. Spiritual development refers to the process by which individuals *gradually* increase their depth of awareness of spiritual matters, search for spiritual meaning, and commitment to spiritual practices (Wink & Dillon, 2002). Spiritual maturation has also been used to refer to this process. Spiritual development is distinct from spiritual transformation in that it is a slower process that unfolds over time and may not manifest in discrete major changes to

one's life or worldview. Spiritual transformation represents more significant changes than development or maturation (Schwartz, 2000).

Recently, Smith (2006) conducted a national study of the prevalence and experience of spiritual transformation. The sample consisted of 1,328 people across the United States. Approximately half (50.4%) of the sample reported having experienced a spiritual or religious change in their lifetime. Spiritual changes were more likely to have been experienced by Black individuals, individuals living in the South, and individuals who were actively involved in a religion. Those experiencing a spiritual transformation reported significant life changes with over 77% reporting agreement with the notion that the transformation had changed their lives overall. The study identified two major factors that led to the spiritual transformation: religious activities (e.g., attending services, engaging in prayer) and personal problems. Among the personal problems cited as leading to spiritual transformation were divorce, illness, death, accidents, and criminal victimizations. This study established that spiritual transformations are important events in the lives of many individuals. Notably, spiritual transformations are often triggered by difficult circumstances.

One of the earliest psychological scholars in the area, William James (1902/1961), suggested that spiritual transformation may happen after times of significant stress, trauma, or crisis. Rambo's (1993) seven stage model of spiritual transformation, suggests that crisis is the second step of spiritual transformation. Psychological literature has evolved from viewing increased spirituality following crisis as pathological to seeing it as a potentially important part of adjustment and well-being (Fahlberg, Wolfer, & Fahlberg, 1992). Difficult life experiences often trigger changes in spiritual domains (Hall, 1986; Howe, 1988; James & Samuels, 1999). The posttraumatic growth literature has conceptualized spiritual transformation as one way individuals may find growth or meaning following the struggle with a traumatic life experience (Park et al., 1996; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). In reflecting on her work as a hospice worker, Harris (2008)

suggested "crisis and chaos provide ground for the growth of spirituality and transcendence" (p. 228).

For the purposes of this study, the definition of spiritual transformation will be narrowed to consider changes in religion and/or spirituality only following highly stressful life experiences. Pargament (1997) calls for research into both positive and negative changes in spirituality. Accordingly, spiritual transformation is defined in this review as spiritual growth or spiritual decline following the experience and struggle with a difficult and highly stressful life event.

Spiritual transformation, as defined in this review, has garnered little specific attention. This lack of research may be due to a dearth of quality measures dedicated solely to the construct of spiritual transformation (Hill & Pargament, 2003; O'Rourke et al., 2008). The widely used Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) and the Stress-Related Growth Inventory (Park et al., 1996) contain spiritual growth subscales. The recently developed Spiritual Transformation Scale (Cole et al., 2008) is the only measure to date intended solely to measure spiritual growth and decline following a stressful event. The spiritual transformation domains of these measures will be briefly reviewed to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the conceptualization of spiritual transformation in the empirical literature.

The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) is a commonly used measure of growth. One of the five factors of the scale established by factor analysis is spiritual change. The spiritual change domain contains just two items: "A better understanding of spiritual matters" and "I have a stronger religious faith." Thus, this measure briefly conceptualizes spiritual growth as finding a deeper understanding of faith and achieving a stronger religious commitment.

The Stress-Related Growth Scale (SRGS; Park et al., 1996) is another prominent measure of posttraumatic growth. A recent factor analysis of the SRGS with a large sample of college students (N = 1,070, 73% women, 49% ethnic minorities) suggested a

three factor model: rational/mature thinking, affective/emotional growth, and religious/spiritual growth (Roesch, Rowley, & Vaughn, 2004). The spiritual growth domain is comprised of three items: "I developed/increased my faith in God," "I developed/increased my trust in God," and "I understand better how God allows things to happen." Therefore, spiritual growth within the SRGS represents positive changes in faith and trust in God as well as increased understanding of spiritual matters.

The most comprehensive measure of spiritual transformation to date is the Spiritual Transformation Scale (STS; Cole et al., 2008). The STS contains two factors: spiritual growth and spiritual decline. This is the only measure to consider both the growth and decline aspects of spiritual transformation, as others only consider spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is conceptualized as positive changes in one's spiritual world view, goals and/or priorities, sense of self, and relationships. Thus, individuals change in their ways of looking at life (i.e., in a more spiritual manner), how they spend their time (e.g., worship, meditation), who they feel close to (e.g., higher power, spiritual community), and how they see themselves (e.g., as a more spiritual person). Spiritual decline is characterized as negative changes in one's spiritual world view, goals and/or priorities, sense of self, and relationships. Changes within spiritual decline may include feeling more distant from faith or one's higher power, spending less time in spiritual practice, and experiencing disconnection from one's spiritual or religious community.

Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth is one aspect of the two-dimensional construct of spiritual transformation that represents positive changes in a person's spiritual life following a highly stressful life experience. In this section, the empirical literature related to spiritual growth will be reviewed including demographic and psychological factors related to spiritual growth. Events leading to spiritual growth will be presented, highlighting

interpersonal offenses which will be the focus of the current study. Finally, the literature on spiritual growth and well-being will be examined.

In order to understand the construct of spiritual growth, researchers have considered characteristics of individuals who have demonstrated such growth. In the development of a scale to measure spiritual transformation, the STS, Cole et al. (2008) studied the relationships between spiritual transformation and various demographic variables. Their sample of 244 individuals was mostly female (78%), Caucasian (95%), and Christian (89%); all had been diagnosed with cancer within the past two years. Results showed that spiritual growth was positively related to religious service attendance, frequency of prayer/meditation, level of religiousness, level of spirituality, and time since diagnosis. Spiritual growth was negatively related to age. Moreover, women were more likely to report spiritual growth than men.

Another study, notable for its attention to a variety of demographic and coping variables, considered the role of individual factors in spiritual growth. Butler et al. (2005) administered surveys to 1,505 adults (mean age of 44.7 years) approximately 41 and 61 days after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The sample was primarily White (92%), female (77%), and well-educated. At baseline, spiritual growth was predicted by younger age, less education, non-White ethnicity, more trauma symptoms, more positive worldview, higher denial, positive reframing, religious coping, less venting, and less active coping/planning. At the one month follow-up, spiritual growth was predicted by female gender, more positive worldview, religious coping, and less self-distraction. These two studies offer insight into the role of demographic and psychological variables in spiritual growth; however, a summary of the body of literature as a whole provides more information.

Gender and age have inconsistent relationships with spiritual growth in the literature. Women reported higher levels of spiritual growth than men following a range of stressful life events (Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008; Pakenham & Cox, 2008;

Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). However, other studies have not shown gender differences (Joseph et al., 2005; Maguen, Vogt, King, King, & Litz, 2006). A similar pattern emerges for age as some studies have found spiritual growth to be negatively related with age (Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008) while others have not found a relationship (Maguen et al., 2006; Salo, Qouta, & Punamaki, 2005). However, these studies have suffered from the overreliance on largely White, middle-age, female samples which limits our understanding of the role of gender and age in spiritual transformation.

Religious and spiritual variables have strong relationships with spiritual growth. Religious coping (Butler et al., 2005; Pargament et al., 1998; Smith, Pargament, Brant, & Oliver, 2000), religiosity (Cole et al., 2008; Kennedy et al., 1996), level of religious attendance and participation (Cole et al., 2008; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), and religious attributions (Smith et al., 2000) have all been positively related to spiritual growth. However, the majority of these studies have focused on mostly Christian populations. In one of the few studies conducted with Muslims, religiosity was strongly related to spiritual growth among 275 Palestinian men who were former prisoners of war (Salo et al., 2005). Few studies have considered the role of more intrinsic religious variables, including the personal importance of religion and spirituality.

Psychological variables, including personality and attachment style, have also been studied. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) administered surveys to 604 college students who had experienced a significant negative life event in the previous five years. The events included bereavement, separation or divorce of parents, relationship break-up, and criminal victimization. Optimism and extraversion were positively correlated with spiritual growth. In another study, secure attachment style predicted spiritual growth in former male prisoners of war (Salo et al., 2005). The authors suggested that individuals with a secure attachment style may be more capable of integrating and deriving meaning from highly stressful life events as opposed to using the event to affirm negative working models of the self and/or the world.

In addition to demographic and psychological variables, researchers have also considered what types of events promote individuals' experience of spiritual growth. Chronic, life-threatening illnesses and significant health problems may precipitate spiritual growth. Individuals living with HIV or AIDS have identified spiritual growth from their experience with the disease (Ironson et al., 2006). In a qualitative study of 34 women with various stages of HIV, 82% reported they found positive outcomes from their experience including within the domain of spiritual growth (Dunbar, Mueller, Medina, & Wolf, 1998). Men living with HIV/AIDS for an average of eight years also reported spiritual growth (Frame, Uphold, Shehan, & Reid, 2005). Cancer is another significant health problem that serves as a precipitating event to spiritual growth. In a study of individuals who had received a bone marrow transplant for treatment of cancer, 10.7% reported spiritual growth one year following the transplant, 16.1% reported spiritual growth three years post-transplant (Tallman et al., 2007), and 20% reported spiritual growth nine years after the transplant (Tallman et al., 2010). Women receiving treatment for early-stage breast cancer (N = 60) endorsed moderate levels of spiritual growth from their experience (Sears et al., 2003). In another study, women with early-stage breast cancer (mean of 38 months since diagnosis) and their husbands both reported at least moderate levels of spiritual growth (Weiss, 2002).

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is yet another disease that has led to spiritual growth in individuals living with the disease. In a study of 477 individuals with MS (77% female, mean age of 47.8 years), 9% of the participants identified having experienced spiritual growth when prompted to identify benefits from their experience with MS on an open-ended question (Pakenham, 2007). In another study of individuals living with MS, 44% of the 144 participants (66% female, mean age of 40 years, mean time since diagnosis of 9.1 years) endorsed spiritual growth (Mohr et al., 1999). Caregivers of individuals with MS have also reported spiritual growth (Pakenham & Cox, 2008).

Various levels of spiritual growth have followed experiences with terrorist attacks and war. Milam et al. (2005) studied posttraumatic growth among 514 adolescents living in the United States (mean age of 13.5 years, 63% female, 84% non-White) following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001; participants reported a mild level of spiritual growth. In a sample of 1,505 primarily female (77%), White (92%) adults, 27% endorsed at least moderate levels of spiritual growth following the September 11th attacks and these levels remained constant over time (Butler et al., 2005). Former American prisoners of war (Erbes et al., 2005), Palestinian prisoners of war (Butler et al., 2005), and wives of Israeli prisoners of war (Dekel, 2007) all found spiritual growth from their experiences. However, American veterans from the Gulf War reported only a small degree of spiritual growth (Maguen et al., 2006).

Interpersonal offenses, or those highly stressful wrongs that occur within an interpersonal context, have also spawned spiritual growth. In a small sample of divorced adults, some participants reported that divorce (especially traumatic divorces) led to spiritual growth in their lives (Blomquist, 1985). In a study of individuals who had experienced a range of stressful life events, including divorce, participants reported high levels of spiritual growth, which was related to depth of cognitive processing (Weinrib et al., 2006).

Sexual assault is an interpersonal offense that has been the focus of several studies concerning spiritual growth. Kennedy and colleagues (1996) collected data from 70 women who had been sexually assaulted in the past 9 to 24 months. Participants were mostly Christian (36% Baptist, 20% Catholic, 6% Pentecostal, 9% Protestant, 6% Jewish), African American (66%, 16% Hispanic, 12% White), and of low incomes (70% under $20,000 per year). Changes since the assault were assessed using measures of psychological well-being, spirituality, intrinsic religiosity, and severity of the assault. Results showed that 60% of participants endorsed positive changes in spirituality, with

71% of African Americans reporting growth as compared to 38% of Whites. Spiritual growth was also positively related to well-being.

In a longitudinal examination of positive and negative life changes in victims of sexual assault, Frazier et al. (2001) administered surveys (including measures of posttraumatic life changes and psychological distress) to 171 women at four time points following the assault: two weeks, two months, six months, and one year. Participants were mostly Caucasian (77%) adults (mean age of 27 years) recruited from an agency that worked with survivors of sexual assault. At two weeks post-assault, 34% of participants reported spiritual growth. This number increased to 46% at two months post-assault and remained stable through subsequent measurements (44% at six months and 45% at one year). Interestingly, spiritual growth was negatively associated with depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at two weeks and one year post-assault, and these relationships represented medium to large effects.

Using grounded theory methodology, a theoretical model of how survivors of sexual assault achieve growth was articulated by Knapik et al. (2008). Of the 50 participants, 54% were women, 46% identified as African American (36% Caucasian), and 52% had an annual income under $10,000. Through in-depth interviews with the participants, a model of spiritual change after sexual violence was created. The model suggests that following the assault, survivors experience spiritual connection which provides support and a sense of purpose. The model then proposes that many will begin a spiritual journey toward healing. Finally, the model posits that some will experience spiritual transformation from their experience with the sexual assault. This study further posits that sexual assault can serve as a catalyst for spiritual growth. It is also the only study to offer a model of spiritual transformation; however this model is unspecific and overly generalized.

Spiritual growth may have important links to mental and physical well-being. Spiritual growth was related to positive affect, life satisfaction, and dyadic adjustment in

a study of caregivers of individuals with multiple sclerosis (Pakenham & Cox, 2008). In a sample of 226 men living with HIV/AIDS (mean age of 45.7 years, 55% White), spiritual growth predicted overall quality of life, global mental health, emotional well-being, social functioning, role functioning, energy, and perception of general health (Frame et al., 2005). However, spiritual growth was not related to physical functioning or pain management in this study. Other studies have linked spiritual growth to positive affect (Erbes et al., 2005), psychological well-being (Kennedy et al., 1996) less psychological distress (Frazier et al., 2001), lower levels of depression (Pargament et al., 1998), and positive mood (Weinrib et al., 2006).

Spiritual growth is important due to its prevalence and relationship to well-being. However, much is still to be understood about the construct, including how spiritual growth happens and processes that accompany spiritual growth. Given spiritual growth is a domain of posttraumatic growth, one may assume that cognitive processing plays an important role; however, this has not been empirically examined and no comprehensive model of spiritual growth currently exists. Furthermore, the literature is significantly limited by its focus on mostly White, female samples.

<div align="center">Spiritual Decline</div>

The other factor comprising spiritual transformation is spiritual decline. Spiritual decline represents negative changes in one's spiritual world view, goals and/or priorities, sense of self, and relationships following a highly stressful life event (Cole et al., 2008). In this section, the empirical literature related to spiritual decline will be presented. The literature on spiritual growth is still in its infancy, and there is a noticeable dearth of literature focusing on spiritual decline. In fact, much of the literature is confined to spiritual decline following sexual abuse, which is relevant to the current study as sexual abuse is an interpersonal offense.

In the development of the STS, Cole et al. (2008) administered the measure to cancer patients. Spiritual decline was negatively related to age, religious service attendance, level of religiousness, and level of spirituality. Furthermore, they found that Protestants were more likely to experience spiritual decline than Catholics, and individuals without a high school diploma or GED were more likely to report spiritual decline than those with a high school degree or GED, those with some college experience, and those with a graduate or professional degree.

Another study examined changes in religious beliefs following trauma in a sample of 120 adults who a experienced a high degree stressor as defined by the DSM-III-R (Falsetti et al., 2003). Participants were mostly women (66.9%), Caucasian (81.8%, 17.4% African American), and had a mean age of 36.6 years. Among those traumas experienced by participants were living through a natural disaster, sexual assault, witnessing someone being seriously injured, being in an accident, and physical assault. Results showed that 16.7% of the total sample reported becoming less religious after the trauma, with 30% of those with PTSD reporting declines in religion. Also notable within the total sample, 69.7% reported no change in religious beliefs and 13.6% reported religious gains.

The majority of the literature related to spiritual decline focuses on decline following sexual assault. Within their study of positive and negative changes following a sexual assault, Frazier et al. (2001) examined the prevalence and health-related correlates of spiritual decline. Results showed that 44% of participants reported spiritual decline two weeks post-assault; the number decreased to 24% at two months post-assault and remained relatively constant through six months post-assault (28%) and one year post-assault (23%). Spiritual decline was positively related to both depression and PTSD, and these relationships represented medium to large effects.

The relationship between sexual abuse and religion was one aspect of a study by Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, and Smith (1989). The researchers interviewed 2,630 adults

(56% female) about the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse and its relationship to various relational and religious factors. Results demonstrated that victims of sexual abuse had a greater tendency not to practice religion than those with no history of abuse. While this study demonstrates a relationship between childhood sexual abuse and reduced religiosity, participants were not primed to identify if reduced religiosity was a result of the abuse rather than other life events or factors.

Hall (1995) investigated the spiritual effects of childhood sexual abuse in adult Christian women. Participants comprised three groups: women in outpatient treatment with a history of childhood sexual abuse (n = 33), women in outpatient treatment with no history of childhood sexual abuse (n = 20), and a non-clinical sample of women with no history of childhood sexual abuse (n = 22). Results showed that women with a history of childhood sexual abuse had significantly lower spiritual functioning, religious acceptance, religious knowledge, and involvement in organized religion than women without a history of sexual abuse. Researchers conceptualized the results as demonstrating that childhood sexual abuse negatively affects spirituality in the areas of a sense of religious acceptance, a sense of community with others, and religious trust.

Other studies of sexual assault and spiritual decline target levels of religiosity and spirituality following childhood sexual assault by a clergy member. Rosetti (1995) surveyed 1,810 primarily Roman Catholic adults (68% female) from the United States and Canada. The participants were placed in three groups: those with no history of sexual abuse (*n* = 1,376), those sexually abused as a child not by a priest (*n* = 307), and those sexually abused as a child by a priest (*n* = 40). Results showed that individuals abused by a priest reported significantly lower levels of trust in priests, relationship to God, and commitment to church leadership when compared to those not abused. Furthermore, individuals abused not by a priest also reported lower levels of trust in priests, the church, and God when compared to individuals who had not experienced childhood sexual abuse. Mart (2004) shared observations from working as a forensic

psychologist evaluating 25 victims of sexual abuse by Catholic priests. He reported that the abuse caused significant spiritual distress evidenced by a decline in relationships with the Catholic Church and religion in general.

Further evidence of spiritual decline following sexual abuse by a religious figure was offered in a qualitative study by Fater and Mullaney (2000). Using the phenomenological method, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with seven men who had been sexually abused by priests during adolescence to further understand the experience of men abused by religious figures. Of the ten themes that emerged during data analysis, one described spiritual decline—"survivors felt that the clergy victimization caused loss of spirituality, mistrust of the church, and a rage expressed as rejection of self and others" (p. 290). This study clearly ties spiritual decline to the experience of sexual abuse, a highly traumatic event in the life of an individual.

As noted earlier, the research on spiritual decline following a highly stressful event is sparse. A body of distantly related literature describes negative religious coping with difficult life experiences (Pargament, 1997) and spiritual struggle as a normal part of spiritual development (Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar, & Ano, 2004). However, these constructs are not directly applicable to the current study. Pargament et al. (2004) notes that the field of psychology has largely ignored religious and spiritual phenomena—including spiritual decline—despite their importance to individuals' daily lives, identity, and well-being. This lack of attention may be due to psychologists' low level of religiousness (Shafranske, 1996), underestimated importance of religion and spirituality, and historical notions of religion and spirituality being inappropriate and unempirical research topics.

Therefore, we have a limited understanding of spiritual decline. The existing evidence suggests that spiritual decline is negatively related to religious variables (Cole et al., 2008) negatively correlated with psychological well-being (Cole et al., 2008, Frazier et al., 2001), and occurs following significant interpersonal offenses such as sexual abuse

and assault (Fater & Mullaney, 2000; Frazier et al. 2001; Hall, 1995). The existing literature is limited by its focus on sexual assault, which may have a unique impact on the victim when compared to other interpersonal offenses. There is much to learn about the occurrence of spiritual decline following various stressful life events.

Taken as a whole, the literature on spiritual transformation is evolving. While the existing research provides initial information on when spiritual transformation happens and to whom, much less is known about the processes that precede spiritual transformation (Joseph et al., 2005). Given its connection to religion and spirituality, forgiveness may be one such process that may be closely related to spiritual transformation.

<center>Forgiveness</center>

Forgiveness is not a new idea. Throughout history, many of the world's major religious traditions (e.g., Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism) have included teachings on forgiveness as a means to understand a higher being or handle worldly conflict (Rye et al., 2000). This religious thread is heard in Alexander Pope's poignant words, "To err is human; to forgive is divine." Yet also captured in those historic words is the complexity and challenge of forgiveness, which psychology has only recently considered. After being largely ignored in the psychological literature, the study of forgiveness has exploded in the last 20 years. The following section will review psychological literature on forgiveness, including definitions, health benefits, and a prominent model of the process.

<center>Definitions</center>

The complexity of studying forgiveness is demonstrated through the difficulty in establishing a consistent definition within the literature. Many of the leading scholars in the field suggest variations on the construct in their own definitions, and the question "what is forgiveness?" has consumed a great deal of the literature. All agree that

forgiveness is a response to the experience of being hurt or offended within an interpersonal relationship (Worthington, 2005); the definitional variations appear in the description of that response to the offense. Enright and colleagues provide a process definition that contends that forgiveness unfolds over time and involves replacing negative cognitions, affect, and behaviors toward an offender with more positive ones (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). McCullough's motivation model proposes that individuals abandon negative motivations (i.e., revenge and avoidance) and assume more conciliatory motivations toward the offender (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). DiBlasio and Worthington's decisional forgiveness is conceptualized as a change in willpower or negative behavioral intentions toward the offender (DiBlasio, 1998; Worthington, 2003). Finally, Worthington's emotional forgiveness consists of replacing negative emotions toward the offender with more prosocial emotions (Wade & Worthington, 2003; Worthington, 2003; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Some researchers argue that forgiveness is not simply a reduction in unforgiveness (e.g., anger, hostility, bitterness, desire for revenge), but also the adoption of a more positive stance toward the offender (e.g., benevolence, empathy, goodwill; Wade & Worthington, 2003; Worthington & Wade, 1999). However, others suggest forgiveness can be achieved through the reduction of unforgiveness in the absence of achieving a positive stance toward the offender, especially when the offense occurs in non-continuing or non-committed relationships (Worthington, 2005).

Subtle definitional variations remain due to the complex nature of forgiveness. However, Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, and Miller (2007) posit that "virtual agreement" (p. 291) now exists among researchers. According to the authors, these points of agreement include the nature of unforgiveness, the idea that forgiveness involves reducing unforgiveness, the notion that forgiveness is a process rather than a discrete occurrence, the idea that forgiving is different in close versus more distant (e.g.,

strangers) relationships, and the notion that forgiveness is an intrapersonal process which can be distinguished from interpersonal sequelae (e.g., reconciliation).

For the purposes of the current study, forgiveness will be defined through general consensus in the literature as an intrapersonal process that involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in which a person releases a negative stance of unforgiveness and may adopt a positive or prosocial stance toward the offender (McCullough et al., 2000; Worthington, 2005). It is important to note that this definition refers to forgiveness occurring in an interpersonal context when one individual wrongs another individual. Accordingly, interpersonal forgiveness does not refer to forgiveness of a group (e.g., the Nazi regime), a natural disaster (e.g., Hurricane Katrina), a higher power (e.g., Allah), or any material object (e.g., one's automobile). The rationale for this definition is three-fold. First, the definition attempts to be comprehensive in that it allows for forgiveness to occur in relationships with varying degrees of closeness; includes behavioral, affective, and cognitive components; and involves the reduction of unforgiveness with the possibility of adopting positive aspects of forgiveness. Secondly, the definition is victim-focused in that it involves the individual's intrapersonal process. Thirdly, the definition is literature-based and integrates major components of forgiveness posited in the research.

The concept of forgiveness has been met with resistance by some who mistake it with other concepts (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991). Thus, it is important to distinguish forgiveness and explicitly describe what it is not—a task on which philosophers and psychologists have labored. Forgiveness is not pardoning, excusing, or condoning the offense. These concepts invoke legal processes or make a judgment on the acceptability of the offense. Likewise, forgiveness is not reconciliation. Reconciliation refers to the restoration of trust in a relationship, and this may be a desired outcome for some individuals who pursue forgiveness. However, one does not need to resume a relationship in order to forgive. In fact, it may be impossible or harmful for

some individuals to recommence a trusting relationship with the person who committed the transgression. Forgiveness must also be set apart from forgetting. Whereas forgetting eliminates the experience from memory, forgiveness focuses on reframing one's responses to an offense rather than eliminating the experience of the offense from consciousness. With a converging definition of forgiveness and a proposed theoretical backing, the research in this area has expanded to consider other aspects of the construct such as related health benefits.

Health Benefits

Physical and mental health benefits accompany forgiveness. Research has established that forgiveness is positively related to global mental health (Berry & Worthington, 2001), life satisfaction (Brown & Phillips, 2005; Krause & Ellison, 2003; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006), and existential well-being (Rye et al., 2001). Forgiveness is negatively correlated with psychological distress (Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001), negative affect (Thompson et al., 2005), depression (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrot, & Wade, 2005; Brown, 2003; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; Seybold, Hill, Neumann, & Chi, 2001), anxiety (Exline, Yali, & Lobel, 1999; Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001; Orcutt, 2006; Subkoviak et al. 1995), and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Witviet, Phipps, Feldman, & Beckham, 2004). Some authors suggest that chronic states of unforgiveness may also impact physical health, including an increased risk of disease (Harris & Thoresen, 2005; McCullough et al., 2000). A recent study suggests that forgiveness mediates the relationship between religiosity and health in adults (Lawler-Row, 2010).

A limitation of the current body of literature on the health benefits of forgiveness is that the research is largely correlational. A causal relationship has yet to be established. Two recent studies employed longitudinal designs to address this concern with varying results. In their study of college students describing recent interpersonal

offenses, Bono, McCullough, and Root (2008) presented evidence that forgiveness is associated with subsequent well-being and well-being is related to later forgiveness. The authors suggested that both placements of the causal relationship may be feasible, possibly yielding a bi-directional model. Orth and colleagues (2008) examined forgiveness of an interpersonal offense and psychological adjustment (conceptualized as depression and rumination) at four time points over a six week period. Results showed that psychological adjustment facilitated forgiveness; however, forgiveness did not predict psychological adjustment. Research clearly establishes that forgiveness is related to health. Yet much is to be learned about the causal direction of this forgiveness-health link.

<div align="center">Religion and Spirituality</div>

For many individuals, religious connotations accompany the concept of forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Many of the world's major religious traditions have long discussed forgiveness, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Rye et al., 2000). Psychological research has examined the role of religion and spirituality in interpersonal forgiveness.

A body of research establishes that religious or spiritual individuals place a higher value on forgiveness than those who do not identify as religious or spiritual (Edwards et al., 2002; Poloma & Gallup, 1991; Rokeach, 1973; Shoemaker & Bolt, 1997). For example, Gorsuch and Hao (1993) found that when compared to individuals low in personal religiousness, individuals high in personal religiousness viewed themselves as more motivated and working harder to forgive. Moreover, a study by Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989) found that religious individuals demonstrated higher level reasoning regarding forgiveness. Taken as a whole, this evidence suggests religious individuals identify as more forgiving in general; that is, these individuals view themselves as more likely to forgive offenses overall.

Scholars have suggested that religion encourages forgiveness in several ways. Many religions place a high value on forgiveness, and encourage emotions such as empathy and compassion that may foster forgiveness (Tsang et al., 2005). Religious traditions also espouse worldviews that promote forgiveness and provide role models for forgiveness through deities, specific teachings, and parables (McCullough et al., 2005; Rye, 2005; Tsang et al., 2005).

While religious individuals identify as more forgiving, evidence suggests they are no more likely to forgive a specific offense as those who are less religious. For example, Subkoviak et al. (1995) found a weak correlation ($r = .09$) between forgiveness of a specific transgression and self-reported religiousness, and Rackley (1993) found no association between religious involvement and forgiveness of one's spouse for a specific offense. Thus, religious individuals claim to be more dispositionally forgiving than non-religious individuals but are no more likely to forgive a specific offense. This phenomenon is known as the *religion-forgiveness discrepancy* (McCullough & Worthington, 1999).

Several explanations for the religion-forgiveness discrepancy have been posited. First, even if religion does not provide resources for forgiveness, social desirability may lead religious individuals to appear more forgiving (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Second, forgiveness of a specific offense may be more highly influenced by social and psychological conditions; religion may play a more distal role (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Third, problems with measurement may confound the connection between religion and forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Tsang et al., 2005). Fourth, religion may provide an abstract system of reasoning that allows individuals to rationalize and justify both forgiving and unforgiving behaviors (Tsang et al., 2005).

In summary, religion and spirituality are connected to forgiveness. Yet, the form and degree of this connection is not fully known. It seems that religion and spirituality

influence the process of forgiveness. The next section reviews a theoretical model that describes the process of forgiveness.

Model of Forgiveness

The process of forgiving another person for a significant offense is important to understand. Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991) developed a process model of forgiveness, and the model has continued to be refined by Enright and colleagues. This theoretical model has been applied and researched extensively within therapeutic settings including with elderly women who experienced various offenses (Hebl & Enright, 1993), college students who experienced a perceived lack of parental love (Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995), women sexually abused by a relative (Freedman & Enright, 1996), men hurt by the abortion decision of a partner (Coyle & Enright, 1997), adolescents hurt by their parents' divorce (Freedman & Knupp, 2003), substance abuse patients who experienced various offenses (Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn, & Baskin, 2004), and women emotionally abused by a romantic partner (Reed & Enright, 2006).

Empirical research establishes that the theoretical Enright model is similar to the naturalistic process adults engage in when they are trying to forgive without therapeutic intervention (Knutson, Enright, & Garbers, 2008). In this study, participants were 82 middle-class adults (73% female, mostly White) who identified a serious offense that caused emotional distress. Participants completed an online survey which included demographic information and asked participants to order randomly presented units in the Enright forgiveness model according to how they experienced the forgiveness process in their own lives. Participants' rank ordering of the units was correlated with the theoretically-ordered model, and all correlations were statistically significant. While the model was deemed to be statistically valid, subtle differences emerged between the theorized model and participant-ordered model. While other models of forgiveness exist

(Luskin et al., 2005; Worthington, 2003), the Enright model is the only one to have empirical evidence for its validity regarding the naturalistic process adults engage in when pursuing forgiveness.

The Enright model (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) is comprised of four major phases: the uncovering phase, the decision phase, the work phase, and the deepening phase. Each phase contains specific units or steps toward forgiveness; a total of 20 units are described in the model. The model was created to outline the developmental progression of forgiveness; however, not all individuals will progress through all phases and units in a linear fashion. Similarly, there are no established timelines for which individuals proceed through the model.

Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) provide a detailed description of the process model of forgiveness. The goal of the uncovering phase is for the individual to develop insight into the psychological and social impact of the interpersonal offense on their life. In this phase, individuals explore psychological defenses, anger, shame, emotional energy, and cognitive processing of the event (Units 1-6). Units 7 and 8 seek to bring insight into the lasting effects of the offense and the "just world" outlook. Within the decision phase, individuals aim to work toward an accurate understanding of forgiveness and make a decision to pursue forgiveness. Units in this phase include understanding current resolution approaches are not working (Unit 9), considering forgiveness as a possibility (Unit 10), and committing to forgiving the offender (Unit 11). The goal of the work phase is to develop changes in cognitive understanding of and affect toward the offender as well as changes in emotions toward self and the relationship. To do this, empathy toward the offender is built (Units 12-14) and acceptance of the pain of the offense is developed (Unit 15). Finally, the deepening phase seeks to have the client develop increased meaning and a reduction of negative emotions. In this phase, individuals find meaning in suffering and forgiving (Unit 16) and realize they have needed the forgiveness of others in the past (Unit 17). Unit 18 involves developing

insight into the communality of interpersonal offenses and forgiveness within human experience. Finally, individuals may recognize an altered sense of purpose from the offense (Unit 19) and realize decreased negative feelings and emergence of positive affect toward the offender (Unit 20).

In the final phase of the model, individuals find an altered sense of purpose from the offense, which may be conceptualized as growth or meaning-making. The Enright model does not explicitly address the role of religion or spirituality in forgiveness, nor does it speak directly to the possibility for spiritual growth. However, the model does suggest growth may accompany or to be a part of the forgiveness process in Unit 19 when individuals realize a changed sense of purpose from the offense.

<center>Spiritual Transformation and Forgiveness</center>

The most obvious and intuitive link between spiritual transformation and forgiveness is that of religion and spirituality. For many individuals, both constructs are rooted in religious and spiritual frameworks. In fact, religion and spirituality may provide a way of understanding or coping with difficult experiences that may lead to forgiveness followed by spiritual transformation. Cognitive processing may also provide a link between the two, as individuals work to assimilate or accommodate trauma-related information into their existing frameworks for understanding themselves and their worlds. Despite the conceptual link between the forgiveness and spiritual transformation, little is known about the relationships between these important constructs. This section will review the sparse literature in this area, and then offer the rationale for the current study.

While not directly related to spiritual transformation, several studies have considered the relationship between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth. Spiritual growth, one dimension of spiritual transformation, is a domain of posttraumatic growth; therefore, these studies do offer relevant information to the current study. Fischer (2006)

administered measures of posttraumatic growth, forgiveness, and PTSD to individuals associated with the Oklahoma City bombing six years after the attack. Participants reported significant levels of posttraumatic growth, including spiritual growth, and individuals who met criteria for PTSD reported significantly elevated levels of growth as compared to those who did not meet criteria. However, there was no relationship between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth, and individuals who met criteria for PTSD reported significantly lower levels of forgiveness than those who did not meet criteria. These results suggest that individuals may experience growth, including spiritual growth, without forgiving the offender. However, the author did not consider the potential mediating or moderating role of PTSD or severity of the event, which appears to have influenced both growth and forgiveness although in different ways.

McCullough and colleagues (2006) conducted a writing intervention study with 304 college students to examine if benefit-finding influenced forgiveness of an offender. Participants (70% female; 51% White, 24% Hispanic, 14% African American; mean age of 19.3 years) were asked to recall the most recent time someone hurt them and then assigned to a writing condition: writing about traumatic aspects of the experience, writing about positive aspects or benefits of the experience, or writing about an unrelated topic. Results showed that participants from the benefit-finding condition reported significantly higher levels of forgiveness than those in the control or traumatic features conditions. However, these effects sizes were small to medium in nature. Results also showed that cognitive processing mediated the effects of the benefit-finding condition on forgiveness. While this is an intervention study, it does suggest that posttraumatic growth and forgiveness do have a relationship with one another. Still the nature of that relationship in a non-manipulated setting remains unclear.

Most recently, Laufer et al. (2009) explored factors related to posttraumatic growth, including forgiveness, among Israeli youth exposed to acts of terrorism. Measures of forgiveness, exposure to terror attacks, stressful life events, PTSD, and

posttraumatic growth (including spiritual growth) were administered to Israeli youth. The sample consisted of religious, traditional, and secular Jews; analyses were conducted to examine differences between these groups. Results showed that unwillingness to forgive predicted posttraumatic growth among traditional and secular youth; however, forgiveness predicted posttraumatic growth among religious Jewish youth. Additionally, religious youth found greater overall levels of posttraumatic growth. These results highlight the importance of considering the role of religious variables when examining the link between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth.

There is some evidence that spiritual growth may be experienced through participation in an intervention designed to promote forgiveness. Rye and Pargament (2002) randomly assigned participants to one of three treatments: a secular forgiveness intervention, a religiously integrated (based on Christian beliefs) forgiveness intervention, and a no-treatment control. Participants (N = 58) were Christian female undergraduate students who had been hurt by a romantic partner; the majority were Caucasian (90%), most were first year students (69%), their mean age was 18.8 years, and they identified with a variety of Christian affiliations (41% Catholic, 33% Protestant, 26% Nondenominational). Individuals in both forgiveness intervention groups showed significant improvements in forgiveness of the offender, understanding of forgiveness, and spiritual well-being. Twenty-six percent of participants in the religiously-integrated forgiveness interventions reported growth in spirituality as a result of the program. While this study suggests that spiritual growth may accompany forgiveness, it is unknown if this growth was a function of forgiveness or general participation in the intervention.

Forgiveness has been conceptualized as a coping mechanism for extremely difficult and stressful interpersonal offenses (Pargament, 1997; Pargament et al., 1998). Therefore, forgiveness may be a way that individuals cope with being hurt in interpersonal relationships by releasing anger and bitterness and looking toward the offender with empathy and compassion. After coping with the offense through

forgiveness, individuals may then be able to engage in increased cognitive processing to achieve spiritual transformation. Conversely, unforgiveness may lead individuals to spiritual decline following an interpersonal offense.

The relationship between forgiveness and spiritual transformation is important for several reasons. First, forgiveness and spirituality are important to people. In a nationwide Gallup Poll, 94% of Americans thought it was important to forgive. Similarly, 96% of Americans believe in God or a universal spirit (Gallup & Jones, 2000), and 86% report that religion is at least fairly important in their lives (Gallup & Castelli, 1989). Second, both spiritual transformation and forgiveness are important to overall well-being. Being the victim of a significant interpersonal offense carries significant psychological implications for the individual, including depression, PTSD, and psychological distress. A body of literature demonstrates strong positive relationships between well-being and spiritual growth (Erbes et al., 2005; Frazier et al., 2001; Kennedy et al., 1996; Pargament et al., 1998; Weinrib et al., 2006) as well as forgiveness (Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Third, specifically designed psychological interventions are effective in promoting forgiveness and mental health (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Worthington, 2003). Given that these are important issues to people and they have strong links to well-being, better understanding the relationship between forgiveness and spiritual transformation may aid to creating effective interventions to help people dealing with the aftermath of significant interpersonal offenses.

Conclusion

This review has presented the existing literature on spiritual transformation and forgiveness. Spiritual transformation, which encompasses both spiritual growth and spiritual decline, is an important phenomenon that follows a traumatic or highly stressful experience for some individuals. Given its salience in the lives of many people and its relationship to well-being, it is vital that psychologists gain a deeper understanding of

spiritual transformation. Forgiveness also represents a significant process in which individuals may engage following an interpersonal offense. Given its links to religion and spirituality, achieving forgiveness may help individuals experience spiritual transformation. This study asks two major research questions: 1) What factors (including forgiveness variables) are related to spiritual transformation? and 2) Does forgiveness explain a significant amount of variance in spiritual transformation after controlling for demographic and offense-related variables? The current study addresses a major gap in the literature and studies the role of forgiveness in achieving spiritual transformation.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter will describe the methodology and research design of the current study. First, the participants and procedures are described. Next, the measures used in this study are presented with a description of their psychometric properties.

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited to participate in a larger study examining responses to interpersonal offenses (Schultz, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2010). All participants were victims of interpersonal offenses. Participants were 146 adults. A total of 163 participants took part in the study; however, data from 17 were discarded due to failure to meet study criteria or complete all measures. To participate in the study, individuals must have met three inclusionary criteria:

1) be between the ages of 18 to 75 years old,

2) the interpersonal offense identified must have happened within the past five years, and

3) the interpersonal offense identified must not have been ongoing at the time of completion of study procedures.

Procedures

The University of Iowa Institutional Review Board granted approval for all study procedures. Participants were recruited through advertisements in newspapers and posters in various community locations including coffee shops, libraries, and grocery stores. The recruitment materials invited individuals who had been "significantly wronged" by another person to participate in the study. The following examples of experiences that qualified for participation were listed on the recruitment materials:

betrayal or breach of trust, theft of a valued item, verbal or physical force used against the participant, and a wrongdoing.

The recruitment materials instructed interested individuals to call a telephone number dedicated to the study. During this initial telephone contact, participants were screened for inclusionary criteria. Eligible participants were scheduled for a data collection time at a community meeting place (e.g., library, community center). During data collection, participants were individually screened again for eligibility. Informed consent was obtained, and participants then completed the study measures. The informed consent document and all study measures are included in Appendices A and B, respectively. Researchers were available to all participants to provide clarification, assist with reading or understanding of the measures, and monitor the distress level of participants. Upon completion of the study measures, participants were compensated $20 in cash. They were also given a list of local mental health resources, which included free or low-cost services.

<center>Measures</center>

<center>Offense Narrative</center>

Participants wrote a short narrative of the target interpersonal offense. Participants were prompted to briefly describe the event that took place. A team of one counseling psychology faculty member and four doctoral students in counseling psychology developed categories of interpersonal offenses based on an initial review of the offense narratives and literature review.

Eight categories were established: sexual assault, physical harm, infidelity, theft or damage of property, slander, betrayal, lies, and other. Sexual assault was defined as unwanted sexual contact or the threat of unwanted sexual contact, physical harm was classified as the experience of physical violence or the threat of physical violence that was either intentional or accidental, and infidelity was characterized by emotional or

sexual disloyalty by romantic partner. Further definitions included slander as rumors or lies about the participant which were hurtful or damaging to one's reputation; betrayal as a violation of a previous agreement, relationship, or understanding which is not expected by the participant; and lies as untruthful or inaccurate information told to the participant or others which is hurtful to the participant. The "other" category included offenses that were not represented by the other established categories.

Coding rules for offense narratives were consensually established by the team and are included in Appendix C. All raters were trained in coding using mock offense narratives and offense narratives from ineligible data. A team of four raters (one faculty member and three doctoral students in counseling psychology) then sorted each offense narrative into a category using the coding rules. Offense narratives were coded by each rater individually, and the offense was categorized when at least three raters matched. When fewer than three raters agreed, the coding team discussed the offense and reviewed coding rules until agreement was reached. After agreement due to chance, the agreement coefficient for raters was .76.

Demographic Information

Participants provided demographic information for themselves and the offender. Information collected about the participant included age, gender, employment status, educational achievement, marital status, ethnic identity, and religious affiliation. Information (when known) gathered about the offender included age, gender, ethnic identity, type of acquaintance (e.g., family member, co-worker), and religious affiliation.

Religion and Spirituality

Current religious and spiritual importance was measured by a two-item scale created for this study. The items asked participants to rate the importance of religion and the importance of spirituality in their current lives on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 10 (*extremely important*). The two items were summed to create a single

measure of current religious and spiritual importance with higher scores representing higher levels of importance. Current religious participation was measured using a single item that asked participants "How often do you currently participate in religious activities?" with responses ranging from *never* to *more than once a day*.

Childhood religious importance was measured using a single-item scale. The item asked "How important was religion to your family while you were growing up?" with responses ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*more than once a day*). Childhood religious participation was measured with the question "How often did your family participate in religious activities while you were growing up?" Responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*).

Similar brief measures of religion and spirituality have been used in previous research (e.g., Frazier & Kaler, 2006; Worthington et al., 2003). One scholar supported his claim that single-item measures of religion can be as effective as longer measures with empirical data showing that these brief measures often account for a large proportion of variance of longer scales (Gorsuch, 1984). In a study of religious values among college students, single item measures of religion and spirituality were significantly correlated with religious commitment (*r*'s from .89 to .96), religious values (*r*'s from .40 to .54), religious participation (*r*'s from .46 to .76), and spirituality (*r*'s from .40 to .47; Worthington et al., 2003). In another study, spiritual growth was strongly correlated (*r* = .54, *p* < .001) with a brief measure of religion and spirituality (Frazier & Kaler, 2006).

<div align="center">Impact of Event Scale-Revised</div>

The Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R; Weiss & Marmar, 1997) is a measure of psychological distress related to specific traumatic or stressful experience. Originally, the Impact of Event Scale contained items targeting intrusion and avoidance (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979); the IES-R was updated to more closely parallel the diagnostic

criteria for PTSD. The 22 items of the self-report measure comprise three subscales: intrusion (eight items), avoidance (eight items), and hyperarousal (six items). The instructions prompt individuals to rate the degree of distress related to the event with scores ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*extremely*). Participants were prompted to complete the measure with regard to the interpersonal offense previously identified. Example items include "Any reminder brought back feelings about it" and "I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it." Total scores range from 0 to 84, with higher scores representing higher levels of distress.

The psychometric properties of the IES-R have been reported. Internal consistency has been studied with alphas ranging from .95 to .96 for the total scale, .87 to .94 for the intrusion scale, .84 to .87 for the avoidance scale, and .79 to .91 for the hyperarousal scale (Beck et al., 2008; Creamer, Bell, & Failla, 2003; Weiss & Marmar, 1997). Test-retest reliability collected at a six month interval ranged from .57 to .94 for intrusion, .51 to .89 for avoidance, and .59 to .92 for hyperarousal (Weiss & Marmar, 1997). The IES-R has shown adequate concurrent and discriminant validity. It was significantly related to other measures of PTSD including the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (Blake et al., 1990) and the PTSD Symptoms Scale-Self Report (Foa, Riggs, Dancu & Rothbaum, 1993), and unrelated to social desirability in a study of 182 survivors of motor vehicle accidents (Beck et al., 2008). Additionally, Creamer and colleagues (2003) found a high correlation between the IES-R and the PTSD Checklist (r = .84), and they established a cut score of 33 for PTSD which offers a diagnostic sensitivity of .91 and specificity of .82.

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations − 18

The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory−18 is a measure of interpersonal forgiveness (TRIM-18; McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2006). The original TRIM was a measure of unforgiveness; however, the addition of

another subscale makes the TRIM-18 a measure of the both the negative aspects of unforgiveness and positive aspects of forgiveness. The measure contains three subscales: Avoidance, Revenge, and Benevolence. The avoidance subscale is composed of seven items including "I am avoiding him/her." The revenge subscale contains five items including "I want him/her to get what he/she deserves." The benevolence subscale has six items including "Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her." Participants are prompted to indicate their level of agreement with the item statements ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*); higher scores represent higher levels of each construct. Total scores range from 7 to 35 on the avoidance subscale, 5 to 25 on the revenge subscale, and 6 to 30 on the benevolence subscale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of each construct.

Psychometric properties for the TRIM-18 were reported by McCullough and colleagues (1998) in a series of studies with undergraduate students hurt by a range of people in a variety of ways, including physical violence, relationship break-up, sexual infidelity, and betrayal by a friend or roommate. Internal consistency alphas for the TRIM-18 subscales range from .86 to .93. Test-retest reliability was examined by administering the measure to recent victims of interpersonal offenses an average of 5.7 weeks after the offense and then three and nine weeks later. Test-retest reliability at three weeks ranged from .79 to .86 for the subscales and from .64 to .65 at nine weeks. Validity for the TRIM-18 is supported through significant correlations with a single item of forgiveness, relationship quality, relationship closeness, and empathy.

<div align="center">Spiritual Transformation Scale</div>

The Spiritual Transformation Scale (STS; Cole et al., 2008) is a measure of spiritual transformation following a stressful life event. The STS is comprised of two subscales established by factor analysis: spiritual growth and spiritual decline. The subscales are composed of 29 and 11 items respectively. Example items include

"Spirituality has become more important to me" from the spiritual growth subscale and "In some ways I have shut down spiritually" from the spiritual decline subscale. Participants indicated their level of agreement with the items with responses ranging from 1 (*it is not at all true for you*) to 7 (*it is true for you a great deal*). Instructions were altered from the original measure to prompt participants to complete the measure as changes experienced since the interpersonal offense rather than since diagnosis with cancer. Total scores range from 29 to 203 for the spiritual growth subscale and 11 to 77 for the spiritual decline subscale. Higher scores represent higher levels of the construct.

The psychometric properties of the STS were reported by Cole et al. (2008) in a study of people diagnosed with cancer within the previous two years. With regard to internal consistency, alphas for the subscales ranged from .86 to .98. Test-retest reliability was examined by collecting a second measurement two weeks after the first. Correlations of the subscales from these two time points ranged from .73 to .85. Validity for the spiritual growth subscale was supported through significant correlations with posttraumatic growth, emotional and spiritual well-being, intrinsic religiousness, and positive religious coping. Spiritual decline was positively correlated with emotional distress and negative religious coping and negatively correlated with spiritual well-being and intrinsic religiousness.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter explicates the results of the current study. First, the participant

sample is described including relevant demographic variables followed by a discussion

on descriptive data. Next, analyses are presented to address the first research question.

Finally, to answer the second research question, two hierarchical regressions are reported.

Sample Characteristics

A total of 163 individuals completed the study materials. Data from 17

individuals were discarded from analysis due to incomplete study materials or failure to

meet inclusionary criteria for the study despite being screened twice. For example,

several participants' data were excluded from analysis because the offense was described

in the narrative as currently ongoing. Therefore, 146 participants comprise the final

sample in the current study.

A summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants is presented in

Table 1. Importantly, this sample is a diverse group of community-living adults (mean

age of 41.7 years, $SD = 13.8$); 77 (53%) are men and 69 (47%) are women. The sample

is ethnically diverse, with over half (51%) identifying as ethnic minorities. Most are

single and never married (50%), and the educational level is varied. Table 2 presents

data on the religious and spiritual characteristics of the sample. Participants identified

with a variety of religious affiliations, with the most common being Protestant (28%).

The sample was largely comprised of Christian denominations, with just 7% identifying

with non-Christian faiths. Similarly, the majority of participants (70%) identified the

religious preference of their family of origin as a Christian denomination, and 69%

reported their family of origin engaged in religious practices at least once a week.   Forty

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of the participant sample*

Variable	*n*	%
Sample size	146	
Age	41.7*	13.8*
Gender		
Male	77	53
Female	69	47
Ethnicity		
African-American/Black	53	36
American Indian/Native American	4	3
Asian/Asian-American	1	1
Biracial/Multiracial	4	3
Caucasian	71	49
Hispanic/Latino/a	9	6
Other	2	1
Relationship Status		
Cohabitating	6	4
Married	17	12
Separated or divorced	40	27
Single or Never Married	74	50
Widowed	7	5
Education		
Less than high school	13	9
High school diploma	66	45
Some college	39	27
College degree	17	12
Postgraduate school or degree	11	8

Note. * These values are mean and standard deviation, respectively.

Table 2. *Religious and spiritual characteristics of the participant sample*

Variable	*n*	%
Current religious preference		
Protestant	40	28
Catholic	23	16
Jewish	3	2
Muslim	2	1
Spiritual	18	12
Lakota	1	1
Christian	19	13
Wicken	1	1
Other	2	1
No affiliation	34	23
Current participation in religious practices		
More than once a day	11	8
Once a day	13	9
Once a week	34	23
Once a month	33	23
Once a year	26	18
Never	29	20
Religious preference of family of origin		
Protestant	57	39
Catholic	32	22
Jewish	2	1
Muslim	1	1
Spiritual	13	9
Lakota	1	1
Christian	13	9
Mormon	2	1
Other	3	2
No affiliation	19	13
Childhood participation in religious practices		
More than once a day	11	8
Once a day	5	3
Once a week	85	58
Once a month	19	13
Once a year	11	8
Never	14	10

percent of the sample indicated that they participated in religious practices at least once a week, while 20% indicated they never engaged in such practices.

<center>Descriptive Data</center>

Information on means, standard deviations, and reliability of measures used in this study is presented in Table 3. Psychometric properties were evaluated in initial selection of measures, and the measures demonstrated adequate internal consistency in this study. Information is also presented below regarding the comparability of the current sample and others reported in the literature to provide contextual information for the current study.

This sample represents a highly traumatized population. These participants described interpersonal offenses that were highly psychologically distressing as evidenced by the mean IES-R score of 43.7. Comparatively, a community sample of male Vietnam veterans reported a mean score of 40.0 and a treatment-seeking sample of Vietnam veterans recruited from hospital-based PTSD treatment program reported a score of 58.1 (Creamer et al., 2003). A cut-score of 33 for PTSD has been established, which offers a sensitivity of 0.91 and specificity of 0.82 (Creamer et al., 2003). Within this sample 72% of participants reported IES-R scores that exceeded the PTSD cut score of 33. While the IES-R can be used as a screening measure, exceeding the cut score is not diagnostic of PTSD. The discussion of this established cut score is presented to contextualize the level of distress experienced by these participants, rather than to imply diagnoses.

Participants experienced a range of interpersonal offenses, which are documented in Table 4. Offense-related distress for each offense category was analyzed. Strikingly, the average scores for all categories except theft of property exceeded the PTSD cut score of 33. An analysis of variance was conducted to examine differences in offense-related distress between groups, and a significant effect was found ($F_{(7, 138)} = 4.71$, $p < .000$).

Table 3. *Descriptive information for predictor and outcome variables*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Possible Range	Alpha
Spiritual growth	123.0	51.8	29-203	.98
Spiritual decline	31.9	18.1	11-77	.93
Forgiveness				
Unforgiveness	35.0	10.1	12-60	.83
Avoidance	23.1	6.9	7-35	.79
Revenge	11.9	5.3	5-25	.82
Benevolence	16.5	6.6	6-30	.84
Event-related distress	43.7	17.7	0-88	.92
Religious-spiritual importance	14.6	5.2	2-20	.79

Table 4. *Offense categories*

Offense	*n*	%
Sexual assault	8	5
Physical harm	32	22
Infidelity	17	12
Theft or damage of property	27	18
Slander	18	12
Betrayal	31	21
Lies	4	3
Other	9	6

Tukey post hoc comparison revealed that offense-related distress was significantly lower for the theft or damage of property category ($M = 32.0$, $SD = 12.9$) than for the physical harm ($M = 51.8$, $SD = 14.6$), infidelity ($M = 50.2$, $SD = 11.2$), and betrayal ($M = 45.8$, $SD = 20.9$) categories.

Participants in this sample endorsed higher levels of both spiritual growth and spiritual decline than other samples reported in the literature. The mean score for spiritual growth was 123.0 ($SD = 51.8$) and 31.9 ($SD = 18.1$) for spiritual decline. Comparatively, a sample of individuals diagnosed with cancer in the previous two years reported lower levels of spiritual growth ($M = 109.0$, $SD = 49.3$) and much lower levels of spiritual decline ($M = 16.1$, $SD = 8.14$). Similarly, participants in the current sample reported higher levels of unforgiveness ($M = 35.0$, $SD = 10.1$) than others in the literature. For example, undergraduate students reporting about an event during which someone had hurt them reported mean unforgiveness scores of 26.8 and 26.3, and students reported a mean unforgiveness score of 22.7 for the worst time they were hurt in a romantic relationship (McCullough et al., 1998).

<u>Relationships between Variables</u>

The first research question involved the relationship of demographic and study variables with spiritual transformation. T-tests revealed no differences in spiritual growth or spiritual decline for gender. Table 5 presents descriptive information for spiritual transformation based on gender. An analysis of variance was conducted to examine differences in spiritual transformation across ethnicities of participants and a significant effect was found for spiritual growth ($F = 3.06$, $p = .05$). Means and standard deviations of spiritual transformation scores based on ethnicity are presented in Table 5. Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey method revealed that African Americans reported higher levels of spiritual growth ($p = .049$) than Caucasians or other ethnicities.

Table 5. *Mean differences in spiritual transformation between groups*

	Spiritual Growth		Spiritual Decline	
Group	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Gender				
Male	120.47	52.71	31.61	16.82
Female	125.71	51.12	32.14	19.58
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	114.47	49.84	30.24	17.29
African American	136.63*	50.91	35.96	20.20
Other Ethnicity	115.46	56.88	27.10	13.68

p < .05.

To further address factors related to spiritual transformation, a bivariate correlation matrix was calculated and is presented in Table 6. Spiritual growth and spiritual decline were not related to age. Avoidance was the only study variable that demonstrated a significant correlation with age (r = -.21, p = .013). Spiritual growth was significantly related to religious and spiritual variables. Childhood religious and spiritual importance was positively correlated with spiritual growth (r = .30, p = .000). Spiritual growth was also positively related to current religious and spiritual importance (r = .61, p = .000). Thus, as current and childhood importance of religion and spirituality increased, so too did spiritual growth following a specific interpersonal offense.

Spiritual decline was significantly correlated with two major variables of interest in this study. Avoidance was positively related to spiritual decline (r = .22, p = .008). Thus, the more participants avoided their offender, one component of unforgiveness, the greater their decline in spirituality. A positive correlation was also found between spiritual decline and event-related distress (r = .32, p = .000).

Several other interesting relationships emerged. In addition to its relationship with spiritual decline, event-related distress was positively correlated with both revenge (r = .23, p = .005) and overall unforgiveness (r = .24, p = .004). Thus, the greater the psychological impact of the offense on the participant, the greater levels of revenge and unforgiveness they experienced. Additionally, current religious and spiritual importance was positively correlated with benevolence (r = .21, p = .012), and childhood religious and spiritual importance was negatively correlated with avoidance (r = -.19, p = .026).

Regression Analyses

The second research question asked if forgiveness explains a significant amount of variance in spiritual transformation after controlling for demographic and offense-related variables. To address this question, two separate regression analyses were conducted and are presented below.

Table 6. *Intercorrelations of scores on study variables*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Spiritual growth	--								
2. Spiritual decline	.07	--							
3. Benevolence	.16	-.01	--						
4. Revenge	-.01	-.07	-.39**	--					
5. Avoidance	-.09	.22**	-.39**	.39**	--				
6. Unforgiveness	-.05	.07	-.47**	.88**	.78**	--			
7. Event-related distress	.09	.32**	-.09	.23**	.16	.24**	--		
8. R/S importance	.61**	-.12	.21*	.06	-.15	-.04	.13	--	
9. Childhood R/S importance	.30**	-.15	.13	-.05	-.19*	-.13	.04	.46**	--

Note. R/S importance = current religious and spiritual importance. Childhood R/S importance = childhood religious and spiritual importance

*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Spiritual growth, measured by the STS, was the dependent variable in the first equation. Based on relationships in previous research, demographic information (age, gender) was entered in the first step followed by current religious and spiritual importance in the second block. Event-related distress (IES-R) was entered in the third step, and the three subscales of the TRIM-18 (avoidance, revenge, and benevolence) were entered in the fourth step. Table 7 presents the results of this regression equation.

The overall model was significant [$F(7, 133) = 11.82$, $R^2 = .38$, $p = .00$]. Step 1 was not predictive of spiritual growth. After accounting for the variables in Step 1, current religious and spiritual importance was uniquely predictive of spiritual growth ($\beta = .62$, $\Delta r^2 = .37$, $p < .01$). Strikingly, current religious and spiritual importance accounted for 37% of the variance in spiritual growth after controlling for age and gender. The addition of event-related distress in Step 3 and forgiveness variables in Step 4 were not significantly predictive of spiritual growth.

The second regression analysis examined whether forgiveness predicted spiritual decline. Demographic information (age, gender) was entered in the first step followed by current religious and spiritual importance in the second block. Event-related distress (IES-R) was entered in the third step, and the three subscales of the TRIM-18 (avoidance, revenge, and benevolence) were entered in the fourth step. Spiritual decline, measured by the STS, was the dependent variable in this equation. Table 8 presents the results of this regression equation.

In this regression analysis, the overall model was significant [$F = 4.83(7, 133)$, $R^2 = .20$, $p < .00$]. Spiritual decline was not significantly predicted by Step 1. After accounting for variables in Step 1, current religious and spiritual importance was not predictive of spiritual decline. Event-related distress was uniquely predictive of spiritual decline ($\beta = .33$, $\Delta r^2 = .11$, $p < .01$) after accounting for the variables in Steps 1 and 2. After accounting for the variables in Steps 1, 2, and 3, revenge ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$) and

Table 7. *Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting spiritual growth*

Variable	B	$SE\ B$	β	F
Step 1 ($R^2 = .01$)				.47
Age	.29	.32	.08	
Gender	2.56	8.78	.03	
Step 2 ($\Delta R^2 = .37^{**}$)				27.70**
Age	-.09	.26	-.02	
Gender	-1.53	6.99	-.02	
R/S Importance	6.19	.69	.62**	
Step 3 ($\Delta R^2 = .00$)				20.70**
Age	-.09	.26	-.02	
Gender	-1.87	7.05	-.02	
R/S Importance	6.15	.69	.62**	
Distress	.09	.20	.03	
Step 4 ($\Delta R^2 = .01$)				11.82**
Age	-.11	.26	-.03	
Gender	-1.01	7.15	-.01	
R/S Importance	6.18	.72	.62**	
Distress	.14	.21	.05	
Benevolence	.13	.61	.02	
Revenge	-.54	.60	-.07	
Avoidance	.20	.78	.02	

Note. R/S importance = current religious and spiritual importance.

*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 8. *Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting spiritual decline*

Variable	B	SE B	β	F
Step 1 (R^2 = .02)				1.18
Age	-.17	.11	-.13	
Gender	1.23	3.07	.03	
Step 2 (ΔR^2 = .01)				1.18
Age	-.15	.11	-.11	
Gender	1.45	3.07	.04	
R/S Importance	-.33	.30	-.09	
Step 3 (ΔR^2 = .11**)				5.23**
Age	-.16	.11	-.12	
Gender	.14	2.92	.00	
R/S Importance	-.46	.29	-.13	
Distress	.35	.08	.33**	
Step 4 (ΔR^2 = .07**)				4.83**
Age	-.14	.11	-.10	
Gender	.95	2.86	.03	
R/S Importance	-.35	.29	-.10	
Distress	.36	.08	.35**	
Benevolence	.15	.24	.06	
Revenge	-.62	.24	-.24**	
Avoidance	.83	.31	.24**	

Note. R/S importance = current religious and spiritual importance.

*p < .05, ** p < .01.

avoidance (β = .24, p < .01), were significantly predictive of spiritual decline. The

addition of forgiveness variables uniquely accounted for 7% of the variance in level of

spiritual decline after previously entered variables were accounted for in the model.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter will present the findings and implications of this study. First, results are discussed in the context of other relevant findings in the literature. Next, the limitations of the current study are presented. Finally, implications for future research and practice are explicated followed by concluding remarks.

<u>Discussion of Results</u>

The purpose of the present investigation was to examine factors related to spiritual transformation among individuals who experienced a range of significantly distressing interpersonal offenses. Additionally, this study examined the role of forgiveness in accounting for variance in spiritual transformation.

To address the first research question of factors related to spiritual transformation, the influence of various demographic variables was examined. As the previous research in spiritual transformation is in its infancy, examining the role of demographic factors sheds light on who experiences spiritual transformation. Spiritual group and spiritual decline were not related to age. Interestingly, religion and spirituality are consistently documented to increase with age (Dalby, 2006; Wink and Dillon, 2002); however, spiritual transformation did not have a similar relationship. Two prior studies have also failed to show a relationship between spiritual growth and age (Maguen et al., 2006; Salo et al., 2005); however, both of these studies suffered from a restriction of range in the age of participants. Meanwhile, two other studies have shown both domains of spiritual transformation to be negatively related to age (Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008). Taken as a whole, the status of the existing literature suggests that more research is needed before the assertion of Cole et al. (2008) that "as one ages, one's level of

spirituality matures and stabilizes, and is less impacted by traumatic events" (p. 117) can be accepted.

Men and women did not differ in levels of spiritual transformation. Some studies, like this one, have not found gender differences (Joseph et al., 2005; Maguen et al., 2006), and others show women experience higher levels of growth (Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008; Pakenham & Cox, 2008; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). However, none of the studies that found gender differences in spiritual growth considered interpersonal offenses; rather, they focused on events such as illness and terrorist attacks which are qualitatively different than interpersonal offenses in that there is not a specific target (i.e., person) to blame. The nature of the triggering event may cause gender differences in how it is interpreted or responded to by victims. This study is a significant contribution to the literature in understanding demographic variables related to spiritual transformation because the sample includes a large age range of adult participants and is balanced in gender composition.

Ethnicity of participants in this study impacted their experiences of spiritual transformation. Analysis revealed that African Americans endorsed significantly higher levels of spiritual growth than Caucasians or individuals of other ethnicities. Similarly, in a study of women who had been recently sexually assaulted, 71% of African Americans reported spiritual growth as compared to 38% of Whites (Kennedy et al., 1996). In another study of adults in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, spiritual growth was higher among ethnic minorities than Whites 41 days after the attack (Butler et al., 2005). In this study, African Americans were the only group of color to demonstrate differences in spiritual growth. Higher levels of spiritual growth among African Americans can be explained in several ways. First, spiritual growth is shown to be positively related to various religious variables (Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2000), and African Americans show generally higher levels of religiosity than other ethnic groups (Ellison, 1995; Koenig et al., 2001; Pargament, 1997;

Worthington et al., 2003). Second, for this marginalized group, spiritual growth may represent the effects of relying on religion as an accessible and culturally salient coping mechanism in the aftermath of a highly difficult event.

Current religious and spiritual importance as well as childhood religious and spiritual importance were both positively correlated with spiritual growth. These findings build upon previous evidence of this link (Butler et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2008; Kennedy et al., 1996; Pargament, et al., 1998; Smith et al., 2000). This study also provides empirical support for Knapik and colleagues' (2008) theoretical model of spiritual growth, which suggests that a spiritual connection (i.e., personal importance of religion and spirituality) creates the possibility of spiritual growth for individuals who have experienced trauma. Clearly, the importance of religion and spirituality is related to the experience of spiritual growth following highly stressful events. However, future research may investigate how the importance of religion and spirituality influences spiritual growth. Religion and spirituality may provide a framework for understanding and finding meaning following a difficult life event. For example, cognitive processing is theorized to play a major role in posttraumatic growth and spiritual growth, and religion and spirituality may provide a means of organizing and efficiently processing the event. Alternatively, organized religion may also facilitate spiritual growth through support networks and active coping strategies (e.g., prayer). However, as this is correlational data, it cannot be assumed that the importance of religion and spirituality in individuals' lives causes spiritual growth. It is possible that the relationship found in this study simply reflects that after individuals have experienced spiritual growth, they endorse higher levels of importance of religion and spirituality.

Interestingly, religious and spiritual importance was not related to spiritual decline. This suggests that individuals low in religious or spiritual importance are just as likely to experience spiritual decline as those high in this variable. Furthermore, these results indicate that the personal importance of religion and spirituality does not

necessarily provide a buffering effect against spiritual decline. However, in a study of cancer patients diagnosed within the past two years, spiritual decline was negatively related to intrinsic religiosity and spiritual well-being (Cole et al., 2008). Perhaps differences in the type of offense may explain these conflicting results. For some, cancer may be interpreted as a spiritual test in which a higher power can be blamed, making the importance of religion and spiritual a more salient variable. By contrast, blame may be more easily allocated to the offending individual(s) in interpersonal offenses.

The relationships between spiritual transformation and religious and spiritual importance must be interpreted within the context of several factors. First, this sample was largely Christian. Only 7% identified with a non-Christian religious or spiritual orientation. Similarly, only 30% indicated that the religious preference of their family of origin was non-Christian. Recent polls suggest that 78.4% of Americans and 80% of Midwesterners identify as Christian (Pew Forum, 2008). Other religious affiliations were represented within the larger sample (e.g., Islam, Judaism, Wicka); however, small sample sizes did not allow for statistical exploration of differences between groups. To date, research has not explored differences in spiritual transformation across religious groups.

Second, participants indicated a high degree of the importance of religious and spirituality in their lives. On a 20-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the importance of religion and spirituality, the mean score of this sample was 14.6 (*SD* = 5.2). However, as the measure of importance of religion and spirituality in this study does not have normative data and was used exclusively in this study, comparisons with other samples cannot be made. While it is difficult to gauge if the levels of the importance of religion and spirituality are inflated in the current sample, these levels appear relatively similar to Americans at large. In polls, 96% of Americans indicated that they believe in God or a universal spirit (Gallup & Jones, 2000), and 82% reported that religion is at least somewhat important in their lives with 56% identifying religion as

"very important" (Pew Forum, 2008). Therefore, the high levels of the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of these participants may be loosely reflective of the larger population. The high levels of the importance of religion and spirituality may also be impacted by their recent experiences of interpersonal offenses, as individuals commonly display intensified religiosity in stressful times or crises (Pargament, 2002).

In further assessing factors related to spiritual transformation, relationships emerged between spiritual transformation and event-related distress. As levels of distress increased, so too did spiritual decline. Similarly, Frazier et al. (2001) showed that the relationship between spiritual decline and distress among sexual assault survivors represented medium to large effect sizes. Cole et al. (2008) found that spiritual decline predicted poorer mental health (e.g., depression, negative affect) following a diagnosis of cancer. The existing literature converges in its evidence that spiritual decline is related to psychological distress. Theoretically, the model of Pargament and colleagues (2005) suggests that the distress caused by a trauma may initiate a spiritual struggle. The tension of a spiritual struggle may further impact distress and lead to either growth or decline based on the individual's coping and resources. While, this model is confined to Judeo-Christian perspectives, the present data offer empirical support for it.

Participants in this study endorsed high levels of distress. Certainly, it is expected that the experience of an interpersonal offense may trigger psychological distress; however, the degree of distress described by these participants is striking. The majority of participants in this study reported levels of offense-related distress that exceeded previously established cut scores for PTSD (Creamer et al., 2003). Clearly, these participants had experienced not just interpersonal offenses, but interpersonal *traumas*, and the distress reported by participants in this sample was significant. Given the deleterious impact of the interpersonal offenses experienced by participants, the relationship between distress and spiritual decline is noteworthy for researchers and

clinicians alike given its implications for research and practice, which will be discussed later.

Spiritual growth was unrelated to distress in this study. This was a surprising finding as previous research has consistently shown strong relationships between spiritual growth and mental health in individuals who experienced a variety of highly stressful experiences (Cole et al., 2008; Erbes et al., 2005; Frame et al., 2005; Frazier et al., 2001; Pakenham & Cox, 2008; Pargament, et al., 1998). This discrepancy may be attributable to several factors. The extremely high levels of distress reported by individuals in this study may have resulted in a restriction of range for distress that was not present in other studies. Moreover, most of the previous research studied participants more recently after the triggering events, with time frames ranging from two weeks to two years post-event. In a longitudinal study of sexual assault survivors, spiritual growth was strongly negatively related to depression and PTSD at two weeks post-assault, but was only related to depression (and at a much smaller magnitude) at one year post-assault (Frazier et al., 2001). Therefore, relationships between spiritual growth and mental health may decline over time. In this study, participants were studied as long as five years after the interpersonal offense, and the time since the event may account for the lack of relationship between spiritual growth and distress.

It was hypothesized that forgiveness would be significantly related to spiritual transformation. Avoidance, one component of forgiveness, was positively correlated with spiritual decline. This was the only hypothesized relationship that was supported by the data. This is the first study to explore the relationship between forgiveness and spiritual decline. It suggests that as individuals distance themselves from the offender through avoidance following a significant interpersonal offense, this distancing extends to other areas of their life including their relationship with their higher being/power through spiritual decline.

The second major purpose of this study was to examine if forgiveness explains a significant amount of variance in spiritual transformation after controlling for demographic and offense-related variables. Forgiveness did not significantly account for variance in spiritual growth. However, after controlling for age and gender, the importance of religion and spirituality was predictive of spiritual growth. In fact, the importance of religion and spirituality accounted for 37% of the variance in spiritual growth. The importance of religion and spirituality in the experience of spiritual growth among victims of interpersonal offenses is a major finding of this study.

How can the overall lack of relationship between spiritual growth and forgiveness be explained? In individuals affected by the Oklahoma City bombing, there was no significant relationship between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth; however, it seemed that the severity of the event for the individual may have played a mediating or moderating role (Fischer, 2006). Even though this study accounted for event-related distress, no relationship emerged between forgiveness and growth. Two previous studies have shown connections between growth and forgiveness. In an experimental study, participants assigned to write about the benefits of the most recent time someone hurt them, thus priming for growth, reported significantly higher levels of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2006). The authors found that cognitive processing mediated the effects of the benefit-finding condition on forgiveness. Cognitive processing was not measured or manipulated in the current, non-experimental study. Moreover, in an intervention designed to promote forgiveness, participants in the forgiveness intervention showed significantly higher levels of both forgiveness and spiritual well-being (Rye & Pargament, 2002). Participants in that intervention study were Christian, mostly White, college-age women, whereas the current study considered a much more diverse group of individuals in a non-manipulated setting to explore forgiveness and spiritual growth as it unfolds without intervention. This study suggests that without intervention, forgiving an offender does not significantly account for variance in spiritual growth. Individuals may

be able to hold onto negative feelings toward an offender, and still experience a greater closeness to whomever or whatever they view as a higher power.

Forgiveness significantly accounted for variance in spiritual decline even after controlling for age, gender, importance of religion and spirituality, and distress. In this model, lower levels of avoidance and increased levels of revenge were related to greater spiritual decline. Additionally, event-related distress was also a significant predictor of spiritual decline after controlling for demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, importance of religion and spirituality).

Currently, there is not a comprehensive theory explaining the process of spiritual decline across individuals. One theory of "spiritual struggle" among Judeo-Christians posits that a traumatic, unexpected event such as a significant interpersonal offense may trigger distress and initiate a spiritual struggle (Pargament et al., 2005). Further, the spiritual struggle creates feelings of tension and discomfort for the individual, which may be resolved through active coping and resourcefulness. However, the tension of spiritual struggle may heighten distress and remain unresolved through ineffectual coping and lower levels of resourcefulness. Forgiveness has been conceptualized as a means to cope with negative effects of difficult life experiences. As coping through forgiveness significantly accounted for a reduction of spiritual decline (i.e., resolution of a spiritual struggle), the results of this study support the Pargament et al. (2005) theory. Furthermore, while not empirically tested, these results suggest that helping individuals to forgive may prevent spiritual decline and ameliorate the deleterious mental health correlates of spiritual decline.

Study Limitations

While this study addressed a major gap in the literature by exploring the relationship between forgiveness and spiritual transformation, there are limitations that are important to consider. First, the sample largely identified as Christian. This is not

unique, as much of the research on forgiveness and spiritual transformation has been conducted with primarily Christian samples. This is attributable to the fact that Christianity is the largest religious group within the United States. However, research focused almost solely on Christians limits our understanding of forgiveness and spiritual transformation within other faith groups. As religions have distinct teachings, traditions, and practices related to both forgiveness and spiritual transformation, it is reasonable to consider that differences may emerge between groups in the experience of spiritual transformation. Understanding forgiveness and spiritual transformation among Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and other religious groups is an important area for further consideration.

The religious and spiritual identification of this sample carries with it two other limitations. First, this sample reported high levels of the importance of religion and spirituality in their lives. These potentially inflated levels may be explained by regional differences or time of sampling (i.e., Midwest sample and after a traumatizing event). Secondly, this study did not analyze differences in study variables among various Christian denominations. Pargament (1997) argues that exploring denominational differences is important given large doctrinal differences across denominations. There is reason to believe that denominational differences may be present as, for example, one study found that Protestants were more likely to experience spiritual decline than Catholics after a diagnosis of cancer (Cole et al., 2008).

Self-report measures are susceptible to bias in measurement. Among issues of concern are response sets characterized by acquiescence and social desirability. In this study, all measures were self-report. Forgiveness and spiritual transformation are highly individualized experiences, and conceptually there are challenges to measuring these phenomena in ways other than self-report inventories. To date, collateral measures of spiritual transformation have not been developed; however, Cole et al. (2008) presented evidence that self- and observer-ratings were significantly correlated on the spiritual

growth scale of the STS. Collateral measures of forgiveness have been developed, although these are not widely used. For example, Brown (2003) presented validity evidence for a forgiveness measure completed by a romantic partner of the research participant. Scholars have also called for the use of data derived from trained raters/observers and test data from laboratory situations (Hoyt & McCullough, 2005).

There are two other limitations related to measurement in this study. First, the measure of the importance of religion and spirituality was developed solely for this study. It lacks robust data on its psychometric properties, including test-retest reliability and validity. Furthermore, it combines the importance of religion *and* spiritual into a single domain, while a growing body of literature distinguishes religion and spirituality as overlapping, yet distinct constructs (Hill et al., 2000). Within this debate, religion is described as a search for the sacred through social or institutional practices (Plante & Sherman, 2001), whereas spirituality represents a personal quest for meaning (Koenig et al., 2001). In this study, the measure of religion and spirituality as a single construct lacks the sophistication to detect subtle differences in individuals who may identify as highly spiritual but not religious and vice versa.

The second measurement limitation is related to the measure of event-related distress used in this study. The instructions for the IES-R asked individuals to answer questions based on when the participant "felt most distressed with respect to the interpersonal transgression." This may have primed individuals to inflate levels of event-related distress through a hindsight bias.

As a correlational, cross-sectional study, this study is limited by the constraints of its research design. A causal relationship between forgiveness and spiritual transformation cannot be assumed due to the correlational nature of this study. Furthermore, as a cross-sectional study, data were collected at a single point in time. This significantly limits the ability to understand how distress, forgiveness, and spiritual transformation may emerge and evolve over time.

Implications for Future Research

The literature on spiritual transformation remains sparse, and there is much yet to be learned. Given the discrepancies in the literature associated with demographic factors related to spiritual transformation, future studies should continue to use diverse samples to further our understanding of this issue. This study was remarkable in that the sample was highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, educational level, and age. Historically, studies in this area have suffered from their overreliance on White, middle-class, female samples, which significantly limits generalizability of results and does not adequately allow for investigation into cultural differences in spiritual transformation. Interestingly, African Americans in this study showed higher levels of growth; however, at this point, only hypotheses can be offered to explain this finding. Future research can expand upon these findings to further understand differences in spiritual growth among ethnic communities through both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The importance of religion and spirituality played a major role in spiritual growth in this study. However, the role and function of religion and spirituality in these processes is still unknown. Future studies can provide more clarity by studying various religious groups and denominations. The role of specific religious and spiritual variables (e.g., commitment, intrinsic vs. extrinsic religiosity/spirituality) might also be explored. Researchers should strive to use psychometrically sound measures of religious and spiritual variables.

The measurement of this event-related distress in this study is a strength and distinct from other research. The measure used in this study, the IES-R, is a well-researched measure which demonstrates adequate reliability and validity. The literature, thus far, has suffered from psychometrically-limited instruments. For example, in their study of spiritual transformation among sexual assault survivors, Kennedy and colleagues (1996) used two items with yes or no responses to measure psychological severity of the offense. Similarly, Frazier and colleagues (2001) used a measure of psychological

distress developed solely for their study. To further our understanding of the relationship between spiritual transformation and psychological distress, future researchers might strongly weigh psychometric properties of measures, especially measures of psychological distress. Furthermore, future research may also consider the role of a previous history of significant interpersonal offenses or trauma in the experience in spiritual transformation. A history of trauma may lead to resiliency and growth, while unresolved trauma may lead to increased psychological distress and decline.

The existing literature demonstrates that spiritual decline is related to distress. In fact, this study showed that event-related distress played a major role in accounting for variance in spiritual decline. Is there a causal relationship between these variables? This question has important implications for clinicians in both assessment and intervention. Experimental research which allows for causal implications would be ideal, yet methodologically challenging. However, future prospective longitudinal studies will help to illuminate how distress and spiritual decline unfold over time. Two recent longitudinal studies of forgiveness and health (Bono et al., 2008; Orth et al., 2008) provide models of the type of studies that are needed to expand our understanding in this area. Currently, research indicates that spiritual decline is negatively related to mental health. However, longitudinal research can investigate an alternative hypothesis that spiritual decline, which is initially deleterious, may spawn a richer, more spiritually rich life in the long-term (Cole et al., 2008). Prospective longitudinal studies, possibly utilizing multilevel linear growth models could offer a wealth of insight into baseline factors impacting forgiveness and spiritual transformation as well as the temporal unfolding of these processes.

As unforgiveness significantly accounted for variance in spiritual decline and spiritual decline is related to increased distress, clinicians may consider implementing existing research-based forgiveness interventions with clients. While a large body of data demonstrates these interventions are effective in reducing psychological distress (Baskin

& Enright, 2004; Lundahl, Taylor, Stevenson, & Roberts, 2008; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005), future research might investigate the effectiveness of these interventions in preventing or reducing spiritual decline. Furthermore, future research might develop and investigate interventions targeting spiritual transformation to investigate if these can allay psychological distress.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

This study offers several important implications for practicing psychologists. One of the key findings of this study was the importance of religion and spirituality in individuals experiencing spiritual growth in the aftermath of a significant interpersonal offense. Psychologists have been criticized for ignoring religious and spiritual variables in research and practice (Rosenfeld, 2010). The results of this study suggest it is critical for clinicians to understand the role of religion and spirituality in clients' lives in order to understand spiritual growth following a significant interpersonal offense.

Assessment of the role of religion and spirituality, including spiritual transformation, in the lives of clients who have experienced significant interpersonal offenses is an important implication of the current study. As such, a thorough assessment should consider current religious or spiritual identification, religious or spiritual history, and the role of religion and spirituality in the client's life (e.g., intensity, essentiality, degree of helpfulness and harmfulness). Hathaway, Scott, and Garver (2004) suggested that a short initial query regarding religion and spirituality (e.g., 'Is religion or spirituality important to you?') can provide clinicians the opportunity to probe for more information in those clients that endorse religious or spiritual identification. In fact, Rosenfeld (2010) argued that "asking about the client's religion can promote trust/engagement, overcome suspicion that the therapist is hostile to the client's religious beliefs, and clarify the client's expectation and theory of change" (p. 512). This may contribute to a healthy therapeutic alliance in which clinicians can inquire about and normalize the experience of

spiritual transformation. Furthermore, a brief inquiry of changes in a client's religion or spirituality may help clinicians gain insight into the presence of spiritual transformation in the aftermath of a significant interpersonal offense.

Interest in integrating religion and spirituality into psychotherapy has increased substantially in recent decades. A recent interdivisional taskforce of the American Psychological Association, the Taskforce on Evidence-Based Therapy Relationships, judged tailoring psychotherapy to the client's religion/spirituality to be "demonstrably effective" in influencing outcomes (Norcross & Wampold, 2011). In a major meta-analysis of religious and spiritually accommodated therapies, results showed that religious/spiritually orientated therapies demonstrated similar effectiveness in reaching psychological outcomes and greater effectiveness in achieving spiritual outcomes as secular psychotherapy (Worthington, Hook, Davis, & McDaniel, 2011).

Various examples of the integration of religion and spirituality exist in the literature (Richards & Bergin, 2004, 2005). Among these are examples which integrate Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Eastern perspectives. Aspects of these include conceptualizing distress within a religious or spiritual framework, pursuing both psychological and spiritual goals, and integrating religious or spiritual practices such as meditation or prayer (Worthington et al., 2011). Additional spiritually-oriented interventions in psychotherapy include consulting spiritual or religious leaders, encouraging forgiveness, discussing specific teachings, teaching mindfulness or meditation, and using spiritual imagery (Richards & Worthington, 2010). It is essential that religion and spirituality be integrated into treatment in relation to the client's comfort and preference, and that religion and spirituality be viewed as a key component of multicultural competence.

To date, no interventions have been developed and empirically studied that specifically target spiritual transformation. However, several approaches have been empirically shown to enhance posttraumatic growth among a variety of individuals. A

brief, group-based the intervention based on cognitive-behavioral therapy, the transactional model of stress and coping, and the resilience and thriving models significantly increased overall posttraumatic growth, and increased spiritual growth among college students discussing the "most stressful/upsetting event" in their lifetimes (Dolbier, Jaggars, & Steinhardt, 2009).   In another study of cancer patients, a fifteen-hour mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention improved patients' levels of posttraumatic growth and spirituality (Garland, Carlson, Cook, Lansdell, & Speca, 2007). Finally, an internet-based cognitive-behavioral therapy intervention which involved self-confrontation, cognitive reconstruction, and social sharing significantly improved posttraumatic growth among individuals who had experienced a variety of traumatic events (Knaevelsrud, Liedl, & Maercker, 2010)

It is important for clinicians to recognize that not all individuals will experience spiritual growth, and this is not necessarily negative. In fact, suggesting or prompting growth prematurely may be harmful to already traumatized individuals. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2006) suggest that clinicians act as "expert companions" in guiding traumatized individuals in exploring both the impact of the trauma on their lives and, as appropriate and clinically indicated, helping individuals to recognize the possibility of growth. Expressive writing (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986) has also been shown to have a positive impact on posttraumatic growth (Stanton et al., 2002) and health (King & Miner, 2000).

This study demonstrated that forgiveness significantly accounts for variance in spiritual decline, implying that clinicians may consider integrating forgiveness into treatment. Psychologists have developed interventions targeting forgiveness as an outcome (e.g., Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Worthington, 2003). These interventions focus on the victim's response to the being hurt and the individual's informed choice to pursue forgiveness as a means to cope with the difficult emotions (e.g., anger, revenge, bitterness, avoidance, sadness). The effectiveness of forgiveness interventions has been studied with a variety of individuals who experienced a range of interpersonal offenses,

such as those described in this study. Men hurt by the abortion decision of a partner (Coyle & Enright, 1997), women sexually abused by a relative (Freedman & Enright, 1996), women emotionally abused by a partner (Reed & Enright, 2006), and divorced adults hurt by ex-spouses (Rye et al., 2005) have all demonstrated increased forgiveness following forgiveness interventions. There is also evidence for improvements in mental health following forgiveness interventions (Freedman & Enright, 1996; Reed & Enright, 2006). Meta-analyses found that forgiveness interventions demonstrate moderate to large effect sizes in improving forgiveness and mental health-related outcomes (e.g., self-esteem, anger, depression; Baskin & Enright, 2004; Lundahl et al., 2008; Wade et al., 2005).

In a content analysis, Wade and Worthington (2005) identified five common components of major forgiveness interventions: 1) defining forgiveness to clarify goals and build shared understanding; 2) remembering and verbalizing the hurt caused by the offense to encourage catharsis; 3) building empathy for the offender to humanize the other person; 4) acknowledging one's own previous interpersonal offenses to minimize the fundamental attribution error (i.e., the tendency to explain behaviors through the dispositional characteristics of an individual and ignore situational factors; Ross, 1977), and; 5) committing to forgiveness and setting a goal to pursue or maintain forgiveness. Despite the rationale and evidence presented for targeting forgiveness in therapy, some opponents resist this notion. Particularly, opponents contend that interventions targeting forgiveness may further victimize the client, may perpetuate cycles of abuse and place victims in dangerous or hurtful situations, and may invoke guilt in the victim due to religious or moral mandates (Lamb, 2005; Lamb & Murphy, 2002). In a review of these concerns, Wade, Johnson, and Meyer (2008) argue that while concern may be justified in some situations, forgiveness interventions may be extremely helpful for victims when offered at the appropriate time and with appropriate informed consent. Still, very little is

known about the applicability and effectiveness of forgiveness interventions with individuals from backgrounds diverse in race, ethnicity, religion, age, and social class.

Conclusions

This study offers important insight into the spiritual transformation following highly significant interpersonal offenses. The results suggest that the importance of religion and spirituality in individuals' lives plays a major role in the experience of spiritual growth. Furthermore, forgiveness accounts for a significant amount of variance in spiritual decline after controlling for demographic variables and event-related distress. While much is yet to be learned about forgiveness and spiritual transformation following significant interpersonal offenses, these results offer important implications to clinicians and researchers alike. It is important that future research pursue this topic given its relevance to individuals' daily lives and implications for health.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Processes Following an Interpersonal Transgression

Research Team: Elizabeth Altmaier, PHD
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                     Jessica Schultz, BA
                     Benjamin Tallman, BA

This consent form describes the research study to help you decide if you want to participate. This form provides important information about what you will be asked to do during the study, about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your rights as a research subject.

- If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the research coordinators for more information.
- You should discuss your participation with anyone you choose such as family or friends.
- Do not agree to participate in this study unless the research coordinators answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This is a research study. We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you have been significantly wronged by someone in your life.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate processes that may or may not happen after someone has been significantly wronged by another person. So, for example, one person may be able to forgive the person who wronged him or her while another may not. One person might be able to find something positive about the negative event while another person may not. We are interested in learning more about these processes. We are also going to consider the impact that the severity of the transgression and people's characteristics (like their age, their gender) have on these processes.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 100 people will take part in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will require a single visit that will last approximately 40 minutes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a series of questionnaires and to tell us some information about yourself. In regard to you, we will ask you questions about your age, gender, racial/ethnic group, religious affiliation and activities, highest educational level, marital status, occupation, and employment status. We will be also ask you about an event when another person committed a transgression against you. We will also ask you, in general terms, who committed the transgression, how long ago the event took place, the impact of the transgression on your feelings and behaviors, and processes that may have followed the transgressions. You are free to skip any questions you prefer not to answer, and you may also stop participation at any time. Filling out the questionnaires will take no more than 30 minutes. We will have some introductory remarks before everyone starts. We also will need you to fill out a brief form acknowledging your payment at the close of the study.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

You may experience one or more of the risks indicated below from being in this study. In addition to these, there may be other unknown risks, or risks that we did not anticipate, associated with being in this study.

We will ask you questions about an emotionally distressing event that occurred in your life. You may be uncomfortable answering some of these questions. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You will not benefit from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because we will identify factors that help persons cope better after experiencing a major transgression.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study. You will be responsible for the cost of transportation to and from the study site.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will be paid $20 in cash at the conclusion of the study. We will need you to sign an acknowledgement form that you received that money. If you are an employee of the University of Iowa, we will need your social security number added to the form that acknowledges receiving the money

WHO IS FUNDING THIS STUDY?

The University and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

We will keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people such as those indicated below may become aware of your participation in this study and may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.
- federal government regulatory agencies,
- auditing departments of the University of Iowa, and
- the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies)

To help protect your confidentiality, we will use study identification numbers and not your name on all the information we gather from you. Your informed consent form has your identification number. That is the number you should use on all your questionnaires. We will keep the consent forms stored separately from the questionnaires. In addition, all of this information will be stored in locked filing cabinets and locked offices that are only accessible by members of this research team. The list linking your name and your study identification number will be stored in a secure location that is accessible only to the investigators. If we write a report or article about this study or share the study data set with others, we will do so in such a way that you cannot be directly identified.

IS BEING IN THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop, just bring your materials to the front of the room and give them to the research coordinators.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

We encourage you to ask questions. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact: Elizabeth Altmaier, Ph.D., (319) 335-5566.   If you experience a research-related injury, please contact: Dr. Altmaier at the telephone number above or by e-mail at elizabeth-altmaier@uiowa.edu.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research subject or about research related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Office, 340 College of Medicine Administration Building, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 52242, (319) 335-6564, or e-mail irb@uiowa.edu. General information about being a research

subject can be found by clicking "Info for Public" on the Human Subjects Office web site, http://research.uiowa.edu/hso. To offer input about your experiences as a research subject or to speak to someone other than the research staff, call the Human Subjects Office at the number above.

This Informed Consent Document is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You are not waiving any legal rights by signing this Informed Consent Document. Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subject's Name
(printed):_____

_____

      (Signature of Subject)   (Date)

Statement of Person Who Obtained Consent

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative. It is my opinion that the subject understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

_____

(Signature of Person who Obtained Consent)   (Date)

APPENDIX B

STUDY MEASURES

Demographic Questionnaire

1) What was the event (interpersonal transgression) that took place? Please describe the event briefly.

2) If the transgression was ongoing, approximately how long did the transgression last?
_____days _____months _____years

3) How much did the transgression impact you when it took place?
Not at all   Extremely
    1   10

4) How much does the transgression impact you currently?
    Not at all   Extremely
    1   10

The next set of questions deal with the ***person who committed the interpersonal transgression***. Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge.

5a) Who committed the interpersonal transgression?

My Child   Spouse   Sibling   Parent   Friend   Relative

Acquaintance   Co-Worker   Boss   Neighbor   Stranger   Other

5b) How old was the person (approximately) when the transgression took place?
_____years

5c) What is the person's gender?   Female   Male

5d) What is the person's ethnic group?
Hispanic   Asian   African American   Caucasian
American Indian   Bi-racial   Other _____   Don't know

5e) What was the person's highest educational degree?
Below high school   High School   Community College or Some College
College Degree   Graduate/ProfessionalDegree Don't know

5f) What was the person's religious affiliation?

Protestant   Catholic   Jewish   Muslim   No affiliation
Spiritual   Don't know   Other (*please write in*) _____

Please answer the following questions as they relate to *you*.

6) What is your age? _____

7) What is your gender?   Female   Male

8) What is your occupation? _____

9) What is your employment status?

Full-time   Part-time   Full-time homemaker   Student
Self-employed   Retired   Disabled   Not employed

10) What is your marital status?

Single or never married   Married   Separated   Divorced
Widowed   Cohabiting   Other_____

11) How many children under age 18 are currently living in your home?
          0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   more than 8

12) What is your highest educational degree?

Below high school   High School   Community College or Some
                                                       College
College Degree   Graduate/ProfessionalDegree

13) What is your racial/ethnic group?

Hispanic   Asian   African American   Caucasian
American Indian   Bi-racial   Other _____

14) What is the zip code where you currently live? _____

15) What was the primary religious affiliation of your *family* while you were growing up?

Protestant   Catholic   Jewish   Muslim   No affiliation
Spiritual   Other (*please write in*) _____

16) What is *your* current primary religious affiliation?

Protestant   Catholic   Jewish   Muslim   No affiliation
Spiritual   Other (*please write in*) _____

Religion and Spirituality

1) How often did your *family* participate in religious activities while you were growing up (for example, attend church, read religious scripture, pray/meditate)?
Never   Once a year   Once a month   Once a week
Once a day   More than once a day

2) How important was religion in your *family* while you were growing up (circle one number)?
  Not at all   Extremely
      1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3) How often do *you* currently participate in religious activities?
Never   Once a year   Once a month   Once a week
Once a day   More than once a day

4) How important is religion to *you* currently (*circle one number*)
  Not at all   Extremely
      1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

5) How important is spirituality to *you* currently (*circle one number*)
  Not at all   Extremely
      1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Impact of Event Scale-Revised

Below is a list of difficulties that people sometimes have after stressful life events. Please read each item and then indicate how true each item was for you when you *felt most distressed* with respect to the interpersonal transgression.

	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1. Any reminder brought back feelings about it	0	1	2	3	4
2. I had trouble staying asleep	0	1	2	3	4
3. Other things kept making me think about it	0	1	2	3	4
4. I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it	0	1	2	3	4
5. I thought about it when I didn't mean to	0	1	2	3	4
6. I felt as if it hadn't happened or wasn't real	0	1	2	3	4
7. I stayed away from reminders about it	0	1	2	3	4
8. Pictures about it popped into my mind	0	1	2	3	4
9. I was jumpy and easily startled	0	1	2	3	4
10. I tried not to think about it	0	1	2	3	4
11. I was aware that I still had a lot of feelings about it, but I didn't deal with them.	0	1	2	3	4
12. My feelings about it were kind of numb	0	1	2	3	4
13. I found myself acting or feeling as though I was back at that time	0	1	2	3	4
14. I had trouble falling asleep	0	1	2	3	4
15. I had waves of strong feelings about it	0	1	2	3	4
16. I tried to remove it from my memory	0	1	2	3	4
17. I had trouble concentrating	0	1	2	3	4
18. Reminders of it caused me to have physical reactions, such as sweating, trouble breathing, nausea, or a pounding heart	0	1	2	3	4
19. I had dreams about it	0	1	2	3	4
20. I felt watchful or on-guard	0	1	2	3	4
21. I tried not to talk about it	0	1	2	3	4

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations - 18

For the questions on this page, please indicate your *current* thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I will make him/her pay	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible	1	2	3	4	5
3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her	1	2	3	4	5
4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am living as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around	1	2	3	4	5
6. I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship	1	2	3	4	5
7. I don't trust him/her	1	2	3	4	5
8. Despite what he/she did, I want to have a positive relationship again	1	2	3	4	5
9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am avoiding him/her	1	2	3	4	5
12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurts aside so we could resume our relationship	1	2	3	4	5
13. I am going to get even	1	2	3	4	5
14. I forgive him/her for what he/she did to me	1	2	3	4	5
15. I cut off the relationship with him/her	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health	1	2	3	4	5
17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable	1	2	3	4	5
18. I withdraw from him/her	1	2	3	4	5

Spiritual Transformation Scale

This next set of questions asks about spiritual changes people sometimes have following a difficult life event. Spiritual changes might be negative or positive, small or large. These changes may or may not be true for you. Please think about any spiritual changes you may have experienced since the transgression as you tell us how true each statement is for you.
Whether you are or are not spiritual or religious, please indicate the extent to which these statements are true for you since your transgression.

	It is **not at all** true for you						It is true for you **a great deal**
1. Spirituality has become more important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My way of looking at life has changed to be more spiritual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Because of spiritual changes I've been through I've changed my priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I pay more attention to things that are spiritually important and forget about the little things that used to bother me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I pray or meditate more often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I spend more time taking care of my spiritual needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I more often experience life around me as spiritual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I more often see my own life as sacred.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have a stronger spiritual connection to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I have a stronger spiritual connection to nature.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Spiritually I am like a new person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Taking care of my body has taken on spiritual meaning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My relationships with other people have taken on more spiritual meaning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	It is **not at all** true for you						It is true for you **a great deal**
14. I have a stronger sense of the Sacred (God, Higher Power, Allah, Adonai, etc.) directing my life now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I act more compassionately towards other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I see people in a more positive light.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I more often express my spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I spend more time thinking about spiritual questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I am more humble.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I more often think about how blessed I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I have grown spiritually.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I am more spiritually present in the moment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I take part in spiritual rituals more often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I more often have a sense of gratitude.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I more often pray for other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. My spirituality is now more deeply imbedded in my whole being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I am more receptive to spiritual care from others (examples: prayer, healing practices, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I more often look for a spiritual purpose for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I'm finding it more important to participate in a spiritual community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. In some ways I am spiritually withdrawn from other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. My faith has been shaken and I am not sure what I believe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	It is **not at all** true for you						It is true for you **a great deal**
32. Spirituality seems less important to me now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. In some ways I have shut down spiritually.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. In some ways I think I am spiritually lost.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I feel I've lost some important spiritual meaning that I had before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. My relationships with other people have lost spiritual meaning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. I am more spiritually wounded.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. In some ways I am off my spiritual path.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I more often think that I have failed in my faith.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I am less interested in organized religion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX C

OFFENSE NARRATIVE CODING RULES

1. Sexual Assault (Coded SA)

    -The participant was sexually assaulted by another person

    -Perpetrator may be anyone (e.g., friend, family member, stranger)

    -May be the threat of sexual assault/violence

    -Example: I was raped

    -*Supersedes everything*

2. Physical Harm (Coded PH)

    -Physical violence is used *toward the participant*

    -Includes the threat of physical violence

    -May be unintentional or an accident

    -Perpetrator may be anyone (e.g., friend, family member, stranger)

    -Example: My husband beat me

    -*Supersedes everything but Sexual Assault*

3. Infidelity (Coded I)

    -Emotional or sexual infidelity committed by the a partner while in a romantic

      relationship

    -*Supersedes Lies and Betrayal*

4. Theft or Damage of Property (Coded TP)

    -Property of the participant is stolen or damaged

    -*Supersedes Betrayal and Lies*

5. Slander (Coded S)

    -Rumors/lies are spread to others *about the participant* that are hurtful or

      damaging to one's reputation

    -Example: My ex-boyfriend told everyone I had an STI

    -*Supersedes Betrayal and Lies*

6. Betrayal (Coded B)

    -Violation of a previous agreement, relationship, or understanding which is not

      expected by the participant

        -Example: My best friend began dating my boyfriend behind my back

        -*Supersedes Lies*

7. Lies (Coded L)

    -Untruthful or inaccurate information is told to the participant or others which is

      hurtful to the participant

    -Does not include lies told about the participant to others (see slander)

8. Other (Coded O)

    -Does not meet coding rules for existing categories