

**FORGIVENESS AND MENTAL HEALTH: A COMPARISON ACROSS
MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS**

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the relationship between forgiveness and mental health. Additionally, the study compared two monotheistic religions (i.e. Judaism, Christianity) with respect to the practice and conceptualization of forgiveness. Participants from the Jewish and Christian religions were recruited from several Midwestern churches and synagogues. Participants answered self-report questionnaires concerning religiousness, forgiveness, and mental health (e.g. anger, hope, depression, and spiritual well-being). Consistent with hypotheses, Forgiveness (AN) and Forgiveness (PP) were negatively correlated with state anger and positively correlated with existential well-being after controlling for the effects of demographics and religiousness. Additionally, Forgiveness (AN) was negatively correlated with depression, and positively correlated with religious well-being. Contrary to hypotheses, the tendency to forgive across situations was not significantly correlated with any of the mental health measures. Contrary to hypotheses, no significant differences were found between Christian and Jewish participants with respect to the practice of forgiveness after controlling for the effects of demographics and

religiousness. Consistent with hypotheses, Christian participants were more likely to agree with statements that embraced unconditional forgiveness, while Jewish participants were more likely to agree with statements supporting conditional forgiveness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is highly valued within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Throughout the centuries, these religions have developed rich conceptualizations of forgiveness based upon sacred scriptures and the teachings of spiritual leaders. Adherents of these religions have suggested that forgiveness leads to both spiritual and emotional benefits. Only recently (i.e. within the past 15 years), social scientists have begun to explore these claims. Continued research is needed to better understand the relationship between forgiveness and mental health. Social scientists who study forgiveness need to understand religious conceptualizations of forgiveness because forgiveness and religion are integrally related for many people. Furthermore, practitioners who work with religious clients need to be sensitive to similarities and differences across religions with respect to the conceptualization and practice of forgiveness.

This study addressed the following questions: (1) What is the relationship between forgiveness and mental health (e.g. anger, hope, depression, and spiritual well-being)? (2) How does religious affiliation affect the practice of forgiveness? (3) How does religious affiliation affect the conceptualization of forgiveness?

The review of the literature will be organized in the following manner. First, a general conceptualization of forgiveness will be presented. Second, forgiveness will be examined within the context of religion. Specifically, conceptualizations of forgiveness

from the perspectives of monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) will be discussed. Third, the role of forgiveness as a coping strategy will be examined. Fourth, studies will be reviewed that; 1) examined the relationship between forgiveness and mental health, and 2) examined the role of religion in forgiveness.

Conceptualization of Forgiveness

Pargament (1997) defines forgiveness as “an effort to find peace by letting go of the deep anger, hurt, fear, and resentment associated with an offense, even though these feelings are deserved” (p. 264). McCullough and Worthington (in press) argue that forgiveness rests on three premises. First, forgiveness involves the perception of unjust actions by another. Second, the perception elicits “emotional responses, motivational responses, cognitive responses, or behavioral responses that would promote the deterioration of good will toward the offender and social harmony” (McCullough & Worthington, in press). Third, when an individual forgives a transgressor, the negative responses are nullified and interpersonal relationships become a possibility.

A number of authors have made distinctions between forgiveness and related concepts (see Delashmut, 1996; Enright, Gassin, Longinovic, & Loudon, 1994; Enright & Zell, 1989). These distinctions are useful because they effectively address many philosophical criticisms of forgiveness. To begin, forgiveness does not entail forgetting about the offense (Delashmut, 1996; Enright et al., 1994; Enright & Zell, 1989). Indeed, forgiveness would not be necessary if an individual could forget that he/she had been wronged. A distinction has also been made between forgiveness and reconciliation (Delashmut, 1996; Enright & Zell, 1989). Reconciliation may occur after forgiving the

offender, but one does not have to reconcile in order to forgive. Smedes (1996) argues that it takes one individual to forgive, but it takes two individuals to reconcile. One can easily imagine circumstances in which it would be unwise and even dangerous for a victim to reconcile with an offender. Thus, reconciliation should involve a careful consideration of safety issues. Forgiveness is also different from condoning an offense (Enright et al., 1994; Enright & Zell, 1989). According to Enright and Zell (1989), individuals must acknowledge they were wronged before forgiving the offender. In other words, the victim must recognize the impact and extent of the personal injury in order to forgive the perpetrator. Finally, several authors have made a distinction between forgiveness and legal pardon (Enright et al., 1994; Enright & Zell, 1989). In theory, one can forgive an offender and still pursue social justice through the legal system.

Religion and Forgiveness

In order to obtain a fuller conceptualization of forgiveness, it is essential to examine its religious roots. Pargament (1997) notes that religion contributes to forgiveness in several ways. First, religion “can lend significance to the act of forgiving” (Pargament, 1997, p. 264). Forgiveness within the context of religion reminds humanity of the need for divine forgiveness, the opportunity to live a spiritually based life, and the need to enhance relationships with others and God. Second, religion provides theological justification for the forgiveness process. Third, religion seeks to humanize the offender by relating the offense to the victim’s own shortcomings and fallibility. Fourth, religion provides role models for forgiveness.

Unfortunately the role of religion in forgiveness has received relatively little attention from social scientists. Of the authors who have examined the religious roots of forgiveness, most have focused on a Christian perspective (see Enright & Zell, 1989; Educational Psychological Study Group, 1990; Gassin & Enright, 1995; Jones, 1995; Jones-Halderman, 1992; Pingleton, 1989). Relatively few authors have examined forgiveness from the perspectives of Judaism (see Dorff, 1998; Newman, 1987; Rye, et al., 2000) and Islam (see Ayoub, 1997; Enright, Eastin, Golden, Sarinopoulous, & Freedman, 1992; McCullough & Worthington, in press; Rye et al., 2000). Forgiveness is also valued by eastern religious traditions (see Rye et al., 2000). Although forgiveness is valued by many eastern and western religions, this study will focus on how the major monotheistic religions (i.e. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) view forgiveness.

The theological roots of forgiveness within these monotheistic religions, can be traced back to the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim perspectives will be briefly discussed with respect to the following five topics: 1) definition of forgiveness, 2) divine forgiveness, 3) interpersonal forgiveness, 4) role models for forgiveness, and 5) conditions for forgiveness. These topics were selected because they are relevant to psychotherapy process, and highlight important differences across monotheistic religions. Perspectives on forgiveness will be compared and contrasted across these monotheistic religions.

Definition and Conceptualization of Forgiveness

Judaism. Forgiveness is an important concept in the Jewish tradition. Jewish scholar, Elliot Dorff, defines forgiveness as freeing the violator from further punishment and removing the original violation (as cited in Rye et al., 2000). There are two Hebrew

words that denote forgiveness within the Hebrew Scriptures; *mehillah* and *selimah*.

Mehillah refers to the “wiping away of a transgression,” and *selimah* refers to “reconciliation.” Nevertheless, these words are often used interchangeably (Dorff, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 20).

Christianity. Forgiveness is one of the most central virtues within the Christian faith. Christian scholar, James Williams, writes that forgiveness “represents the possibility and reality of change and transformation of the individual in relation to others and others in relation to the individual” (as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 31). Within the Christian tradition, forgiveness is seen as a “pardon or release from an injury, offense, or debt” (Williams, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 20).

There are two words within the Christian scriptures that signify forgiveness (Williams, as cited in Rye et al., 2000). The most commonly used word is *eleao* (and related cognate nouns). *Eleao* can be defined as to “show mercy.” The second word used in the New Testament is *aphiemi*. *Aphiemi* means to “release, discharge, put away.” Williams also notes that another word is occasionally used, *splanchnizomai*. Typically this word is understood to mean “feeling sorry for” or “having compassion on” (Williams, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 20).

Islam. Forgiveness in the Islamic tradition is defined as “closing an account of offense against God or any of His creation” (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 21). Islamic scholar, M. Amir Ali, also notes that forgiveness requires sincerity. The Islamic view of forgiveness is based on several different sources. The first, and most important is the Qur’an. The Qur’an is the word of God (Allah), with no human interpolation, as revealed to God’s messenger, Muhammad. The second source of information comes

from Hadith. Hadith are the preserved reports from the Prophet Muhammed's sayings, deeds, and approvals (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000). Ali notes that there are three terms used to denote forgiveness. *'Afw* means, "to pardon, to excuse for a fault, an offense, or a discourtesy, waiver of punishment and amnesty" (Qur'an 42:40, 2:187, 5:95, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 21). The second term, *Shafu*, means "to turn away from a sin or a misdeed, ignore, etc." (Qur'an 2:109, 15:85, 43:89, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 21). The final, and most frequently occurring term is *Ghafara*, which means "to cover, to forgive, and to remit" (Qur'an 2:263, 42:37, 43:43, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 21).

Divine Forgiveness

Judaism. In Judaism, forgiveness begins with God. According to the Jewish tradition, God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (NRSV, Exodus 34:6). God's compassionate and forgiving nature is an underlying theme in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Israelite community continually sinned throughout the Hebrew Bible, but was nevertheless forgiven by their God.

During biblical times, Divine forgiveness was achieved through animal sacrifice within the Temple (Leviticus 4-6). This method is no longer used, and has been replaced by prayer. The Amidah, which is a prayer repeated three times a day, states "forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, for we have transgressed" (as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 24). The Jewish tradition also uses the Day of Atonement as a way to seek forgiveness for sins (Leviticus 16; 23:27-32). The Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur, is the holiest day of the year for Jews. Einstein and Kukoff (1989) state

that Yom Kippur “is a day of prayer, fasting, meditation, self-examination, and deep introspection--a day of moratorium on which we put aside all our normal activities and throw ourselves into the process of becoming one with God and the universe” (p. 28).

The High Holy Day of Yom Kippur is essential for bringing together the Jewish community under God (Einstein & Kukoff, 1989).

Christianity. Christian theology views God as the ultimate forgiver, and the model of forgiveness. The Christian God forgives His people through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, humanity’s savior. Jesus Christ is the mediator of forgiveness between God and His wayward people. It has been suggested that this enabled humanity to restore relationships and facilitate interpersonal healing (Meek & Minn, 1997). As stated in Ephesians: “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you” (NRSV, 4:32).

Early Christian writings taught that divine forgiveness also took place through baptism (Brakenhielm, 1993). The initial belief was that once a Christian was baptized, they were cleansed of their sins and forgiven. After baptism, it was believed that the sinner was “born again,” and would no longer sin. This notion was replaced because it became painfully obvious that this was not the case, and the baptized individual could still sin. Later writings reflected this change in belief (Williams, as cited in Rye, et al., 2000).

Islam. Allah is seen as a forgiving God in the Islamic tradition. The Qur’an states: “Allah is ever All-Forgiving” (25:70). One of the 99 attributes of Allah, according to Islamic tradition, is the Forgiving One (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000). Ayoub

(1997) notes that Allah's forgiveness can be seen throughout the Qur'an. This forgiving nature is reflected in the following example from the Qur'an:

And vie with one another to attain your Sustainer's forgiveness and to a paradise vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been readied for the God-conscious who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow men because God loves the doers of good; and who, when they have committed a shameful deed or have [otherwise] sinned against themselves, remember God and pray that their sins be forgiven – for who but God could forgive sins? And do not knowingly persist in doing whatever [wrong] they may have done. These it is who shall have as their reward forgiveness from the Sustainer, and gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide; and how excellent a reward for those who labor! (Qur'an 3:133-136, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 25).

Within the Islamic faith, Allah is the ultimate forgiver. In order to be forgiven by Allah, Muslims must forgive others to the same degree that they wish to be forgiven (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000). Furthermore, forgiveness is believed by many Islamic scholars to be the way to become "more virtuous and nearer to God" (Hathout, 1997, p. 28).

Interpersonal Forgiveness

Judaism. The Torah states that Jews are to be "walking in all His (God's) ways" (NRSV, Deuteronomy 11:22). Consequently, they have a duty to forgive one another. Israel is seen as having a special covenant with God, with terms that are outlined in the Hebrew Bible. These duties obligate the Israelites to forgive others (Leviticus 19:18). The Mishnah Yoma 8:9 reflects this duty, "for sins between an individual and God, Yom

Kippur can effect atonement; however, if a person has hurt another person, atonement is not possible until forgiveness of the wronged party has been sought” (Einstein & Kukoff, 1989, p.32).

Christianity. Similarly, Christians are encouraged to “forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you” (NRSV, Colossians 3:13). Christ states in the New Testament: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (NRSV, Matthew 6:14-15). A parallel view is also expressed in the Gospel of Mark: “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses” (NRSV, 11:25). Christian theology stresses the need to be forgiven from both fellow humanity and from God. Granting forgiveness to others is a way to become closer to the Kingdom of God (Mackintosh, 1927).

Islam. The Qur’an also teaches forgiveness toward each other. An example found within the Qur’an is “But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives – this, behold, is indeed something to set one’s heart upon” (42:43, as cited in Rye et. al., 2000, p. 26). Another example found in the Qur’an involves forgiveness within the context of family situations, “O you who believe! Behold among your spouses and your children are enemies unto you: so beware of them! But if you pardon [their faults], and forbear, and forgive – then, behold, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (64:14, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 26). McCullough and Worthington (in press) note the Qur’an holds that Muslims are to forgive others to the degree that they wish to be forgiven by others.

Role Models for Forgiveness

Judaism. There are many role models of forgiveness within the Torah. The most notable of these models is God. As noted earlier, the Israelite God continually forgave His people for their numerous transgressions. Joseph provides another model of forgiveness by forgiving his brothers for selling him into slavery (Genesis 37:36). King David was also a model of forgiveness within the Torah. In 1 Samuel 25:28, King David's maidservant, Abigail, slights her husband, Nabal. She does not attempt to atone for wronging him. Nevertheless, King David forgave her transgression.

The Hebrew Bible is also full of examples of individuals seeking forgiveness on the behalf of others. Gladson (1992) highlights the following examples. Abraham interceded on the behalf of the sinful city of Sodom (Genesis 18:23-33), and Moses pleaded with God to spare the Israelites who lapsed into idolatry (Exodus 32:11-14, 31-34). Other examples of intercession contained in the Jewish scriptures are Samuel (1 Samuel 7:8-11), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 14:19-15:2), and Joab (1 Samuel 14).

Christianity. Christians see Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the perfect model of forgiveness for humanity. His compassion for humanity and forgiving nature can be seen at the time of His death. Christ stated to His executioners while upon the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (NRSV Luke 23:34). Jesus also forgave a sinful woman's transgressions in Luke 7:47-48. The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is an example of a father forgiving his neglectful son. This parable will be discussed in the next section that deals with conditions of forgiveness.

Another model of forgiveness within Christian theology is the community. Marty (1998) states that “one is called to the Christian community or church to experience forgiveness from God and a consequent awareness and reality of a ‘new creation’ or ‘the new being.’ The consequence of this experience is that the divine version somehow inspires forgiveness among humans” (p. 11). Cunningham (1985) states “the church is the forgiven community and the forgiving community” (p. 142).

Islam. The Prophet Muhammad provided a role model of forgiveness to Muslims as outlined in the Qur’an and Hadith. The Prophet lived in Makkah (Mecca), which was a largely polytheistic society during his time. Muhammad’s concept of a single, All-Powerful God was a significant departure from the prevailing polytheistic paradigm. His message was not well received, and his family, friends, and followers were persecuted. Many wanted to kill the Prophet, while many of his close companions were killed. After the conquest of Makkah, Muhammad declared “general amnesty for those who did not take up arms against him during his entry in Makkah” (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 27). Haykal writes:

No alienation, antagonism, or hostility could find any permanent abode in his heart. His heart was absolutely free of injustice, of malice, of tyranny or false pride. In the most decisive moment, God gave him power over his enemy. But Muhammad chose to forgive, thereby giving to all mankind and all the generations the most perfect example of goodness, of truthfulness, of nobility and magnanimity (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 27).

Muhammad explicitly encouraged forgiveness. Oqbah Ibn ‘Amer reported “you shall keep relationship with one who cut it off from you, you shall give one who disappointed

you, and you shall pardon one who oppressed you” (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 26).

Conditions for Forgiveness

Judaism. Once an individual offends another, the victim “must do everything possible to forgive the transgressor once the transgressor has gone through the process of return” (Dorff, 1998, p. 46). This process is called *Teshuvah*, and was outlined by the Jewish Rabbi Moses Maimonides (1140-1204) in his book, *Law of Forgiveness* (Dorff, 1998). *Teshuvah* involves acknowledging the wrongdoing and then making a public expression of remorse (to both God and the community). The perpetrator must also announce that they will not sin in this fashion again. The offender then must offer compensation to the victim, and sincerely ask for forgiveness. The offender is to avoid the situations in which the offense occurred, and act differently when confronted with the situation again (Dorff, 1998). Once the individual has gone through the process of return, it becomes the duty of the victim to grant forgiveness (Dorff, 1998). Nevertheless, for less serious offenses, this process may not be needed. The victim may choose to forgive so that they can move on in their life. Dorff adds that, in Judaism, “free” forgiveness is not looked upon favorably, and the process of return is the preferred method of attaining forgiveness (as cited in Rye et al., 2000). Interestingly, if the offended party does not grant forgiveness after the offender has completed *Teshuva*, the offended party has committed an offense that is equivalent to the initial wrong (Newman, 1987). Newman adds that the duty to seek forgiveness is unconditional, while the duty to grant forgiveness is “conditional upon the offenders having fulfilled his or her prior duty” (p.

165). It is a religious duty for Jews to forgive upon sincere repentance by the offender (Enright et al., 1992; Neusner, 1997; Newman 1987).

Christianity. Christ's decision to forgive his executioners, demonstrates that forgiveness does not require repentance by the offender. Many passages in the New Testament support this notion (e.g., Colossians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 2:7; Mark 11:25; Luke 15:11-32). The clearest example comes from Luke 15:11-32, the Parable of the Prodigal Son. This parable tells the story of a son who wastes his share of his father's inheritance. The son moves away until he spends all of the money. He then returns home to his father in need of food. Before the young man had a chance to say anything, "his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him" (NRSV, Luke 15:20). The father had already forgiven the son before he had a chance to repent for his past wrongdoing. Another example comes from the Gospel of Matthew, "Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but I tell you, seven-seven times'" (NRSV Matthew 18:21-22). This passage suggests that forgiveness should be a way of life. Jesus says nothing about the offender having to repent in order to forgive. The executioners in Luke 23:24 never repented when Jesus asks God to forgive them. However, there are some Christian authorities that believe that forgiveness requires repentance. The support for this view comes from Luke 17:3, which states "Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive" (NRSV). This alternative view ignores much of the evidence within the New Testament that suggests repentance is not required for forgiveness. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, God is the

ultimate forgiver and Christians are instructed to emulate Him. Therefore, Christians are encouraged to forgive unconditionally.

Islam. If one wishes to be forgiven, they must learn to forgive others. Islam takes a middle path between revenge and forgiveness (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000).

Revenge is allowed only to the equivalent level of personal harm that the victim incurred.

Nevertheless, forgiveness is the preferred choice for several reasons. Forgiving

“improves relations with people by bringing good reputation and respect” (Ali, as cited in

Rye et al., 2000, p. 31). Ali points out that when an offender repents, “it will bring a

better bond between the two parties” (as cited in Rye et al., 2000, p. 34). He goes on to

add that forgiveness does not always require repentance when dealing with humanity, but

when dealing with Allah, repentance is always required (Ali, as cited in Rye et al., 2000).

Similarities and Differences Between Traditions

Perspectives on forgiveness across monotheistic traditions are similar in many ways. First, all three traditions highly value forgiveness. Second, these traditions all portray God as having a forgiving nature. Third, the sacred texts of each tradition (e.g. Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Qur’an, and Hadith) contain role models, as well as divine commands to forgive. Fourth, forgiveness from God depends on one’s willingness to forgive others.

Several important differences exist with respect to how the monotheistic traditions conceptualize forgiveness. Most notably, the conditions for forgiveness differ between various traditions. In Judaism, the offender must go through the process of return (*Teshuvah*) in order to obtain forgiveness. Forgiveness is not generally encouraged if the offender has not yet taken this step. After the offender goes through this process three

times, it becomes the duty of the victim to forgive. In Christianity, forgiveness is generally seen as unconditional. Islam takes a slightly different approach to forgiveness. Although forgiveness is highly valued and preferred, it is not the only acceptable option. Muslims can forgive if they choose, or can seek revenge that is equal to the wrong that they incurred. Understanding similarities and differences with respect to how these religions view forgiveness is especially important for clinicians who are working with religious clients who wish to forgive.

Forgiveness and Coping

Forgiveness can be conceptualized as a method of coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). The terms “constantly changing” and “specific demands” reflect the process-oriented nature of the definition.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) make a distinction between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is aimed at alleviating the environmental stressor (both internally and externally). It is an effort “directed at defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, weighing the alternatives in terms of costs and benefits, choosing among them, and acting” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 152). In contrast, emotion-focused coping involves “regulating the emotional response to the problem” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.179).

Forgiveness can be viewed as both a problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategy. Forgiveness is a problem-focused strategy because it increases the

range of response options available for individuals who have been wronged. Certain responses to wrongdoing, such as ruminating about the offense, seeking to obtain revenge, and avoiding locations that remind the victim of the offense, may contribute to adjustment difficulties. In theory, forgiveness is a response that may minimize disruption in one's life following an offense.

Forgiveness can also be viewed as an emotion-focused coping strategy. An individual who has been wronged may feel powerless because he/she is unable to change the circumstances of the wrongdoing. However, victims of wrongdoing can seek to change their emotional response to the event. Frequently, individuals who have been wronged experience feelings of anger and hostility toward the offender. Such feelings can be adaptive initially as they may serve to motivate victims to protect themselves from being wronged in the future (Davenport, 1991; Novaco, 1976). However, feelings of anger and hostility can also be maladaptive. For example, studies have shown that hostility is related to physical problems such as heart disease (e.g. Dembroski, MacDougall, & Williams, 1985).

Pargament (1997) provides another important framework to examine coping. He posits that coping is "a search for significance in times of stress" (Pargament, 1997, p. 90). Objects of significance can be anything that the individual values. These objects may be material, physical, psychological, social, and/or spiritual (Pargament, 1997). Objects of significance are not always beneficial. Indeed, objects of significance can be harmful (e.g. substance abuse). According to Pargament (1997), the most effective coping "will result in the greatest gain to significance at the least cost" (p. 90).

Pargament (1997) notes that coping involves either the conservation or transformation of objects of significance. Our initial tendency is to conserve objects of significance (Pargament, 1997). Pargament (1997) writes “much of coping can be characterized by the effort to maintain and preserve significance” (p. 109). Sometimes individuals hold on to prior notions of significance, regardless of the consequences. For example, anger may become an object of significance for individuals who have been wronged. As mentioned earlier, anger can be adaptive. However, some individuals who have been wronged organize their lives around the central idea that they are the victim and have the right to seek revenge against the offenders. This could be maladaptive, particularly if it begins to interfere with other important personal goals.

Coping can also be transformational in nature. Transformational coping attempts “to change the character of significance itself- to relinquish old values, to discover new ones, and to build a life around this new center” (Pargament, 1997, p. 110). Once conservation is no longer helpful, transformation becomes necessary. For example, victims of wrongdoing may find that bitterness and hostility toward an offender actually prolongs the negative consequences that result from the past wrong. In theory, forgiveness may facilitate healing by transforming their previous object of significance (i.e. anger toward the offender) into a new object of significance (e.g. seeking peace). Thus, forgiveness can be conceptualized as a transformational form of coping.

Forgiveness and Mental Health Outcomes

Within the past 15 years, there has been a growing body of empirical literature examining the relationship between forgiveness and mental health. First, studies

examining the relationship between forgiveness and mental health will be described. This will be followed by a description of studies examining the role of religion in forgiveness.

Outcome Studies on Forgiveness

Hebl and Enright (1993) examined the effectiveness of a forgiveness intervention with elderly females ($N=24$) who had been wronged. Participants were randomly assigned to either a group forgiveness intervention, or to a control group. The forgiveness group consisted of a 1-hour intervention for 8 weeks. The control group focused on topics generated by the participants. Participants completed a battery of questionnaires measuring anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and forgiveness. The results showed that both the experimental and control groups decreased on reported anxiety and depression.

Al-Mabuk, Enright, and Cardis (1995) evaluated a forgiveness intervention for college students who had experienced parental love deprivation through a two part study. In study 1, participants ($N= 48$) were placed into one of two programs: forgiveness education or human relations education. The participants were administered a battery of questionnaires that measured forgiveness, anxiety, depression, hope, self-esteem and their view of their parents. Participants in the forgiveness education group reported higher levels of hope and willingness to forgive over those in the human relations group. Nevertheless, no differences were found in the forgiveness of their parents, as measured by the Psychological Profile of Forgiveness.

In the second study, Al-Mabuk, Enright, and Cardis (1995) used a more thorough intervention, which included more sessions and a greater emphasis on the forgiveness

process. Participants ($N=45$) were administered the same questionnaires as the first study. Al-Mabuk et al. (1995) found that the majority of the dependent measures favored the forgiveness education group (e.g. Willingness-to-Forgive Scale, Beck Depression Inventory, and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory). There were no significant differences between groups concerning anxiety and depression. Both studies found that higher levels of self-reported forgiveness (regardless of group) were associated with less anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem, and better view of parents.

McCullough and Worthington (1995) studied the effects of two psycho-educational forgiveness interventions. Participants ($N=86$) were assigned to one of two intervention conditions or a wait-list control group. The first intervention used a self-enhancement approach toward forgiveness, which emphasized the benefits for the self (victim). The second intervention used an interpersonal approach, which focused on how forgiveness may benefit relations with others. The Wade Forgiveness Scale was administered at pretest, posttest, and a 6-week follow-up. The forgiveness group consisted of an hour-long intervention. A wait-list control group was used in which to compare the two interventions. Results showed that intervention participants reported less desire for revenge, and a more positive attitude toward the offender. These individuals were also more likely to seek reconciliation than the control group. Those in the self-enhanced group reported less feeling for revenge, and more conciliatory thoughts and behaviors over those in the interpersonal group.

Freedman and Enright (1996) examined the efficacy of a forgiveness intervention program for incest survivors. The study used 12 adult women that were victims of sexual abuse from a male relative. The subjects were randomly assigned to either an

experimental or a wait-list control group. The intervention participants received weekly therapy sessions. The length of the intervention varied depending on the participant (average length of treatment was 14.3 months). Participants completed a battery of questionnaires prior to intervention, and at several posttests. The questionnaires assessed anxiety, depression, hope, self-esteem, and forgiveness. The results showed that the experimental group had higher levels of forgiveness, hope, and self-esteem as compared to wait-list control. The experimental group also reported lower levels of anxiety and depression. These findings were maintained at the one-year follow-up.

Coyle and Enright (1997) evaluated a forgiveness intervention with men that were hurt by their partner's decision to have an abortion. Participants ($N=10$) were randomly assigned to either a forgiveness intervention group or a control condition. The forgiveness intervention consisted of 12 weekly sessions, lasting 90-minutes each. Measures of mental health were administered prior to the intervention, after the intervention, and at 12-week follow-up. Results showed that compared to control participants, intervention participants showed more forgiveness, less anxiety, anger, and grief. The results also showed that those who had experienced the forgiveness group had greater increase in forgiveness than those in the control group. These findings were maintained at the 12-week follow-up.

Rye and Pargament (2000) examined the effects of two forgiveness therapy groups on college women who were wronged in a romantic relationship. Participants ($N=58$) were recruited from university psychology classes. They were randomly assigned into either a secular, religiously integrated, or no treatment group. The two intervention groups were designed to promote forgiveness. Data were collected at pretest, posttest,

and at a six-week follow-up. The results showed that participants in both interventions improved on measures of forgiveness, and existential well-being. These findings were maintained at six-week follow-up.

Taken together, these studies provide support that forgiveness can lead to better mental health benefits. These studies have shown forgiveness may lead to improved hope (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996), improved self-esteem (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996), improved sense of well-being (Rye & Pargament, 2000), decreased depression (Hebl & Enright, 1993; Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996), decreased anxiety (Hebl & Enright, 1993; Freedman & Enright, 1996), decreased grief (Coyle & Enright, 1997) and decreased feelings for revenge (McCullough & Worthington, 1995).

Role of Religion in Forgiveness

Rokeach (1973) conducted one of the first studies to examine the role of religion in forgiveness using a national sample of college students and adults. Instruments included self-reported religiousness, the Religious Orientation Inventory (ROI), and the Rokeach Value Survey. The results showed that those higher in church attendance, self-reported religiousness, and intrinsic religiousness, rated the value of forgiving as higher than those who attended church less frequently, considered themselves less religious, or were extrinsically religious.

Shoemaker and Bolt (1977) looked at ideal religious values. Participants ($N=51$) were Christian students that were instructed to rank values on the Rokeach (1967) Value Survey. The authors found that among the instrumental values, forgiveness was rated second, only to loving, as an idealized value among religious individuals.

Poloma and Gallup (1991) also examined the relationship between religion and forgiveness. They used a variety of measures to assess religious involvement (e.g. value of religion, church membership, church attendance, feeling of closeness to God, and several measures of prayer) with a national sample of 1,030 participants. They found that religious involvement was related to people's attitudes about forgiveness. They also found that the measures of religiousness were related to the subjects' self-reported tendencies to forgive others when harmed. A negative correlation was found between self-reported tendencies to act in a negative way (e.g. revenge, etc.) following wrongdoing and the measures of religiousness. Forgiving was also related to life satisfaction.

Similarly, Gorsuch and Hao (1993) looked at the relationship between forgiveness and religion. They used a similar population as Poloma and Gallup (1991), and administered questions regarding forgiveness. They found that those who considered themselves more religious reported more motivation to forgive than those who were considered less religious. The study also reported that Protestants were more likely to endorse more religious responses than Catholics, Jews, and participants indicating no/other religion. Protestants were also more likely to endorse proactive forgiving responses over those that were Catholic, Jewish, or have no religious background.

Taken together, these studies show that individuals who are religious tend to value forgiveness more. Gorsuch and Hao (1993) also found some differences with respect to the endorsement of forgiveness across specific religious traditions. However, more research is needed to better understand differences in the conceptualization and practice of forgiveness across monotheistic religions.

Present Study

The present study further examined the relationship between forgiveness and mental health and the role of religion in forgiveness. Originally, participants from the Islamic tradition were going to be included in the sample. However, of the 92 questionnaires distributed to Muslims, only 8 participants completed and returned them. Consequently, Muslim participants were dropped from the sample due to insufficient representation for meaningful analyses. The following questions were addressed: (1) What is the relationship between forgiveness and mental health (e.g. anger, hope, depression, and spiritual well-being)? It was hypothesized that forgiveness would be associated with better mental health (e.g. lower depression, lower anger, increased hope, and increased spiritual well-being). (2) How does religious affiliation affect the practice of forgiveness? It was hypothesized that Christian participants would be more likely than their Jewish counterparts to forgive a specific offender and forgive across situations. This hypothesis was based on the respective theological traditions. Jewish individuals are more likely to place conditions on forgiveness than Christian individuals, and thus might be less likely to forgive indiscriminately. (3) How does religious affiliation affect conceptualization of forgiveness? It was hypothesized that many similarities would emerge with respect to how forgiveness is viewed in various religious traditions. The differences that emerge should correspond with the conceptualizations as outlined by religious scholars. Specifically, it was hypothesized that Jewish participants would be more likely to endorse forgiveness only after the offender expressed remorse. In contrast, it was hypothesized Christian participants would be more likely to forgive unconditionally.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

Participants ($N=90$) were recruited from several midwestern synagogues and churches. As shown in Table 1, participants' religious affiliations included Jewish ($N=32$) and Christian (Catholic $N=30$, Protestant $N=28$) faiths. Among Jewish participants, 69% identified themselves as Reform, 22% as Conservative, 6% as Orthodox, and 3% did not indicate a specific denomination. The Christian sample consisted of both Catholics and Protestants. Among Protestants participants, 55% indicated they were Baptist and the other 45% indicated they were Methodist. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 80 ($M=46.7$, $SD=15.5$). The majority of the participants were female (62%) and Caucasian (99%). Education among the participants varied. Most indicated that they had some form of college degree (72%), with 26% having a graduate degree, 32% having a bachelors degree, and 14% having an associates degree.

Participants were instructed to think of a situation in which they had been wronged. Participants who indicated they had not been wronged were dropped from subsequent analyses. Types of wrongdoing reported by participants were classified into the following nine categories (see Table 2): mistreatment by a friend or family member (50%), gossip/wrongful accusation (19%), verbal/emotional abuse (16%), lying (10%),

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Religious Groups

Variable	CHRISTIAN (N=58)				JEWISH (N=32)				TOTAL (N=90)						
	Catholic (N=30)		Protestant (N=28)		Total Christians		Jewish		TOTAL						
	N (%)	Mean	SD	N (%)	Mean	SD	N (%)	Mean	SD	N (%)	Mean	SD			
Age	29 (33)	41.28	14.49	28 (31)	42.61	13.95	57 (64)	41.93	14.12	32 (36)	55.13	14.38	89(100)	46.67	15.50
Gender															
Male	13 (14)			7 (8)			20 (22)			14 (16)			34 (38)		
Female	17 (19)			21 (23)			38 (42)			18 (20)			56 (62)		
Race															
American Indian	--			--			--			--			--		
Asian	--			--			--			--			--		
African-American	--			--			--			--			--		
Latino	--			--			--			--			--		
Caucasian	30 (33)			28 (31)			58 (64)			31 (34)			88 (99)		
Other	--			--			--			1 (1)			1 (1)		
Education															
Graduate Degree	6 (7)			4 (4)			10 (11)			13 (14)			23 (26)		
Bachelors Degree	9 (10)			13 (14)			22 (24)			7 (8)			29 (32)		
Associates Degree	4 (4)			6 (7)			10 (11)			3 (3)			13 (14)		
High School Diploma	11 (12)			5 (6)			16 (18)			9 (10)			25 (28)		
No High School Diploma	--			--			--			--			--		
How long ago did Mistreatment occur?															
0-4 weeks ago	--			--			--			4 (4)			4 (4)		
1-2 months ago	--			1 (1)			1 (1)			1 (1)			2 (2)		
3-6 months ago	2 (2)			1 (1)			3 (3)			1 (1)			4 (4)		
7-12 months ago	--			4 (4)			4 (4)			3 (3)			7 (8)		
1-2 years ago	1 (1)			2 (2)			3 (3)			5 (6)			8 (9)		
3-4 years ago	5 (6)			3 (3)			8 (9)			5 (6)			13 (15)		
more than 4 years ago	21 (24)			17 (20)			38 (44)			11 (13)			49 (55)		
missing	1 (1)			--			1 (1)			2 (2)			3 (3)		

TABLE 2

Nature of Wrongdoing By Religious Groups

Nature of Wrongdoing	Christian		Jews	Total
	Catholic (N = 30)	Protestant (N = 28)	Total (N = 58)	(N = 90)
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Infidelity	0 (0)	3 (11)	3 (5)	5 (6)
Lying	2 (7)	4 (14)	6 (10)	9 (10)
Verbal/ Emotional Abuse	3 (10)	7 (25)	10 (17)	14 (16)
Physical Abuse	3 (10)	1 (4)	4 (7)	5 (6)
Rape/ Sexual Assault	3 (10)	3 (11)	6 (10)	6 (7)
Gossip/Wrongful Accusation	3 (10)	6 (21)	9 (16)	17 (19)
Mistreatment by a Friend or Family Member	15 (50)	17 (61)	32 (55)	45 (50)
Miscellaneous	5 (17)	2 (7)	7 (12)	14 (16)
No answer/no comment	2 (7)	0 (0)	2 (3)	3 (3)

Note. Many participants indicated that they had been wronged in more than one way. As a result, the percentages add up to more than 100.

rape/sexual assault (7%), physical abuse (6%), infidelity (6%), miscellaneous (16%), and no answer/no comment (3%). The percentages add to more than 100 due to participants indicating multiple forms of wrongdoing. Most participants (55%) reported that they were mistreated over four years ago (see Table 1). Other responses included: 0-4 weeks ago (4%), 1-2 months ago (2%), 3-6 months ago (4%), 7-12 months ago (8%), 1-2 years ago (9%), and 3-4 years ago (15%). Three participants did not indicate when they had been wronged (3%).

Measures

Participants eligible for the study were given a battery of questionnaires that addressed demographic/background information, religiousness (Hoge Intrinsic Religiousness Scale), forgiveness (Forgiveness Scale and Forgiveness Likelihood Scale), and mental health (State-Trait Anger Inventory, Hope Scale, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, Spiritual Well-Being). The measures are briefly described below.

Demographic/Background Information

Participants completed basic demographic information about age, gender, race, educational level, and religious affiliation (Appendix A). This information was used to describe the sample and to determine what demographic differences exist in this sample across religious groups.

Religiousness

Intrinsic Religiousness. Religiousness was assessed using the Hoge Intrinsic Religiousness Motivation Scale (Hoge, 1972; Appendix B). This questionnaire has 10 Likert-type scale items with possible responses varying between 1 (Strongly agree) to 5

(Strongly disagree). Sample questions include “My faith involves all of my life,” and “Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how.” This measure was found to have adequate psychometric properties (Hoge, 1972). The internal consistency of the scale was reported to be .90 (Hoge, 1972). The scale was correlated with several other measures. For example, the Feagin Intrinsic Scale was correlated with the Intrinsic Religiousness Motivation Scale at .852, while the correlation with the Allport-Ross Total Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale was .874. Cronbach’s Alpha was found to be .90 in this study.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness Scale. Forgiveness will be assessed using the Forgiveness Scale (Rye, et al., 2000; Appendix C). This scale consists of 15 Likert-type items, with possible responses ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Sample questions from this survey are “I can’t stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person,” and “I have compassion for the person who wronged me.” A factor analysis revealed a two-factor solution: Absence of Negative and Presence of Positive (Rye, et al., 2000). The test-retest correlation for both scales over an average of fifteen days was .76. Cronbach’s Alpha for the Absence of Negative scale is .85, while the Presence of Positive scale has an Alpha value of .86. Both scales were significantly correlated with the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (Absence of Negative, $r = .52$; Presence of Positive, $r = .75$). The Forgiveness Scale was also correlated with spiritual well-being (Absence of Negative, $r = .40$; Presence of Positive, $r = .21$), hope (Absence of Negative, $r = .35$; Presence of Positive, $r = .11$), state anger (Absence of Negative, $r = -.41$; Presence of Positive, $r = -.13$) and trait anger (Absence of Negative, $r = -.21$; Presence of Positive, $r = -$

.21). In this study, the Absence of Negative Scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of .84 and the Presence of Positive Scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of .86.

Forgiveness Likelihood Scale. The tendency to forgive across situations was assessed through the Forgiveness Likelihood Scale (Rye, et al., 2000; Appendix D). The scale contains 10 Likert-type items on which participants are asked to respond to hypothetical situations involving wrongdoing. The responses range from 1 (Not at all likely) to 5 (Extremely likely). Sample questions are "Your significant other has a 'one night stand' and becomes sexually involved with someone else. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive this person?" and "You accept someone's offer to attend a formal dance. However, this person breaks their commitment to take you and goes to the event with someone who they find more attractive. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive this person?" A factor analysis was performed and found that a one-factor solution was the most appropriate (Rye, et al., 2000). Cronbach's Alpha is .85, with test-retest reliability (about 15 days) at .81. The Forgiveness Likelihood Scale was significantly correlated with the Enright Forgiveness Inventory ($r = .25$), trait anger ($r = .31$), and religious well-being ($r = .23$). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .92.

Forgiveness Knowledge. The Forgiveness Concept Survey was used to assess the knowledge of forgiveness (Rye, 1998; Appendix E). The scale consists of ten Likert-type scale items, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Sample items include, "Forgiveness involves forgetting about how you were wronged," and "Forgiveness involves suppressing the fact that you are angry." The "correct" answers are based on theoretical considerations as outlined by several forgiveness

researchers. Cronbach alphas measured at several points in time ranged from .55 to .88 (Rye, 1998). Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .63 in this study.

Mental Health

Anger. The State-Trait Anger Inventory was used to assess anger (Spielberger, Jacob, Russell, and Crae, 1983; Appendix F). This measure consists of two subscales measuring state anger and trait anger. Each sub-scale consists of 10 Likert-type items. The state anger responses vary between 1 (Not at all) to 4 (Very much so). Sample questions from this subscale include "I am mad," and "I feel like yelling at somebody." Responses on the trait anger scale range from 1 (Almost never) to 4 (Almost always). Sample questions for this portion of the scale are "I have a fiery temper," and "When I get frustrated, I feel like hitting someone." The internal consistency for the state anger scale ranged between .88 and .95, and for the trait scale the range was .81 to .92 (Spielberger et al., 1983). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha for the State anger scale was .93 and for the Trait scale was .83.

Hope. Hopefulness was assessed by the Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1991; Appendix G). This measure consists of 12 Likert-type items, with possible responses ranging from 1 (Definitely false) to 4 (Definitely true). Sample questions from this measure are "There are lots of ways around any problem," and "I usually find myself worrying about something." The internal consistency of the Hope Scale ranged from .74 to .84, with a slight variation between the Agency Scale ($r = .71$ to $.76$) and the Pathways Scale ($r = .63$ to $.80$). The test-retest reliability was .85 at the 3-week interval, which was higher than the 8-week ($r = .73$) and the 10 week ($r = .76$ and $.82$) intervals. The Hope Scale was correlated with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($r = .58$), the Beck

Hopelessness Scale ($r = -.51$), and the Beck Depression Inventory ($r = -.42$). Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .76 in this study.

Depression. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D Scale) was used to measure depression (Radlof, 1977; Appendix H). This survey consists of 20 Likert-type items, with responses ranging from 1 (Rarely or none of the time- >1 day) to 4 (Most or all of the time- 5-7 days). Sample questions include, "I felt that everything I did was an effort," and "I could not get 'going.'" The internal consistency was found to be .85 for the general population, and .90 for psychiatric patients. The test-retest reliability ranged from .45 to .70 for all but one variable over a two to eight week intervals. The CES-D was correlated highest with the Bradburn Negative Affect ($r = .55$ to .63), the Bradburn Balance ($r = .61$ to .72), and Lubin ($r = .43$ to .70). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was found to be .69.

Spiritual Well-Being. Spiritual well-being was measured using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Ellison, 1983; Appendix I). This questionnaire consists of 20 Likert-type items, which range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree). The questionnaire contains an Existential Well-Being subscale and a Religious Well-Being subscale. Sample items from the Existential Well-Being survey include, "Life doesn't have much meaning," and "I believe there is some real purpose for my life." Sample items from the Religious Well-Being subscale include, "I believe that God is concerned about my problems," and "I have a personally meaningful relationship with God." Cronbach's Alphas have been reported as .89 for the total scale, .96 for Religious Well-being, and .86 for the Existential Well-Being scales. In a review of the literature, Bufford, Paloutzian, and Ellison, (1991) found that the test-retest reliability for the

Spiritual Well-Being Scale was above .85. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale has been found to be correlated with physical, psychological, and interpersonal well-being, as well as other measures of religiousness (Ellison, 1983). Cronbach's Alpha for the Spiritual Well-Being Scale was found to be .91 in this study. More specifically, the Religious Well-Being Scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of .93 and the Existential Well-Being Scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of .80.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from several Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio synagogues and churches. These institutions were identified through personal contacts of the experimenter and by looking through the phonebook. Members of the clergy were initially contacted by phone and, after a brief explanation of the study, were asked if they would be willing to distribute questionnaires to members of their organization. Questionnaires were delivered to clergy either in person or through the mail. The clergy then distributed the questionnaire to members of their congregations. Participants were provided with a cover letter (see Appendix J). Members were instructed to fill out the questionnaire and return it either to their clergy leader or mail it directly to the experimenter.

Each questionnaire was assigned a research code in order to preserve confidentiality and to identify to which organization participants belonged. Additionally, participants were randomly assigned to complete one of two versions of the questionnaire. The questionnaires differed only on the ordering of the questions. In the first ordering block, participants completed the forgiveness questions first, while in the second ordering block, participants completed the mental health questions first.

Individuals were eligible for participation if they met the following three criteria: 1) affiliated with Judaism or Christianity, 2) were at least 18 years of age, and 3) had experienced some form of wrongdoing. Of the 345 questionnaires distributed, 98 (28%) were returned. Thirty-four were returned from Jews (35%) and 64 from Christians (65%). Questionnaires from eight participants were dropped from the analyses because they indicated they had never been wronged. Therefore, a total of 90 participants were included in the final sample.

At the end of the study, clergy members were provided with copies of the study debriefing (see Appendix K) and asked to distribute them to the study participants. The debriefing letter explained the purpose of the study. In addition, the letter reminded participants about seeking professional help if they experienced any difficulties when thinking about being wronged.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The results will be presented as follows. First, preliminary analyses will be presented. Specifically, demographic and religiousness variables will be compared across religious groups. Additionally, correlations between demographic and religiousness variables and forgiveness measures will be computed. Next, the results from major study questions will be presented. First, the relationship between forgiveness and mental health will be examined. Second, comparisons of forgiveness toward an offender across religious groups will be examined. Third, comparisons of conceptualization of forgiveness across religious groups will be discussed. Additional analyses will also be presented examining correlations between all mental health measures, all forgiveness measures, and comparisons of forgiveness across gender.

Preliminary Analyses

Comparisons of demographic and religiousness variables across Christian and Jewish participants. T-tests were computed on continuous demographic and religiousness variables (age, intrinsic religiousness, religious activity, days per month), while chi-squares were computed on categorical demographic variables (sex, race, education, time since wrongdoing) to determine if there were any significant differences between Jewish and Christian participants. Several significant differences were found

between the two conditions. As Table 3 shows, Jewish participants were significantly older than the Christian participants ($t = 4.20, p < .01$). Christian participants also scored higher on intrinsic religiousness than Jewish participants ($t = -8.72, p < .001$). Finally, Christian participants spent significantly more days engaging in religious activities per month than Jewish participants ($t = -2.88, p < .05$). No significant differences were found between any of the categorical variables. Consequently, age, intrinsic religiousness, number of days per month engaged in religious activities were used as covariates in subsequent analyses.

Correlations between demographic variables and forgiveness measures.

Correlations were computed between demographic variables and forgiveness measures.

As Table 4 demonstrates, several of the variables were significantly correlated. Younger participants were more likely to forgive across hypothetical situations ($r = -.374$).

Intrinsic religiousness was correlated with experiencing positive feelings toward the offender ($r = .495$) and the likelihood to forgive across hypothetical situations ($r = .609$).

The number of days spent per month in religious activity was significantly correlated with experiencing positive feelings toward the offender ($r = .248$). Religious activity was not significantly correlated with any of the forgiveness measures. Consequently, the effects of age, intrinsic religiousness, and the number of days per month engaged in religious activities were controlled for in subsequent analyses.

Analyses of Major Study Questions

Partial correlations between mental health measures and forgiveness measures with the effects of demographics and religiousness removed. As mentioned earlier, age,

TABLE 3

T-Tests Comparing Demographic and Religiousness Variables Between Two Religious Groups.

	Christian (N=58)	Jewish (N=32)	t Value
Age	41.93	55.13	4.20**
Intrinsic Religiousness	43.20	30.11	-8.72***
Religious Activity	3.63	3.47	-1.32
Days Per Month	9.58	6.17	-2.88*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4

Correlations between Forgiveness Measures and Continuous Demographic Variables.

	Age	Intrinsic Religious Religiousness	Religious Activity	Days per Month
Forgiveness (AN)	.205	.135	.101	.061
Forgiveness (PP)	-.119	.495***	.076	.248*
Forgiveness Likelihood	-.374***	.609***	.151	.142

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

intrinsic religiousness, and number of days engaged in religious activities per month were significantly correlated with the forgiveness measures. Thus, the effects of these variables were controlled for when computing partial correlations between mental health and forgiveness measures. Several measures were significantly correlated (see Table 5). The Absence of Negative subscale was significantly correlated with state anger ($r = -.300$), depression ($r = -.288$), existential well-being ($r = .440$), and religious well-being ($r = .251$). Experiencing positive feelings toward the perpetrator was significantly related to less state anger ($r = -.283$) and existential well-being ($r = .220$). There were no significant correlations between the Forgiveness Likelihood measure and mental health measures.

Comparison of forgiveness measures across two religious groups using demographics and religiousness as covariates. ANCOVAs were computed on forgiveness measures using age, intrinsic religiousness, and the number of days engaged in religious activities per month as covariates to determine if there were any significant differences between Jewish and Christian participants. Table 6 shows that no significant differences were found.

Comparison of conceptualization of forgiveness between Christian and Jewish participants using demographics and religiousness as covariates. Separate ANCOVAs were performed on each item of the Forgiveness Concept Scale to determine if there were any differences between Jewish and Christian conceptualizations of forgiveness using age, intrinsic religiousness, and number of days per month engaged in religious activities as covariates. The results are presented in Table 7. Jewish participants were significantly more likely to disagree on question 2 (When a victim of crime forgives his or her offender, there is no longer reason to prosecute the offender in a court of law) than

TABLE 5

Partial Correlations Between Mental Health Measures and Forgiveness Measures with the Effects of Demographics and Religiousness Removed.

	Forgiveness (AN)	Forgiveness (PP)	Forgiveness Likelihood
1. State Anger	-.300**	-.283*	-.181
2. Trait Anger	-.090	-.090	-.161
3. Hope Scale	.206	.022	.009
4. Depression Scale	-.288**	-.044	-.022
5. Existential Well-Being	.440***	.220*	.187
6. Religious Well-Being	.251*	.107	.146

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 6

ANCOVAs Comparing Forgiveness Measures Between Two Religious Groups Using Demographics and Religiousness as Covariates.

	Christian (N=58)	Jewish (N=32)	F Value
Forgiveness (AN)	41.71	41.14	.075
Forgiveness (PP)	17.79	16.45	.947
Forgiveness Likelihood	30.64	28.02	1.42

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 7

ANCOVA Results Comparing Means of Specific Items on the Forgiveness Concept Survey Between Jewish and Christian Participants Using Demographics and Religiousness as Covariates.

Item	Christian (N= 58)	Jewish (N= 32)	F Value
Forgiveness involves forgetting about how you were wronged.	3.19	3.95	3.07
When a victim of crime forgives his/her offender, there is no longer reason to prosecute the offender in a court of law.	4.26	4.72	4.54*
If we have truly forgiven a person who has hurt us, we should always seek to establish (or reestablish) a relationship with him/her.	3.23	3.52	.68
In order to forgive, we must be willing to overlook how we've been hurt.	3.07	3.46	.85
Forgiveness involves suppressing the fact that you are angry.	4.01	4.33	1.36
One should only forgive after the person who hurt you says that he/she is sorry.	4.01	3.07	8.21**
Forgiveness usually occurs at a specific moment in time, after which all feelings of hurt and anger disappear.	4.17	3.89	.82
When someone is mildly annoying us, forgiveness is on possible response.	2.55	2.21	.89
Forgiving others is usually an easy process.	3.82	4.14	.80
One can forgive organizations and institutions.	2.51	2.58	.84

Note. Items were constructed using a Likert-type scale with response possibilities ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

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

Christian participants ($F(1, 86) = 4.54, p < .05$). A follow-up t-test revealed no significant differences when comparing Protestants and Catholics on this question.

Additionally, Jewish participants were significantly more likely to agree on question 6 (One should only forgive after the person who hurt you says that he/she is sorry) than Christian participants ($F(1, 86) = 8.21, p < .01$). A follow-up t-test revealed no significant differences when comparing Protestants and Catholics on this question.

Additional Analyses

Correlations between mental health measures. Correlations were computed between mental health measures. As shown in Table 8, there were several significant correlations between measures in the expected direction. State anger was significantly correlated with Trait anger ($r = .281$). Hope was significantly related to decreased depression ($r = -.339$) and higher levels of existential well-being ($r = .434$). Lower levels of depression were significantly related to increased levels of existential well-being ($r = -.499$) and religious well-being ($r = -.207$). Additionally, religious well-being and existential well-being were significantly related ($r = .504$). None of the other mental health measures were significantly correlated with each other.

Correlations between forgiveness measures. Correlations were computed between forgiveness measures. Table 9 shows that there were significant correlations in the expected direction between forgiveness measures. Forgiveness (AN) was significantly correlated with Forgiveness (PP) ($r = .500$), and Forgiveness Likelihood ($r = .289$). Presence of Positive was significantly correlated with Forgiveness Likelihood ($r = .463$).

TABLE 8

Correlations Between Mental Health Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. State Anger	...					
2. Trait Anger	.281**	...				
3. Hope Scale	-.009	-.117	...			
4. Depression Scale	.105	.194	-.339**	...		
5. Existential Well-Being	-.106	-.165	.434***	-.499***	...	
6. Religious Well-Being	-.086	-.104	.134	-.207*	.504***	...

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 9

Correlations Between Forgiveness Measures

	Forgiveness (AN)	Forgiveness (PP)	Forgiveness Likelihood
1. Forgiveness (AN)	...		
2. Forgiveness (PP)	.500***	...	
3. Forgiveness Likelihood	.289**	.463***	...

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Comparison forgiveness variables across gender. T-tests were computed to determine if there were any differences on forgiveness measures based on gender. As Table 10 shows, no significant group differences were found.

TABLE 10

T-Tests Comparing Forgiveness Variables Across Gender.

	Male (N=34)	Female (N=56)	t Value
Forgiveness (AN)	41.79	40.96	-.571
Forgiveness (PP)	16.27	17.84	1.50
Forgiveness Likelihood	27.97	31.00	1.60

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

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Major Study Questions

Consistent with hypotheses, this study found significant correlations between forgiveness and several measures of mental health after controlling for the effects of demographics and religiousness. To begin, both Forgiveness (AN) and Forgiveness (PP) were negatively correlated with state anger. Similarly, McCullough and Worthington (1995) also found a relationship between forgiveness and absence of negative feelings toward the offender. It is not surprising that forgiveness is negatively correlated with anger, since anger reduction is an essential component of forgiveness.

This study also found a significant negative correlation between Forgiveness (AN) and depression. Other studies have also found a significant relationship between depression and forgiveness (Hebl & Enright, 1993; Al-Mabuk et al., 1995, Freedman & Enright, 1996). It is unclear why forgiveness is related to depression. One possibility is that improved mood is associated with thinking differently about the effects of being wronged. Indeed, one of the characteristics of depressed individuals is their negative explanatory style.

This study also found that Forgiveness (AN) and Forgiveness (PP) were positively correlated with Existential Well-Being. Additionally, Forgiveness (AN) was positively correlated with Religious Well-Being. Other studies have also found significant

relationships between forgiveness and Spiritual Well-Being (Rye et al., 2000; Rye & Pargament, 2000). Forgiveness provides both an emotion focused and problem focused strategy that enhances one's perception of one's coping resources. Additionally, religious well-being may be enhanced because when religious individuals forgive, they experience increased harmony with their religious belief system that encompasses forgiveness. Thus, cognitive dissonance may be reduced.

Contrary to hypotheses, hope and trait anger were not significantly related to forgiveness of the offender or forgiveness across situations. In contrast, other studies have found forgiveness to be related to increased hope (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996). This study failed to replicate those results. One possibility for this is that most participants in this sample were wronged over four years ago. Perhaps significant correlations would have been detected on these measures in a sample that had experienced more recent wrongdoing. As noted earlier, another possibility is that due to the small sample size, there was not enough statistical power to detect significant relationships. Finally, it is possible that no relationship exists between these variables.

The next study question involved examining whether Christian and Jewish participants differed with respect to the practice of forgiveness. Contrary to hypotheses, after controlling for demographics and religiousness, no significant differences were found between Jewish and Christian participants with respect to forgiveness of an offender or forgiveness across situations. To our knowledge, this is the first study to compare Christians and Jews with respect to the practice of forgiveness. The lack of significant differences likely reflect the fact that forgiveness is highly valued by both religious traditions.

The final question examined how religious affiliation affects conceptualization of forgiveness. The findings of this study tend to support the notion that there are some differences in conceptualizations of forgiveness between religions. Specifically, Jewish participants were significantly more likely to disagree with question 2 on the Forgiveness Concept Survey (When a victim of crime forgives his or her offender, there is no longer reason to prosecute the offender in a court of law). Additionally, Jewish participants were more likely to agree with question 6 (One should only forgive after the person who hurt you says that he/she is sorry) than Christian participants. These differences are consistent with theological differences between Christianity and Judaism. Specifically, Christianity teaches unconditional forgiveness. In contrast, as outlined in the law of *Teshuvah*, Judaism requires offenders to go through a series of steps including a public apology, in order to be forgiven by the victim in Judaism. In fact, forgiveness is not encouraged if the offender has not taken these steps (Dorff, as cited in Rye et al., 2000).

Study Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. To begin, the demographic characteristics of the sample are not representative of the general population and thus it is unclear how well the results will generalize. Almost all participants (99%) were Caucasian, and the majority (62%) were female.

Additionally, most participants reported experiencing wrongdoing more than four years ago. Future research should also examine individuals who have been wronged more recently.

Additionally, the denominational affiliations of the participants in the sample are not representative of the denominational affiliations of adherents of Judaism and

Christianity in the general population. For example, most of the Jewish participants identified with the Reform tradition. Absent from the sample was an adequate number of Jewish participants from the Orthodox and Conservative traditions. Thus, it is unclear whether these findings would be replicated with a representative sample. Within the Christian sample, both Catholics and Protestants were represented. However, even among the Protestant participants, individual denominations differ significantly with respect to beliefs and practices. Only participants from the Baptist and Methodist denominations were represented in this study. This illustrates one of the major challenges to conducting research involving comparative religions. Religions are complex and researchers must be careful not to over generalize findings.

Another limitation was that the sample size was relatively small. Thus there may not have been enough statistical power to detect some of the differences that might exist. Further research should focus on larger samples that are more representative of the respective religions.

Additional Issues and Suggestions for Future Research

An important component of this study, examining the practice and conceptualization of forgiveness among Muslim participants, could not be completed due to a low sample size. Obtaining a Muslim sample proved to be a difficult task. Of the 92 questionnaires distributed throughout the Islamic community, only 8 were returned. There are several possible reasons for the low return rate among Muslim participants. It is possible that Muslims are especially sensitive to how their faith is presented in this society. Indeed, the American media has traditionally portrayed Muslims in an unflattering manner. This may raise skepticism about outside attempts to gain

information about this community. Another related concern might have been the author's lack of personal connection with the Islamic community. Muslims may have been more likely to respond if they knew the researcher personally. Additionally, the researcher did not present and explain the questionnaire and purpose of the study directly to participants. In retrospect, this may have helped members of the Islamic community to feel more comfortable in filling out the questionnaire. Recommendations for the future when conducting research with this population is to work harder to establish trust with this community. Additionally, researchers need to be familiar with the Islamic faith and sensitive to issues that affect this community (i.e. media portrayal, religious oppression, etc.).

Many interesting questions still remain. Would the pattern of results be the same using a larger, more representative sample? How does the time since the wrongdoing occurred affect the relationship between forgiveness and mental health? How would the practice and conceptualization of forgiveness by Muslims compare to the results found with Jewish and Christian samples? Clearly, more research is needed on this important topic.

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Appendix A

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age: _____

2. Sex: _____ Female _____ Male
(1) (2)

3. Race: American Indian _____ Asian or Pacific Islander _____
(1) (2)

African-American _____ Latino _____
(3) (4)

Caucasian _____ Other (please specify) _____
(5) (6)

4. HIGHEST level of education attained (Please select only one)

_____ Graduate degree
(1)

_____ Bachelor's degree (four year college or university)
(2)

_____ Associate degree (Community college or technical school)
(3)

_____ High school diploma or equivalent
(4)

_____ I did not obtain a high school diploma or equivalent
(5)

5. Religious affiliation:

_____ Protestant
(1)

_____ Catholic
(2)

_____ Jewish
(3)

_____ Muslim
(4)

_____ Other (please specify) _____
(5)

Appendix A (con't)

6. Specific religious denomination or subgroup (if relevant) _____
7. Currently, how active are you in organized religious activities?
- | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Not at all active | Rarely active | Moderately active | Very active |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
8. Approximately how many days do you attend organized religious events per month?

9. Have you ever been wronged?
 _____ Yes _____ No
 (1) (2)
10. Think about somebody who has wronged or mistreated you in the past. Please briefly describe how you were wronged or mistreated by this person. (If you have been wronged more than once, select the person and actions that were the most hurtful). _____

11. How long ago did this mistreatment by this person occur?
 _____ 0-4 weeks ago _____ 1-2 months ago _____ 3-6 months ago _____ 7-12 months ago
 (1) (2) (3) (4)
- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ 1-2 years ago | _____ 3-4 years ago | _____ more than 4 years ago |
| (5) | (6) | (7) |

Appendix B

HOGE INTRINSIC RELIGIOUSNESS SCALE

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1. My faith involves all of my life.	SA	A	D	SD
2. One should seek God's guidance when making every important decision.	SA	A	D	SD
3. It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life.	SA	A	D	SD
4. In my life I experience the presence of the Divine.	SA	A	D	SD
5. My faith sometimes restricts my actions.	SA	A	D	SD
6. Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs.	SA	A	D	SD
7. Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how.	SA	A	D	SD
8. I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life.	SA	A	D	SD
9. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.	SA	A	D	SD
10. Although I believe in my religion, I feel there are many more important things in life.	SA	A	D	SD

*Reverse coded items 3, 6, and 10.

Appendix C

FORGIVENESS SCALE

Think of how you respond to someone who has wronged or mistreated you. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I can't stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I wish for good things to happen to the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I spend time thinking about ways to get back at the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I feel resentful toward the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I avoid certain people and/or places because they remind me of the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I pray for the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
7. If I encountered the person who wronged me I would feel at peace.	5	4	3	2	1
8. This person's wrongful actions have kept me from enjoying life.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I have been able to let go of my anger toward the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I become depressed when I think of how I was mistreated by this person.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix C (con't)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. I think that many of the emotional wounds related to this person's wrongful actions have healed.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I feel hatred whenever I think about the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I have compassion for the person who wronged me.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I think my life is ruined because of this person's wrongful actions.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I hope the person who wronged me is treated fairly by others in the future.	5	4	3	2	1

*Forgiveness (AN) items: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14.

*Forgiveness (PP) items: 2, 6, 7, 13, 15

*Reverse Coded items: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14

Appendix D

FORGIVENESS LIKELIHOOD SCALE

Imagine the scenarios below happened to you. Based on the information provided, consider the likelihood that you would choose to forgive the person. Then, circle the response which is most true for you.

1. You share something embarrassing about yourself to a friend who promises to keep the information confidential. However, the friend breaks his/her promise and proceeds to tell several people. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your friend?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

2. One of your friends starts a nasty rumor about you that is not true. As a result, people begin treating you worse than they have in the past. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your friend?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

3. Your significant other has just broken up with you, leaving you hurt and confused. You learn that the reason for the break up is that your significant other started dating a good friend of yours. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your significant other.

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

4. A family member humiliates you in front of others by sharing a story about you that you did not want anyone to know. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive the family member.

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

Appendix D (con't)

5. Your significant other has a “one night stand” and becomes sexually involved with someone else. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your significant other?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

6. Your friend has been talking about you behind your back. When you confront this person, he/she denies it, even though you know that he/she is lying. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your friend?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

7. A friend borrows your most valued possession, and then loses it. The friend refuses to replace it. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your friend?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

8. You tell an acquaintance about a job that you hope to be hired for. Without telling you, the acquaintance applies and gets the job for him/herself. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive your acquaintance?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

9. A stranger breaks into your house and steals a substantial sum of money from you. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive the stranger?

Extremely Likely (5)	Fairly Likely (4)	Somewhat Likely (3)	Slightly Likely (2)	Not at all Likely (1)
----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

Appendix D (con't)

10. You accept someone's offer to attend a formal dance. However, this person breaks their commitment to take you and goes to the event with someone who they find more attractive. What is the likelihood that you would choose to forgive this person?

Extremely
Likely
(5)

Fairly
Likely
(4)

Somewhat
Likely
(3)

Slightly
Likely
(2)

Not at all
Likely
(1)

Appendix E

FORGIVENESS CONCEPT SURVEY

Please answer the following questions according to your understanding of the concept of forgiveness.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Forgiveness involves forgetting about how you were wronged.	5	4	3	2	1
2. When a victim of crime forgives his/her offender, there is no longer reason to prosecute the offender in a court of law.	5	4	3	2	1
3. If we have truly forgiven a person who has hurt us, we should always seek to establish (or reestablish) a relationship with him/her.	5	4	3	2	1
4. In order to forgive, we must be willing to overlook how we've been hurt.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Forgiveness involves suppressing the fact that you are angry.	5	4	3	2	1
6. One should only forgive after the person who hurt you says that he/she is sorry.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Forgiveness usually occurs at a specific moment in time, after which all feelings of hurt and anger disappear.	5	4	3	2	1
8. When someone is mildly annoying us, forgiveness is one possible response.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix E (con't)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. Forgiving others is usually an easy process.	5	4	3	2	1
10. One can forgive organizations and institutions.	5	4	3	2	1

* Every item was reverse coded for the analyses.

Appendix F

STATE ANGER

For each of the following statements circle the choice that best indicates the intensity of your feelings RIGHT NOW.

	Very Much So	Moderately So	Somewhat	Not at All
1. I am mad.	4	3	2	1
2. I feel angry.	4	3	2	1
3. I am burned up.	4	3	2	1
4. I feel like I'm about to explode.	4	3	2	1
5. I feel like banging on the table.	4	3	2	1
6. I feel like yelling at somebody.	4	3	2	1
7. I feel like swearing.	4	3	2	1
8. I am furious.	4	3	2	1
9. I feel like hitting someone.	4	3	2	1
10. I feel like breaking things.	4	3	2	1

Appendix F (con't)

TRAIT ANGER

For each of the following statements circle the choice that best indicates how you GENERALLY feel.

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I have a fiery temper.	4	3	2	1
2. I am quick-tempered.	4	3	2	1
3. I am a hotheaded person.	4	3	2	1
4. It makes me furious when I am criticized in front of others.	4	3	2	1
5. I get angry when I'm slowed down by others mistakes.	4	3	2	1
6. I feel infuriated when I do a good job and get a poor evaluation.	4	3	2	1
7. I fly off the handle.	4	3	2	1
8. I feel annoyed when I am not given recognition for doing good work.	4	3	2	1
9. When I get mad, I say nasty things.	4	3	2	1
10. When I get frustrated, I feel like hitting someone.	4	3	2	1

Appendix G
THE HOPE SCALE

Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided.

	Definitely False	Mostly False	Mostly True	Definitely True
1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.	1	2	3	4
2. I energetically pursue my goals.	1	2	3	4
3. I feel tired most of the time.	1	2	3	4
4. There are lots of ways around any problem.	1	2	3	4
5. I am easily downed in an argument.	1	2	3	4
6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.	1	2	3	4
7. I worry about my health.	1	2	3	4
8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4
9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.	1	2	3	4
10. I've been pretty successful in life.	1	2	3	4
11. I usually find myself worrying about something.	1	2	3	4
12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.	1	2	3	4

*Reverse Coded Items: 3, 5, 7, 11

Appendix H

CES-D SCALE

Using the scale below, indicate the number which best describes how often you felt or behaved in this way—DURING THE PAST WEEK.

	Rarely or none of the time (>1 day)	Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)	Occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days)	Most or all of the time (5-7 days)
1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.	1	2	3	4
2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.	1	2	3	4
3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with the help from my family or friends.	1	2	3	4
4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.	1	2	3	4
5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.	1	2	3	4
6. I felt depressed.	1	2	3	4
7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	1	2	3	4
8. I felt hopeful about the future.	1	2	3	4
9. I thought my life had been a failure.	1	2	3	4
10. I felt fearful.	1	2	3	4
11. My sleep was restless.	1	2	3	4
12. I was happy.	1	2	3	4

Appendix H (con't)

	Rarely or none of the time (>1 day)	Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)	Occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days)	Most or all of the time (5-7 days)
13. I talked less than usual.	1	2	3	4
14. I felt lonely.	1	2	3	4
15. People were unfriendly.	1	2	3	4
16. I enjoyed life.	1	2	3	4
17. I had crying spells.	1	2	3	4
18. I felt sad.	1	2	3	4
19. I felt that people disliked me.	1	2	3	4
20. I could not get "going."	1	2	3	4

*Reverse Coded Items: 4, 8, 12, 16

Appendix I

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING SCALE

For each of the following statements circle the choice that best indicates the extent of your agreement or disagreement as it describes your personal experience.

	Strongly Agree (6)	Moderately Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Disagree (3)	Moderately Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1. I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
2. I don't know who I am, where I came from, or where I am going.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
3. I believe that God loves me and cares about me.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
4. I feel that life is a positive experience.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
5. I believe that God is impersonal and not interested in my daily situations.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
6. I feel unsettled about my future.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
7. I have a personally meaningful relationship with God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
8. I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
9. I don't get much personal strength and support from my God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD

Appendix I (con't)

	Strongly Agree (6)	Moderately Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Disagree (3)	Moderately Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
10. I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
11. I believe that God is concerned about my problems.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
12. I don't enjoy much about life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
13. I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
14. I feel good about my future.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
15. My relationship with God helps me not to feel Lonely.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
16. I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
17. I feel most fulfilled when when I'm in close communion with God.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
18. Life doesn't have much meaning.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
19. My relation with God contributes to my sense of well-being.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD
20. I believe there is some real purpose for my life.	SA	MA	A	D	MD	SD

Appendix I (con't)

*Religious Well-Being Scale: odd numbered items.

*Existential Well-Being Scale: even numbered items

*Reverse Coded Items: 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 16, 18

Appendix J
COVER LETTER

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your participation in this research project. A questionnaire is enclosed that will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Please sign this letter and return it to indicate your willingness to participate. The answers that you provide will remain confidential. Please do not place your name anywhere on the questionnaire. Each questionnaire has been given a research code (upper right hand corner). It is possible that you will experience some negative emotions when completing this questionnaire. You may wish to contact a local mental health agency if you wish to discuss these feelings with a counselor. You are free to withdraw your participation in this project at anytime.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and return it to the leader of your organization. Thank you for your participation in this project. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Todd Heim (937) 866-2761 or Dr. Mark Rye (937) 229-2160.

Thank You,

Todd A. Heim, B.A.
Psychology Masters Student
Psychology Department
University of Dayton

Mark Rye, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Psychology Department
University of Dayton

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Appendix K

DEBRIEFING LETTER

Dear Participant:

The research that you participated in was designed to 1) compare perspectives of forgiveness across the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and 2) to examine how forgiveness relates to mental health (hope, anger, depression, and spiritual well-being). You were asked to complete a variety of questionnaires that dealt with religiousness, forgiveness, and mental health. These questions will be examined to determine the relationships between these variables.

As a reminder, your responses are strictly confidential. Your name was replaced by the research code at the top of your questionnaire. We are interested in your responses as a group. If you are experiencing any emotional problems related to being wronged, you may wish to contact a local mental health agency.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you are interested in a summary of the results, please provide us with your name and permanent mailing address. If you have any additional questions, please contact Todd Heim (937) 866-2761 or Dr. Mark Rye (937) 229-2160.

Thank You,

Todd Heim, B.A.
Masters Student
Psychology Department
University of Dayton

Mark Rye, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Psychology Department
University of Dayton