A Workbook to Promote Forgiveness for Ingroup Congregational Offenses

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A WORKBOOK TO PROMOTE FORGIVENESS FOR INGROUP CONGREGATIONAL OFFENSES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

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Abstract

A WORKBOOK TO PROMOTE FORGIVENESS FOR INGROUP CONGREGATIONAL OFFENSES

By Chelsea L. Greer, M.S., M.A.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013

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Since research on forgiveness has flourished over the past three decades, multiple interventions have been developed to aid individuals in this arduous process. Two interventions in particular have been most-widely studied with diverse groups: Enright’s process model (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) and Worthington’s REACH Forgiveness model (2006). Thus far, these forgiveness interventions have been led by trained professionals in an in-person group. In-person interventions pose issues of cost and attendance. In the current study, I adapted Worthington’s Christian-adapted REACH Forgiveness intervention into a self-directed workbook for Christians who have experienced an offense within a religious community. Participants (N = 52) voluntarily completed the workbook for partial course credit, taking an average of 6.66 hours of time, and assessments at three time points. I found a significant treatment condition x time interaction, Wilks’ $\lambda = .31, F(6,31) = 11.57, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .69$, which indicates that the effect of time depended upon the treatment condition to which participants were assigned. In addition, the current study produced a larger effect size comparable to benchmarks of previous in-person REACH Forgiveness interventions ($d = 1.63$),
and fell within the upper limit of the standard of change. The current findings encourage further analysis of this self-directed intervention which is cost-effective, easily disseminated, and found effective in this initial study.
A Workbook to Promote Forgiveness for Ingroup Congregational Offenses

In the last thirty years, forgiveness as a topic of psychological research has gone from fairly non-existent to expansive and only continuing to abound. Researchers have answered questions of how forgiveness is defined, the theoretical underpinnings of unforgiveness as a stress response, what traits relate to a forgiving personality, which emotions and relationship characteristics predict forgiveness of specific offenses and forgiveness of self, the physiological and psychological health benefits of forgiving, and, very recently, personal spiritual variables that relate to religious and spiritual people’s ability to forgive. Despite the rapid growth in this research area, our knowledge of the intrapsychic process of forgiveness is still in an early stage relative to other psychological domains. Current researchers are attempting to move from basic understanding to more detailed and nuanced levels. As a result, multiple research teams have developed interventions to be used in psychoeducational groups or personal psychotherapy that encourage forgiveness (see Enright, 1991; Luskin, 2002; McCullough & Worthington, 1995; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Rye & Pargament, 2002). One such intervention, the REACH forgiveness model by Worthington, will be examined. This intervention was developed to be used in secular populations but has been religiously accommodated for use with explicitly religious populations.

The relationship between religion/spirituality (R/S) and forgiveness has been widely studied (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). In a recent search on Psych Info (on February 16, 2011), there were over 100 empirical articles examining R/S and forgiveness. Within the scope of religion and spirituality relating to forgiveness, recent studies have defined a model which contains consistently strong predictors of forgiveness of specific offenses (Davis et al., 2008).
This model of Relational Spirituality and Forgiveness is made up of relationships between the victim of an offense and the offender, and the offense, plus consideration of a sacred object (as defined by the victim), and relationships between the victim, offender, and offense and the sacred. In two studies, Greer et al. (2013) investigated a new measure of relational spirituality: a victim’s relationship with a church congregation as the sacred element. Greer et al. found evidence supporting religious group identification as fitting into the model of relational spirituality and forgiveness. In fact, religious group identification was a stronger predictor of forgiveness of an in-group offender’s offense than were variables previously studied. Most studies examining parts of the model of relational spirituality and forgiveness have involved cross-sectional data, limiting our understanding of the relationships over time. Also, to date, no studies have investigated how variables in the model of relational spirituality might interact with forgiveness interventions.

The specific aim of the present study is to help advance the field in four ways. First, I examine the effectiveness of a new format of a well-tested forgiveness intervention (i.e., the REACH Forgiveness model). Second, I measure rates of forgiveness over time using pre-, post-, and follow-up measures subsequent to a forgiveness intervention (i.e., the REACH Forgiveness workbook). Third, I apply the REACH forgiveness intervention to offenses occurring within a specified population (congregations of Christians). Fourth, I examine possible effects of a particular measure of victim identity (group identification with a congregation) and changes in forgiveness around the intervention.

In the current dissertation, I review three related literatures on religion/spirituality and forgiveness, group identification, and the REACH Forgiveness intervention. I propose a theoretical connection between relational spirituality and response to the forgiveness intervention.
via group identification with a religious community (a church congregation). To test this connection, I describe a study that uses a within-subjects design. I test the effectiveness of a new individually administered workbook (compared to the original format using psychoeducational groups to promote forgiveness). The participants are students (who might or might not currently identify as Christians) who have experienced a hurtful offense within a Christian congregation and retain at least moderate unforgiveness towards the identified offender. In the final chapter of the dissertation, I describe the efficacy of the intervention in the context of differential group identification with the congregation to which offender and victim belonged. I also discuss the findings in light of existing research and theory.

Review of the Literature

In 2006, Ted Haggard, the then-president of the National Association of Evangelicals and the senior pastor of New Life Church, a church of more than 10,000, was found to be having an illicit affair with a male prostitute and using illegal drugs. After denials to various media outlets and to members of his church, he finally admitted guilt. The ramifications of the scandal were far-reaching. Personally, it strained his relationship with his wife and children. Professionally, members of the church left, and giving to the church dropped sharply. Publicly, it was an embarrassing event that left many doubting the veracity of the beliefs presumably espoused by the charismatic leader. This can leave us wondering, how would the members of his church respond? That is, would individuals who strongly associated with the ideals promulgated by Haggard and who found their identity, in part, by aligning with the superordinate group of which Haggard was a part (e.g., Evangelicals, members of New Life Church) be likely to forgive him for his transgressions? Whereas Haggard was a highly visible member of his congregation, we might experience similar waves from members of a congregation who offend others. The waves
can knock other members off kilter, regardless of whether the members are directly involved in the transgression. One might wonder what factors predict whether church members are able to forgive leaders like Haggard and other church members who hurt the congregation and/or individuals within it with their actions.

In this review, I will focus on forgiveness (or not) of an in-group member in a Christian congregation. I observe, however, that this is a special case of response to any transgression by a member of a cherished in-group. Such in-groups could involve fall of a leader of a political party, uncovering fraud done by one’s immediate work supervisor, discovery of physical or sexual abuse by a sport coach, scout leader, or pastime organization, or betrayal of a group of friends by a group member. Religion or spirituality – by virtue of the sacred nature of the sacred object – can compound the issue, at least hypothetically. So the generalization might not be perfect. However, potentially there is much overlap.

**Definitions, Concepts, and Theoretical Perspectives**

**Forgiveness of Specific Transgressions**

Researchers have debated the best definition of forgiveness. Two definitions are widely accepted, though not fully consensual, definitions of forgiveness. In *emotional forgiveness*, the victim replaces negative feelings towards the offender with positive ones (Worthington, 2006). *Decisional forgiveness* is a behavioral intention statement in which the forgiver decides to act differently toward the offender by (1) treating him or her as a valued person and (2) eschewing vengeance. Importantly, decisional and emotional forgiveness are two different phenomena, not two halves of one phenomenon. *Unforgiveness* is defined as the building up of negative emotions such as bitterness, hostility, anger, hatred, and fear towards an identified offender following an offense.
perceived by the victim. It is essential to recognize that forgiveness does not necessarily include any type of reconciliation. Both decisional and emotional forgiveness are intrapersonal. Reconciliation, which is the restoration of trust in a relationship (Worthington, 2006) and communicating about transgressions are interpersonal. The majority of researchers who study forgiveness have agreed that forgiveness takes place within the victim/offended party (Worthington, 2005). Outside the professional realm, forgiveness is sometimes confounded with reconciliation (Kearns & Fincham, 2004).

Research on forgiveness has increased in recent years partially due to findings that, as a coping strategy, forgiveness relates more strongly to positive outcomes for the offended party than does unforgiveness. Several studies have shown stress-reduction (Strelan & Covic, 2006) and health related benefits for those who forgive and highly value forgiveness (Berry, Worthington, O’Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005; Lawler-Row, 2010; Lawler-Row, Hyatt-Edwards, Wuensch, & Karremans, 2011; Thompson et al., 2005; Webb & Brewer, 2010; Webb, Toussaint, Kalpakjian, & Tate, 2010; for a review, see Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007). According to Worthington’s (2006) stress-and-coping model, when an individual perceives that a transgression has occurred that affects him or her personally, he or she typically feels stressed. The victim then needs some way to reduce this stress. Worthington (2006) posits that forgiveness is a choice among many coping strategies (such as seeking or observing justice, seeking revenge, avoidance of the transgressor, acceptance, forbearance, turning the event over to God, or anger with God) to cope with stress from an offense. Strelan (2006) also conceptualizes forgiveness as a coping response.

The emotional shift to more prosocial feelings may be terminated when all negative feelings have been neutralized, which is what typically occurs when one has been offended.
or hurt by a stranger or one with whom one does not seek a continued relationship. Or the emotional shift might not end until there is a net positive feeling toward the offender, which is typically the case when the relationship is valued and continuing and the victim is not content with merely eliminating negative memories and experiences. Although changed emotions might motivate the victim to reconcile with a willing and available offender, offenders are often not willing, nor are they available, and even the victim might not pursue reconciliation because it might not be possible, safe, or prudent to do so. Thus, forgiveness towards an offender—an internal experience—might or might not lead to reconciliation (a social experience).

The feelings of unforgiveness and forgiveness may both occur within an individual over time. Typically, one is hypothesized to notice a decrease in negative emotions until negative emotions are negligible. We would say that emotional unforgiveness is declining as emotional forgiveness is increasing. However, most people do not immediately forgive (emotionally) without experiencing substantial negative emotions initially (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003). McCullough et al., in a series of studies, have shown that unforgiveness motivations decrease with time. For a group, this can be represented by a logarithmic function—faster at first and slowing as time goes on. For an individual, however, prediction is less accurate and more individually determined. Some people forgive all at once; some simply see unforgiveness erode; others forgive in a two-steps forward-one-step-backwards lurch towards forgiveness. McCullough et al. (2003) termed an initial low rating of unforgiveness towards an offender forbearance, and they found that benevolence motivations and forgiveness increase slowly over time. In their conceptualization, trend forgiveness is the rate of decreasing avoidance and revenge motivations and increasing benevolence motivations towards the offender over time.
According to this view, thorough forgiveness typically takes time (see also McCullough, Luna, Berry, Tabak, & Bono, 2010; Tabak & McCullough, 2011; Worthington, Kurusu, Collins, Berry, Ripley, & Baier, 2000). The rate of decrease of unforgiving motivations and increase in forgiving motivations also relates to the hurtfulness of the offense (see Davis et al., 2009a; McCullough et al., 2003).

Worthington, Sharp, Lerner, and Sharp (2006) hypothesized an *injustice gap* that can arise without conscious thought as an initial reaction to a transgression taking place. The *injustice gap* is the difference between the way a person would like a situation resolved and the person’s current assessment of the situation. Bigger injustice gaps are harder to forgive. This concept has been studied in related ways by others as a justice motive (see Lerner, 1977) or as a gut reaction (Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005). An injustice gap is common. Type of justice desired can predict forgiveness (Lucas, Young, Zhdanova, & Alexander, 2010; Strelan, Feather, & McKee, 2011; Strelan & Sutton, 2011). After this initial reaction, several things can lessen the perceived injustice gap. These include punishment of the offender, apology or restitution offered by the offender (see meta-analysis on apology by Fehr & Gelfand, 2010), and other events that yield a perception that some justice has occurred. In addition, the passage of time can simply lessen emotional responses and erode details and associations in long-term memory. However, persistent rumination (Berry et al., 2005; Witvliet, DeYoung, Hofelich, & DeYoung, 2011; Witvliet, Knoll, Hinman, & DeYoung, 2010) can widen the injustice gap by reviewing or elaborating emotional associations with an event. Also, forgiveness might increase a sense of justice (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). Worthington et al. (2006) posit that an injustice gap is salient even for those religious as a result of valuing treating others with beneficence.
Trait Forgivingness

Within the scientific study of forgiveness, researchers collect data on different aspects of the process. Depending on the aim of a study, one may be more interested in offense-specific forgiveness or dispositional forgivingness (one’s tendency to be forgiving), or both. Several scales have been developed to measure one’s dispositional forgivingness. These include the Forgiveness of Other and Self Scales (Mauger, Perry, Freeman, Grove, McBride, & McKinney, 1992), Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005), Trait Forgivingness Scale (Berry et al., 2005), and the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness (Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O’Connor, & Wade, 2001). Personality characteristics such as trait anger, vengeful rumination, fear, hostility and neuroticism have correlated negatively to dispositional forgivingness, while extraversion, agreeableness, and trait empathy have correlated positively with dispositional forgivingness (see Berry et al., 2001; Berry et al., 2005). A measure of a person’s dispositional forgivingness should portray a somewhat stable tendency, so it could be expected to relate to personality characteristics, which are also considered stable over time. In past studies it was typical that a scale measuring trait forgivingness was the only instrument included to rate participants’ level of forgiveness (see McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Mullet, Barros, Frongia, Usai, Neto, & Shafighi, 2003). Basing research findings on traits alone fails to collect information regarding people’s reactions to real-life situations ignoring the inevitable divide between one’s ideal self and actual self. If possible, it is beneficial to collect data for each participant (victim) concerning transgressions by multiple offenders and aggregate findings (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005). Knowing how a person deals with several transgression situations can give a more accurate view of a person’s tendency to be forgiving.
Religion/Spirituality, Forgiveness, and Forgivingness

McCullough and Worthington (1999) presented a qualitative review of studies examining the values and frequency of forgiveness for four major religions: Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. Trait forgivingness has correlated strongly with religiousness and spirituality over many studies (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Tsang et al., 2005). However, the data collected up to that point asserted that while religious individuals value the act of forgiveness, offense-specific forgiveness was not higher among these populations than their secular counterparts. This is called the religion-forgiveness discrepancy (Tsang et al., 2005).

Since McCullough and Worthington (1999) identified the gap in valued (dispositional forgivingness) and reported forgiveness levels of specific offenses by Christians, researchers have focused on the religion-forgiveness discrepancy (coined by Tsang et al., 2005). The religion-forgiveness discrepancy occurs when religious people rate the value of forgiving highly but do not report high levels of forgiveness of specific offenses. McCullough and Worthington (1999) first offered possible explanations citing either rationalization or psychometric shortcomings of research. These four possibilities are as follows: (1) Social Desirability, (2) Aggregation and Specificity in Measurement, (3) Distal Location of Religion in the Causal Chain Leading to Forgiveness, and (4) Recall Bias.

Investigation of the religion-forgiveness discrepancy.

Tsang et al. (2005) examined the hypotheses by McCullough and Worthington (1999) by conducting three studies to illustrate how common psychometric shortcomings of forgiveness research might distort results. Through three studies, data supported that more stringent recall instructions given to participants and aggregation of multiple offense-specific transgression related motivations were associated with higher forgiveness ratings. Without these parameters,
religiousness was not related to forgiveness (Tsang et al., 2005). In each study, the Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations inventory (TRIM; McCullough et al., 1998) was used to measure avoidance and revenge (unforgiving) motivations. In none of the three studies were participants given instructions concerning the transgressing individual’s characteristics such as religious, similarly religious or nonreligious.

Study 1 included college students that identified as Christian \(N = 224\). Recall instructions for offenses were not restrictive. Religiousness was not related to avoidance or revenge motivations in this sample. For Study 2, students \(N = 91\) were instructed to recall a transgression occurring within the past 2 months. Sixty of these students completed the TRIM again 2 months later in regard to the same offense. Intrinsic religiousness was negatively related to revenge motivations at time 1 and time 2, indicating a relationship between religiousness and forgiveness. In the final study of this set, Tsang et al. (2005) collected data using more specific recall instructions. Students \(N = 137\) were instructed to recall two offenses for each of the following relationships: romantic partner, same-sex friend, and opposite-sex friend. Aggregated avoidance motivations were negatively related to interpersonal and intrapersonal religious commitment. Aggregated revenge motivations were negatively related to intrapersonal religious commitment. As Tsang et al. increased restriction of recall instructions and amount of transgressions recalled by each person, religiousness was related to lower unforgiving motivations. Their findings support the hypothesized psychometric issues posed by McCullough and Worthington (1999).

Since the writing of the McCullough and Worthington (1999), much has occurred in the field on the relationship between religion/spirituality and forgiveness. Two meta-analyses have been conducted that help to organize the empirical findings on these relationships. Fehr,
Gelfand, and Nag (2010), in a general meta-analysis of forgiveness used $k = 175$ studies to examine several moderators and main effects on offense-specific forgiveness. They investigated religion as a socio-moral mechanism that may promote forgiveness. Fehr et al. reported an effect size of .19 for the correlation between religiousness and forgiveness of a specific offense. Davis, Hook, Worthington, and McDaniel (in press) conducted meta-analyses with an explicit focus on the relationships between religion/spirituality and trait forgivingness ($k = 64$ studies; $N = 99,117$), state forgiveness ($k = 50$ studies; $N = 8,932$), and self-forgivingness ($k = 23$; $N = 4,000$). The effect size for religion/spirituality and trait forgivingness, state forgiveness, and self-forgivingness were .29, .14, and .12, respectively. They also examined several moderators and found that the relationship between religion/spirituality and state forgiveness was stronger when religion/spirituality was also measured as a state ($r = .33$) compared to when it was measured as a trait ($r = .10$). Additionally, the relationship between religion/spirituality and self-forgivingness was stronger when a measure of attachment to God was used to assess religion/spirituality ($r = .21$) than when a general measure of religiosity was used ($r = .10$).

These meta-analytic reviews together summarized a vast number of studies on religion/spirituality and forgiveness. Consequently, there is not much of a “gap” between religious people’s valuing forgiveness or describing themselves as having high trait forgivingness and actually enacting it in specific transgressions when variables are measured at the same level of specificity.

I have reviewed studies conducted by Tsang et al. (2005) to investigate the proposals of McCullough and Worthington (1999) of methodological problems impacting study results of Christians’ reports of offense-specific forgiveness. Implementing stricter recall instructions and aggregating transgressions resulted in a stronger relationship between religiousness and offense-
specific forgiveness (Tsang et al., 2005). Additionally, I reviewed meta-analyses by Fehr, Gelfand, and Nag (2010) and Davis, Worthington and Hook (2012), which illustrate the lack of or a weak religion-forgiveness discrepancy when religion and spiritual variables are measured as states rather than traits. In the next section, I explain a theory of relational spirituality and forgiveness that might shed light on variables affecting religious and spiritual people’s forgiveness.

How Religion Operates Psychologically to Promote Forgiveness

The initial literature on forgiveness and religion was dominated by the question of whether forgivingness and forgiveness of events were related to religions. Furthermore, of particular interest were (1) how does forgiveness operate in each religion (Rye et al., 2000) and (2) which religion promotes forgiveness to the greatest extent? Worthington et al. (2011) provide an account of how research on religion/spirituality and forgiveness developed over time. After this early research, the attention of researchers has gravitated more to the psychology of how forgiveness occurs. One model to describe this was proposed by Davis et al., (2008) and Davis et al., (2009a). In that model, the authors take the spiritual dimension seriously. They describe both a horizontal and vertical level for considerations of the effects on forgiveness, and they are particularly concerned with the relationships. Spirituality is defined as closeness to some target that one considers sacred. Worthington (2009) hypothesized different types of spirituality: religious, human, nature, or cosmos spirituality, depending on the target that is considered sacred. In the following section, I describe religious spirituality and its effects on forgiving.
Relational spirituality and forgiveness. The model of relational spirituality by Davis et al. (2008) provides a new way for considering a victim’s perspective following an offense. The model describes relational spirituality and forgiveness. The concept of relational spirituality was initially outlined by Shults and Sandage (2006). Their conceptualization asserts that spirituality is only meaningful in the context of a relationship as the sacred is the center of one’s spirituality. Though for most people and for the purpose of this review, the sacred in question is God, it could be another person, nature, or the cosmos (Worthington, 2009). Regardless of the sacred being, spirituality involves a personal relationship with someone or something outside the individual, hence the term relational spirituality. Close relationships involve an emotional bond and experiences such as closeness and commitment. Davis et al. assert that a transgression which causes relational damage inevitably affects the victim’s close relationships with others and the sacred.

Stress-and-coping model. This model of relational spirituality and forgiveness by Davis et al. (2008) draws on stress-and-coping theory described by Worthington (2006). Transgressions cause stress in victims. Appraisal of the relational context of a transgression affects the level of stress the victim experiences (Lazarus, 2006). In response to a transgression, a victim has various ways to cope with the stress. Unforgiving emotions are likely to result when a victim appraises unresolved injustice (Worthington, 2006), which is perceived as the difference between the way a victim would like a situation resolved and the victim’s current assessment of the situation (injustice gap). Unforgiving emotions such as desires for avoidance and vengeance cause stress to the victim. Forgiveness is one way of many to relieve stress from unforgiving emotions and cope with the aftermath of the transgression. Forgiveness involves the victim replaces negative feelings towards the
offender with positive ones (Worthington, 2006). Victims are more likely to develop unforgiveness when viewing the stressor as a threat, and forgiveness when seeing it as a challenge. Worthington (2006) articulated the model and summarized research that supported the model.

Since 2006, various research teams have studied the stress-and-coping model, of which I will summarize a few examples. In 2007, Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, and Miller reviewed literature examining the relationships between trait forgivingness, emotional and decisional forgiveness and health. Over time, an unforgiving personality leads to negative health outcomes caused by stress and momentary unforgiving reactions produce stressful states in the body. More recently, Lawler-Row et al. (2011) investigated links between attachment, forgiveness, and well-being. In one study, $N = 114$ undergraduate students completed measures of forgiveness, attachment, relationship commitment, parental intrusiveness, and health. The authors found that unforgiveness created psychological tension which led to physical symptoms indicating unease and self-rated stress. Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman (2009) conducted two studies with women in romantic relationships to test the mediating role of appraisal-coping processes between forgiveness and depressive symptoms. In Study 1, $N = 85$ female undergraduate students who perceived to be experiencing abuse in their romantic partnerships were recruited and completed measures of abuse, depression, appraisal, coping strategies, and forgiveness. In Study 2, $n = 35$ male and $n = 64$ female undergraduate students in a non-abusive romantic relationship completed similar measures as in Study 1. The relation between forgiveness and depressive symptoms was mediated by appraisal-coping processes in both studies. Lower use of emotion-focused coping related to lower depressive symptoms. The authors
content that forgiveness lessens distress via conflict appraisals and reducing emotion-focused coping. As a final example, Hirsh, Webb, and Jeglic (2011) investigated the relationship between forgiveness, mental health, and suicidal behavior. In this study, \( N = 158 \) college students indicating mild-severe depression completed measures of depression, forgiveness of self and others, religion, spirituality, and suicidal thoughts and behavior. Results indicated that the relationship between self-forgiveness and suicidality was fully mediated by depression. Also, forgiveness of others directly predicted suicidality. Altogether, recent studies examining the stress-and-coping model of forgiveness consistently illustrate that forgiveness lessens stress and contributes to physical and mental well-being.

To return to the explanation of relational spirituality, the victim’s appraisal of the transgression and its relational context may be interpreted spiritually. This model incorporates the construct described by Pargament, Magyar, Benore, and Mahoney (2005)—sacred loss and desecration. The transgression and relationship with the offender may hold spiritual meaning for the victim (Pargament et al., 2005). When the transgression is interpreted as spiritually significant, the victim may experience strong emotional reactions. Pargament et al. studied \( N = 117 \) adults from the community who identified their most negative life event from the past two years and the degree to which they viewed the event as a sacred loss or desecration. Participants also completed measures of religious coping and the impact of the event on various health (traumatic, emotional, and physical) outcomes. The authors found that sacred loss and desecration related to emotional distress differently. Sacred loss predicted intrusive thoughts and depression, but also post-traumatic growth and spiritual change. Desecration predicted intrusive thoughts and anger, and less post-
traumatic growth. The relationship between these spiritual appraisals and outcomes were partially mediated by positive and negative religious coping. Pargament et al. asserted these results illustrate the multidimensional nature of spirituality and how people attribute spiritual meaning to stressful life events.

This model of relational spirituality posits that, in response to the spiritual appraisal of the transgression, positive moral emotions are likely to lead to emotional forgiveness and negative moral emotions will make emotional forgiveness more difficult (Davis et al., 2009a). Positive moral emotions are love, empathy, sympathy, compassion, and feelings of mercy. Negative moral emotions include anger, resentment, hatred, and disgust. Therefore, the nature of the religious victim’s appraisal, whether morally positive or negative, will influence the likelihood of forgiveness of the transgressor. See the figure below (Figure 1) for the model of relational spiritually created by Davis et al. (2008). Following that depiction is an example to illustrate each relationship appraisal in response to a transgression.
Figure 1. Spiritual Appraisals in the Model of Relational Spirituality and Forgiveness. From Davis, D. E., Hook, J. N., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2008). Relational spirituality and forgiveness: The roles of attachment to God, religious coping, and viewing the transgression as a desecration. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 27*, 293-301; p. 294. Copyright 2008 by Christian Association for Psychological Studies. Reprinted with permission. All variables are from the victim’s perspective. **SO** _victim’s appraisal of the relationship between the offender and the sacred; SV _victim’s appraisal of his or her own relationship with the sacred; ST _victim’s appraisal of the relationship between the transgression and the sacred. VT _victim’s appraisal of their relationship to the transgression. VO _victim’s appraisal of their relationship with the offender. OT _victim’s appraisal of the offender’s relationship to the transgression.*
To illustrate the relationship, we can use our opening example of Ted Haggard (the transgressor) who had an illicit affair with a male prostitute (the transgression) and his wife (the victim). The victim may consider the following secular appraisals: (a) her relationship to the affair (victim-transgression relationship; VT); (b) her relationship with Haggard (victim-offender relationship; VO); and (c) Haggard’s perception of the affair (offender-transgression relationship; OT). Perhaps she sees the affair as a threat to her identity as a wife or values of fidelity and honesty (VT relation). The wife possibly views trust between the two of them being broken (VO relation). Finally, she may view her husband’s affair as intentional or an unexpected betrayal (OT relation).

Haggard’s wife may also evaluate spiritual relationships connected to her husband’s offenses as well. The wife considers the relationship of the affair and the sacred as a destruction of something holy (sacred-transgression relationship; ST), like the marriage or the marital vows. The wife will appraise her own relationship with the sacred (sacred-victim relationship; SV; Davis, Hook, Worthington, Van Tongeren, Gartner, Jennings, & Norton, 2010; Davis, Worthington, Hook, & Van Tongeren, 2009). She might see God as loving or as distant. Finally, the victim appraises Haggard’s relationship with the sacred in relationship with her own relationship with the sacred (sacred-offender relationship; SO; see (Davis, Worthington, Hook, Van Tongeren et al., 2009). The SO appraisal can include the victim’s perception of how spiritually similar/dissimilar the offender is to them (the sacred and victim) and assessment of relational status of the offender towards the sacred (i.e., ashamed, repentant, etc.) as well as the sacred towards the offender (i.e., punitive, forgiving, etc.).
Several measures have been created to assess various elements in the model of relational spirituality and forgiveness within the past few years. For example, Davis and colleagues (Davis, Worthington, Hook, Van Tongeren et al., 2009) created the Similarity of Spirituality Scale including spiritual and human similarity. Davis, Worthington, Hook, and Van Tongeren (2009) created a brief measure of Dedication to the Sacred, adapted from a measure of commitment in couples, and Davis et al. (2010) created the Relational Engagement of the Sacred for a Transgression (REST) scale measuring the victim-sacred relationship. Wood et al. (2010) created a measure of the victim’s anger at God and comfort toward God (Attitudes towards God scale; ATG-9).

In order to test the theorized model of relational spirituality, Davis et al. (2008) polled a sample of $N = 180$ college students at a large, mid-Atlantic public university. As expected, anxious and avoidant attachments to God, negative religious coping, and viewing the transgression as a desecration were negatively correlated with forgiveness. Also, the situation specific measures of relationship with the sacred and religious coping predicted an additional 10% of the variance in forgiveness above that of attachment to God in a hierarchical multiple regression. Finally, the relationship between attachment to God and forgiveness was fully mediated by relational spirituality.

Davis et al. (2009a) created a measure for this new model measuring similarity of victim and offender (VO relationship) with 200 students, Similarity of Spirituality. Two factors remained on the scale after exploratory factor analysis: human similarity and spiritual similarity. Perceived similarity predicted forgiveness above the effect of several other established related variables (i.e., time since offense, hurtfulness, attachment to God, sacred loss & desecration, etc.). Another important finding was that the relationship
between similarity and forgiveness was mediated by empathy for the offender. A second study (N = 182) with students used confirmatory factor analysis of the nine item scale and the factor structure was supported. Results showed that the measure is able to distinguish between similar and different individuals in relation to the participant.

These strong results showing relational spirituality as relating to forgiveness give direction to future research. More work is needed to explore the effect of human and spiritual similarity on one’s relational appraisal as part of the forgiveness process. I have explained the theories of (1) stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness, and (2) relational spirituality and forgiveness. Next, I will describe the theory of group identification and studies that support a victim’s relationship to a religious group as fitting the model of relational spirituality. Following that section, I will describe the emotional processes involved in forgiveness and unforgiveness and, consequently, how emotional replacement leads to greater forgiveness. In the following section, I outline the purpose of the present review of literature concerning studies that have tested the efficacy of the REACH forgiveness intervention.

**Social Identity Theory and Group Identification**

Applications of social identity theory have developed far beyond the original definition of the concept. What originated as something socially constructed in a laboratory as the minimal group paradigm (Turner, 1975) has inspired much research and debate (Dimmock, & Guciarrdi, 2008; Henry, Arrow, & Carini, 1999). *Social identity* refers to broad categorizations in one’s life, such as gender and roles one plays, such as parent. *Group identification* is an individual-level variable and is contrasted with *group identity* which refers to characteristics that describe and define a group (Henry et al., 1999). Social
identity has historically been treated as a dichotomous variable. One is considered either male or female, parent or not, for the purpose of research. However, some researchers have been careful to measure group identification on a continuum. For example, one’s level of identification with a political party (for example) can have more or less strength. Consider a mother who frequently attends PTA meetings and aims to stay informed of school policies and upcoming events. A good percentage of her time may be spent within the PTA group and many of her social connections will be tied to this participation, however, this does not necessarily mean that PTA membership is a highly salient aspect of the woman’s identity. This illustrates the need to measure group identification as a continuous variable instead of a simple yes or no question of membership.

Tajfel (1978) outlines consequences of social identities in terms of group memberships. One principle is that a person remains a member of a certain group as long as it is beneficial for him or her. In the event that membership no longer yields any satisfaction, the person is likely to leave the group unless leaving is impossible or conflicts with essential values. If such difficulties are encountered by considering leaving the group, the person may reinterpret group characteristics or accept current features and attempt to change some of the undesirable characteristics of the group. The final principle outlined by Tajfel is that all groups acquire meaning by comparison to other groups. A group is made important by being distinct from other groups. According to the aforementioned principles of group identification, members in one group can have various levels of satisfaction with the group. A person may remain within a group though he or she is not pleased with all aspects of that group.
Research is scant concerning the topic of group identity and forgiveness. Brown, Wohl, and Exline (2008) manipulated offense conditions in three separate samples to measure secondhand forgiveness for out-group offenders transgressing against a participant’s in-group. In Study 1, $N = 80$ college students were recruited for the study one week following a group of Canadian soldiers from their area being killed by an American missile in Afghanistan. Participants were assigned to either an apology or no apology condition and completed measures of national group identity and unforgiving motivations. Participants in the apology condition reported lower avoidance and revenge motivations towards the out-group. In Study 2, $N = 538$ college students were recruited from two large, public universities in America during three weeks following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Participants rated national group identity and single items endorsing emotions experienced following the attacks. High identification with national-in-group was associated with emotions like blame, anger, fear, sadness, and lower forgiveness. In Study 3, $N = 113$ college students at a Canadian university completed an online study in which assimilation and differentiation needs were manipulated. Participants completed measures of second-hand forgiveness, empathy, concerns related to the scenario read, and hostile and anxious mood. Participants in the assimilation condition reported less forgiveness towards the out-group perpetrators. Results repeatedly showed that revenge and avoidance motivations were higher for participants that highly identified with the cultural group under attack as opposed to low-identifiers. This set of studies was measuring in-group members’ reaction to an offense by out-group members, which makes the results not generalizable to the concept of within group offenses. At the time of the present review, this was the only published experiment concerning group identity and forgiveness.
According to Henry et al. (1999), a person’s social identity can include many important relationships and groups, and some are likely more salient than others. Identification with particular groups is made up of dynamic variables that can shift over time depending on satisfaction with a group and attraction to other members. Identification with a particular group needs to be measured by cognitive, affective, and behavioral connections to the group rather than a static assessment of group membership. Also, little is known about how level of group identification of a victim and offender will affect the forgiveness process within a group.

Thus far, only the two studies by Greer et al. (2013) have examined group identification as relating to forgiveness of an in-group member, which provided robust initial support for such a relationship. In these studies, church members from the community (Study 1, \( N = 63 \)) and college students at a large, Mid-Atlantic university (Study 2, \( N = 387 \)) identified an offense which they experienced from someone with whom they attend(ed) church. In Study 1, participants then completed measures concerning personal traits, forgiving and unforgiving motivations towards the offender, and group identification with a congregation (Group Identification 2.0, adapted from “group” to “congregation;” Henry et al., 1999). Study 1 provided preliminary support for a relationship between group identification with a congregation and unforgiving and forgiving motivations. Higher group identification with a congregation related to lower avoidance and higher benevolence, towards an in-group offender. This first study provided evidence of a significant relationship. Another study was conducted to test group identification as a predictor of forgiveness of in-group offenders compared to past variables found to be significant predictors of offense-specific forgiveness.

In Study 2, participants completed the same measures from Study 1 as well as questionnaires measuring each relationship in the model of relational spirituality (i.e., sacred loss
and desecration, closeness of victim and offender, similarity of spirituality, dedication to the sacred). Other research had found those variables to predict measures of forgiveness (Pargament et al., 2005; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006; Davis et al., 2009a, 2009b). The larger sample in Study 2 allowed for a more stringent test of the relationship between group identification with a congregation and forgiveness. Regression analyses were used to test group identification’s predictive power of forgiving and unforgiving motivations above that of other offense-specific variables in the model of relational spirituality. Group identification failed to add variance to that accounted for by other predictors of avoidance motivations; however, it did more strongly predict revenge and benevolent motivations above the other variables in the model. Greer et al. hypothesized that group identification may not have related as strongly to avoidance in this second study because the sample (college students) may not be currently attending the same congregation as where the offense occurred while at school and could easily avoid an offender from within their home congregation. However, in Study 1, community-based adult participants were more likely still attending a congregation with the identified offender and may have found it necessary to lessen feelings of avoidance due to frequent interactions and the effect it could have on their church involvement. The results of Study 2 support group identification fitting into the model of relational spirituality and forgiveness as a victim characteristic that adds predictive validity to the model. This variable more strongly predicted forgiving and unforgiving motivations (revenge and benevolence) than other variables found to be strong predictors both previously and in Greer et al.’s research.

The authors in these studies believed that there was more going on regarding how group identification predicted forgiveness in the particular context of within congregation offenses. The authors proposed that group identification may be the mechanism through
which dispositional forgivingness is translated into intra-group forgiveness within these particular religious settings. Research has found that state-specific variables predict offense-specific forgiveness more strongly than traits (Davis et al., 2008; McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Trait forgivingness is also related to offense-specific forgiveness, though it is likely less strongly (Davis, Hook, Van Tongeren, Gartner, & Worthington, 2012). In the two studies, Greer et al. investigated the process of being offended and (possibly) forgiving within Christian congregations, as forgiveness is considered by many Christians as a command of this religion (Rye et al., 2000). Thus, individuals who highly value forgiveness (i.e., high trait forgivingness) and identify as Christian are likely to highly identify with their group that shares this value, such as a local church congregation. Greer et al. proposed that trait forgivingness, or highly valuing forgiving, contributes to an individual identifying with a Christian congregation. In turn, high identification with a congregation contributes to forgiveness of specific offenses. Hayes’ (2012) method of PROCESS analysis was used to test the indirect effects from trait forgivingness to unforgiveness and forgiveness (TRIM-A, TRIM-R, and TRIM-B) via group identification, over 1,000 bootstrapping iterations. Group identification significantly mediated the relationship between trait forgivingness with avoidance, revenge, and benevolence.

Altogether, the results of Study 2 suggest that group identification is a significant predictor of whether an individual forgives an in-group offender, and it may account for part of the process of enacting one’s level of value of forgivingness to forgiving an in-group offender for a specific offense, suggesting that one’s group identity motivates interpersonal reactions to other members in the group, such as offering forgiveness. Though there is scant literature concerning the relationship between group identification and forgiveness, these
two studies by Greer et al. (2013) provide initial support that one’s level of identification with a group predict forgiveness of an offender within the group. In the previous sections, I have defined relevant constructs and explained the theories related to forgiveness, religiousness/spirituality, and group identification. In the following section, I review the literature examining the REACH forgiveness model prior to proposing the current study utilizing this intervention.

**Purpose of the Present Review**

The purpose of the present review is to examine the theory behind the REACH forgiveness intervention and the findings that support its effectiveness. I will first describe the steps of the intervention, explain the theoretical backing of the emotional replacement hypothesis in encouraging forgiveness, present a summary of the findings of the twenty-two studies examining the REACH intervention, and then critically review the three published studies that have utilized the Christian adapted version of the intervention.

**Method of Review**

In a PsycInfo search on January 13, 2012, twelve publications that have examined the REACH model of forgiveness were found, and there are several other studies conducted not yet published, bringing the total number of studies utilizing this model to $N = 22$. Within this set of publications, three studies examine the Christian adapted version of the REACH intervention. At this time, no published study utilizing the REACH forgiveness intervention has incorporated a predictor of forgiveness from the model of relational spirituality and forgiveness. In addition, no intervention study has investigated participants trying to forgive an offense that occurred within a congregation.
The REACH Forgiveness Intervention and the Emotional Replacement Hypothesis

The scientific study of forgiveness began in the 1980s. Between the years of 1990 and 2000, multiple research teams created group interventions to promote forgiveness. These included Enright (1991), McCullough and Worthington (1995), McCullough, Worthington and Rachal (1997), Rye and Pargament (2002), and Luskin (2002). Since that time, many studies have been conducted to analyze the components of the interventions and examine the effect of time spent during the intervention on level of forgiveness. To date, no one intervention among these research teams has been found significantly superior over others in effect size (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Hoyt, Wade, & Worthington, 2013; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005). However, I will discuss which components seem to be the most effective later in this section. Prior to explaining the components of the REACH forgiveness model and findings of its effectiveness, I will review an article by David and Montgomery (2010) suggesting a thorough evaluative framework for determining the appropriateness of deeming a therapeutic intervention as “evidence-based.”

Evidence-based psychotherapy. The field of psychotherapy has been trying to define criteria for evidence-based treatment for several years. Within that time, various evaluative approaches have been suggested to accomplish the goal of knowing which treatment approaches are proven effective for particular issues or disorders. Because the field overall is not in agreement on an accepted standard, writers can mean different things when using terms such as evidence-based treatment, therapy, or practice. Because of this lack of clarity and consistency, David and Montgomery (2010) suggested a framework using comprehensive evaluation of therapies and their respective theoretical bases. David and Montgomery describe the need to conduct studies that seek out evidence both for the
psychological change mechanisms (or theory) and the therapeutic techniques that are created based on that theory. The authors argue that without support for both aspects of a therapeutic approach, psychologists do not know why a particular approach is effective. They support the common sense of their reasoning by observing that in the late nineteenth century malaria was thought caused by bad air. Treatment to prevent malaria based on the prevailing theory was to close windows, which would, it was believed, prevent bad wind. In reality, closed windows kept out mosquitoes, which were the actual carriers of malaria. They thus observe that mere efficacy data might support a treatment but in fact the theory of the treatment could be completely wrong. David and Montgomery (2010) advocate securing support for the efficacy of the treatment and validity of proposed change mechanism.

Within analysis of the two factors that make up a therapy, there are more detailed categories which constitute levels of support. David and Montgomery break down the levels of support for each factor into three categories: “a) empirically well supported, b) no data, preliminary data less than minimum standards, or mixed data, and c) strong contradictory evidence,” (p. 91). Utilizing this hierarchical model, a psychological treatment can fall into one of nine categories. For a theory to be deemed empirically well supported, the authors contend it must be backed by evidence from experimental studies and/or component analyses by at least two different investigators or teams. Likewise a therapeutic approach must have evidence from randomized clinical trials of efficacy or effectiveness in at least two studies by two or more different investigators or teams. For a therapy to be considered well supported in both aspects it must also produce evidence of various kinds of efficacy: absolute efficacy – better than a waitlist control in three studies, relative efficacy – better than another evidence-based treatment (and both treatments are
better than a control condition), and specific efficacy – better than other standard therapies and the theory is backed by mediation and/or moderation analyses.

Now that I have briefly outlined the framework proposed by David and Montgomery (2010) for classifying evidence-based status of psychotherapies, I will transition into reviewing the evidence pertaining to the theoretical mechanisms of change for the REACH forgiveness model: the emotional replacement hypothesis and literature examining the REACH forgiveness intervention. At the conclusion of these reviews, I will define the classifications for the theory and therapeutic package of the REACH intervention within David and Montgomery’s framework.

**The five steps to REACH Forgiveness.** In this section, I will define each of the five steps in the REACH forgiveness model. Following this brief section, I will proceed to the literature explaining how these steps came about to form the current intervention based on component analysis. The first step in the model is **R = Recall the hurt.** Leaders work with participants to recall the identified offense in a new way, namely by removing the negative emotions wrapped up in the memory. The second step is **E = Empathize with the offender.** Through a series of exercises that help participants see themselves as imperfect and capable of hurting others, they are encouraged to develop empathy for the person who hurt them as a similarly imperfect being. The third step is **A = Give an Altruistic gift of forgiveness.** Following the participants developing a sense of empathy for their offender, they are reminded of times when they received mercy and forgiveness from others (either from other people or from God). Participants are asked to consider giving their offender an altruistic gift of forgiveness just as they were forgiven by others. The fourth step in the model is **C = Commit to the forgiveness you experience.** In this step, leaders ask participants to define
the percentage of emotional forgiveness they have experiences towards their offender and commit to it by completing a certificate of emotional forgiveness during the group. The last step is H = Hold onto the forgiveness when you doubt. Within this last step, the group discusses possible future situations which could make it difficult for them to remain forgiving towards their offender. The group concludes by participants working independently through a series of exercises which attempt to help them find ways to be a more forgiving person across situations and relationships in their lives, and stating a final percentage of emotional forgiveness towards their identified offender.

**Unforgiveness and forgiveness as emotion-driven responses.** In the second section of this paper, where I defined terms and concepts involved in the current study, I explained the ideas of perceived hurts, forgiveness, and unforgiveness. In this section, I will further examine how hurts lead to negative emotional reactions (and eventually perhaps to unforgiveness if reparative processes do not intervene) and how positive facilitative emotions can lead to forgiveness. Worthington (2006) explains that fear and anger are initial reactions to an offense. Through ruminating about these feelings and the offense, victims develop other negative emotional reactions such as bitterness, hatred, hostility, and resentment. If a person feels these emotions in response to an offense the person will likely develop emotional unforgiveness towards the offender (e.g. bitterness, hatred, hostility, resentment, anger, and fear). After unforgiveness has set in, emotional and decisional forgiveness are more difficult than merely overcoming a sense of injustice (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). The unforgiving emotion must be changed, and emotions can be quite resistant to change, especially negative ones (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).
Worthington presents some positive facilitative emotions that can help lead to forgiving emotions. These facilitative emotions are gratitude, humility, contrition, and hope. Several studies by Emmons and McCullough (see Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001; McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004) examine dispositional gratitude and related personality traits. Evidence from these studies shows that a disposition high in gratitude relates to positive affect, prosociality, well-being, spirituality, and religiousness. Though not directly related to other-oriented emotions which aid in forgiving, gratitude is part of the same configuration of personality traits as forgiveness.

Another facilitative emotion is humility, which has not been studied as thoroughly as gratitude. Researchers have found it difficult to measure humility, ensuring that what they measure is not low self-esteem (Tangney, 2000; Worthington, 2003). Exline and Martin (2005) found preliminary data that humility may lead to forgiveness. Most recently, Davis et al. (2010) created a scale for measuring spiritual humility (SHS: Spiritual Humility Scale). Davis and colleagues found that spiritual humility related to other measures of spirituality and general humility. In addition, spiritual humility has been related to forgiveness, while controlling other spiritual variables and this relationship was moderated by religious commitment. Early evidence supports humility as a facilitative emotion and one related to forgiveness (see also Davis et al., 2011).

Another emotion that possibly facilitates other-oriented emotions is contrition. Thus far, there is one study by Roberts (2005) which defines contrition as “as sense of one’s own moral imperfection coupled with both a distress over one’s moral failings and a motivation to avoid moral failures and to thus act virtuously,” (cited by Worthington, 2006; p. 80).
Worthington (2006) asserts that contrition leads one to empathize, not judge another, and behave out of love and compassion, all of which promote forgiveness. Finally, the last hypothesized emotion facilitative of other-oriented emotions that leads to forgiveness is hope, which is an emotion that involves belief in positive outcomes. Hope might relate to expecting that a relationship can be repaired, that forgiving would be beneficial for one’s health or believing one can please God through his or her decisions and emotions. Next, I will present positive other-oriented emotions commonly found to replace unforgiveness.

As explored at the beginning of this section, unforgiveness develops from a constellation of negative emotions aimed at another person. Worthington’s (2006) emotional replacement hypothesis states that these unforgiving emotions can be replaced by positive emotions directed towards an offender. These other-oriented emotions that typically lead to forgiveness are empathy, sympathy, compassion, and altruistic love. Recall that in the five steps of the REACH forgiveness model, E stands for “empathizing with the offender” and A is an “Altruistic gift of forgiveness.”

**Empathy.** Empathy is defined as discerning another’s emotions and being emotionally engaged with them. Several studies have examined empathy and its relationships to forgiving. Sandage and Worthington (2010) found that, regardless of treatment condition emphasizing forgiving out of empathy or self-enhancement motivations, participants who developed empathy for an offender forgave them more. Victims may be able to develop empathy for an offender if they view the offender’s actions as not malicious or intentionally harmful, rather believing they acted in what they believed to be the best option at the time (Worthington, 2006). Through empathizing with an offender, victims may realize that the hurtful action was something anyone was capable of doing.
Sympathy. The next other-oriented emotion is sympathy, which is distinct from empathy in that sympathy goes beyond simply feeling what another may feel to generating positive emotions towards that person. Sympathy has been studied in detail by Eisenberg for decades. Eisenberg qualifies sympathy as an empathy-related response and found to relate to perspective taking and prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, Valiente, & Champion, 2004). Eisenberg et al. (2002) found that empathy and sympathy displayed in young children persisted through adulthood and related to prosocial disposition rated by participants and their friends.

Compassion. Another related other-oriented emotion is compassion, which is a valued virtue by all major religions. Batson, Klein, and Highbarger (1995) found that encouraging empathy and discussing a situation with others leads to compassionate responses towards others. The two studies by Batson et al. (1995) suggest that altruism can out-weigh justice motivations and lead to more compassionate actions. Su, Lee, Ding, and Comer (2005) presented participants with emotionally intense scenarios and found that compassion mediated the relationship between empathy and willingness to get involved in the situation. Empathy and compassion produced motivation to act.

Love. The final other-oriented emotion proposed by Worthington (2006) to aid in developing forgiveness is altruistic love. Altruistic love is concerned with the well-being of another person. Some evidence for the existence of pure altruism was demonstrated by the studies of Batson et al. (1995) previously mentioned. Sprecher and Fehr (2005) developed a compassionate (or altruistic) love scale in three studies. The authors found that altruistic love related to prosocial behavior towards particular targets. Also, Sprecher and Fehr found that love was distinct from empathy.
Worthington (2006) asserts that when a person begins developing these positive other-oriented emotions, their motives towards an offender subsequently shift. The victim lets go of motives for justice and revenge and replaces them with benevolent motives. Benevolent, conciliatory motives seek to enhance a relationship, repairing emotional ruptures. When one forgives an offender they have motives of mercy, grace, and altruistic love towards the offender. Initially, mercy is a feeling of withholding punishment one deserves. Grace then goes further to treating a person better than deserved. Finally, altruistic love might involve doing beneficial acts for the person, feeling positively towards them, and thinking positively towards the offender. Replacement of negative, unforgiving emotions with positive other-oriented emotions of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love can transform a victim’s motives towards an offender. This can occur independently of behavior depending on the relationship situation. I have explained the emotions involved in unforgiveness and forgiveness and will proceed to provide evidence for Worthington’s (2006) emotional replacement hypothesis. After presenting that evidence, I will delve into more detail as how the REACH forgiveness intervention operates to replace emotions.

**The emotional replacement hypothesis.** In the previous section, I briefly outlined Worthington’s (2006) stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness. In the present section, I will expand the explanation of this concept and how it led to the theory of effectiveness behind Worthington’s REACH intervention for promoting forgiveness. Worthington (2006) presents four propositions of evidence for the emotional replacement hypothesis, while admitting that there is not any direct evidence from research of the casual factors for forgiveness. However, as will be explored in these four propositions, there is much indirect evidence linking emotional, cognitive, and behavioral changes to the affect related to
unforgiveness and forgiveness. I will review the four primary propositions presented by Worthington, which support the emotional replacement hypothesis.

The first proposition is that positive and negative affect exist within separate systems within the body. This argument is substantiated by personality psychology (Russell & Carroll, 1999), stress-and-coping theory (Folkman, 1997), theories of emotion, motivation, and interpersonal interaction, brain chemistry of aggression, and evolutionary theory. Russell and Carroll (1999) suggested that if positive and negative affect existed on a bipolar continuum, the domain of one would be the direct opposite of the other. When we apply this to the concept of unforgiveness, then the only alternative affect would be forgiveness. However, we have plenty of evidence to the contrary. There are many possible alternatives to relieving unforgiveness than through developing forgiveness, including justice, acceptance, and renarration. Folkman has studied stress and positive coping through many studies and has found in samples and contexts that people can experience positive and negative emotions simultaneously (see Folkman, 1997; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). These findings add to evidence suggesting that positive and negative affect do not exist on opposite ends of one scale.

More evidence that positive and negative affect are controlled separately comes from emotion research. Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, and Steward (2000) studied the relations between emotional states and health, finding that positive and negative emotions have different effects on body systems. Positive emotions have a different effect on the body than the lack of negative emotions. Norman et al. (2011) review research in neuroscience supporting the bivariate model of negativity and positivity. One example from Norman et al. is that repeated research supports the nucleus accumbens’ involvement in experiencing
positive affect and the amygdala’s involvement in experiencing negative affect. Finally, evolutionary theorists Newberg, d’Aquili, Newberg, and deMarici (2000) suggest that three brain processes are involved in experiencing unforgiveness and forgiveness: (a) a developmental sense of self and ego, (b) conspecific congruence, a nonhierarchical relationship between oneself and others, and (c) long-term memory of harmful events. Newberg and colleagues hypothesize that a sense of unforgiveness evolved out of an inflated sense of self combined with the ability to recall harmful events long-term. However, constant revenge and grudge-holding would destroy a community, thus forgiveness may have subsequently evolved with the aid of developing empathy for others (see also McCullough et al., 2010). Considered together, there is much evidence suggesting that different systems control positive and negative affect.

The second proposition for the emotional replacement hypothesis is that positive and negative emotions compete with one another when experienced simultaneously. There is some direct evidence involving forgiveness, and more indirect evidence for this hypothesis. Farrow and colleagues have conducted studies using neuroimaging that examine which portions of the brain are activated when a person thinks about judgments of fairness versus empathy and forgivability (what they would consider forgiving). Farrow et al. (2001) found that the left front temporal region is activated when one thinks about empathy and forgivability, but other regions are involved in considering fairness. See Farrow (2007) for a review of neuroimaging research on empathy. In another neuroimaging study, Pietrini, Guazzelli, Basso, Jaffe, and Grafman (2000) instructed participants in different condition scenarios. The authors found that participants instructed to imagine angry situations showed high activity in the limbic system while rational thinking in the orbitofrontal cortex was
inhibited. These findings suggest that negative affect will block rational thought and imply that calm emotions may be blocked as well. These neuroimaging studies provide evidence in different ways supporting the claim that positive and negative affect compete against each other. See Vytal and Hamann (2010) for a recent meta-analysis of studies examining this theory. Vytal and Hamann show that compounded evidence supports that basic emotions consistently correlate with discriminate areas of the brain.

Another area of research adding to this proposition is motivational systems. Harmon-Jones and colleagues have studied approach motivation, emotion, and behavior in several studies. In Harmon-Jones, Vaughn-Scott, Mohr, Sigelman, and Harmon-Jones (2004), the researchers measured brain activity in college students related to being evaluated in which they were either insulted or not. EEG scans showed that when insulted, participants’ left frontal activity increased (the area of the brain often associated with anger and aggression) and right frontal activity decreased versus when participants felt high sympathy, this effect went away. This study replicated findings from Harmon-Jones, Sigelman, Bohlig, and Harmon-Jones (2003) showing that positive other-oriented emotions affected brain activity associated with negative (unforgiveness). Research from these separate laboratories support the hypothesis that negative and positive affect work against one another. Harmon-Jones, Gable, and Peterson (2010) recently reviewed the work on asymmetric frontal cortical activity related to emotional experience.

Another research area providing support for this hypothesis is related to moral dilemmas. A study by Greene et al. (2001) asked \( N = 9 \) participants to solve a moral dilemma while in an fMRI unit. During one dilemma scenario, participants’ brain activity switched from rational thinking to emotional when they had to decide whom to save and
whom to harm. To seek more evidence of emotions taking over in certain decisions, the researchers conducted a second experiment. Greene et al. found that participants who made a minority decision in solving the dilemma took longer to come to their conclusion. This supports the claim that emotions compete with rational thought. Greene, Morelli, Lowenberg, Nystrom, and Cohen (2008) again presented undergraduate students \((N = 82)\) with moral dilemma scenarios. Greene et al. assigned participants to either a cognitive load or control condition. Results showed that the cognitively tasked participants took longer to respond, supporting the earlier findings by Greene et al. (2001).

A final area of research supporting the competing hypothesis is studies of the peripheral nervous system. Witvliet, Ludwig, and Vander Laan (2001) presented participants with four offense-reaction scenarios and measured physiological activity simultaneously. Participants showed changing levels of reactivity between the unforgiving and forgiving scenarios on measures of heart rate, mean arterial pressure, skin conductance, and muscle tension. Witvliet, Ludwig, and Bauer (2002) replicated these findings in a similar experiment presenting participants with scenarios of seeking forgiveness and various responses. (See also Witvliet et al., 2010; Witvliet et al., 2011 for similar studies). Brain imaging and physiological measures provide indirect evidence for the proposition that positive and negative emotions compete when experienced simultaneously.

Worthington’s (2006) third proposition in the emotional replacement hypothesis is that emotions experienced at present are stronger than “as if” emotions when they compete with each other. Evidence of this comes from the idea of the corrective emotional experience in psychotherapy. Practitioners aim to provide strong in-vivo emotional experiences during treatment in order to help clients feel differently. The effectiveness of
the corrective emotional experience relies on the proposition that emotions experienced now, in the moment, are stronger than remembering past emotions. When encouraging someone to forgive, interventionists aim to provide a strong, positive emotional experience of empathy, compassion, and altruism, which can outweigh negative past emotions of hostility, revenge, and bitterness. Another related area is the relaxation response studied by Benson for more than two decades (see Benson & Klipper, 1975). Benson has found that even a few minutes of calming relaxation through meditation, imagery, or deep breathing can overcome negative health effects caused by stressors. The positive mood created by the relaxation response counteracts negative physical and mental outcomes.

Research on emotional expression gives additional support for the third proposition of emotional replacement. Several researchers have investigated the relationship of expression of negative emotions and positive health outcomes. For brevity, I will focus on a study by Pennebaker (2004) who assigned participants to write about negative life events for 15 minutes a day for 2 weeks. While this task results in more negative moods temporarily, better health outcomes are found long-term. Other research supports the claim that more than catharsis is taking place (see Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009 for a review of studies of expressive writing and health outcomes). Participants who use reflection on negative events to express strong affect and work through the traumatic happenings derive benefits later on. Research on emotional expression shows that suppression of negative affect is not beneficial, such that ignoring negative feelings in an attempt to “move on” is not effective. Rather, people need to express negative emotions in order to work towards more positive feelings.
Worthington’s (2006) fourth proposition of emotional replacement is that specific positive emotions oppose unforgiveness and result in emotional forgiveness. A number of studies have investigated the effect of empathy on prosocial action, such as altruism and inhibition of aggression. Studies specifically concerned with forgiveness have found that empathy mediates connections between apologies and forgiveness, and proportionately relates to amount of forgiveness (Davis & Gold, 2011; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Work by psychotherapists also supports the proposition that certain positive emotions lead to forgiveness. Developing empathy is a key aspect in all major models of encouraging forgiveness. Malcolm and Greenberg (2000) assert that empathy is a necessary ingredient in coming to forgive an offender. Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) include empathy as a gateway to developing compassion for an offender in their 20-step model to promote forgiveness. Sandage and Worthington (2010) compared two 6-hour psychoeducational interventions to promote forgiveness with a waitlist control. One intervention was an empathy condition and the other a self-enhancement condition. Participants in both seminars rated comparably on follow-up measures of empathy and forgiveness. However, empathy mediated the relationship between condition and forgiveness. It seems that if participants in either condition developed more empathy, they were more forgiving. These are just a few examples of studies supporting the role of empathy opposing unforgiveness, though many more exist in the literature.

A final area of evidence for the fourth proposition comes from the Broaden and Build model by Fredrickson (1998). In this model, Fredrickson aimed to expound on the effect of positive emotions, which tended to receive much less investigation by researchers than negative. Overall findings consistently support negative emotions focusing an
organism narrowly on a problem. However, Fredrickson argues that positive emotions broaden a person’s thoughts about possible actions. In this way, positive emotions also build up someone’s resources as the person sees more options available. Garland, Fredrickson, Kring, Johnson, Meyer, and Penn (2010) also assert that positive emotions support coping and mental health though broadening cognition and behavior such that biopsychosocial resources increase. Fredrickson’s claims align with the emotional replacement hypothesis around the idea that positive emotions can undo effects of negative experiences and lead to better health outcomes for people. In a related area, McCullough, Root, and Cohen (2006) investigated effects of benefit-finding following a transgression compared to the traumatic effects and a control condition. Participants in all three conditions completed a 20-minute writing task. Participants in the benefit-finding condition showed reductions in avoidance and revenge. As results did not support the number of benefit-related or cost-related words predicting unforgiving motivations, the authors suggest that cognitive processing produced changes in unforgiveness and forgiveness. This suggests that, similar to Fredrickson’s model, positive thoughts and emotions helped participants process through their experience and consider different outcomes, namely forgiveness.

In this section, I have presented four propositions, which build upon one another, and supply mounting evidence for the emotional replacement hypothesis on which the REACH forgiveness model is based. Proposition one states that positive and negative affect exist separately rather than on opposite ends of one continuum. The second proposition shows that positive and negative affect compete with one another when experienced simultaneously. Third, emotions experienced in the present are stronger than those remembered. Finally, the fourth proposition asserts that positive emotions can replace
negative and lead to emotional forgiveness. Now that I have reviewed a large body of evidence supporting the basis for the REACH forgiveness intervention, I will report a summary of findings from the studies testing this model.

**Summary Review of the Empirical Literature on REACH Forgiveness Groups**

Worthington’s REACH forgiveness model was originally created for use with general populations and tested at secular universities. Later, the secular intervention was adapted for use with exclusively Christian populations. There are fewer studies investigating the Christian version as it is a more recent protocol, but it has already been utilized by Worthington and other researchers at Christian universities and within a church in the Philippines (see Lampton, Oliver, Worthington, & Berry, 2005; Stratton, Dean, Nooneman, Bode, & Worthington, 2008; Worthington et al., 2010). Recently, the adapted version was tested by Toussaint (2011) in order to compare to another forgiveness intervention created by Fred Luskin (2002). Toussaint and colleagues found comparable results between the two treatments. In the present section, I will summarize the literature on all REACH intervention studies published so far with an overview of the consistent findings. In the following section, I will review the findings of studies using the Christian-adapted intervention in more detail.

In 2005, Wade, Worthington, and Meyer published a meta-analysis reviewing the four most studied forgiveness interventions, created by Enright, Rye, Worthington, and Luskin. This meta-analysis provides the most up to date information for the effectiveness of the REACH intervention overall. In early studies, the intervention included only the first three steps (REA) of the current model. Studies utilizing the full REACH model, which were also longer (6-8 hours as compared to 1-2), showed larger gains from pre- to post-
treatment levels of forgiveness. Effect sizes of the full model range from .35 to .95 versus .12 to .40 for partial treatments. Across all forgiveness treatment models, Wade et al. (2005) found that time spent on specific components was related to effect size of treatment. These particularly effective components are empathizing with the offender, committing to forgive, and overcoming unforgiveness through relaxation or anger management. Also, across all forgiveness interventions, time spent increases gains in forgiveness. For the REACH forgiveness model, one hour of intervention relates to about .10 standard deviation in effect size (i.e., a 6-hour intervention results in about .55 - .60 effect size).

Ten published studies have investigated the full REACH model, 5 of which compared the intervention to a no-treatment control and found it more effective. Four of the other studies compared the REACH model to an alternative treatment, which include expressive writing, process-oriented treatment, self-enhancement motivated forgiveness, and deep muscle relaxation. Within all these studies, the REACH model was consistently more effective than a no-treatment control group (see Jackson, 1998; Lampton et al., 2005; McCullough et al., 1997; Ripley & Worthington, 2002; Wade, 2002). However, the REACH model was not always found more effective than alternative treatments (see Sandage and Worthington, 2010; Stratton et al., 2008; Wade, Worthington, and Haake, 2009). Researchers have suggested common factors among treatments possibly causing similar outcomes. Overall, research has not clearly delineated benefits of the REACH forgiveness model over alternative treatments to produce forgiveness.

Recall the criteria outlined by David and Montgomery (2010) used to categorize psychotherapeutic interventions within a framework of effectiveness. These authors asserted that psychotherapy must be backed by evidence for both its therapeutic package and
theory in order to be classified as fully “evidence-based.” In the previous section, I reviewed four propositions presented by Worthington (2006) in support of the emotional replacement hypothesis, the theory on which the REACH forgiveness model is based. In the current section, I summarized findings for all studies that have tested the REACH intervention. Though evidence for the emotional replacement hypothesis is indirect, it is substantial and wide-ranging across disciplines. The breadth of scientific evidence provides strong support for this theory. Also, multiple researchers have tested the REACH model at secular and Christian universities. According to the criteria defined by David and Montgomery (2010), I evaluate the REACH forgiveness model as having solid supporting evidence for both the theory of change behind the REACH forgiveness model and the psychoeducational intervention. Therefore, the REACH forgiveness intervention is classified as an evidence-based treatment for lessening unforgiveness and promoting forgiveness.

**Review of the Empirical Literature on REACH Forgiveness Groups with Christian Populations**

In the present section, I will continue to review findings of studies utilizing the REACH forgiveness model. In contrast to the previous section, I will focus only on the three published studies that utilized the Christian-adapted version of the intervention, and I will briefly review findings of one yet unpublished study. As mentioned in the previous section, the REACH forgiveness intervention was created for use with any population, not specifically for religious persons. At the time of Wade, Worthington, and Meyer (2005), only small differences had been found between results of the secular and adapted REACH forgiveness interventions (e.g., the only published study on a Christian adapted REACH Forgiveness intervention was Lampton et
al., 2005). More recently, Davis et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analytic review of religious and spiritual psychotherapies and their effectiveness compared to secular treatments with religious and spiritual populations. Religious and spiritual tailored interventions demonstrated larger effect sizes for patients in psychological and spiritual outcomes. Two Christian-adapted version of REACH forgiveness model were included in this review (e.g. Lampton et al., 2005; Stratton et al., 2008). Though the meta-analysis was not solely concerned with the comparative effectiveness of the adapted versus secular version of the REACH Forgiveness model, this gives promising support for using the Christian-adapted version of this intervention with Christian populations. Furthermore, Hook et al. (2009) reviewed Christian accommodated treatments to determine whether they met criteria for empirically supported status. Both Lampton et al. (2005) and Stratton et al. (2008) were more efficacious than control conditions and came from different labs (at John Brown University and Asbury University, respectively). Therefore, the Christian accommodated REACH Forgiveness intervention was deemed empirically supported, but because it was not superior to can alternative treatment, it was not deemed specifically efficacious.

So far, three studies have been conducted at separate Christian universities which utilize the Christian-adapted version of the REACH intervention with students (Lampton et al., 2005; Stratton et al., 2008; Toussaint, 2011) and one study was conducted in the Philippines with a mix of groups from a church, retreat center, and college (Worthington et al., 2010). Below, I have outlined the design and findings of the three published studies in this area. Following the table, I will explore the Lampton et al. (2005) study in more detail as an example of this body of literature.
Table 1.

Summary of findings from studies utilizing Christian-adapted REACH intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>General Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lampton et al., 2005</td>
<td>$N = 65$ students at a Christian college</td>
<td>Efficacy study, Randomized clinical trial. Treatment comparison: Christian-oriented psychoeducational forgiveness workshop (REACH), $n = 42$, and assessment-only condition, $n = 23$</td>
<td>Demographics, Trait forgiveness scale (TFS), Transgression-related interpersonal motivations inventory (TRIM), Forgiveness-positive responses to the offender (F-PRO)</td>
<td>Treatment condition showed greater decrease in avoidance motivations and higher positive feelings towards an offender. Slightly higher changes in unforgiveness and forgiveness in current sample than previous secular samples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratton et al., 2008</td>
<td>$N = 114$ students at a Christian college</td>
<td>Efficacy study, RCT. Treatment comparison: Christian-oriented psychoeducational forgiveness workshop training (REACH), $n = 22$, Essay writing, $n = 46$, a Combination of the two treatments, $n = 17$, and a Control condition, $n = 29$</td>
<td>TFS, TRIM, F-PRO</td>
<td>REACH training produced increases in forgiveness and decreases in unforgiveness towards an offender. Essay writing showed some forgiveness responses toward an offender, the combined Workshop-Essay writing produced more positive, but not negative, responses to an offender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthington et al., 2010</td>
<td>$N = 32$ participants from Christian</td>
<td>Effectiveness study, non-randomized.</td>
<td>Demographics, TFS, TRIM, Single-item</td>
<td>Increase in TFS in participants who completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
churches, a Christian retreat center, and a college in the Philippines | Evaluation of REACH Christian-oriented treatment in a new context. The REACH was also accommodated to Filipino culture. | forgiveness scale (SIF) | post-treatment measures, comparable results for changes in unforgiving and forgiving motivations to other studies using REACH model.

| Toussaint, 2011 | *N* = 101 students at a Christian university | Efficacy study, RCT. Treatment comparison of Christian-adapted REACH model (*n* = 34), secularly based model: Forgive for Good (FFG; *n* = 31), and a control group (*n* = 36). | TFS, TRIM, Decisional forgiveness scale (DFS), Emotional forgiveness scale (EFS), Rye forgiveness scale (RFS), Gratitude questionnaire-6 (GQ-6), and Perceived stress scale (PSS) | Both REACH and FFG interventions showed significant changes in TRIM, EFS, and RFS. REACH and FFG were both more effective than control. FFG had a larger effect size for RFS. Treatments had equal effect size for EFS and TRIM. |

As you can see in the summary table, the three published studies testing the Christian-accommodated REACH Forgiveness (henceforth referred to as C-REACH) model included similar measurements: demographics, trait forgivingness, transgression-related interpersonal motivations (revenge and avoidance), and positive forgiving motivations. Lampton and colleagues (2005) conducted a study at a private, Christian university as part of an administration led initiative to develop moral character of students. Several activities that reached the entire campus focused on forgiveness for 6 weeks. Near the end of this time, volunteers signed up to participate in either a 6-hour psychoeducational group promoting forgiveness or an assessment
only condition. Participants were allowed to express a preference for treatment group, which the majority did, and the rest were randomly assigned to a treatment condition. This might be considered a modified RCT design because some were and some were not randomly assigned. The psychoeducational group took place in two-hour segments over three weeks. All participants were assessed at the outset of the study and at a later date, 2-weeks later in the assessment-only condition and immediately following the end of the intervention (3 weeks) for the treatment group. Lampton and colleagues expected the assessment-only participants to increase in trait and state forgiveness over the 2 week period due to concurrent exposure to the forgiveness programming on campus (hypothesis 1). The authors also expected participants in the psychoeducational groups to show increases in trait and state forgiveness following the intervention (hypothesis 2). For hypothesis 3, they expected the treatment group would gain a larger increase in forgiving than the control group.

Prior to this study being conducted, 40 group leaders, made up of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, were trained by Worthington in a 1-day session. Training consisted of Worthington leading the entire group through the REACH exercises and providing guidelines on running the groups. Eight group-leaders-to-be sat in the middle of a room and discussed their experiences throughout the intervention, with the other 32 group-leaders-to-be participating, but not discussing exercises, and observing the smaller group. All group leaders were given manuals with which to lead the REACH forgiveness psychoeducational groups and participant manuals. The group-leaders-to-be followed along in their own participant manuals during the group. In the study proper, groups of students in dormitories were led by undergraduate, lay counselor, and master’s level counselors who had been among the 40 trained leaders.
Following measurement of the assessment-only condition and treatment groups being conducted, the authors checked the two groups for equivalence on the major study variables and no differences were found. For hypothesis one, participants in the assessment-only condition showed no increase in trait forgivingness and no decrease in revenge and avoidance motivations. There was a significant increase in positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from time-1 to time-2 for participants. Regarding hypothesis two, participants in the treatment condition showed no difference in trait forgivingness, but revenge and avoidance motivations decreased and positive aspects increased significantly. Regarding the third hypothesis, analyses of covariance compared the two conditions on all main variables. The treatment group did not differ from control in trait forgivingness or revenge motivations. However, there were differences on avoidance motivations and positive thoughts. There was partial support for each hypothesis.

Overall, in an informal post-hoc analysis, changes in TRIM and F-PRO were slightly larger than those found in previous studies in secular settings (Cohen’s $d = .61$). Lampton et al. (2005) suggest this may relate to specific aspects of this study: (a) the intervention followed several weeks of participants’ exposure to the target concept, forgiveness; (b) participants were predominantly Christian; and (c) the content of the intervention was Christian (value-congruent content). This study was the first published to test a Christian-adapted intervention with untargeted transgressions. An untargeted transgression means that participants were able to select any type of transgression to work towards forgiving, rather than a specific category such as a hurt by a romantic partner or incest. Findings from this efficacy study warrant use of the C-REACH forgiveness intervention within Christian populations and further study of the intervention beyond university students. In addition, since this first study utilizing the C-
REACH intervention, three more studies have tested it, and two found it efficacious with Christian populations, while one found it effective in Filipino church communities.

In Lampton et al. (2005), the authors did provide a detailed table showing the Christian accommodations made to the secular treatment. Worthington, Hook, Davis, and McDaniel (2010) criticized most religiously accommodated treatment studies for not describing the specific accommodations.

**Summary Critique of Current Literature**

In the previous section, I outlined the four studies that have tested the C-REACH intervention (see Table 1). I reviewed one of these studies, Lampton et al. (2005) in detail as an example of the literature. In the present section, I will provide a summarizing critique of this small body of literature. The studies within this area were fairly similar, and thus, my critiques apply across studies.

One potential limitation of all the studies was low power due to the small sample sizes. Though it is generally difficult to recruit enough participants for an intervention study, results cannot be generalized or strongly relied upon as accurate with very small samples (as in Stratton et al., 2008; Worthington et al., 2010).

All four studies involved participants considering untargeted transgressions. As such, we lack information on whom and for what offenses participants were trying to forgive. There could be quite a bit or variety in type of transgression, offender, hurtfulness, and time since offense. A few studies have controlled some such variables, but if none are controlled, we really do not know what types of hurts and offenses are being forgiven. One might speculate that Christians may forgive different people in different ways at different levels. Also, there is no literature yet examining if Christians forgive other Christians versus secular peers differently.
Additionally, thus far the REACH model has exclusively been administered in an in-person group format. There are advantages to this method as participants can interact and learn from each other’s forgiveness process. However, it limits the availability for participants to those who can attend 6-hours of an intervention in person on specified dates and times. Also, two meta-analyses of process-model forgiveness interventions have found that individually administered interventions yield much larger results than groups (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Lundahl, Taylor, Stevenson, & Roberts, 2008). Neither set of researchers investigated further into how the individual interventions yielded greater differences in forgiveness. However, it seems to be a weakness that the REACH model has not yet been applied to individual administration to test its effectiveness. These four efficacy studies pave the pathway for further investigation of the C-REACH forgiveness model with Christian populations. However, now that this research base has been established, future studies testing this intervention need to go beyond the current studies in examining more nuanced hypotheses concerning variables which may interact with the intervention and, thus, effect outcomes.

**Format of Forgiveness Interventions**

As described earlier, various versions of forgiveness interventions have been developed over the last three decades, the two most widely studied being Enright’s process model (Enright & Fizgibbons, 2000) and Worthington’s REACH model (2006). Iterations of these models have been compared in multiple meta-analyses (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Lundahl et al., 2008; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005). Wade et al. included only forgiveness interventions in group format, but widened the scope to all studies that fit that criteria, including those unpublished, conference presentations, and dissertations. In contrast, Baskin and Enright, and Lundahl et al. analyzed studies that included a control group or alternative treatment and were published in
refereed journals. Both groups of researchers included forgiveness interventions conducted in both individual counseling and group settings. For this brief review, I will focus on the meta-analysis conducted by Lundahl and colleagues for multiple reasons: it is the most recently published and includes individually administered forgiveness interventions as well as groups.

Lundahl et al. reviewed 14 forgiveness intervention studies, most of which happened to employ either Enright’s or Worthington’s model. The authors calculated effect size of intervention using Hedge’s $g$ to correct for variance accounted for by sample size. For effect size, a positive value indicates change in the desired direction, in this case: gains in forgiveness. An effect size of less than 0.5 is considered fairly small, while above 0.8 is quite large. Across studies, the researchers evaluated effect on multiple outcomes. Keeping the focus here on forgiveness, the average effect size on forgiveness post-intervention was $g = 0.82$. These authors also investigated possible moderators and found that mode of treatment (individual versus group) showed differences in effect. Forgiveness interventions administered to groups had an average effect size of $g = 0.41$, while those administered to individuals yielded $g = 1.72$. This finding is similar to that found by Baskin and Enright (2004). Both sets of authors reported this discrepancy but did not investigate the possible causes of such a large difference in outcomes between individual and group interventions.

There are some obvious differences in the studies that utilized individual counseling versus group administration. One such difference is the type of targeted transgression. Four studies utilizing individual counseling were included in Lundahl and colleagues’ review. The offenses participants worked on forgiving included incest, spousal abuse, substance abuse, and that of a partner’s abortion. However, the group interventions typically focused on relational wrongdoings, not specifically having to do with abuse. It could be argued that the participants in
the individual intervention had steep offenses to forgive and could be expected to show greater gains in forgiveness due to the harmful nature of the offenses experienced. Both sets of authors note that participants reporting more severe transgressions show larger gains in forgiveness post-treatment. Another notable difference in the 4 individual intervention studies review is the time spent, whereas the group interventions met within a range of 2-12 hours, the individual interventions ranged from 12-57 hours per person. Previous research has asserted that time spent is directly related to level of effect size (Wade et al., 2005), so we can logically infer that one possible reason for the larger outcomes in the individual interventions has to do with more time spent working on forgiving. There may be other factors influencing the greater outcomes for individual treatments that we are not aware of yet. This finding is encouraging for researchers who want to adapt the current forgiveness interventions into modes for greater distribution and impact, such as workbooks which can be completed by individuals on their own time.

**Manualized Self-Help Interventions**

As mentioned in the previous section, there are limitations to in-person intervention formats. Carpenter, Stoner, Mundt, and Stoelb (2012) argue that self-help psychotherapeutic interventions may be preferable because they are cost effective, easily distributed, and serve to empower patients. Many researchers in the health and mental health fields have been creating and testing self-help workbook formats of accepted treatment modalities such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for eating disorders (for a review see Sysko & Walsh, 2008), anxiety and depression (Galfin, Watkins, & Harlow, 2012), and pain control (Carpenter et al., 2012). In 2008, Barak, Hen, Boniel-Nissim, and Shapira conducted an extensive meta-analysis ($n = 92$ studies) on web-based psychotherapeutic interventions published by 2006. This included multiple formats, not only workbooks, such as websites, email, and online chat and forums. This
review included studies that utilized pure self-help (PSH) and guided self-help (GSH), which involves minimal involvement of a health care or mental health professional (Lovell et al., 2008). Overall, the mean weighted effect size of these web-based interventions was 0.53, comparable to face-to-face therapy results (Barak et al.). As examples of self-help versions of psychotherapeutic interventions, I will review the three specific studies listed above.

Sysko and Walsh (2008) reviewed the efficacy of self-help workbook treatments for Bulimia-Nervosa (BN) and Binge Eating Disorder (BED). Across 26 studies evaluated, self-help workbooks were generally more effective than waitlist control, but not always more effective than other treatments. Therefore, self-help workbooks for BN and BED are not deemed specifically efficacious. Results were not presented in effect size but percentage of reduction of problematic behaviors (binge eating, purging). This review also included both PSH and GSH formats. In all but one study in this review, GSH showed no advantage over PSH for patient outcomes. In more recent studies, both Galfin et al. (2012) and Carpenter et al. (2012) compared self-help workbooks to waitlist control (for rumination in palliative care patients and chronic back pain, respectively) and found the treatment more effective than control. Galfin and colleagues evaluated a GSH format, while Carpenter et al. utilized a pilot version of a PSH workbook. The current proposed study is most similar to that of Carpenter et al., who utilized a between subjects treatment v. waitlist control design with a PSH workbook format.

In this brief review, it is clear that a variety of treatment modalities fall under the umbrella title of “self-help” treatments. One might assume that PSH and GSH would differ considerably in effectiveness with the involvement of a health care professional. However, Barak et al. (2008) found no difference in effectiveness among type of modality (self-help web-based versus communication-based) when compared head-to-head in 14 studies. In the review
by Sysko and Walsh (2012), only three studies compared PSH and GSH head-to-head. Two of these three studies found no difference in outcomes between the two treatments. However, the third study showed a significant difference favoring GSH on one outcome: frequency of binge-eating. Overall, both reviews noted that web-based self-help interventions are effective for treating certain disorders (i.e., anxiety, depression, bulimia, and binge eating) but not specifically efficacious as they have not been proven more effective than standard in-person treatments.

As is common in newly developing treatments, web-based interventions lack uniformity in methodology and presentation of findings. Proudfoot et al. (2011) developed operational guidelines for internet intervention research in order to ameliorate these issues and set forth standards for best practice in this rapidly expanding intervention area. The authors set forth 12 guidelines, which are as follows:

Facet 1: Focus and target population – The target population and issue/disorder are well-defined.
Facet 2: Authorship details – The authors provide identifying information of program, developers, and how to find more information on the program.
Facet 3: Model of change – The authors clearly define the underlying theory of change.
Facet 4: Type and dose of intervention – The authors articulate actual administration of intervention to participants and completion of assessments, including validity of online use.
Facet 5: Ethical issues – Researchers provide clear consent information to participants including potential risks and benefits and whom to contact in case of adverse effects of treatment.
Facet 6: Professional support – Researchers provide clear information to participants concerning who is providing professional support, if anyone, and their credentials.
Facet 7: Other support - Researchers provide clear information to participants concerning who is providing non-professional support, if anyone, and their credentials.
Facet 8: Program Interactivity – Degree of interactivity is described when reporting on components of the program as well as purpose and length of time spent by participants.

Facet 9: Multimedia channel of delivery – The particular modes of delivery are well explained.

Facet 10: Degree of synchronicity – Degree of synchronicity (time delay of responses to participants) is reported, if applicable.

Facet 11: Audience reach – Level of access to intervention and exclusion criteria are explained, as well as follow-up support per participant drop-out, if applicable.


Effectiveness: Information on real-world effectiveness is provided including details on administration and adherence. Readiness for mass dissemination: Authors report on cost-effectiveness and ability of intervention to be used with a wider audience.

Proudfoot et al. (2011) acknowledge that professionals in the field of internet interventions must discuss these facets and the associated impacts prior to implementation.

These authors recommend adoption of the 12 proposed facets both while designing and reporting on internet interventions, thus allowing replication, extension, and comparison of studies. As will be described later, the current study will adhere to the guidelines set forth by Proudfoot et al. and each facet specifically addressed.

Research Agenda

When research on forgiveness began, relevant questions concerned defining the concept, identifying related variables and personality traits. Since this field advanced, researchers became more concerned with situational factors that relate to whether someone forgives. This movement from a trait approach to a state approach was partially caused by gaps in research findings. Specifically, researchers measuring forgiveness with religious participants found a gap between
participants’ self-rated trait forgivingness and actual level of forgiveness for a particular offense. After identifying this *religion-forgiveness discrepancy*, researchers called for changes in research design to better capture the relationships between offense-specific forgiveness and state-level religious and spiritual variables (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Since that time, researchers have aimed to fulfill these goals and find variables which are relevant at the time of the offense and in relation to the parties involved (offender, victim, transgression; for an example see Tsang et al., 2005).

Recall the model of relational spirituality by Davis and colleagues (2008) which considers these relevant relationships, including each party in reference to the sacred. Studies utilizing the model of relational spirituality have found robust relationships between these state variables and offense-specific forgiveness (see Davis et al., 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b; Greer et al., 2013). Due to equal specificity in measurement, we are beginning to better understand what relationships and variables impact victims’ responses. This research design has been utilized repeatedly in cross-sectional studies.

Studies examining the effectiveness of forgiveness interventions have not included relational variables beyond closeness between victim and offender and hurtfulness of the offense. Without including offense-specific relational variables, knowledge is lacking on how these variables might interact with treatment conditions. I suggest that failure to include these relational variables also means failure to capture the religious victim’s full forgiveness experience. Research findings suggest the importance of these spiritual relationships in the religious person’s appraisals following an offense. These salient relationships are likely, therefore, involved in the religious victim’s ability to forgive an offender. There is much evidence supporting the emotional replacement hypothesis which promotes forgiveness.
However, none of this evidence considers the unique perspective offered by religion and spirituality. This is a weakness of the current state of forgiveness literature considering that we know how strong the impact of spiritual relationships are on the forgiveness process of religious/spiritual victims. As such, I believe that researchers could expand understanding of how religious/spiritual people forgive by investigating interactions between relational spirituality variables and forgiveness interventions. This approach would provide a more nuanced understanding of victims’ forgiveness processes and characteristics of offense situations which may alter the course of forgiving.

The field of forgiveness research as a whole has conducted mainly cross-sectional studies but not many longitudinal or experimental designs. More studies are needed in both these areas to capture a fuller picture of what leads to and impedes forgiveness rather than a brief “snap shot.” Few studies have utilized a longitudinal design (Tsang et al., 2005), but those that do have shown stronger relationships between trait forgivingness and offense-specific forgiveness. In another study, Tsang et al. (2005) measured multiple offense situations and this approach also improved strength of relationship between trait and state forgiveness. Researchers need to utilize longitudinal designs, aggregation of data (multiple offense situations), and experimental methods so that research findings reflect that real nature of offenses and victims’ forgiveness of offenders rather than artifacts of measurement.

Another direction for forgiveness researchers is to catch up with other health and mental health teams investigating treatments which can be conducted at a distance. Increasingly, research is being translated into alternative administration routes for greater distribution. It behooves forgiveness researchers to examine new formats which can be more widely distributed to interested individuals. Conducting forgiveness interventions through individually emailed
workbooks can reach more participants, allow participants to complete exercises when it is convenient, and save on costs by not providing a space, food and compensation for leaders.

**General Statement of the Problem**

Though research concerning the concept of forgiveness has been flourishing for two decades, there is virtually no theory and almost no studies examining how religious people forgive. The research that has focused on religious populations and forgiveness has only recently begun to examine forgiveness of specific offenses (for a review see Davis et al., 2012). The majority of research has measured attitudes towards and dispositional tendencies to forgive others. Also, researchers have only begun to examine how the spiritual relationship between the victim, offender, transgression and the sacred may influence forgiveness of an offense (Davis et al., 2009). This present study takes the concept of a victim variable and relevant factors in an offense situation and applies it to a specific social milieu of similarity defined by level of group identification within a church congregation. Though this has only been utilized in two studies, theoretical models that guide this approach have been explicated (stress-and-coping theory, Worthington, 2006; relational spirituality and forgiveness model; Davis et al., 2008; Shults & Sandage, 2006; social identity theory and group identification, Henry et al., 1999; Tajfel, 1978). The current study goes further, examining the possible interaction of a victim’s group identification with a congregation and response to the REACH forgiveness intervention in resulting level of forgiveness of an in-group offender.

Several models have been described throughout my review of theories and research related to the Christian-accommodated REACH Forgiveness model and the ways it might promote forgiveness in Christians who have been offended by an in-group member (i.e., another Christian within the victim’s congregation). In the present section, I outline the ways the models
connect with each other, and afterwards I will hypothesize ways that the REACH Forgiveness intervention might affect specific elements within the various models. I have depicted these interrelationships among the models in Figure 2.

First, the stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness involves four elements: (1) the transgression; (2) appraisals of the transgression involving primary and secondary appraisals (e.g., is the transgressor potentially harmful and can I cope, respectively), however, additional specific appraisals are also relevant as we shall see below; (3) unforgiveness is an emotional stress reaction to the appraisals; (4) coping responses are undertaken. In the stress-and-coping theory, emotional forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping response and decisional forgiveness can be a problem-focused or meaning-focused coping response (Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007). Emotion-focused coping is aimed at reducing the emotional unforgiveness, which is shown as a feedback loop in Figure 2. Worthington’s (2006) emotional replacement hypothesis describes the mechanisms by which emotional forgiveness can reduce unforgiveness.

Specific appraisals that affect the amount of and type of unforgiveness are described in the relational spirituality and forgiveness model (for a description, see Davis et al., 2008; Worthington, 2009). Namely, appraisals are made by a victim of a transgression about (a) the victim’s offense- or coping-relevant personal qualities (i.e., religious commitment, trait forgivingness, trait anger, or one’s identification with one’s congregation [which is described in Greer, 2012] etc.), denoted (V); (b) the offender’s characteristics (i.e., remorse, intentionality, trait hostility), denoted (O); (c) the transgression (i.e., hurtfulness, seriousness), denoted (T); (d) relationships between V and O (i.e., friend, family member, sworn enemy, competitor, co-worker), denoted VO; (e) relationship between V and T (i.e., a V might have been seriously hurt in this way previously or might have experienced a similar offense at the hands of a significant
adult) denoted VT; (f) relationships between O and T (i.e., an offender may have inflicted similar hurts repeatedly) denoted OT; (g) the sacred (i.e., perceived characteristics of the sacred might influence forgiveness, such as an angry or uncaring or comforting God), denoted S; (h) the relationship between V and S (i.e., attachment to God, dedication to the sacred, disappointment or anger with God are examples), denoted SV; (i) the relationship between the O’s connection to S and the V’s connection to S (i.e., degree of perceived similarity of relationship to the sacred), denoted SO; and (j) the relationship of the T to S (i.e., whether the T is perceived to be a sacred loss or desecration) denoted ST. Thus, the model, of relational spirituality and forgiveness is a detailed aspect of appraisals in the stress-and-coping model of forgiveness.

Worthington’s C-REACH Forgiveness model affects numerous parts of this synthetic model that combines stress-and-coping theory, emotional replacement, relational spirituality and forgiveness, and Greer’s group identification models. For example, the C-REACH model

- Activates religiously-loaded cognitive structures like (a) religious commitment, (b) religious belief, (c) religious understandings or forgiveness, (d) religious values.
- Promotes a decision to forgive (a coping response affecting the feedback from coping to unforgiveness)
- Stimulates forgiving motives and disempowers unforgiving motives
- Generates positive other-oriented emotions leading to emotional replacement
- Changes perception of O by promoting empathy
- Heightens trait forgiveness (i.e., affects the self-perception of V)
- Lowers rumination (therefore lowers unforgiveness)
• Changes ST by promoting an increased awareness of spiritual similarity between the V and O

• Affects VO, the relationship of the offender and victim is strengthened

• Promotes decisional and emotional forgiveness (i.e., coping mechanisms and the emotional replacement hypothesis)

By creating a synthesis of these five models, we could create a set of experimental hypotheses – based on theory – that may be tested in an efficacy experiment using C-REACH for trying to forgive in-group transgressions by Christians.
Key to Figure 2.

(a): Effect of relationships included in Relational Spirituality and Forgiveness model on offense appraisals; includes victim, offense, and transgression in relationship with each other and the sacred.

(b): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on offense appraisals (developing empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love for the offender)

(c): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on the victim’s unforgiveness (victim making a decision to forgive; lessen rumination)

(d): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on feedback loop of coping responses altering the victim’s unforgiveness (replacement of negative other-oriented emotions of hostility, hatred, and fear with positive other-oriented emotions of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love; Worthington, 2006)

(e): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on victim’s coping methods in response to the transgression (lessening avoidance motives, revenge motives, forbearance, acceptance, and justice seeking; increasing benevolent and conciliatory motives; talking about transgression with others; encouraging decisional and emotional forgiveness and possible reconciliation)

(f): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Sacred-Offender relationship (changing victim’s perspective of their spiritual and human similarity with the offender)

(g): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Sacred-Victim relationship (strengthening Attachment to God and Dedication to the Sacred through Christian oriented exercises such as prayer and reading scripture; Davis et al., 2009a; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002)

(h): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Victim-Offender relationship (strengthening closeness and commitment [DAS-7; Hunsley et al., 2001])

(i): Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Victim (Increasing Trait Forgivingess and Religious Commitment [RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003]; lowering trait anxiety, anger and depression; strengthening Group Identification with congregation through forgiving in-group offender; [Greer et al., 2013])
Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of the present study, then, is to investigate possible effects of group identification with a congregation and treatment through a psychoeducational workbook to promote forgiveness and what impact the victim-sacred relationship has on a religious person’s ability to forgive. Worthington (1988) theorized that religious people in the top 10-15% of religious commitment usually consider relationships through the lens of religious schemas (including religious group norms). Thus, they are likely to compare their religious values to those of others and consider religious relationships in deciding how to respond to transgressions. A person high in religious commitment may be theorized to highly identify with a particular church congregation as a function of his or her commitment. Also, in Greer et al.’s (2013) second study, which measured a sample of college students at VCU, participants scored one standard deviation higher on religious commitment than what was previously found among students in secular universities. According to Worthington’s (1988) theorizing, religious people view their social relationships through religious schema including scripture, doctrine and group norms, which would especially apply to relationships within their identified church congregation of current membership (in-group). Therefore, when studying forgiveness of specific transgressions, the relationship appraisals of most concern in a religious sample may be those regarding the relationships of transgression, victim, and offender with the sacred. The specific aim of the present study is to help advance the field in three ways: by examining rates of forgiveness over time for those who participated in a forgiveness intervention, by applying the REACH forgiveness intervention to offenses occurring within a specified population (congregations of Christians), and to examine possible effects of a particular measure of
relational spirituality (group identification with a congregation) and levels of forgiveness following the intervention.

**Study 1**

**Specific Statement of the Problem**

Research concerned with forgiveness in religious and spiritual victims has moved from considering trait variables, such as religious affiliation, towards examining offense-specific variables, such as the victim’s dedication to the sacred (Davis et al., 2009a). Though research exists examining various relationships described in the model of relational spirituality and forgiveness (Davis et al., 2008), there is little literature concerning church members’ restoration and/or forgiveness of leaders or forgiveness among church members within a congregation (see Greer et al., 2013). The two studies conducted by Greer and colleagues found strong support for victims’ level of group identification with a congregation predicting forgiveness of an in-group offender. These were the first studies to investigate how Christian victims handle hurts inflicted by fellow church-attendees.

Part of life is dealing with interpersonal rejections and hurts—regardless of culture (Hook, Worthington, & Utsey, 2009). Such rejections and hurts are accompanied by inner turmoil involving emotions like anger, anxiety, and sadness (Worthington, 2006). Negative emotions are accompanied by motivations like wanting revenge or seeking to avoid the rejecting person (McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). However, because relationships are often valued, emotions like guilt and shame over one’s own contribution to the hurt or rejection, and more relationship-enhancing motivations like seeking reconciliation or desiring benevolence for the person might also attend the aftermath of the hurt/rejection. The internal experience of unforgiveness is typically considered stressful (Lazarus, 1999; Worthington, 2006). That is, the
A jumble of emotions, motivations, and ruminations constitute a stress reaction. The stress reaction has been labeled unforgiveness (Worthington & Wade, 1999) even though the person who was rejected or hurt might not use the lexicon of “forgiveness” to describe his or her experience.

There are many ways to attempt to cope (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) with experiences of stressful unforgiveness (Worthington, 2006). These include the following. One can engage in angry, vengeful acts to pay back the damage done or get revenge. One can simply put the person out of one’s physical life and try not to think about the person, avoiding the person physically or cognitively. One can suppress one’s emotional expression and negative behaviors for the good of the future of the relationship or the harmony in the groups to which the couple belongs; this is called forbearance (Worthington, 2006). One can attempt to repair the relationship through talking about the transgression and arriving at some understanding, usually called reconciliation (Freedman, 1998; Waldron & Kelly, 2008). Internally, the victim of the hurt or rejection (even if the rejection was to some degree mutual) will usually attempt to minimize the internal upheaval and regain emotional, motivational, and cognitive equilibrium through a variety of coping mechanisms (Worthington & Wade, 1999). These might include internal acts such as excusing or justifying the rejection/hurt, accepting that bad things happen in life and trying to let go of the turmoil, turning the matter over to God or a transcendental being or state of being, and perhaps forgiving.

There are two different types of forgiving (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). Decisional forgiveness is making an intent statement (to oneself) that one intends to put aside vengeance and avoidance (unless it is dangerous to continue interaction) and to treat the other person as someone of value. Emotional forgiveness involves replacing negative emotions associated with unforgiveness with positive other-oriented emotions (such as empathy,
sympathy, compassion, or love for the offender). Decisional and emotional forgiveness are internal processes on the part of the victim and they tend to reduce the distress of the rejection/hurt (Fincham, 2000), have mental health benefits (Toussaint & Webb, 2005), and have physical health benefits (Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007).

There have been a number of interventions developed to promote forgiveness. The two most-frequently used interventions are the process model of forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) and the REACH Forgiveness model of Worthington (2006). The REACH Forgiveness model (Worthington, 2006) has been tested with secular and Christian populations. Forgiveness interventions, like other psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic interventions, tend not to be equally effective for all participants. The REACH Forgiveness model has been found to be efficacious for university students in a secular state university. (e.g., McCullough & Worthington, 1995; McCullough et al., 1997; Sandage & Worthington, 2010; Worthington et al., 2000). The REACH Forgiveness model also has been adapted to particular clientele. For example, it has been adapted to couples (Burchard et al., 2003; Ripley & Worthington, 2002) and parents (Kiefer et al., 2010). It has also been adapted to culture (Worthington et al., 2010) and religion. In most investigations, of religion, it has been adapted to Christians (Lampton, Oliver, Worthington, & Berry, 2005; Rye & Pargament, 2002; Rye et al., 2005; Stratton, Dean, Nooneman, Bode, & Worthington, 2008; Worthington et al., 2010). The secular and Christian versions have not been compared head to head but twice (Rye & Pargament, 2005; Rye et al., 2002) with no statistical differences. It appears from a qualitative (Hook, Worthington, Davis, 2009) and meta-analytic (Davis, Worthington, & Hook, 2010; Worthington, Hook, Davis, & McDaniel, 2010) reviews that the adapted versions might be at least as efficacious as the non-adapted versions. Also, the REACH model has been tested in other labs besides Worthington’s
(e.g., Blocher & Wade, 2010; Rye & Pargament, 2002; Rye et al., 2005). Enright’s model has been applied in both groups and individual counseling, while the REACH model has been utilized exclusively within groups. Considering the transition of conducting psychoeducational interventions with individuals through alternate formats, we need to test the C-REACH Forgiveness model in such ways.

There are three published studies testing the Christian-adapted version of the REACH model, which have all found it to be effective (Lampton et al., 2005; Stratton et al., 2008; Worthington et al., 2010). In all three studies, participants identified untargeted transgressions to work towards forgiving during the psychoeducational group. Therefore, we lack knowledge of the types of offenders and transgressions that victims forgave. To move the field forward, understanding the nuances in offense situations and forgiveness processes of victims, more attention to interacting relational variables is needed.

Researchers have not posed the question, “What else, other than emotional replacement, is happening internally for religious victims utilizing their religious values in order to forgive an offender?” Investigating this question is not a simple task. However, we need to answer this question in order to truly understand how the value-congruent C-REACH intervention aids forgiveness. Also, we can understand more about offense variables that may alter the course of forgiveness for a victim.

Consider offense related variables that could affect a victim’s ability to forgive: if the victim and offender are still in regular contact/interaction, if the victim perceives that the offender hurt significant others in the victim’s life, similarity of the victim and offender’s spiritual values, the victim’s level of dedication to the sacred, etc. Now consider offense-related factors specific to hurts that occur within a congregation: if the offense affected the victim’s area
of Christian service (e.g., teaching Sunday school, leading small groups, doing church sponsored counseling), if the offense was incurred by someone the victim esteemed as a spiritual leader or mentor (such as the case of Haggard in which the offense was also publicly humiliating to the congregation), if the victim and offender were similarly committed to and involved in the congregation, or if the victim perceives the offense to desecrate something sacred within the church. For religious and spiritual victims, relationships between the victim, offense, and offender with the sacred strongly impact their ability to forgive. It is necessary to begin to examine these relationships in conjunction with forgiveness interventions to understand victims’ unforgiveness and forgiveness more fully. As a first step in this direction, I propose examining the possible interaction between a spiritual relationship and its impact on a religious person’s forgiveness of an in-group member.

At the end of the current literature review, I outlined two studies by Greer et al. (2013) which investigated the relationship of group identification with a congregation and forgiveness of an in-group offender. A major finding from Greer et al.’s second study was that group identification was the main mechanism through which dedication to the sacred predicted unforgiving and forgiving motivations. Dedication to the sacred is a measure used to capture the current relationship between the victim and sacred being, typically identified to be God (Davis et al., 2009a). Past studies have also examined the effects of attachment to God (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002) on forgiveness (Davis, Hook, & Worthington, 2008). For religious and spiritual victims, their relation to the sacred is likely a strongly salient factor in being able to forgive an offender their relation to the sacred is a source of values and guidelines for living. Worthington (1988) theorized that religious people in the top 10-15% of religious commitment usually consider relationships through the lens of religious schemas (including religious group
norms). Thus, they are likely to consider religious relationships in deciding how to respond to transgressions. According to Worthington’s (1988) theorizing, religious people view their social relationships through religious schema including scripture, doctrine and group norms, which would especially apply to relationships within their identified church congregation of current membership (in-group). Therefore, when studying forgiveness of specific transgressions, the relationship appraisals of most concern in a religious sample may be those regarding the relationships of transgression, victim, and offender with the sacred.

Within the C-REACH, several exercises focus on the participant’s connection to God. I propose that these exercises activate the victim-sacred relationship as the participant is asked to consider how God and their religious values impact their need to forgive. Consider the following exercises: (1) Reviewing Biblical passages about forgiveness (activates identification as Christian & believer of scripture as divine instruction); (2) C-REACH explains decisional forgiveness as desirable because it is God’s will for Christians (activates identification with the sacred/follower of God’s teaching); (3) Recall the hurt in light of God’s will and work in individuals’ lives (activates identity as Christian and in relation to the sacred via God working in individuals’ everyday lives); (4) Empathize with offender: have participants remember times they hurt others (activates identity as sinner/fallible being in need of forgiveness; also activates victim identifying with offender because both people are capable of hurting others and in need of forgiveness); (5) Give an altruistic gift of forgiveness (activates the participant’s identity as a Christian through the act of looking out for others’ need to be forgiven and being unselfish); (6) Commit to forgiveness by offering it as a sacred gift to God (activates identity as Christian in participants’ desire to obey God & honor God); (7) Hold onto forgiveness by praying for offender (activates identity as Christian as one who desires good for others & God’s will for
others), identify a hero of forgiveness (emulating desired Christian character seen in others). The C-REACH was designed specifically to apply to the forgiveness process for Christians by being value-congruent. The intervention utilizes relevant relationships in the victim’s life, their relationship with God and with other people through a religious lens.

As shown in Greer et al.’s second study, group identification with a congregation is a relevant factor in the victim-sacred relationship. Their study also showed that group identification with a congregation is the mechanism through which one’s dedication to the sacred predicts forgiveness. These findings suggest that when an individual is dedicated to God, he or she considers his or her connection to the religious community of which he or she is a part as a salient relationship. Thus, when hurt by another member of that sacred community, the individual considers how connected they are to the group and the group’s values in reference to their response to the offender. Studies consistently support this assertion through testing other relationships in the model of relational spirituality such as the victim and offender’s similarity of spirituality and sacred loss and desecration caused by the offense (Davis et al., 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Religious victims are taking all these relationships into account when responding to an offense, regardless of participating in a psychoeducational group specifically targeting forgiveness of the offense.

Now consider participants’ forgiveness process in light of being involved in a value-congruent intervention targeting acting on a religious value: forgiveness. Participants are already viewing the offense, offender, and their response in reference to the sacred. Then, throughout an intense six-hour intervention, participants are reminded of these relationships and the importance of behaving according to their values, in addition to working towards emotional replacement. I propose that activation of the victim-sacred relationship during the C-REACH intervention may
serve to maintain the victim’s group identification with a congregation and encourage higher forgiveness of an in-group offender.

The Present Study

Thus, in the present study, I test the REACH Forgiveness intervention with people (a) who identify a transgression occurring within a congregation they are/were a part of to which they still feel some level of unforgiveness towards the offender. Students are assessed on a variety of dispositional and personality attributes initially, and they identify a transgression that will be assessed at three times during the experiment.

In this study, I attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Will a self-directed workbook version of the C-REACH Forgiveness model be more effective than a waitlist control in increasing forgiving motivations and decreasing unforgiving motivations?

2. Will differences in level of group identification with a congregation at Time 1 (before treatment) produce differences in decisional and emotional forgiveness, and interpersonal motivations to transgressors following the intervention?

Establishing Validity of the Online Version of C-REACH

As I test an intervention in a new format, that of a self-help workbook, I proceed to lay out a series of steps with the purpose of establishing the validity of the C-REACH Forgiveness intervention in the proposed format. Another student in VCU’s Counseling Psychology program, Caroline Lavelock, is collecting data on an online administered self-help workbook format of the secular REACH Forgiveness intervention. She has collected two participants in a pilot study on the protocol, and is currently collecting more participants. Lavelock is running a control condition: general positivity, to which she can compare forgiveness outcomes. The first
Step in establishing the validity of the C-REACH workbook is to conduct five separate 2 (Forgiveness Workbook versus Positivity Workbook) x 2 (pre-, post-) within Subjects ANOVAs on outcomes DFS, EFS, TRIM-A, TRIM-R, and TRIM-B. This will give us preliminary evidence of the REACH Forgiveness intervention being valid as a self-help workbook. Lavelock and I are also currently working on constructing a C-REACH workbook for use with Christians in general offense scenarios (not specific to within-congregation offenses). Step 2 of establishing validity of the C-REACH Forgiveness self-help workbook will be to run a pilot study of N = 10 participants and conduct a similar analysis as listed above (2X2 Condition X Time within subjects ANOVAs on DFS, EFS, TRIM-A, TRIM-R, and TRIM-B) between the C-REACH workbook and general positivity workbook. Then, in the current study, I take the C-REACH self-help workbook and adapt it for use with Christians who have experienced within-congregation offenses. The third and final step of establishing the validity of the current intervention as a self-help workbook is to conduct the analyses described below (2X2 Condition [immediate treatment, waitlist control] X Time [pre-, post-] within subjects ANOVAs on all forgiveness outcomes [DFS, EFS, TRIM-A, TRIM-R, and TRIM-B]). If the REACH, C-REACH, and adapted C-REACH Forgiveness self-help workbook are all more effective than control conditions, this current adapted intervention will have evidence of validity for use as a self-help workbook.

In addition, this study adheres to the guidelines for internet intervention research laid out by Proudfoot et al. (2011). I will list how the current study adheres to each guideline. Facet 1: Focus and target population – The population of this study is well-defined as Christian college students who have experienced an offense within a congregation and still hold some unforgiveness towards the offender.
Facet 2: Authorship details – This information has been provided in the current document.

Facet 3: Model of change – I have outlined the emotional replacement hypothesis as the theory of change for the REACH Forgiveness intervention.

Facet 4: Type and dose of intervention – I provide detailed descriptions of all assessments used in this study in the following section. Also, I have outlined my plan to provide evidence of validity for the current intervention.

Facet 5: Ethical issues – I have received approval for the waiver of consent, that includes potential risks and benefits to participants, by VCU’s IRB and will be presented to participants prior to participation.

Facet 6: Professional support – I notify participants of professional support persons and contact information (Greer and Worthington) before and after completion of each online assessment.

Facet 7: Other support – N/A

Facet 8: Program Interactivity – Expected length of intervention has been listed (6 hours) and actual completion time (range and mean) will be reported in findings.

Facet 9: Multimedia channel of delivery – I will describe the method of delivery of the intervention in the following section.

Facet 10: Degree of synchronicity – I will describe the time delay of assessments being emailed to participants in the following section.

Facet 11: Audience reach – I will outline the Inclusion criteria for participation in the following section.

Facet 12: Program evaluation – I will describe how I am adhering to accepted guidelines for efficacy studies in the following section (random assignment to condition, and a control condition).
Method

Participants

Participants for this study were undergraduates at a large Mid-Atlantic urban university. Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes and participate as part of a course requirement or in exchange for a small amount of course credit. Students (\( N = 82 \)) signed up to participate in assessment and a six-hour intervention to promote forgiveness for a transgression through a 6-hour self-directed psychoeducational workbook. 17 participants dropped out of the study after receiving the initial contact informing them of the procedure of the study. 65 participants were assigned to treatment condition based on their student number. 33 were assigned to the immediate treatment (IT) condition and 32 were assigned to the waitlist control (WC) condition. Over the course of the study, 8 participants failed to complete measures in the IT condition and 5 participants failed to complete measures in the WC condition. This resulted in a total of \( n = 25 \) IT participants and \( n = 27 \) WC participants. The sample was 82.7% female and had a mean age of 20.27. Ethnicities reported by participants were 36.5% Caucasian, 28.8% African-American/Black, 19.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.9% Latino/Latina, 1.9% Indian/Native American, 3.8% Multiracial, and 7.7% Other. Participants in the two conditions did not differ significantly on demographic data.

Measures

Demographics and personal variables. A demographics data page included single-item questions concerning age, sex, ethnicity, length of membership, and membership status at identified congregation (see Appendix B for copies of all measures). Participants completed the demographics questionnaire at T1 only.
Dispositional forgivingness. The Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS; Berry et al., 2005) is a 10-item instrument which measures tendency to forgive others as a steady trait. Participants rate statements from $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ to $5 = \text{strongly agree}$. Some items reflect an individual’s tendency to forgive, “I try to forgive others even when they don’t feel guilty for what they did,” or to not forgive, “If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.” Items 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8 must be reverse scored so that higher summed scores on the TFS indicate greater tendency to forgive others. Norms were based on samples of students from a large, Mid-Atlantic university and a private university in the Pacific Northwest. Berry et al. analyzed the ten-item measure in four studies and estimated coefficient alphas ranged from .74 to .80. Evidence supporting construct validity was that the TFS correlated negatively with traits such as anger, depression, hostility, and vengeful rumination. The TFS was positively correlated, as hypothesized, with positive emotional traits such as empathy and agreeableness.

Group identification. The Arrow-Carini Group Identification Scale 2.0 (Henry, Arrow, & Carini, 1999) assesses a person’s identification with a defined social group. It will be used to assess the victim’s level of identification with the church congregation they attend retrospectively, as it was prior to the offense occurring (T1), and at the current time (T2 and T3). There are three subscales on the Arrow-Carini Group Identification Scale: cognitive, affective, and behavioral indicators of identification. An example from the behavioral subscale is, “This congregation [changed from group] as part of who I am.” Items are rated on a 7-point rating scale from $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ to $7 = \text{strongly agree}$. Items 1, 6, 9, and 11 are reverse scored such that a summed scale score indicates level of group identification with a congregation. In testing estimated internal consistency, Henry et al. (1999) found coefficient alpha values ranging from .76-.89 for the overall scale and the three subscales. The cognitive and affective subscales
were moderately correlated. Evidence for construct validity was adduced by having students in an initial round of data collection distinguish between important and unimportant social groups to which they belonged. Norms were based on a sample of 420 students from a large, Midwestern, public university and 320 students from a large, West-coast, public university. Participants were asked to complete the measure of group identification as how they feel at the present time and prior to the offense occurring.

**Measures of Initial Relationship and Transgression**

**Transgression characteristics.** Participants write a narrative description of the event, rate hurtfulness of event on scale from 1 = *very little amount of hurt* to 5 = *large amount of hurt*, and rate initial level of unforgiveness with a single item scale from 0 = *no present unforgiveness* to 4 = *an extreme amount of unforgiveness*.

**Relationship Satisfaction.** Dyadic Adjustment Scale-7 (DAS-7; Hunsley, Best, Lefebrve, & Vito, 2001) was used to measure relational satisfaction prior to the transgression. The 7-item version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was used to measure the commitment, satisfaction, and closeness of the victim-offender relationship as perceived by the victim prior to the offense-in-question occurring. The DAS-7 contains three subscales: commitment, satisfaction, and closeness. The subscales are summed for a total scale score. Closeness is measured with three items on a 6-point rating scale ranging from 0 = *always disagree* to 5 = *always agree*. Commitment is measured with three items on a 6-point rating scale ranging from 0 = *never* to 5 = *more often*. Satisfaction is rated by a single item on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 0 = *extremely unhappy* to 6 = *perfect*. In testing internal consistency, Hunsley et al. (2001) found coefficient alpha values ranging from .75 to .91 among samples. Norms were based on two samples of adults in the community (heterosexual couples)
who were mailed surveys and a sample of adults in a romantic relationship from clinical files at a training facility. Means ranged from 25.8 (SD = 4.7) for the community sample to 17.8 (SD = 5.5) for the clinical sample. Construct validity was evidenced in one sample in the study by positive correlations with marital satisfaction and emotional disclosure. The participant was asked to complete the DAS-7 as he or she felt about his or her relationship with the offender at the present time. Means in the current sample ranged across time points from 10.41 to 16.80.

Spiritual Similarity. (SOS; Davis et al., 2009a). The SOS scale is a 9-item measure of the victim’s appraisal of participants’ similarity to an offender humanly and spiritually. The estimated internal reliability coefficients for these two subscales were reported by Davis et al. (2009) as .79 and .87 respectively. Participants rate statements on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 0 = completely disagree to 6 = completely agree. An item measuring human similarity is, “Even though our bond as humans was broken, I knew we were both the same under the skin,” and for measuring spiritual similarity, “I recalled how similar we were in fundamental values.” The subscales are correlated; they are each summed such that higher scores reflect higher human similarity and spiritual similarity, respectively. Construct validity was evidenced by both subscales correlating in expected directions with measures of religiousness, spirituality, forgiveness, and empathy. Norms were based on samples of students at a large Mid-Atlantic, urban university. In the original studies by Davis et al., means for human similarity ranged from 11.49 to 13.25, and means for spiritual similarity ranged from 13.13 to 16.24. Means in the current study were slightly higher. Across time points, means for human similarity ranged from 11.44 to 17.38; means for spiritual similarity ranged from 16.26 to 20.24. People with highly similar scores tend to be hurt more by a transgression, but to forgive faster, than people with highly different scores (Davis et al., 2009).
Desecration. The SLD (Pargament et al., 2005) Scale ($n = 23$ items) measures the degree that a victim appraises a transgression as a loss or desecration of something Sacred (theistic and nontheistic). Some items are, “Something symbolic of God was purposefully damaged,” and “Something that was Sacred to me was destroyed.” Items are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much. Items are summed for a total scale score which indicates higher feelings of sacred loss and desecration. Estimated internal consistency found coefficient alpha values of .92-.93 for the two subscales (Pargament et al., 2005). The subscales were moderately correlated, $r (116) = .48$, $p <.0001$. As a test of discriminant validity, analyses of variance using the Sacred Loss and Desecration scales as independent variables and the type of event described as the dependent variable were conducted. Both Sacred Loss and Desecration showed significant relationships. Norms were based on a sample of 117 adults from mid-sized, mixed small town/suburban/rural county in the Mid-west. Means ranged from 11.8 to 27.0 according to the type of event described. The current sample reported higher scores on the SLD than the normative sample (Means across time points ranged from 44.23 to 58.21).

Outcome Variables

Decisional Forgiveness Scale (DFS). Decisional forgiveness of a person on a target offense was measured by the Decisional Forgiveness Scale (DFS, Worthington, Hook, Utsey, Williams, & Neil, 2007). The DFS consists of eight items that measure the degree to which one has made a decision to forgive someone of a specific offense (e.g., If I see him or her, I will act friendly; I will try to get back at him or her [reverse scored to indicate forgiveness]). Participants indicated their agreement with each item on a 5-point rating scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7, must be reverse scored. Items are summed such that higher scores reflect more decisional forgiveness. Scores on the DFS had Cronbach’s alpha
coefficients ranging from .82 to .86. The estimated 3-week temporal stability coefficient was .73. Scores on the DFS also showed evidence of construct validity and were correlated with other measures of state forgiveness, trait forgivingness, forgiveness-related constructs such as empathy and anger, and a behavioral measure of forgiveness.

**Emotional Forgiveness Scale (EFS).** Emotional forgiveness of a person on a target offense was measured by the Emotional Forgiveness Scale (EFS, Worthington, Hook, Utsey, Williams, & Neil, 2007). The EFS consists of eight items that measure the degree to which one has experienced emotional forgiveness and peace for a specific offense (e.g., I feel sympathy toward him or her; I no longer feel upset when I think of him or her). Participants indicated their agreement with each item on a 5-point rating scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Items 3, 5, and 7, must be reverse scored. Items are summed such that higher scores reflect more emotional forgiveness. Scores on the EFS had Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .69 to .83 (Worthington et al., 2007). The 3-week temporal stability coefficient was .73 (Worthington et al., 2007). Scores on the EFS also showed evidence of construct validity and were correlated with other measures of state forgiveness, trait forgivingness, forgiveness-related constructs such as empathy, rumination, anger, and a behavioral measure of forgiveness.

**Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations.** Transgression-related interpersonal motivations are measured by Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-12 Item Form (TRIM; McCullough et al., 1998). The TRIM consists of 12 items that measure post-transgression motivations toward a particular offender. Participants identify someone who is in their primary reference group and who has deeply hurt or offended them. Then they write a short description of what the person did to hurt or offend them. Participants then report their motivations toward the person who wounded them by indicating their agreement with each item
on a 5-point rating scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The TRIM consists of two subscales; one measures avoidance motivations (TRIM-A) and one measures revenge motivations (TRIM-R). The 7-item Avoidance subscale measures motivation to avoid a transgressor (e.g., “I live as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around”). The 5-item Revenge subscale measures motivation to seek revenge (e.g., “I’ll make him/her pay”). Higher scores on both represent more unforgiving motives. The TRIM had Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .84 to .93 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998). Estimated three-week temporal stability in a sample of people who had difficulty forgiving ranged from .79-.86 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998). Estimated eight-week temporal stability in a sample of recent victims ranged from .44-.53 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998). The scale shows evidence of construct validity, and it was found to be positively correlated with other measures of forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, and commitment to a relationship (McCullough et al., 1998).

**Research Design**

A wait-list control design was employed. Thus, the wait-list control design can be displayed as follows, with O indicating an observation or assessment and X indicating treatment. The designation OD indicates an observation occasion in which participants complete Demographics (and person variables) online through Sona-Systems © and the three observation points (O1, O2, and O3) are the three testing points prior to any treatment (O1), one week later (O2), and one week later (O3).

ODO1  X  O2  O3  (Immediate Treatment; IT)
ODO1  O2  X  O3  (Wait-list Control; WC)
Participants signed up for the study through Sona systems. Surveys were loaded on Survey Monkey and the researcher emailed links for the surveys to participants after they signed up and were assigned to a treatment condition. The workbook was emailed to participants with the stipulation of completing the workbook within two weeks in order to receive credit. Treatment took place over approximately six hours as the participant completed exercises in the C-REACH Forgiveness workbook.

**Independent and Dependent Variables**

The current study has four independent variables including group identification with a congregation (a retrospective assessment at T1), and time (T1, T2 and T3). Dependent variables include decisional forgiveness (DF), emotional forgiveness (EF), and transgression-related interpersonal motivations (avoidance, revenge, benevolent motivations).

**Treatment**

A Christian 6-hour psychoeducational workbook to help people REACH Forgiveness (Worthington, 2006; see www.people.vcu.edu/~eworth for original treatment manuals for participants and for leaders) was completed independently by participants. The original manual-driven psychoeducational groups have been conducted by mental health professionals, clergy, students in training for mental health professions, undergraduate students in dormitories, and non-college-educated lay people in churches. Over 10,000 people have participated in the psychoeducational groups in the United States and worldwide and no negative incident has yet occurred or reported to the investigator. For the current study, the researcher created self-directed workbooks which should require approximately the same amount of time to complete as the original in-person group format of the REACH Forgiveness model (evidence for validity of this format will be provided as outlined in the previous section). The majority of the workbook
form of the REACH Forgiveness model contains the same exercises as the original Christian-accommodated REACH intervention, with the addition of some language which tailors the exercises to the context of the current study: forgiving offenses incurred within a church congregation.

**Procedure**

Participants log in to Sona-system® and read the inclusion criteria (below) of the study. Also the study is briefly explained to them online. Participants who were interested read the consent form online and agreed to participate in the study online by clicking the button, “I agree to participate in the study.” We requested a waiver of documentation of consent for completing online questionnaires from the IRB and it was granted. Participants were contacted by email to confirm their sign-up for the study and asked to provide Greer with their V-ID student number. Random assignment to condition was used. Participants with a V-ID student number ending in an even number were assigned to immediate treatment, and those with a V-ID student number ending in an odd number were assigned to waitlist control. All participants were required to complete (a) one online personal assessment (15 minutes or less); (b) three online assessments of the target transgression (approximately 20 minutes each); (c) completion of the 6-hour self-directed REACH Forgiveness workbook.

**Recruitment**

Participants were recruited to participate through the psychology department undergraduate research study website. The current study was presented as a study about forgiving offenses that happen within congregations. They were informed that the study would involve identification of a particular offense within a congregation that the participant would
explicitly like to be able to forgive but still found hurtful and engendered unforgiving feelings. The inclusion criteria were listed in the study information (see below).

**Inclusion Criteria**

Students wishing to participate in the study complete questions about inclusion criteria as follows.

Indicate the numbers (below) of **ALL** that apply to you. To participate in this study you must have indicated all of the following—1, 2, 3, 4, 5:

1. 18-year-old or older

2. You have experienced a transgression within a Christian congregation that still bothers you enough to create negative feelings (e.g., anger, resentment, bitterness, hate, feelings of wanting to hurt the person back, anxiety, hostility).

3. When you rate your current unforgiveness (*0 = no present unforgiveness; 1 = a little unforgiveness; 2 = some substantial unforgiveness remains; 3 = a lot of unforgiveness; 4 = an extreme amount of unforgiveness*), you must rate at 2, 3, or 4 to be eligible for participation).

4. You would like to work on your memory of that experience with the idea of possibly forgiving the person.

5. You are willing to complete a workbook on your own which will require you to think about the transgression.

If you meet the inclusion criteria and are interested in participating our study (completing the questionnaires and workbook), please click the button below “I agree to participate the study”. You will be contacted by emails and told of your selection as well as details for the study within one week.

**Requirements of the Study**
Because the study required participants to complete the study on their own, the requirements of the study were described clearly: (a) completion of online personal assessments; (b) three online assessments of the target transgression completed one week before, two days, and two weeks following the workbook (approximately 20 minutes each); (c) completion of the REACH Forgiveness workbook. Participants would receive all of their experimental credit (6, 7, or 10) for their PSYC 101 course for completing (a), (b), and (c).

Research Hypotheses, Rationale, and Analyses

**Research hypothesis 1.** Following are a statement of the research hypothesis, a justification for it, and a plan for analysis.

*Statement of the hypothesis.* For the main dependent variables (i.e., EFS, DFS, TRIM), I hypothesize a multivariate interaction of condition (Immediate Treatment, Wait Control) x time(s). Furthermore, I hypothesize that simple effects will be significant. Simple effects are hypothesized to fit the following pattern: At T1, Immediate Treatment will not be different from Wait Control; at T2 Immediate Treatment will report higher levels of emotional and decisional forgiveness and forgiving motivations, and lower unforgiving motivations; at T3 Immediate Treatment will not be different from Wait Control (See Figures 3 and 4 for hypothesized relationship).

*Rationale.* The introduction of the intervention would likely decrease an individual’s tendency to revenge or avoid and hence increase their decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness to the transgressors. Since neither group has received the intervention, at T1, I do not expect any significant difference for people between in the Immediate Treatment group and in the Waitlist Control group. At T2, participants in the Immediate Treatment group will have been treated while the participants in the Wait Control group will not. Hence, I hypothesize that the
Immediate Treatment group will report more motivation to be conciliatory and benevolent to the transgressor and higher levels of forgiveness. At T3, as both groups will have received the intervention, the Immediate treatment group and Waitlist Control group will show similar elevated levels of forgiveness and positive interpersonal motivations related towards the offender.

**Analysis.** I will conduct a mixed between and within subjects Condition (IT v. WC) X Time (pre-, post-, and follow-up) MANCOVA on forgiveness variables (DFS and EFS) and unforgiveness variables (TRIM-A, R) respectively, with hurtfulness of offense as the covariate. In order to test hypothesis 1, I will first test the correlation between hurtfulness of offense with the criterion variables (DFS, EFS, TRIM-A, TRIM-R, and TRIM-B). If hurtfulness is significantly related to any criterion variable, it will be controlled by entering hurtfulness in the first step of each MANCOVA (described subsequently) in order to remove variance caused by this factor. Next, condition (2 levels) and time (3 levels) will be entered as independent variables (fixed factors).

**Research hypothesis 2.** Following are a statement of the research hypothesis, a justification for it, and a plan for analysis.

**Statement of the hypothesis.** I hypothesize that the initial level of group identification with a congregation, prior to the identified offense occurring, will relate to emotional and decisional forgiveness and transgression-related interpersonal motivations following the intervention. Specifically, I predict that higher group identification with a congregation will relate to higher emotional and decisional forgiveness, and benevolent motivations, and lower unforgiving motivations towards the in-group offender at the assessments following the intervention (T2 & T3).
**Rationale.** In two recent studies by Greer et al. (2013), group identification with a congregation, as rated prior to an identified offense occurring, related to lower unforgiving motivations and higher forgiving motivations towards a within-congregation offender. In those studies, offense specific forgiveness was measured using the three subscales of the TRIM (avoidance, revenge, and benevolence). In study one, group identification was significantly related to avoidance and benevolence and, in study two, it was significantly related to revenge and benevolence. Also, within the second study, we conducted a more detailed examination of the measures included in the model of relational spirituality and group identification predicted variance in revenge and benevolence above the effect of proven relational variables previously studied.

In addition, according to a study by McCullough et al. (2010), victims are more likely to rate higher forgiveness towards offenders with whom they perceive having a valuable relationship. Our assumption is that high group identification with a congregation suggests that the person has a dense group network of valuable relationships, and that the interconnections of relationships make it more likely that the person will forgive the offender. This is likely to be true even if the victim does not find the relationship with the particular offender particularly valuable merely because of the interconnections of relationships.

Findings by McCullough et al. (2010) also suggest that a victim’s ability to consider positive attributes of the offender and their relationship lead to a greater extent of forgiveness. Within the second step of the REACH forgiveness intervention (develop empathy for the offender), participants are asked to do just that, to consider the fallibility of every person and that people tend to act on what they believe to be good intentions. So participants with higher group identification have pre-intervention reasons to remain close to a within-congregation offender.
(the valuable status of the religious body), and work on building empathy for the offender during the intervention. Thus, post-intervention, victims with higher level of group identification with a congregation should lead to even higher forgiveness than what is typically predicted following such a forgiveness intervention.

**Analysis.** Eight separate but similar hierarchical multiple regression equations will be conducted to test the effect of initial level of group identification on the outcome variables (EFS, DFS, TRIM-A, and TRIM-R) at T2 and T3. In every regression equation, severity and hurtfulness of offense will be entered in the first step in order to remove the variance accounted for by these factors. Next, level of forgiveness at T1 will be entered in the second step of the regression to remove the variance accounted for by the initial level of forgiveness prior to the intervention. In step three of each equation, group identification with a congregation at T1 will be entered. Four regression equations will be conducted measuring the outcomes of the Dependent variables at Time 2 and four more regression equations measuring the outcomes of the DVs at Time 3. The regression equation testing the effect of initial level of group identification with a congregation on Decisional Forgiveness following the intervention can be illustrated as follows:

[Step 1]: Hurtfulness + Severity + [Step 2]: DFS @ T1 + [Step 3]: Grp ID @ T1 = DFS @ T2
[Step 1]: Hurtfulness + Severity + [Step 2]: DFS @ T1 + [Step 3]: Grp ID @ T1 = DFS @ T3

**Research hypothesis 3.** Following are a statement of the research hypothesis, a justification for it, and a plan for analysis.

**Statement of the hypothesis.** I predict that the self-directed workbook REACH Forgiveness intervention will produce statistically comparable results in reducing unforgiveness to the in-person group intervention on which this treatment is based.
**Rationale.** The current self-directed workbook REACH Forgiveness intervention involves a new format for a well-tested in-person intervention. The new format presents several possible benefits including cost-effectiveness and increased accessibility to treatment for participants. Carpenter, Stoner, Mundt, and Stoelb (2012) argue that self-help psychotherapeutic interventions may be preferable for these reasons and that they may serve to empower patients. Before the current treatment can be offered to interested users as a viable self-directed treatment to reduce unforgiveness and increase forgiveness towards an offender, its effectiveness comparable to the accepted standard of treatment must be evaluated.

**Analysis.** I will benchmark outcomes from the current study to prior REACH Forgiveness intervention studies conducted with college student populations. I will use a method similar to that employed by Shirk, Kaplinski, and Gudmunsen (2009) and Weersing and Weisz (2002). I will compare outcomes on the TRIM assessment of unforgiving motivations (avoidance and revenge) since this assessment is measured in the current study and most published studies testing the REACH Forgiveness intervention. TRIM benchmarks will be created by using treatment outcome data from eight studies that utilized the REACH Forgiveness in-person group intervention with college students. Means and standard deviations of the TRIM both pretreatment and post-treatment will be collected from these studies. Next, $z$ scores will be computed for each study at pre- and post-treatment. The formula for computation is: $z = (\chi - \mu)/\sigma$, where $\chi$ is the TRIM mean for each study, $\mu$ is the average population mean from all eight studies, and $\sigma$ is the sample standard deviation. Standardized change scores for the TRIM in each of the eight studies will be computed by subtracting the post-treatment $z$ score from the pretreatment $z$ score. A 95% confidence interval will be computed by multiplying the standard error of the mean by 1.96. Finally, I will follow the same procedure to calculate standardized
scores on the TRIM outcome measure for pretreatment and post-treatment and a change score. This standardized change score will then be compared to the average change score and confidence interval of the eight previous studies. The current self-directed REACH Forgiveness workbook can be considered comparably effective if the change score falls within the range of the 95% confidence interval of the eight previous studies.

**Results**

**Means and Standard Deviations**

Means, standard deviations, alphas and ranges for all variables are presented in Table 2 (Immediate Treatment) and Table 3 (Waitlist Control). Data were checked for normality, outliers, and missing values. Age of victims was somewhat skewed and kurtotic. However, this is to be expected as the sample was made up of college students (majority 18-25 years old). Missing data were excluded pairwise in analyses.

In order to insure that participants were completing the workbook, I performed two manipulation checks with the returned workbooks. The first manipulation check was counting the number of words participants typed in the workbook. The original workbook contains 17,887 words. I performed a word count on each completed workbook and subtracted 17,887 from the total to determine how many words the participant added to the document. On average, participants typed 3,483.12 words into their workbook. The second manipulation check involved participants’ self-reported gain in forgiveness at the end of the workbook. Participants were asked to rate their experience with the workbook through several statements. One such statement was: “I have learned how I can be a more forgiving person.” Participants rated their answer on a scale from 1 = Not at all to 5 = Tremendous Amount. On average, participants’ response to this statement was 4.45. Though these checks do not explicitly show participants’
effort in completing the workbook, they illustrate that participants tended to type much data when working through the exercises and, overall, rated their gain in becoming more forgiving relatively high.

The measure of group identification had lower estimates of reliability than in previous studies (ranging from .52-.78). I conducted an exploratory factor analysis to see whether the 12-item scale held together as one factor. I found that one factor emerged (based on a scree test) and several items on the scale did not load onto that factor. Loading criteria were as follows: items were dropped (a) if they did not load at .60 or above on the highest factor and (b) if they cross-loaded at or above .30 on their second factor. These criteria resulted in five items remaining on the scale. After recalculating alpha values with the 5-item scale of group identification, reliability estimates for the scale were higher (ranging from .79-.94) and acceptable for research. This shorter, 5-item scale was used in subsequent analyses.

**Check for Equivalence of Conditions**

To insure equivalence of immediate treatment and waiting-list conditions, I conducted a one-way (Condition, IT or WL) multivariate analysis of variance on the following initial values: age and time-1 TFS. The multivariate F was not significant, multivariate F(2, 47) = 1.12, p = .335. In addition, to insure that the selected transgressions were equivalent initially, I conducted a one-way (Condition, IT or WL) multivariate analysis of variance on the following initial values: single-item unforgiveness, single-item hurtfulness, time since offense, and TRIM, DFS, and EFS at time 1. The multivariate F was not significant, multivariate F(6, 38) = .97, p = .458. The random assignment to conditions was deemed equivalent according to person variables and also choice of transgressions.
Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Alphas of Measures for Immediate Treatment Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>M</th>
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<td>1.04</td>
<td></td>
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<td>31.09</td>
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<td>.94</td>
</tr>
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<td>9.60</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIM Time 3</td>
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<td>.94</td>
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*Note.* TRIM = Transgression-related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory: Avoidance and Revenge subscales; DFS = Decisional Forgiveness Scale; EFS = Emotional Forgiveness Scale; TFS = Trait Forgivingness Scale; Past Group ID Time 1 = Retrospective assessment of group identification with congregation prior to the offense.
Table 3
*Means, Standard Deviations, and Alphas of Measures for Waitlist Treatment Group*

<table>
<thead>
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<td>EFS Time 1</td>
<td>10-28</td>
<td>19.04</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFS Time 2</td>
<td>11-34</td>
<td>20.37</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFS Time 3</td>
<td>20-37</td>
<td>26.80</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFS Time 1</td>
<td>22-48</td>
<td>32.44</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFS Time 2</td>
<td>24-48</td>
<td>32.67</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFS Time 3</td>
<td>24-50</td>
<td>36.88</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Group ID Time 1</td>
<td>6-35</td>
<td>22.80</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Group ID Time 1</td>
<td>5-35</td>
<td>17.46</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Group ID Time 2</td>
<td>10-30</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Group ID Time 3</td>
<td>12-35</td>
<td>22.96</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* TRIM = Transgression-related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory: Avoidance and Revenge subscales; DFS = Decisional Forgiveness Scale; EFS = Emotional Forgiveness Scale; TFS = Trait Forgivingness Scale; Past Group ID Time 1 = Retrospective assessment of group identification with congregation prior to the offense.
Intercorrelations

Intercorrelations of all scales are listed in Table 4 below. Contrary to Hypothesis #2, participants’ level of group identification prior to offense did not relate to levels of forgiveness or unforgiveness at Time 1.

Table 4
Intercorrelations of Main Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>7</th>
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<td>Single-items</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hurtfulness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unforgiveness</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dependent Variables</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. TRIM T1</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. TRIM T3</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. DFS T1</td>
<td>-0.35***</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.64***</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. DFS T3</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.66***</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. EFS T1</td>
<td>-0.36**</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.52***</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. EFS T3</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.53***</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.55***</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Past GI</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Present GI T1</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.56***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Past GI = Retrospective assessment of group identification prior to offense.

Hypothesis 1: Multivariate Interaction of Condition X Time

According to Hypothesis #1, a mixed between-within subjects 2 x 3(S) [condition x time(S)] multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of treatment in two conditions (Immediate Treatment [IT] v. Wait-list Control [WC]) on forgiveness outcomes (TRIM, DFS, EFS) across three time periods (T1, T2, T3), while controlling for the hurtfulness of offense. I found a significant main effect for the covariate hurtfulness of offense, Wilks’s $\lambda = .77$, multivariate $F(3, 34) = 3.44$, $p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .23$. In addition, there was a significant treatment condition x time interaction, Wilks’s $\lambda = .31$, multivariate $F(6,31) = 11.57$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .69$, which indicates that the effect of time depended upon the treatment condition to which participants were assigned.

In order to determine the locus of the effect, three mixed between-within 2 x 3(S) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine the impact of treatment in two
conditions (IT v. WC) across three time periods (T1, T2, T3) using each of the dependent variables (TRIM, DFS, EFS) and controlling for hurtfulness of offense. First, for TRIM, a significant condition x time interaction was observed, $F(1,36) = 40.87, p < .001$. Simple effects on TRIM analyses revealed that IT = WC at T1 ($p = .569$), IT < WC at T2 ($p < .001$), and IT = WC at T3 ($p = .499$). See Figures 3-5 for an illustration.

Second, for DFS, a significant condition x time interaction was observed, $F(1,36) = 33.21, p < .001$. Simple effects analyses on DFS revealed that IT = WC at T1 ($p = .718$), IT > WC at T2 ($p < .001$), and IT = WC at T3 ($p = .093$).

Third, for EFS, a significant condition x time interaction was observed, $F(1,36) = 53.48, p < .001$. Simple effects analyses on EFS revealed that IT = WC at T1 ($p = .231$), IT > WC at T2 ($p < .001$), and IT = WC at T3 ($p = .337$). See Tables 2-3 for Mean values of outcome variables. Effect sizes for each of these measures from T1 to T3 are as follows: TRIM-AR: Cohen’s $d = 1.63$, DFS: Cohen’s $d = 1.29$, EFS: Cohen’s $d = 1.72$. These findings support Hypothesis #1.

![Figure 3](image.png)

*Figure 3. Relationship of TRIM-A and TRIM-R (Summed) by Treatment Condition and Time(S)*
Figure 4. Relationship of DFS by Treatment Condition and Time(S)

Figure 5. Relationship of EFS by Treatment Condition and Time(S)
Hypothesis 2: Impact of Group Identification on Forgiveness and Unforgiveness

As stated previously in the Intercorrelations section, participants’ estimated group identification prior to the offense did not correlate significantly with Time 1 measures of forgiveness and unforgiveness. Consequently, I did not conduct the planned hierarchical regression equations to determine the impact of group identification on the outcome measures. Hypothesis #2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3: Benchmark to Similar Standard Intervention

To establish the research benchmark for the current study, three published trials of the REACH Forgiveness intervention were identified. The three studies met the following criteria for consideration: (a) the interventions were conducted with in-person groups, (b) the intervention was six hours long, (c) the participant groups were college students, and (d) pretreatment and post-treatment scores were reported for the TRIM. See Table 5 for treatment characteristics and outcomes of the three benchmark studies and current study.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pretreatment</th>
<th>Post-treatment</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lampton, Oliver, Worthington, &amp; Berry (2005)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26.95</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>0.56 (r = 0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratton, Dean, Nooneman, Bode, &amp; Worthington (2008)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.72</td>
<td>23.95</td>
<td>0.76 (r = .36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade, Worthington, &amp; Haake (2009)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>0.51 (r = 0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current study</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37.68</td>
<td>21.33</td>
<td>1.63 (r = 0.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Lampton et al. and Stratton et al. were at explicitly Christian universities, but the Wade et al. study was at a large state university with no overt religious reference in the participant solicitation. The current study was at a large state university but was specifically about forgiveness of an offense in a Christian congregation.

Benchmarks for TRIM scores (A and R) were created by using treatment outcome data from the three studies. Means and standard deviations of the outcome measure were obtained.
from the three studies. Normative data were created by averaging the outcome scores of all three studies to create a mean pretreatment and post-treatment TRIM score. After obtaining the data from these studies, z scores were computed for each study at pre- and post-treatment. The formula for computation was: \( z = (\chi - \mu)/\sigma \), where \( \chi \) was the TRIM mean for each study, \( \mu \) was the average population mean from all three studies, and \( \sigma \) was the standard deviation for the sample of \( n = 3 \) comparison studies. Using normative data to calculate the z scores allowed all studies to be compared. Standardized change scores for the TRIM in each of the three studies were computed by subtracting the post-treatment z score from the pretreatment z score (see Table 5). I followed the same procedure to calculate standardized scores on the TRIM outcome measure for pretreatment and post-treatment and a change score. A 95% confidence interval was computed by multiplying the standard error of the mean by 1.96. Mean standard change scores across all three studies was represented by a z score of 0.70, with a confidence interval of \( \pm 0.18 \). The current study had a standard change score of 0.87, which was within the upper limit of the 95% confidence interval based on the other three studies (see Figure 6). The current study can be considered effective as it fell within the range of the standard set by previous similar studies. Hypothesis #3 was supported.
Discussion

In the current study, two out of three hypotheses were supported. According to Hypothesis #1, I found a significant multivariate interaction between time x condition(S), indicating that changes in conditions over time were due to treatment. Hurtfulness of offense also impacted forgiveness outcomes as predicted. This is in concordance with previous research that the rate of decrease of unforgiving motivations and increase in forgiving motivations also relates to the hurtfulness of the offense (Davis et al., 2009a; McCullough et al., 2003). As predicted, treatment decreased levels of avoidance and revenge motivations and increased emotional and decisional forgiveness towards an offender. In an earlier study by Harper, Worthington, Griffin, Lavelock, Greer, & Vrana, 2013, using a similar design but with a secular workbook and with students who were not restricted in the offense they dealt with, the investigators found a similar pattern of results with similar effect sizes (TRIM-AR: Cohen’s $d = 1.25$, DFS: Cohen’s $d = .85$, EFS: Cohen’s $d = 1.24$). Effect sizes in the current study for the
same measures of unforgiveness and forgiveness were as follows: TRIM-AR: Cohen’s $d = 1.63$, DFS: Cohen’s $d = 1.29$, EFS: Cohen’s $d = 1.72$. Both the secular REACH Forgiveness self-directed workbook and Christian-adapted versions have been shown effective at reducing unforgiveness and increasing forgiveness in initial studies with college student populations. Carpenter, Stoner, Mundt, and Stoelb (2012) posited that self-help interventions may serve to empower patients. It may be that these self-directed forgiveness workbooks empower participants by making them active agents in their own change process. Taken together, the findings from the current study and Harper et al. (2013) provide initial evidence that the self-directed forgiveness workbook produces more forgiveness in participants for an identified offense. This appears to be true regardless of whether the transgression is specified to Christian offenders of Christians or is unspecified.

Hypothesis #2 was not supported, that investigated the impact of group identification on forgiveness levels before and after treatment. In the current sample, group identification did not relate to measures of forgiveness. It seems that there was a difference in the current sample compared to previous studies by Greer et al. (2013) that found significant correlations between group identification and offense-specific forgiveness. In the previous studies by Greer et al., inclusion criteria included having been offended within a congregation. The current study also required participants to still feel unforgiving towards the within-congregation offender in order to participate. It may be that recruiting participants who remained unforgiving provided a different sample than Greer’s previous studies.

According to Hypothesis #3, the current treatment was found comparably effective to previous studies of the six-hour in-person REACH Forgiveness intervention conducted with college students (Lampton et al., 2006; Stratton et al., 2008; Wade, Worthington, & Haake,
The current study produced a standardized change score that was higher than that of three similar studies, but fell within the range of the 95% confidence interval. The current study produced a large effect size regarding reduction of unforgiveness and increasing forgiveness, and these findings were similar to Harper et al.’s (2013) recent study examining a secular self-directed forgiveness workbook (see the previous paragraph in this section for effect sizes). In the current analyses, I did not benchmark the increase in forgiveness scores (DFS and EFS) against similar studies due to a lack of consistent investigation of forgiveness measures in those studies. However, I reported the effect size of change for both measures of forgiveness in order to compare current findings to that of Harper et al. In initial investigation of the Christian-adapted self-directed workbook, findings are comparable to a similarly structured non-religious workbook and the standard in-person REACH Forgiveness interventions with similar populations. This provides initial support that the self-directed REACH Forgiveness workbook adapted for Christians who have been offended within a congregation is as effective as the previously studied in-person intervention. The hypotheses regarding the efficacy of the treatment were supported. There are several implications of these findings for future research and these are discussed in the following sections.

**Limitations and Areas for Future Study**

One major limitation of the current study includes conducting the intervention with college student participants, a convenience sample. Results may not generalize to non-college student church populations. In an unpublished study examining congregants’ experience of church conflicts, Toussaint, Greer, and Worthington (manuscript in preparation) found that community adults had a higher level (than college students in the current study) of group identification with a congregation prior to an offense (M = 62.44, SD = 12.00). Non-college student congregants may have higher levels of group identification and this population may show
differences regarding the impact of group identification on level of forgiveness of in-group offenders. Further studies are needed to investigate these possible differences (see the following section for a research agenda). Though the current intervention was found efficacious with the particular population, further studies need to be conducted with larger samples of adult community-based participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the self-directed workbook.

Additionally, the sample size was somewhat small ($N = 52$), though in my benchmarking studies (Lampton et al., 2005; Stratton et al., 2008; Wade et al., 2009), a sample of 52 is well within the usual range of samples. The main concern with the current sample size relates to nonsignificant findings with the measure of group identification. The weak estimates of reliability of the full 12-item measure of group identification and shortening of the scale to a 5-item measure are limitations as well. Participants’ level of forgiveness was measured post-treatment and the immediate treatment condition participants were measured again at a two-week follow-up.

However, I did not measure participants’ level of forgiveness at a longer follow-up period to examine sustained effects of the intervention. Future studies need to conduct the current self-directed workbook with non-college student church populations, collect larger samples, and measure participants at later follow-up periods.

**General Discussion**

In Chapter 3, I described a general statement of the problem in the current literature concerning offense-specific forgiveness and religious populations. Specifically, there is a lack of examination of in-group offenses in Christian congregations and how congregants forgive. One aim of the present study was to examine the impact of a forgiveness intervention on congregants’ forgiveness on in-group offenders. Another aim was to examine the possible relationship of congregants’ group identification with levels of forgiveness both before and after treatment (Greer et al., 2013). The final aim of the present study was examination of a new format, a self-
directed workbook, of the REACH Forgiveness intervention adapted for Christian participants. In the current chapter, I discuss the general findings of the current study and implications for future research.

**Discussion of the Main Claims of the Dissertation**

Based on previous studies examining the REACH Forgiveness intervention that showed significant results in participants’ levels of forgiveness towards an offender (for meta-analyses see Wade, Hoyt, & Worthington, 2013; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005), I hypothesized that the current intervention would produce increases in forgiveness and decreases in unforgiveness. By utilizing a waitlist control design, I was able to examine the multivariate interaction of condition X time(S) on all outcome measures. Previous studies showed a dose-response relationship such that one hour of forgiveness intervention produced about 0.10 effect size in change of forgiveness levels (Wade et al., 2005). As such, I predicted the current intervention to produce and effect size of about 0.65 since the intervention took an average of 6.66 hours to complete. The effect size for the current intervention was higher than predicted, \( d = 1.63 \), which corresponds to a change in effect size of about 0.24 per hour. This finding will be discussed later in this section when I discuss findings of Hypothesis #3. In the current study, I found evidence that the self-directed workbook REACH Forgiveness intervention produced higher levels of forgiveness towards an offender and lower levels of unforgiveness towards an offender post-treatment. As predicted, these changes were significant and due to the intervention rather than merely time or difference in condition. This provided evidence that the treatment was more effective than receiving no treatment for the participants.

Analyses of the correlations between group identification and outcome measures (TRIM, DFS, EFS) did not support the second hypothesis. According to two previous studies conducted by Greer et al. (2013), I hypothesized that level of group identification would relate to levels of
forgiveness before treatment (Time 1) and post-treatment (Time 3). The two previous studies found that group identification with a congregation related to forgiveness and unforgiveness motivations towards an in-group offender. However, I did not find the same relationship in the current study. Participants’ group identification with a congregation as estimated prior to the offense did not relate to the outcome measures. There were two major differences between the samples for the previous two studies and the current study. Both concern inclusion criteria. In the previous studies, participants were required to have experienced an offense within a congregation, but there was no requirement that they remained unforgiving and wanted to work on becoming more forgiving towards the identified offender, which were both criteria in the current study. Participants in the current study had a higher level of unforgiveness at the beginning of the study (M = 37.68, SD = 10.62) compared to college student participants in a previous study by Greer et al. (M = 30.18, SD = 9.08), as measured by the TRIM-A and R. In an Independent samples t-test between these means, t = 5.45, which exceeds the critical value for a two-tailed t-test with df = 422 (degrees of freedom) for a significance value of p = .05. There seems to be a difference between samples concerning initial level of unforgiveness. Level of past group identification did not differ between participants in the current study (M = 52.20, SD = 8.86) and participants in Greer et al.’s previous study with college students (M = 53.42, SD = 8.59). It seems that the difference between participants has to do with level of unforgiving motivations and this may relate to the current study’s discrepant findings that group identification did not relate to offense-specific forgiveness.

Benchmarking the current study against findings of three previous similar REACH Forgiveness intervention studies showed that the self-directed workbook was effective. Change in the current study (z = 0.89) was greater than the overall benchmark mean and within the upper
limit of the confidence interval for the comparison sample. The effect size of the current study for reduction of unforgiveness (TRIM-AR) was $d = 1.63$. This is higher than expected based on previous studies illustrating a dose-response relationship of 0.10 per hour of treatment. However, all three effect sizes for the outcome measures in this study (TRIM-AR, DFS, and EFS) were similar to those found by Harper et al. (2013) who used a similar research design to examine a secular REACH Forgiveness self-directed workbook with college student participants.

In chapter 3, I theorized that Worthington’s (2003) REACH Forgiveness intervention adapted for Christian participants may affect victims’ relational appraisals in the model of relational spirituality (Davis et al., 2008), thereby impacting the “appraisal” phase of the stress-and-coping process (Worthington, 2006). In addition, the REACH Forgiveness intervention is hypothesized to impact victims’ coping responses to replace negative other-oriented emotions with positive, prosocial emotions (see Figure 2; Worthington, 2006). I also posited that level of group identification with a congregation (Greer et al., 2013) would factor into relational appraisals and affect victims’ level of forgiveness on an in-group offender. After researchers failed to find consistent relationships between trait religiousness and offense-specific forgiveness, McCullough and Worthington (1999) called for forgiveness researchers to examine variables at the same level of specificity. Research since that time has confirmed stronger relationships exist between state-variables, such as those in the model of relational spirituality, and offense-specific forgiveness. Greer et al. (2013) found that spiritual relationships related to offense-specific forgiveness of within-congregation offenders. These authors also found that group identification may be one mechanism through which victims enact the tendency to forgive an in-group offender. Based on the findings of Greer et al., I additionally hypothesized that
group identification with a congregation would relate to initial level of forgiveness towards an 
offender and interact with treatment to predict greater outcomes.

Theorizing regarding group identification was not supported by the current findings. 
Group identification with a congregation did not relate to forgiveness of an offender in the 
current study. Possible explanations for this discrepancy are the significant difference in level of 
unforgiveness of participants in the current study and Greer et al.’s second study, and difference 
in inclusion criteria possibly relating to other differences in samples.

According to theorizing regarding social identity theory and forgiveness (chapter 1), I 
expected that within-congregation offenses would be highly hurtful and that victims would be 
motivated to forgive offenders. Individuals remain in a group due to shared values and goal 
accomplishment (Tajfel, 1978). The “group” in the current study is Christian congregations. 
According to the Christian religion, forgiveness is considered a key tenant and required of 
followers (Rye et al., 2000). I theorized that individuals offended within a group that has strong 
values dictating conduct would be highly hurt by an in-group offender. In addition, these victims 
belong(ed) to a group that dictated forgiveness. It seems that the results of the current study are 
in line with theorizing: level of hurtfulness of offense related to level of forgiveness of offenders, 
victims reported a high initial level of unforgiveness, and the treatment produced a large effect 
size in reducing this unforgiveness. Additionally, previous research investigating secular versus 
religiously adapted treatments show that religiously adapted treatments (value-congruent) are 
equally or more effective than secular forgiveness interventions (Lampton et al., 2005). The 
current self-directed workbook was adapted for Christians to be value-congruent and apply to 
within-congregation offenses. The treatment was, in essence, personalized to the participants’ 
experience. It seems that within congregation offenses may be interpreted as severely hurtful,
relate to high levels of unforgiveness, and may be effectively reduced with a value-congruent self-directed workbook for forgiving the offender.

The current study adds to the literature on forgiveness and church conflicts, which is relatively unstudied, as well as forgiveness interventions by testing a new method of treatment. The present study provides empirical evidence of victims’ forgiveness and unforgiveness of within-congregation offenders. The present study also provides empirical support for a new method of a well-tested forgiveness intervention. In the following sections, I discuss the meaning of the present findings for research and practice.

Implications of the Findings for Future Research

In light of the present findings supporting the use of the self-directed Christian-adapted REACH Forgiveness intervention to help Christians forgive a within-congregation offense, I propose the following research agenda to further investigate use of this intervention.

1. Replicate the current study with a college student sample to examine the consistency of treatment effects.

2. Conduct similarly designed treatment studies with non-college church populations to test the effectiveness of the self-directed workbook with community populations.

3. Compare the current study’s outcomes to those of the secular version of the REACH Forgiveness workbook used with Christian participants (compare TRIM, DFS, and EFS measures pre- and post-treatment and effect sizes) to test for possible differences in secular versus value-congruent forgiveness interventions with college students.

4. Apply the current treatment with Christian congregations who have recently experienced conflict/a major offense to test its effectiveness with participants in acute distress.
Implications of the Findings for Interventions in Church Conflicts and Psychotherapy Practice

Several models have been developed to help willing individuals forgive offenders (Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005). Two main interventions are most widely used and studied: Enright’s process model (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000) and Worthington’s REACH Forgiveness model (2006). Worthington and colleagues tested pieces of the REACH intervention to determine which steps were effective and how much. Those authors found that approximately six hours of intervention is needed to produce moderate effect sizes (0.50-0.60). The current study treatment took participants an average of 6.66 hours to complete, yet achieved a larger effect size (1.63). There are many benefits of the current treatment for church populations.

One implication of the current findings is that self-directed workbooks can be easily distributed to interested individuals, such as members of a church who are struggling with unforgiveness towards a within-congregation offender. In certain situations, many members of one congregation may be struggling with unforgiveness towards one offender, such as a clergy member who has transgressed. The current self-directed workbook is also cost effective such that individuals do not have to attend a group at a certain time or location led by a professional helper. Individuals can complete the workbook during convenient times on their own. Another benefit of the current study being an effective forgiveness intervention for Christian congregants is that it is a value-cogruent intervention, which may be preferred by religious individuals.

The current findings also apply to therapeutic work with religious clients. Practitioners may incorporate the self-directed REACH Forgiveness workbook as an additional tool to aid Christian clients in their process of forgiving an offender. Counselors would not have to identify similarly in religion to their clients in order to utilize the religious intervention. Rather, the client
can utilize a religiously value-congruent treatment as an adjunct to religious or secular counseling. This may benefit a client’s progress in overall therapy and is convenient for the counselor due to the time restrictions of regular therapy sessions that are typically 45-50 minutes. The most brief forgiveness intervention found effective is 6 hours, which would take up about 7 therapy sessions. However, if a client works through a self-directed forgiveness workbook in conjunction with regular therapy, they can receive more help for less cost.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the flourish of research on the topic of forgiveness over the past three decades findings have supported forgiveness as a health-related coping strategy (Worthington et al., 2007). Forgiveness may benefit individuals emotionally, mentally, physically, relationally, and spiritually (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). In response, multiple interventions have been created and tested to help people forgive. Interventions encouraging forgiveness have proven effective (Wade et al., 2005) but these in-person group interventions present several problems including level of cost, convenience, and availability. Recent health researchers have called for more self-help based psychotherapeutic interventions to remedy these issues and empower patients (Carpenter, Stoner, Mundt, and Stoelb, 2012). In the current study, I adapted an in-person forgiveness intervention (REACH Forgiveness; Worthington, 2006) to a self-directed workbook. I tested the workbook through an immediate treatment vs. waitlist control design in order to test its efficacy for decreasing unforgiveness and increasing forgiveness in college students who have been offended by an offender within a Christian congregation. Findings from the current study support this self-directed workbook as a valid forgiveness treatment in the context it was applied. These findings warrant further investigation of the self-directed workbook with Christians seeking to forgive an offender.
References


Rye, M. S., & Pargament, K.I. (2002). Evaluation of a secular and religiously integrated forgiveness group therapy program for college students who have been wronged by a romantic partner. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58*, 419-441.


Toussaint, L. (2011, April). Learning to forgive at Luther College: A randomized, controlled trial of REACH and Forgive for Good. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (chair), Promoting forgiveness on Christian college campuses. Symposium conducted at the meeting of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Indianapolis, IN.


Figure 1. Spiritual Appraisals in the Model of Relational Spirituality and Forgiveness. From Davis, D. E., Hook, J. N., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2008). Relational spirituality and forgiveness: The roles of attachment to God, religious coping, and viewing the transgression as a desecration. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 27*, 293-301; p. 294. Copyright 2008 by Christian Association for Psychological Studies. Reprinted with permission. All variables are from the victim’s perspective. SO _ victim’s appraisal of the relationship between the offender and the sacred; SV _ victim’s appraisal of his or her own relationship with the sacred; ST _ victim’s appraisal of the relationship between the transgression and the sacred. VT _ victim’s appraisal of their relationship to the transgression. VO _ victim’s appraisal of their relationship with the offender. OT _ victim’s appraisal of the offender’s relationship to the transgression.
Key to Figure 2.

(a) : Effect of relationships included in Relational Spirituality and Forgiveness model on offense appraisals; includes victim, offense, and transgression in relationship with each other and the sacred.
(b) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on offense appraisals (developing empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love for the offender)
(c) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on the victim’s unforgiveness (victim making a decision to forgive; lessen rumination)
(d) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on feedback loop of coping responses altering the victim’s unforgiveness (replacement of negative other-oriented emotions of hostility, hatred, and fear with positive other-oriented emotions of empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love; Worthington, 2006)
(e) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on victim’s coping methods in response to the transgression (lessening avoidance motives, revenge motives, forbearance, acceptance, and justice seeking; increasing benevolent and conciliatory motives; talking about transgression with others; encouraging decisional and emotional forgiveness and possible reconciliation)
(f) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Sacred-Offender relationship (changing victim’s perspective of their spiritual and human similarity with the offender)
(g) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Sacred-Victim relationship (strengthening Attachment to God and Dedication to the Sacred through Christian oriented exercises such as prayer and reading scripture; Davis et al., 2009a; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002; strengthening Group Identification with congregation through forgiving in-group offender; Greer et al., 2013)
(h) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Victim-Offender relationship (strengthening closeness and commitment [DAS-7; Hunsley et al., 2001])
(i) : Effect of C-REACH Forgiveness intervention on Victim (Increasing Trait Forgivingess and Religious Commitment [RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003]; lowering trait anxiety, anger and depression)
Figure 3. Relationship of TRIM-A and TRIM-R (Summed) by Treatment Condition and Time(s)
Figure 4. Relationship of DFS by Treatment Condition and Time(s)
Figure 5. Relationship of EFS by Treatment Condition and Time(s)
Figure 6. Standardized change scores for current study and three similar REACH Forgiveness interventions with college student participants.
Appendix B

Measures Used in Study

Initial Measures on SONA @ time of sign-up

Inclusion Criteria

Please answer the following questions to see if you can be included in this study.

1. Are you 18 years or older? (Yes or No)
2. Have you experienced a transgression within a Christian congregation that still bothers you enough to create negative feelings (e.g., anger, resentment, bitterness, hate, feelings of wanting to hurt the person back, anxiety, hostility)? (Yes or No)
3. Rate your current unforgiveness on the following scale. (0=no present unforgiveness; 1=a little unforgiveness; 2=some substantial unforgiveness remains; 3=a lot of unforgiveness; 4=an extreme amount of unforgiveness)
4. Would you like to work on your memory of that experience with the idea of possibly forgiving the person? (Yes or No)
5. Are you willing to complete a workbook on your own which will require you to think about the transgression? (Yes or No)

Demographic Information

Directions: We would like to have a little bit of information about you. Please complete these last questions as they apply to you.

Age
Please write in your age in years ___

Gender
__ Male
__ Female

Race: Please select the choice that best applies to you
__ Caucasian/White
__ African-American/Black
__ Asian/Pacific Islander
__ Latino/Latina
__ Indian/Native American
__ Multiracial
__ Other (please specify: ______________)

Member Status: Please select all that apply
__ Visitor
__ Member
__ Teacher
__ Committee member
__ Deacon
__ Elder
__ Minister on staff
__ Administrative assistant on staff
__ Counselor on staff

**Time 1, 2, & 3 Measures**

1. In order to receive research credit and match your responses in different questionnaires (Personal Variables, T1, T2 and T3), please enter your VCU e-mail address below. Your e-mail address will be kept separate from your survey responses.

   *Insert free response box for written answer.*

**1. Identify a Particular Hurt or Offense** (you will be required to write down the same particular hurt or offense at three different times: T1, T2 and T3; Also, you will complete the following questionnaires based on the same transgression.)

Please identify someone who is in your primary reference group (a group to which you strongly feel that you belong) and who has deeply hurt or offended you. Do not write their name, but make a brief note to yourself below (e.g. write their initials), so you are thinking of someone specific. Then write a brief description of what the person did to hurt or offend you. (Note: if the person has done many things, it is important to recall one specific event on which you focus.) Write a short description below to remind yourself of the event.

(NOTE: Importantly, you will discuss this event in the groups and you will complete questionnaires at three following times on this specific event. So, please remember this and use the same event each time. Now, please open a word document in your laptop and copy and paste what you already wrote down below. You can save the document into a new folder named "Forgiveness Groups". You can just copy and paste what you saved today on the following two questionnaires.

*Insert free response box for written answer.*

**1. Hurtfulness of the Hurt or Offense**
Please rate the hurtfulness of the offense you identified, using the scale below. Choose your answer.

1= Very Little Amount of Hurt
2= Little Amount of Hurt
3= Moderate Amount of Hurt
4= Large Amount of Hurt
5= Very Large Amount of Hurt

2. Time Since the Hurt or offense

The offense occurred how long ago? Please write in the length of time since the offense below in years. If it occurred less than one year ago, write the answer in months.

*Insert free response box for written answer.*

Please complete the following instruments about how you feel at the current time about the event (and about yourself).

TRIM

DIRECTIONS: For the following questions, please indicate what you imagine your current thoughts and feelings would be about the person who stole from you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>mildly disagree</td>
<td>agree and disagree equally</td>
<td>mildly agree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ___ I’ll make him/her pay.
2. ___ I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
3. ___ I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.
4. ___ I’m going to get even.
5. ___ I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.
6. ___ I’d keep as much distance between us as possible.
7. ___ I’d live as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around.
8. ___ I wouldn’t trust him/her.
9. ___ I’d find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
10. ___ I’d avoid him/her.
11. ___ I’d cut off the relationship with him/her.
12. ___ I’d withdraw from him/her.
Single-Item Assessment of Two Types of Forgiveness

Note: We want you to rate two types of forgiveness. For example, a person might perhaps decide to *grant* complete forgiveness but still *feel* very unforgiving toward a person.

*Granting forgiveness* is defined as deciding (even if you don’t say aloud) that you will not seek revenge against and not avoid but will try (as much as it is up to you) to put the relationship back on the pre-offense footing. Using the scale below (from 0 = no forgiveness granted to 4 = complete forgiveness granted) estimate the current level to which you have granted forgiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Forgiveness</td>
<td>Complete Forgiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Experiencing emotional forgiveness* is defined as the degree to which you actually feel that your emotions have become less negative and more positive toward the person who offended or harmed you. If 0 = No forgiveness experienced and 4 = complete forgiveness experienced (that is, if you have experienced complete emotional forgiveness, you have no negative feelings and perhaps even some positive feelings toward the person who offended or harmed you), then use the scale below to indicate to what degree you have experienced emotional forgiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Forgiveness</td>
<td>Complete Forgiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**DFS**

Think of your current intentions toward the person who hurt you. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
<th>Disagree (D)</th>
<th>Neutral (N)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I intend to try to hurt him or her in the same way he or she hurt me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I will not try to help him or her if he or she needs something.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I see him or her, I will act friendly.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I will try to get back at him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I will try to act toward him or her in the same way I did before he or she hurt me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If there is an opportunity to get back at him or her, I will take it.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I will not talk with him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I will not seek revenge upon him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EFS

Think of your current emotions toward the person who hurt you. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
<th>Disagree (D)</th>
<th>Neutral (N)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I care about him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I no longer feel upset when I think of him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I’m bitter about what he or she did to me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel sympathy toward him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I’m mad about what happened.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I resent what he or she did to me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel love toward him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TFS

Directions: Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by using the following scale:

5 = Strongly Agree
4 = Mildly Agree
3 = Agree and Disagree Equally
2 = Mildly Disagree
1 = Strongly Disagree

_____  1. People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.
_____  2. I can forgive a friend for almost anything.
_____  3. If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.
_____  4. I try to forgive others even when they don’t feel guilty for what they did.
_____  5. I can usually forgive and forget an insult.
_____  6. I feel bitter about many of my relationships.
_____  7. Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.
_____  8. There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.
_____  9. I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.
_____  10. I am a forgiving person.
Arrow-Carini Group Identification Scale 2.0 (GI)

Directions: Now, please think of yourself in the present time. Please rate the following statements as you feel right now about the congregation where you are a member. Remember to rate these statements about your own feelings in the present.

Rate each statement on a 7-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

1. I would prefer to be in a different congregation. (R)
2. In this congregation, members don’t have to rely on one another.
3. I think of this congregation as part of who I am.
4. Members of this congregation like one another.
5. All members need to contribute to achieve the congregation’s goals.
6. I see myself as quite different from other members of the congregation. (R)
7. I enjoy interacting with the members of this congregation.
8. This congregation accomplishes things that no single member could achieve.
9. I don’t think of this congregation as part of who I am. (R)
10. I don’t like many of the other people in this congregation.
11. In this congregation, members do not need to cooperate to complete group tasks. (R)
12. I see myself as quite similar to other members of the congregation.

NOTE: (R) indicates a reverse-scored item.
Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7b)
Directions: Now, please think about your current relationship with the offender. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. Remember to rate these statements as your relationship is right now with the offender you have in mind.

1. Philosophy of life ___
2. Aims, goals, and things believed important ___
3. Amount of time spent together ___

5 = Always agree
4 = Almost always agree
3 = Occasionally disagree
2 = Frequently disagree
1 = Almost always disagree
0 = Always disagree

How often would you say the following events occur between you and the offender?
4. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas ___
5. Calmly discuss something together ___
6. Work together on a project ___

0 = Never
1 = Less than once a month
2 = Once or twice a month
3 = Once or twice a week
4 = Once a day
5 = More often (than once a day)

7. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, “happy,” represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.
0 = Extremely Unhappy
1 = Fairly Unhappy
2 = A little unhappy
3 = Happy
4 = Very Happy
5 = Extremely happy
6 = Perfect

Note: The total score for the DAS-7 is the sum of the responses to the seven items.
Similarity of an Offender’s Spirituality Scale (SOS)

Directions: In trying to get over the serious harm done to you by the offender(s), you may or may not have considered how you and the offender(s) have related to the Sacred. For each statement, please indicate the degree to which you would disagree or agree whether it has played a part in how you dealt with the offense by the offender(s).

0 = Completely disagree
1 = Mostly disagree
2 = Somewhat disagree
3 = Neither disagree nor agree or uncertain
4 = Somewhat agree
5 = Mostly agree
6 = Completely agree

1. Our beliefs overlap in important ways.
2. I thought about how similar my basic religious beliefs were to his/hers.
3. I thought, we are basically committed to the same belief system.
4. I recalled how similar we were in fundamental values.
5. I believe that he/she is a similar spiritual person to me.
6. I thought to myself that this person was a brother/sister human.
7. Even though our bond as humans was broken, I knew we were both the same under the skin.
8. I reminded myself that I was no better as a person than the one who hurt me.
9. I said to myself that he/she was no worse as a person than I am.

Scoring: Items 1-5 make up the Similarity of Spirituality subscale; items 6-9 the Similarity of Humanity subscale. Higher scores indicate more similarity.
**Sacred Loss and Desecration (SLD)**

Directions: Think about the offense you have recalled. Please rate the following statements as your view of this particular offense.

Use a five-point scale, from 1=not at all to 5=very much.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1=not at all</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5=very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something from God was torn out of my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that gave Sacred meaning to my life is now missing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something of Sacred importance in my life disappeared when this event took place.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something symbolic of God left my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A part of my life in which I experienced God’s love is now absent.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My life lost something that once gave me a sense of spiritual fulfillment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I suffered a loss of something that was given to me by God.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something I held Sacred is no longer present in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This event involved losing a gift from God.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that connected me to God is gone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A source of spirituality became absent in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that contained God is now empty.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this event, something central to my spirituality was lost.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This event was an immoral act against something I value.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event was a sinful act involving something meaningful in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This event was both an offense against me and against God.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something evil ruined a blessing in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something Sacred that came from God was dishonored.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event ruined a blessing from God.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something symbolic of God was purposely damaged.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sacred part of my life was violated.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event was a violation of something Sacred.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that was Sacred to me was destroyed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Spiritual Humility Scale**

1. He/she accepts his/her place in relation to the Sacred
2. He/she is comfortable with his/her place in relation to the Sacred
3. He/she is humble before the Sacred.
4. He/she knows his/her place in relation to nature.

*Note. Participants rated items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree.*
The Gratitude Questionnaire–6 (GQ-6)

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

1  strongly disagree
2  disagree
3  slightly disagree
4  neutral
5  slightly agree
6  agree
7  strongly agree

___1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
___2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
___3. When I look at the world, I don’t see much to be grateful for.
___4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
___5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.
___6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

Items 3 and 6 are reverse scored.
Personal Biography

Chelsea L. Greer was born July, 8, 1983 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Chelsea is currently a fourth year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Virginia Commonwealth University. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Rochester College in 2004, a Master’s degree in Counseling from Michigan State University in 2009, and a Master’s degree in Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2011. She received an award from the Psychology department at VCU for the Outstanding Master’s Candidate in 2011. Chelsea will be conducting her doctoral internship at Cook Counseling Center of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University beginning in August 2013. Chelsea lives in the greater Richmond area with her husband, young daughter, and dog. The Greer family is originally from metro-Detroit, Michigan.