Marymount University

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CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS/SPRITUAL, AND TRANSGRESSION-RELATED PREDICTORS OF FORGIVENESS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

A Dissertation Submitted in Counselor Education and Supervision

by

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Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans

Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... ii

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 1
Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................................................... 3
Research Questions ........................................................................................................................ 4
Significance of the Study ................................................................................................................ 4
Limitations/Assumptions ................................................................................................................. 5
Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................................... 7
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 9

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................... 11
Forgiveness Defined ....................................................................................................................... 11
  *Forgiveness Theories* .................................................................................................................. 13
  *Interpersonal Forgiveness* ......................................................................................................... 16
  *Intrapersonal Forgiveness* ......................................................................................................... 17
Cultural Factors of Forgiveness .................................................................................................... 18
  *Culture and Cultural Identity* .................................................................................................. 18
  *African American Identity* ....................................................................................................... 18
  *Cultural Comparisons* ............................................................................................................. 20
Age ................................................................................................................................................ 23
  *Sex Differences in Forgiveness* ............................................................................................... 25
Religious/Spiritual Factors of Forgiveness ..................................................................................... 30
  *Religious Affiliation: Perspectives on Forgiveness* .............................................................. 32
  *Religiousness* ........................................................................................................................... 37
  *Religiousness and Religious Activities* ................................................................................... 39
Prayer ............................................................................................................................................ 41
  *Spirituality* ............................................................................................................................... 43
African American Religiousness and Spirituality .......................................................................... 46
Transgression-Related Factors of Forgiveness ............................................................................... 49
  *Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIMs)* .................................................. 51
  *Appraisal of Transgression and Relationship* ....................................................................... 53
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS .......................................................................................... 69
Research Questions ........................................................................................................... 69
Research Design ................................................................................................................ 69
Participants ........................................................................................................................ 70
Instrumentation .................................................................................................................. 74
  The Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001) ................................................................. 75
  Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18) (McCullough et
  al., 2006) .................................................................................................................... 75
  Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Fetzer
  Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) ............................................................. 77
  Supplemental Questionnaire ......................................................................................... 78
Data Collection Procedures ............................................................................................... 78
Mixed Methods Analysis ................................................................................................... 80
Pre-Analysis Steps ............................................................................................................. 80
Tests for Violations of Assumptions .................................................................................. 81
Qualitative Analysis ........................................................................................................... 82
Triangulation Strategies .................................................................................................... 82
Summary ............................................................................................................................. 83
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS ......................................................................................................... 84
Quantitative Results .......................................................................................................... 84
  Cultural Factors ............................................................................................................ 85
  Religious/Spiritual Factors ......................................................................................... 86
  Transgression-Related Factors .................................................................................... 88
  Summary of Quantitative Analysis ............................................................................ 89
Qualitative Analysis Themes ............................................................................................. 90
  Type of Transgression ............................................................................................... 90
  Type of Relationship ................................................................................................... 91
  Justice ......................................................................................................................... 91
  Apology ....................................................................................................................... 92
  Time ............................................................................................................................ 93
  Additional Forgiveness Factors .................................................................................... 95
Abstract

This study examined cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), and transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) as predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. Additionally, the study explored other factors that may provide useful information for future studies on forgiveness among African Americans. Participants completed the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18) (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006), the Forgiveness Scale (Rye, Loiacono, Folck, Olszewski, Heim, & Madia, 2001), the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999), and a supplemental questionnaire. Multiple regression analyses indicated that religious affiliation, sex, revenge, benevolence, and BMMRS Forgive were significant predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. Further, qualitative analysis identified personal/self-growth, religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs, God’s forgiveness of others, and maintaining the relationship as additional factors that influenced forgiveness in this sample. Future research may explore these factors both within and between African Americans and other groups to compare findings and enrich the literature on predictors of forgiveness.

Key words: forgiveness, religiousness, spirituality, culture, African Americans
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is an essential part of healthy human development (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Researchers have reported the benefits of forgiving, including improved physical health (Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007), mental health (Toussaint & Webb, 2005), and life satisfaction (Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel, 2008). Forgiveness has also been found to be an important factor in the restoration of relationships after a conflict and is often the goal of many forms of psychotherapy, such as group and marital therapy (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2000; Malcolm & Greenberg, 2000; Worthington, Sandage, & Berry, 2000). Forgiveness not only helps with restoring relationships, but it can improve mental and physical health (Exline & Zell, 2009). In addition, forgiveness helps relieve the emotional pain of the offended (Root & Exline, 2011). Therefore, forgiveness appears to be beneficial to people in a variety of ways.

In the counseling relationship, forgiveness is often a goal of psychotherapy because clients may present with issues involving feeling wronged or hurt by another. Group and marital therapy frequently works on achieving forgiveness since many clients in counseling present issues related to feeling hurt or wronged by someone (Gordon et al., 2000; Malcolm & Greenberg, 2000; Worthington, et al., 2000). Forgiveness is an important factor in the restoration of relationships after a conflict and the forgiveness process can help improve the overall well-being of clients, and aid in the achievement of treatment goals (Worthington, et al., 2000). Consequently, studying the predictors of forgiveness as well as other factors that impact forgiveness may have significance when seeking best practices in counseling.

Researchers have examined how sex (Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Eldis-Matityahou, & Moore, 2007; Miller et al., 2008; McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2000; Root & Exline,
and spirituality, including religious activity, religious affiliation (Fox & Thomas, 2008; Escher, 2013), and imitation of God (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye et al., 2001; Mullet et al., 2003) influences forgiveness. Women have been found to be more religious than men and are believed to be more forgiving (Freese, 2004). Further, self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others, and the feeling of being forgiven positively affects the health of participants later in life (Lawler-Row, 2010). In addition, forgiveness has been linked to increased existential well-being.

Continued research on the influence of cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), and transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) on forgiveness may help individuals move forward to improved physical & mental health and increased life satisfaction. Further, it is hoped that the present study will facilitate the exploration of other factors that influence forgiveness.

Minimal research has examined African American beliefs about forgiveness (Cornick, Schultz, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2011; McFarland, Smith, Toussaint, & Thomas, 2012; Regnerus & Uecker, 2006) and this author could not find any published studies looking at how cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), and transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) may predict forgiveness among African Americans.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), and transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) are predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. A mixed methods research design was used to look at the relationship between cultural factors, religious/spiritual factors, and transgression-related factors (independent variables) and forgiveness (dependent variable). Criterion and snowball sampling was used to select the participants before data collection. In addition, a supplemental questionnaire was given in order to discover what other factors may provide useful information for future studies on forgiveness. Qualitative analysis of these responses allowed for other factors, such as apology, justice, time, type of transgression, or type of relationship, to emerge. The predictors that emerged from the responses of the African American participants in the present study may increase awareness of and insight to this unique community that is often overlooked in the research on forgiveness. Further, results will be compared to previous findings regarding forgiveness within this population.

The participants were purposely selected to understand the cultural, religious, and transgression-related predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. For participants to be considered, they were required to be (1) African American and (2) over 18 years of age. The researcher used the data of participants who self-identified as African American. Participants were recruited from African American sororities and fraternities (e.g. Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Omega Psi Phi), African American churches in the Washington Metropolitan area, the Counselor Education and Supervision
NETwork-Listserv (CESNET-L), and Facebook©. The researcher contacted these organizations to obtain listserves before sending the recruitment email to the potential participants on the listserves. African Americans known to the researcher were sent the recruitment email so they could share the recruitment email with those that qualified. Additionally, the survey was advertised on social media via Facebook©.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Do cultural factors (age and sex) and religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

2. Do transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

3. What other factors impact the motivation to forgive among African Americans?

**Significance of the Study**

Findings from the present study could assist professional organizations, counselor educators, counselors, and African American religious organizations by promoting and advocating holistic wellbeing of clients. Spirituality and religiousness (Chandler, Holden, & Kolander, 1992; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) and forgiveness (Toussaint & Webb, 2005) have been shown to promote holistic wellness. Counselor educators are aware of the importance of religiousness and spirituality, but many counseling programs historically have not included training to work with clients’ spirituality and religiousness (McCullough, 1993). Counselors may find this concerning, given that 81 percent of clients indicated a preference to have their
own beliefs integrated in the counseling process (American Association of Pastoral Counselors, 1992). There is a need for a more holistic approach from counselors and in counselor preparation programs in order to better serve African American clients. This study is designed to foster a better understanding about predictors of the motivation to forgive as well as other factors that influence forgiveness among African Americans.

The study will also benefit African American organizational and religious leaders because forgiveness can empower their members to work more effectively to fight inequality and injustice. Additionally, counseling practitioners may be better prepared to work with the unique needs of persons from the cultural and religious groups represented in the sample around issues of forgiveness. Increased understanding of how cultural factors, religious/spiritual factors, and transgression-related factors as well as other factors that influence forgiveness will hopefully lead to successful counseling treatment outcomes and overall well-being for African Americans. Further, future studies should explore predictors of forgiveness across cultures and religious denominations either in isolation or collectively to enrich the body of research on forgiveness.

Limitations/Assumptions

The mixed methods study is created to fill a gap in the research about the predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. A notable weakness of the research is the use of one race which minimizes generalizability. The specific set of individuals used in the study limits the ability to apply the findings to other cultures, racial/ethical groups, and geographic locations, although it does provide a basis for comparison in future studies. However, the qualitative questions provide general information about other factors that influence forgiveness since research indicates that the nature of the transgression and other factors influence forgiveness.
Recall bias is another limitation of the study because participants explore their own experiences and report based on what they believe occurred. Recall bias is a factor that was evaluated by McCullough and Worthington (1999) and can limit the validity of arguments about the personality process that influences forgiveness. In most forgiveness research, participants are asked to remember events when they have been wronged. Religious individuals may find it harder to recall a salient offense whereas the less religious may find one with ease (McCullough & Worthington, 1999).

A general limitation of using survey data is that participant responses are self-reported. Self-reporting prevents researchers from knowing how personality traits, characteristics of the relationship between the transgressor and forgiver, and the characteristics of the offense may influence the ability to forgive. The qualitative portion of this study was included in order to determine if there were other factors that might predict forgiveness that were not measured by the quantitative measures. This method was also used in order to allow for expansion of self-reporting through short answer questions that might promote greater validity in participants’ responses.

Finally, the sex, race/ethnicity, religious background, and personal experiences of the primary researcher may have been a limitation. Growing up in the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) church, the author has seen how others react at the expression of more conservative beliefs and values. The personal experience of the primary researcher as an African American woman within the SDA community could constitute researcher bias when analyzing the results. To control for this possible bias, the researcher’s church was not used for the study to prevent the sample from being influenced by their relationship with the researcher.
Definition of Terms

The following definitions of terms are offered to assist in the explanation and understanding of the study.

Forgiveness: (1) “the reduction of negative experiences (e.g., emotions, motivations, behavior, cognitions), (2) both a reduction of negative experiences and a resulting positive experience toward the transgressor’ (Miller et al., 2008, p. 845), and (3) when a transgressor is freed of the earned punishment.

Forgiveness is achieved when there is a decrease in the negative emotions such as avoidance and revenge and an increase in positive emotions like benevolence (Worthington, 2005). Based on this definition, this researcher will define forgiveness as the presence of positive (PP) feelings, experiences, and thoughts (benevolence) toward the transgressor and the absence of negative (AN) emotions, experiences, and thoughts (avoidance and revenge) toward the transgressor (Rye et al., 2001)

Transgressor: the individual that is perceived as having wronged the forgiver and may be freed of the earned punishment and (Miller et al., 2008).

Forgiver: the individual that experiences “the reduction of negative experiences (e.g., emotions, motivations, behavior, cognitions) resulting positive experience toward the transgressor” (Miller et al., 2008, p. 845).

African-American: Individuals with ancestry from Sub-Saharan Africa who are residents of the United States that self-identify as African American (McPherson & Shelby, 2004).
Cultural identity: the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct (Collier & Thomas, 1988).

Age: an individual's self-reported chronological age.

Sex: a person’s biological status typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Spirituality: is “the universal human capacity to experience self-transcendence and awareness of sacred immanence, with resulting increases in greater self-other compassion and love” (Cashwell & Young, 2011, p. 7). Further, “each person defines spirituality in her or his personal way, and this changes over times so that each person defines spirituality differently at various periods in her and his life” (Cashwell & Young, 2005, p.197). One does not have to belong to a religious affiliation in order to be spiritual.

Religion: “provides a social context within a set of beliefs, practices, and experiences occur. Religion is, by definition, institutional and creedal, and often socially defined (Cashwell & Young, 2011, p. 9).”

Religiousness: is “the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living” (Worthington et al., 2003, p. 85).

Retributive justice: focuses on punishing the transgressor without taking into account the forgiver. Retributive justice is designed to deter future transgressions (Darley & Pittman, 2003). Revenge, unlike retributive justice, is driven by emotion and is retaliation and does not restore balance or provide closure (Exline et al., 2003).
**Interpersonal motivation:** measured along three dimensions (revenge, avoidance, and benevolence) in *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18)* (McCullough et al., 2006).

**Revenge:** “feelings of righteous indignation correspond to a motivation to seek revenge or see harm come to the transgressor” (McCullough, 2000, p. 44). Revenge is considered a negative motivation to forgive.

**Avoidance:** “feelings of hurt perceived attack correspond to a motivation to avoid personal and psychological contact with the transgressor” (McCullough, 2000, p. 44). Avoidance is considered a negative motivation to forgive.

**Benevolence:** “a lack of negative motivation results in benevolence toward the transgressor that caused the individual pain” (McCullough, 2000, p. 44). The motivation toward benevolence (presence of positive) and the absence of avoidance and revenge (absence of negative) motivators work together to achieve forgiveness; benevolence is necessary to achieve forgiveness.

**Conclusion**

Forgiveness is an essential part of healthy human development (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). In order to work effectively with African American clients that are working on forgiving themselves or others, it may benefit counseling practitioners to understand forgiveness and the predictors and factors that might impact a client’s motivation to forgive.

Gathering data that investigates forgiveness among African Americans brings awareness to the African American community about forgiveness in general. Concurrently, the results have implications for counselors as they provide therapy for members of the African American communities, particularly those who exhibit issues around forgiveness. Further, the findings
inform counselor preparation which may ultimately lead to counselors’ better meeting the needs of African American clients and may later have an implication for counselors working with diverse clients in general.

Chapter Two includes an in-depth literature review of the following: (a) definitions and theories of forgiveness, (b) cultural factors that influence forgiveness, (c) religious/spiritual factors that may influence one’s ability to forgive, (d) African American religiousness and spirituality, (e) and transgression-related factors that have been linked to forgiveness. Chapter 3 includes information regarding the research methodology and research design used in this mixed-methods study. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of results from the survey instruments (quantitative) and questionnaire (qualitative). Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the findings of the study, limitations of the study, and implications for further research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of Chapter Two is to review literature on both forgiveness and the African American community in order to provide a context and demonstrate a need for the study. First, forgiveness will be described including: (a) theories on forgiveness, (b) interpersonal forgiveness, (c) intrapersonal forgiveness, (d) cultural factors of forgiveness, (e) religious/spiritual factors and forgiveness, and (f) transgression-related factors that impact forgiveness. The predictors selected for this study will be explored and an in-depth literature review on each variable and its relevance to forgiveness will be presented. Then, the literature on other possible factors will be reviewed. Chapter Two will conclude with a summary of key themes and the need for further research examining the influence of cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), and transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) on forgiveness among African Americans.

Forgiveness Defined

Forgiveness has been a topic that has been researched extensively over the past two decades (Miller et al., 2008). One of the central problems with forgiveness studies has been defining forgiveness. Initially, individuals may respond to transgressions with negative behavior such as seeking revenge or avoiding contact; forgiveness counteracts these negative behaviors (McCullough, 2001). As a result, it may seem reasonable to perceive forgiveness as an action of granting the transgressor a release from punishment.

Even though the definition of forgiveness is subjective, researchers have agreed that forgiveness is different from pardoning, condoning, and excusing (Miller et al., 2008;
Worthington, 2005). Two commonly used definitions of forgiveness are: (1) “the reduction of negative experiences (e.g., emotions, motivations, behavior, cognitions) and (2) both a reduction of negative experiences and a resulting positive experience toward the transgressor” (Miller et al., 2008, p. 845). Forgiveness is seen either as an interpersonal process or an intrapersonal process. The interpersonal process focuses on the expression of forgiveness to the transgressor, whereas the intrapersonal process focuses on the internal process of forgiveness of self (Miller et al., 2008). Similarly, Worthington (2005) defined forgiveness as letting go and replacing bitter and vengeful feelings with positive feelings.

Lawler-Row et al. (2007) investigated a definition of forgiveness with 270 young adults (age 18-33 years). The sample consisted of 95 males and 173 females and the participants were primarily Caucasian (70.4%) with smaller percentages of African Americans (7%) and other (7%) (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). The definitions of forgiveness of the participants were compared with the definition of philosophers, theologians, and psychological researchers. The data identified three dimensions of forgiveness: “orientation (self, other), direction (passive letting go of negative experiences, active enhancement of positive experiences) and form (emotion, cognition and behavior)” (Lawler-Row et al., 2007, p. 233). Results revealed that more instances of forgiveness were associated with definitions using a passive letting go of negative experiences; that is, individuals reported forgiveness was achieved without participating in activities that were found to reduce the negative experiences (Lawler-Row et al, 2007).

Although there are multiple definitions of forgiveness, in the present study, forgiveness will be defined from McCullough’s (2000) motivational perspective which identifies forgiveness behaviors as revenge, avoidance, or benevolence. Forgiveness is achieved when there is a decrease in negative motivations (avoidance and revenge) and increase in positive emotions
(benevolence) (McCullough, 2000). This will be expanded on in the discussion on forgiveness theories.

In the present study, forgiveness is assessed as the presence of positive (PP) feelings, experiences, and thoughts toward the transgressor and the absence of negative (AN) emotions, experiences, and thoughts (avoidance and revenge) toward the transgressor (Rye et al., 2001). Even though these definitions seem simple, it is may be difficult for an individual to take the steps to achieve forgiveness and, for many, forgiveness is not a state, but may be a gradual process. The qualitative research question is designed to understand what other factors, such as length of time since the transgression, might influence the motivation to forgive. According to Horwitz (2003), forgiveness is an intrapsychic process that often requires an individual to work through conscious and unconscious anger. One must put the transgression in the context of the whole person of the transgressor to allow for empathy and understanding, which helps one to forgive (Horwitz, 2003).

**Forgiveness Theories**

Currently, there are a limited number of theories on the forgiveness process although McCullough (2000) presented a conceptual model on forgiveness suggesting that forgiveness is a motivational construct and people respond to transgression in different ways. According to McCullough (2000), *transgression related interpersonal motivations (TRIMs)* vary along three dimensions. He theorized that:

(a) feelings of hurt or perceived attack corresponding to a motivation to avoid personal and psychological contact with the transgressor (i.e., avoidance); (b) feelings of righteous indignation correspond to a motivation to seek revenge or see harm come to the
transgressor (i.e., revenge), [and] (c) a lack of motivation results in benevolence toward the transgressor that caused the individual pain. (McCullough, 2000, p. 44)

These distinct motivations and the motivation toward benevolence work together to achieve forgiveness. McCullough (2000) theorized that forgiveness is pro-social change in the drives to escape or to seek revenge against a transgressor. Further, McCullough (2000) described forgiveness as prosocial change in the forgiver’s transgression-related interpersonal motivation toward a transgressor. In other words, when a person has forgiven their transgressor, he/she is more motivated by feelings of benevolence toward the transgressor and less motivated by feelings of avoidance and revenge.

Forgiveness is associated with improved interpersonal relationships between the transgressor and the forgiver and forgiveness encourages relationship harmony because of the innate social nature of human beings (McCullough, 2000). A forgiver may experience an emotional release or positive feeling while forgiving a transgressor (Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vos, 2004). Further, forgiveness may be characterized as demonstrating more reconciliatory actions and less avoidance behaviors, and replacing negative thoughts, feeling, and behaviors with positive ones has been found to decrease stress (Zechmeister et al., 2004).

More recently, Enright (2001) offered a forgiveness process that involves four phases: uncovering phase, decision phase, work phase, and deepening phase. In the uncovering phase, the forgiver “gains insight into whether and how the injustice and subsequent injury have compromised his or her life” (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 67). During the decision phase, an individual “gains an accurate understanding of the nature of forgiveness and makes a decision to commit to forgiving on the basis of this understanding” (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 67). During the work phase, the individual “gains a cognitive understanding of the transgressor and
begins to view the transgressor in a new light, resulting in positive change in affect about the transgressor, about the self, and about the relationship” (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 67). A new understanding generates empathy and compassion, which in turns allows the pain of the offense to be accepted and the forgiver to show good will toward the transgressor. In the final deepening phase, the individual “finds increasing meaning in the suffering, feels more connected with others, and experiences decreased negative affect and, at times, renewed purpose in life” (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 67).

When comparing the two theories, McCullough (2000) focuses on the motivations that drive the behaviors of the forgiver whereas Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) examine the insight surrounding the transgression because insight drives the behaviors and actions of the forgiver. Both theories stress the importance of factors that drive forgiveness such as revenge, avoidance, or benevolence. Unfortunately, these theories do not account for cultural factors that may influence the forgiveness process.

Ho and Fung (2011) proposed a dynamic process that accounts for the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, motivational, and sociocultural factors related to forgiveness. Ho and Fung’s (2011) model referenced the emotion regulation model and identifies processes of forgiveness influenced by cultural and social contexts. The process begins with the transgression which is then appraised and generates an emotional response. Reframing is then used to regulate behavior, cognitions, and emotions and this emotion regulation decreases the negative emotion without physiological costs such as depression or anxiety. Ho and Fung (2011) believed the following variables influenced the forgiveness process; “perceptions of transgression, dialectical thinking, causal attribution, approach versus avoidance-focused motivation, and socially engaged
versus socially disengaged emotion” (p. 87). Despite the efforts of Ho and Fung (2011), there continues to be a limited number of forgiveness theories.

**Interpersonal Forgiveness**

Interpersonal transgressions are defined as when an individual hurts, harms, or offends another that causes anger, sadness, and fear (Root & Exline, 2011). These emotional reactions can be adaptive and destructive. The anger can assist in preserving self-respect, enforcing limits, and restoring justice, whereas other negative emotions can evolve into rumination and a grudge, leaving the individual physically and emotionally drained (Root & Exline, 2011). Forgiveness is a method to reduce these negative emotions once the adaptive purpose has been fulfilled (Root & Exline, 2011).

McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) defined interpersonal forgiveness as multiple pro-social changes where the individual “becomes (a) decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending relationship partner, (b) decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the transgressor, and (c) increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the transgressor, despite the transgressor’s hurtful actions” (pp. 321–322). Forgiveness from a motivational level, looking specifically at McCullough’s (2000) TRIM, acknowledges people may forgive but do not act in a new benevolent way toward their transgressors (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001). In certain situations, such as the work place, people may inhibit negative behaviors because, depending on motivation level, people have a reduced possibility of avoidant and vengeful behavior. This motivational definition also accounts for people who make a public gesture of forgiveness, but still lack pro-social motivational changes such as benevolence and acceptance (McCullough et al., 2001).
Finally, Carlisle and Tsang (2013) explored the debate about whether those who are religious forgive because of egoistic or altruistic reasons. The altruistic motivation to forgive is usually aligned with pro-social behavior since altruism is the pro-social drive to increase the welfare of a person in need; conversely, egoism is the desire to receive benefit or to avoid punishment for oneself (Carlisle & Tsang, 2013). Those who have a high intrinsic religiousness are more likely to help others than those who have low intrinsic religiousness, but this motivation is driven by the desire to appear socially appropriate whereas those who see religiousness as an open-ended journey are not more likely to help, but their patterns to help are more consistent with true altruistic behavior (Carlisle & Tsang, 2013). Thus, it could be that forgiveness is motivated by both egoistic and altruistic reasons.

**Intrapersonal Forgiveness**

Intrapersonal forgiveness happens inside an individual as she retaliates against herself with self-punishment or self-destructive behaviors (Escher, 2013). The research on intrapersonal forgiveness is limited. Psychologists and philosophers have frequently disagreed on whether the focus of forgiveness is within or between individuals (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). In a recent qualitative study, self-forgiveness (intrapersonal) was found to differ from interpersonal forgiveness regarding guilt and the views of being forgiven by a higher power or forgiver (Hall & Fincham, 2005). Unlike interpersonal forgiveness, the individual that inflicts the wrong on someone else or themselves may experience self-resentment and self-blame. The more individuals feel that the forgiver or higher power forgave them, the less guilt they feel and the more likely they forgive themselves (Hall & Fincham, 2005).

Although more research is needed on both interpersonal and intrapersonal forgiveness, the present study focused specifically on the factors that predict interpersonal forgiveness.
Cultural Factors of Forgiveness

The next section will review the literature on the following predictors of forgiveness: cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), and transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy). The predictors were selected due to the limited literature on each especially as they relate to African Americans. A summary of key themes and the gaps in the research will be explored.

Culture and Cultural Identity

Culture is a term that has evolved over time and is a way to view the world and relate to other people. Culture is the manner in which members of the group interpret, use, and perceive the culture’s artifacts, symbols, values, heroes, and rituals (Banks & McGee, 1989). Subcultures can exist within dominant cultures and are usually based on social class, ethnicity, or geographic area (Jandt, 2012). Co-culture is an alternative term that conveys equality between the culture as a whole and the subdivisions within the culture (Jandt, 2012, p.8). Cultural identity (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p.100) is the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct. Those within the same culture or subculture will view these elements the same and behave similarly (Banks & McGee, 1989). Now that culture has been defined, a closer look at the characteristics of specific cultures will be examined.

African American Identity. Race and biological differences has been thought to be the basis of culture or subculture but race refers to a group of people who have a similar biological descent (Jandt, 2012). Culture and cultural identity are built on the identification and acceptance of a group’s shared symbols, values, and norms. Race has historically been associated with
inferior characteristics that have led to the creation of subcultures that empower the dominant culture (McIntosh, 1994). People can be the same race but members of vastly different cultures or co-cultures, therefore, race is not the primary factor when determining a cultural identity.

The African American identity is complex and has at least five connected dimensions (McPherson & Shelby, 2004; Shelby, 2002). McPherson and Shelby (2004) outlined five dimensions: (1) racial, (2) ethnic, (3) national, (4) cultural, and (5) political. The racial dimension applies to those individual who have similar genetic characteristics (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). Appiah (2002) argued that the common sense criteria for African American identity is the racial designation. The ethnic dimension involves the idea of a shared culture and maintaining the integrity of the group by continuing specific cultural norms (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). The national dimension refers to the geographical homeland which can lead to a sense of pride for one’s culture and increased subdivision within a culture (e.g. Caribbean American, Haitian American, Jamaican American) (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). Cultural dimensions are the social concepts that are not always linked to geographical origins or appearance (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). An individual can be Caucasian and view himself as having an African American cultural identity because of his attitudes and social behaviors. The final dimension, political, involves a commitment to certain political views (e.g. civil rights) and approaches again oppression (e.g. protests) (McPherson & Shelby, 2004). In the present study, items on the questionnaire assessed the cultural factors that impact forgiveness among African Americans.

The multidimensional identity of African Americans has created three issues. First, a person may only exemplify one of the five dimensions of black identity which can lead to other African Americans rejecting anyone who only identifies with one dimension and asserts they are
not “fully” black (McPherson & Shelby, 2004, p. 177). Second, an individual may exemplify all dimensions but only to a certain degree which leads to “degrees” of blackness (McPherson & Shelby, 2004, p. 177). Finally, the dimensions are ambiguous and often disputed because there is an argument about what it means to be African American. The multi-dimensional cultural identity of African Americans is important to take into account when considering an individual’s motivation to forgive. The degree of blackness can influence one’s religiousness or participation in prominent African American denominations which might influence the motivation to forgive. Current research focuses more on the relationship between race and forgiveness and research on the influence of culture identity and forgiveness is limited, especially when examining these two prominent African American churches.

**Cultural Comparisons.** Few studies have investigated how cultural identity, ethnicity, and race play a role in adult spirituality, religiousness, or forgiveness. African-Americans and Hispanics attend church more frequently than Caucasians (Regnerus & Uecker, 2006). In another study, it was found that attendance and frequency of religious activities of Korean American adolescents was a predictor of life satisfaction (Kim, Miles-Mason, Kim, & Esquivel, 2013). McCullough et al. (2000) noted that “without addressing religious, cultural, and situational variations, scientific notions of forgiveness are likely to be disconnected from lived human experience” (p.10).

The research on forgiveness frequently obtains demographic information of participants. Currently, the research on the connection between cultural identity factors and forgiveness is inadequate. McFarland, Smith, Toussaint, and Thomas (2012) investigated the connection between interpersonal forgiveness and older (66 years and older) African American and Caucasian adults. The sample comprised an even mix of African Americans and Caucasians
from the United States. In terms of religious affiliation, the population included Christians, former Christians, and those who never associated with a religion. Results revealed that interpersonal forgiveness was a protective factor of health with African Americans but not Caucasians (McFarland et al., 2012). Forgiveness was also related to increased health, decreased alcohol use, and decreased chronic illness with African Americans. This study further supported that race should be considered when looking at the relationship between health benefits and forgiveness because of the protective factors such as socioeconomic status, meaning in life, and optimism that were reported only by African American participants.

Additionally, within the Chinese culture, research has shown a strong link between the collectivist culture and willingness to forgive (Fu, Watkins, & Hui, 2008). Typically, an individualist is more concerned about protecting his identity and justice whereas a collectivist is more concerned about sustaining a good interpersonal relationships and social norms (Ho & Fung, 2011). Fu et al. (2008) examined this relationship using a large sample (n=316) from two Chinese universities. The sample consisted of 161 male participants and 155 female participants with an average age of 20 years. The researchers looked at the following variables: Ren Qing (relationship orientation), inner peace of mind, interpersonal harmony, saving self’s face, saving other’s face, anxiety, and independent/interdependent conception of self. The participants reported that they were more like to forgive in order to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict (Fu et al., 2008). It seems the Chinese culture values forgiveness for its maintenance in social harmony whereas forgiveness is a protective factor in the African American community.

Similarly, forgiveness communication (apology, blame, social harmony, and empathy) within Chinese and within United States relationships has been examined to understand how culture effects interpersonal forgiveness (Merolla, Zhang, & Sun, 2012). Transgressor apology
and transgressor acceptance of blame were the best predictors of forgiveness communication and were positively correlated to conditional forgiveness (forgiveness granted when the forgiver’s conditions are met) in both cultures (Merolla et al., 2012). Additionally, apology was positively correlated to direct forgiveness in both cultures, social harmony was a positive predictor for direct forgiveness only in the Chinese relationships, and empathy was found to not be a good predictor of forgiveness communication in either culture (Merolla et al., 2012). Despite the cultural differences that exist, Chinese and United States cultures had similar perspectives on forgiveness on all predictors except social harmony (Merolla et al., 2012). This implies that factors related to race may impact the motivation to forgive.

Cornick et al. (2011) investigated the influence of forgiver/transgressor racial similarity on one’s willingness to forgive. A sample of 45 black adults and 59 white adults completed the TRIM-18 (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). “Forgiveness was measured as positive (benevolence) and negative (revenge, avoidance) motivations toward the transgressor” (Cornick et al., 2011, p. 936). The results revealed that racial similarity had no effect on negative motivations, but revealed a significant relationship between positive motivations and racial similarity (Cornick et al., 2011). Black forgivers reported increased benevolence towards Black transgressors even after more distressing transgressions; conversely, the other racial combinations yielded a reduction of the positive motivation to forgive for more distressing transgressions (Cornick et al., 2011).

The research that exists about culture, cultural identity and forgiveness is minimal at best and results have been vaguely conclusive. The present study adds to the dearth of research related to cultural factors and forgiveness and results enhance conclusions regarding the
predictive value of cultural factors as predictors of forgiveness among African Americans specifically.

Age

To date, there are few studies that investigate the relationship between age and forgiveness and the limited research has indicated that forgiveness varies across age. Older adults are characteristically believed to be more experienced, wiser, and more forgiving than younger adults (Allemand, 2008). Studies have shown variation because each study uses different measures for forgiveness. On average, older adults are most willing to forgive and young children and adolescents are least willing to forgive (Toussaint et al., 2001; Mullet et al., 2003). Toussaint et al. (2001) found both older adults (65 years and older) and middle aged (45-64 years old) were more forgiving than the 18-44 age group. On the contrary, Ho and Fung (2011) found that individuals between 20–23 years of age were more intrinsically forgiving than individuals between 12–14 years, who are more extrinsically motivated to forgive. From these studies, it seems chronological age could be a factor in the motivation to forgive and forgiveness may be more typical for older people than young people.

There is evidence that forgiveness in older adults may have beneficial outcomes. Krause and Ellison (2003) examined the relationship between forgiveness of others, forgiveness by God, and psychological well-being among older adults. Three major outcomes came from the study: (1) forgiving others increases psychological well-being, which is greater than the effects related to the forgiveness of God, (2) the way in which older adults forgive is related to psychological well-being, and (3) those who unconditionally forgive expressed less psychological distress than those who wanted the transgressor to perform acts of repentance (Krause & Ellison, 2003).
The relationship between age and forgiveness has also been linked to how the values of a generation evolve, such as the differences in values that have emerged in the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946-1964). The literature is not well-developed on generational value differences. Hayward and Krause’s (2013) longitudinal study investigated eight dimensions associated to forgiveness among older adults and birth cohorts. Participants consisted of both African Americans (n=752) and Caucasians (n=748) and had to be over the age of 66. As participants aged, they reported increases in conditional forgiveness of others, forgiveness of others, feelings of being forgiven by God, and feelings of being forgiven by others (Hayward & Krause, 2013). There were also decreases in difficulty forgiving oneself and perceptions of conditionality in God’s forgiveness as participants aged (Hayward & Krause, 2013). Additionally, as participants got older, their religiousness was linked to increases in perceived conditionality in God’s forgiveness and an increased forgiving attitude on the dimensions (Hayward & Krause, 2013). Overall, the results revealed the following regarding levels of forgiveness between birth cohorts: (1) members of the younger cohorts tended to see themselves less forgiven by God and others when compared to older participants, (2) individuals in the younger cohorts were less conditional in their forgiveness of others, and (3) no differences emerged in the overall tendency to forgive among the cohorts (Hayward & Krause, 2013). This does not support previous research indicating older adults are more likely to forgive than younger individuals. Continued research is needed to better understand the relationship between age and forgiveness.

Additionally, Ghaemmaghami, Allemand, and Martin (2011) examined age and sex differences with forgiving recent real-life transgressions. The sample consisted of 75 young adults (16-39 years), 68 middle aged adults (40-59 years), and older adults (60-90 years) from
Switzerland with an even ratio of men and woman. Ghaemmaghami et al. (2011) found: (1) a trend among middle aged adults to express more avoidance behaviors than younger adults, (2) young men had a greater motivation to seek revenge than older and middle aged men, (3) no age or sex differences in the motivation to be benevolent, and (4) women and middle aged adults exhibited more forgiveness in everyday life than younger adults. These findings support the possibility of a relationship between age and the motivation to forgive, and also have implications for sex as a cultural predictor of forgiveness.

**Sex Differences in Forgiveness**

When looking at the influence of sex on forgiveness, the theory and definition of forgiveness cannot be the only factors considered. Lawler-Row et al. (2007) determined that men see forgiveness as a passive letting go response and women see it as an active response to the offense. Passive emotional definitions were also associated with increased forgiveness for men (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). McCullough, Pargament and Thoresen (2000) assessed sex and religion as predictors of forgiveness. The results indicated that sex plays a limited role in forgiveness and the role decreases when religious involvement is taken into account (McCullough et al., 2000). Women were more likely to ruminate about their failures and flaws which distracts them and puts the negative attention on themselves (Exline & Zell, 2009). Exline and Zell (2009) hypothesized that women would be more likely to forgive if they first have the chance to affirm themselves.

Sex differences have been linked to methodological design, dispositional quality, affective traits, attachment styles, situational differences, coping styles, and the tendency to forgive (Miller et al., 2008). Miller et al. (2008) systematically examined 53 empirical articles that studied forgiveness and sex. The results of the meta-analysis showed that there were small
to moderate sex differences in forgiveness (Cohen’s coefficient = .2). Miller et al. (2008) also examined the relationship between sex and nine methodological moderators: (a) type of sample, (b) target of forgiveness, (c) type of forgiveness, (d) actual versus hypothetical transgressions, (e) measurement modality, (f) type of forgiveness measure, (g) published versus non-published, and (h) validated or non-validated forgiveness measure (Miller et al., 2008). The only significant moderator was the measure of vengeance, indicating that men were less likely than women to forgive in responding to vengeance scales (Miller et al., 2008). The sex difference was found to have a small to moderate effect size ($d = .28; r = .14$) and the research also indicated that sociological factors, religion, and culture can also influence forgiveness in men and women (Miller et al., 2008). Men consistently scored higher on revenge and vengeance scales, but cultural affiliation of participants was also a factor because the sample was comprised of Congolese and French men (Miller et al., 2008). From the findings, Miller et al. (2008) concluded that men are more likely to seek revenge, but both men and women avoid the transgressor. The present study will address several of these factors as predictors of forgiveness among African Americans.

Toussaint and Webb (2005) investigated the sex differences in the relationship between empathy and forgiveness. Toussaint and Webb (2005) recruited 127 participants from public beaches and community parks in California. The sample consisted of 35% men and 65% women between the ages of 25 and 45 years of age. The majority of the sample was Caucasian (65%) with 11% Hispanic, 8% Black, 8% Pacific Islander, and 7% other. The religious affiliation was 55% Christian, 25% spiritual, 13% nonreligious, and 7% religious but not Christian (Toussaint & Webb, 2005).
Toussaint and Webb (2005) used the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) (Enright, 2005) to assess forgiveness across behavioral, affective, and cognitive domains. The items were on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (disagree) to 6 (agree). The internal consistency of affective, behavioral, and cognitive subscales of the EF was excellent ($\alpha = .97, .96, .97$ respectively) (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Toussaint and Webb (2005) used a questionnaire to measure emotional empathy as the secondhand experience of the feelings of others. The internal consistency of the emotional empathy scale was high ($\alpha = .83$). Toussaint and Webb (2005) revealed that women were more empathic than men, but there were no apparent sex differences for forgiveness. Further, results showed that empathy was a predictor of forgiveness for men but not women (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). This indicates that even though women are more empathic than men, men who express empathy show a greater likelihood of forgiving.

In a study of college students (63 men and 38 women), researchers compared male and female participants’ motivation to forgive (Exline et al., 2008). The sample consisted of predominantly Caucasian students (70%) from an introductory psychology course in Ohio (Exline et al., 2008). All participants were asked to think of a time when they were deeply wronged by another. The sample was split between two conditions, similar offense condition and the control condition. Participants with the similar offense condition were asked to reflect on a time when they had also deeply offended someone else. The control group wrote about a typical week in their life (Exline et al., 2008). The results indicated that men were found to be more vengeful than women in the control condition (Exline et al., 2008).

Exline and Zell (2009) offered that sex difference could be explained by men’s agentic and systems level thinking. Another explanation may be that men are drawn to Kohlberg’s (1984) justice-based morality whereas women are drawn to warmth-based virtues of Gilligan’s
(1994) ethic of care. Thus, men may be more likely to fight, or seek vengeance or justice and women may be found to be drawn to warmth-based virtues such as forgiveness. Men have also typically been under evolutionary pressure to behave aggressively to establish a dominant position, a reputation for toughness, or a sign of masculinity (Wilkowski, Hartung, Crowe, & Chai, 2012). However, men were shown to have lower vengefulness when prompted to use the self-focused empathic strategy and women had no change in vengefulness (Wilkowski et al, 2012). Wilkowski et al. (2012) hypothesized that women’s low baseline scores on vengefulness might be the reason for this sex difference.

Gupta and Gupta (2014) investigated the relationship between religiousness and mental health and well-being in men and women. Gupta and Gupta (2014) used the Religious Commitment Scale-10 (RCI-10) with a sample of 160 Hindu men and 160 Hindu women (ages 30-45 years). The results revealed that higher religiousness significantly reduced anxiety and stress in participants (Gupta & Gupta, 2014). Additionally, higher religiousness was linked to increased healthy, life satisfaction, meaning in life, and optimism (Gupta & Gupta, 2014). The results revealed that the sex differences were statistically significant for the categories of “twice or more a week” (t-ratio = 2.597, p < .01), “about every week” (t-ratio = 3.394, p < .001), “1-2 times in three months” (t-ratio = 4.284, p < .001) and “1-3 times in the past year (t-ratio = 2.192, p < .05) indicating that women are more involved in religious activities than men (Gupta & Gupta, 2014, p. 186). The women with high religiousness, as measured by frequency of religious activity, were also found to have meaningfulness in life and to be more optimistic and satisfied with life than men.

Root and Exline (2011) performed two studies on sex differences of forgiveness. In the first study, Root and Exline (2011) examined how three forgiveness motivations (personal
benefit, moral obligation, and goodwill) facilitated the forgiveness of men and women. The sample consisted of 106 women and 79 men, who were predominantly white (66%), from a private university in Ohio with a mean age of 19. In terms of religious affiliation, the sample was Catholic (21%), atheist/agnostic (18%), other Christian (16%), Protestant (12%), none (9%), and Hindu (8%) (Root & Exline, 2011). Participants were asked to complete the *Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18)* (McCullough et al., 2006) along with answering open ended questions associated to each motivation. The *TRIM-18 Inventory* (McCullough et al., 2006) was used to assess the forgiving and unforgiving motivations toward the transgressor. The researchers found that all three motivations helped men to forgive, but goodwill was found to be the most effective motivation for men; for women, the forgiveness motivations (personal benefit, moral obligation, and goodwill) did not facilitate forgiveness. These findings support previous research on sex and forgiveness that revealed a relationship between men’s motivation to forgive and a strong sense of justice.

In Root and Exline’s (2011) second study, a sample (106 men and 112 women) was used to take a closer look at the same three motivations from the prior study. The mean age for the sample was 19.3 years with 69% Caucasian, 19% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% African American, 3% Middle Eastern, and 2% Hispanic (Root & Exline, 2011, p. 190). Religious affiliations included Protestant (26%), Catholic (25%), Jewish (8%), Hindu (6%), Eastern Orthodox (4%), Muslim (3%), atheist (6%), agnostic (11%), and no affiliation (7%) (Root & Exline, 2011, p. 190). Participants were asked to describe the specific offense and completed the *TRIM-18* Inventory (McCullough et al., 2006). Participants also assessed the degree to which forgiveness progresses over time versus it happening at a single moment in time (Root & Exline, 2011). The additional items showed a positive correlation ($r(217) = .43, p<.01$) and were averaged to
evaluate the extent to which forgiveness was seen as an emotional healing process (Root & Exline, 2011, p. 190). Root and Exline (2011) discovered women put more effort into forgiving prior to participating in the study, which required them to assess their forgiveness in that instance, and perceived forgiveness as a healing process that required emotional healing. Men, on the other hand, were more forgiving when they were asked to take the perspective of the transgressor.

Both studies performed by Root and Exline (2011) helped to explain why men show greater response to prompts or exercises designed to encourage empathic perspective taking and women see forgiveness as an extensive process. This implies that women require more time to forgive and process the transgression than men and reveals a possible relationship between sex and time given to forgive. The present study was designed to explore sex and time as predictors of forgiveness.

**Religious/Spiritual Factors of Forgiveness**

Culture, ethnicity, race, and religiousness play a factor in determining the definition of religiousness and spirituality (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Hill et al., 2000; Koenig, 2008; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Research on spirituality and religiousness has revealed that both are unique and cohesive (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Yonker, Schnabelrauch, and DeHaan (2012) defined spirituality and religiousness as an "active personal devotion and passionate quest largely within the self-acknowledged framework of a sacred theological community" (p. 300).

In the literature, religiousness and spirituality are both used when describing the faith practices of adolescents and emerging adults (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). Religiousness means that religious people are associated with specific values regardless of the culture of the person and that the majority of religions encourage transcendence of material concerns and
meaning-seeking beyond their daily existence (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). This definition also aligns with views on spirituality and predicts that all religious people would embrace the value of forgiveness more than a non-religious person (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). The link between religion and forgiveness has been documented several times in various research studies.

In the United States, spiritual and religious beliefs and religious activity are important among individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 years, and these individuals reported belief in God (Regnerus & Uecker, 2006; Smith & Snell, 2009). During adolescence, 55% of individuals reported a personal commitment to live their life for God and 40% reported attending church at least once a week (Smith & Denton, 2005). In emerging adulthood, only 15% reported weekly church attendance and 27% reported a strong adherence to their religion (Smith & Snell, 2009). Church attendance and salience were discovered to have a positive effect on the relationship between religiousness and psychological outcomes in adolescents and emerging adults (Yonker, Schnabelrauch, & DeHaan, 2012). Further, those who considered themselves religious or spiritual tended to value forgiveness more (Yonker et al., 2012). Emmons (2000) discussed the idea of a spiritual intelligence and the ability to consistently exercise virtues such as forgiveness as a part of spiritual intelligence. As spiritual intelligence grows, these virtues will become more of an inherent trait of an individual over time; thus, one with a strong spiritual intelligence will be more motivated to forgive (Emmons, 2000). Thus, indicating a relationship between forgiveness and religious/spiritual factors such as a commitment to God, church attendance, and spiritual intelligence.
Religious Affiliation: Perspectives on Forgiveness

Although religion influences forgiveness, it may also depend on the transgression committed. The influence of religious involvement is negligible on transgression-related measures of forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). The two religion-related factors that impact opinions on forgiveness are religiousness and religious affiliation (Cohen, Malka, Rozin, & Cherfas, 2006). The way people think about forgiveness, view the conditions and limits of forgiveness, tend to forgive, and express forgiveness are affected by these factors. Cohen et al. (2006) investigated how these factors affect forgiveness. The results of this study indicated that Jews agreed more than Protestants that certain offenses were unforgivable and Protestants were less inclined to endorse theologically based reasons for the unforgivable offense (Cohen et al., 2006). Research has also shown that Hindu Indians tend to value more interpersonal responsibility in the moral domain than European Americans (Cohen et al., 2006). Therefore, there may be some discrepancy between religious denominations when it comes to forgiveness.

Protestant doctrines rarely discuss the idea of unforgivable offense whereas the Jewish doctrines state that there are some offenses (heresy or murder, causing many others to sin, and cutting oneself off from the community) that are unforgivable (Cohen et al., 2006). According to the Jewish doctrines, there are three characteristic that make an offense unforgivable; the offense is too severe, forgiveness requires the repentance of the transgressor, and only the forgiver can forgive the offense (Cohen et al., 2006). These requirements allow for the possibility of acceptable unforgiveness.

With the strong emphasis of scriptures, Christians believe that if one is forgiven of your sins, then she should be forgiving of someone else. Notably, the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant from Matthew 18:21-35 is frequently cited when discussing forgiveness in Christianity.
Peter asks, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times” (Matthew 18:21, King James Version, 1999)? Jesus Christ responds stating “I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). In the parable, Jesus Christ appears and reminds us of the importance of forgiving others as we are forgiven by God, as demonstrated by the negative example of the unforgiving servants. The parable reminds Christians that forgiveness has to be authentic, an unforgiving nature is offensive to God, God’s forgiveness of sin is enormous, and this enormous magnitude of forgiveness should be an example for the way Christians should forgive others over and over again.

Parables as told by Jesus Christ are often seen as models for living, but it cannot be assumed that those who prescribe to the religious internalize and follow these texts (Mullet et al., 2003; Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005). Engaging certain practices or beliefs does not guarantee an automatic trigger for forgiveness. An individual that adopts a belief system in which “forgiveness is a moral necessity, is socialized into forgiving practices, and has internalized other beliefs and practices that facilitate forgiveness will likely have a propensity to forgive, provided that other entities with causal powers do not interfere” (Escher, 2013, p. 103).

From the Biblical viewpoint, forgiveness is when an individual is freed of the earned punishment. In Genesis 50:17 (King James Version), the first use of the word forgive (nasa/nasah) is to send away a person’s punishment (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Joseph’s brothers had mistreated him and sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:18-36). When they later encountered him as an adult, they pleaded with him for forgiveness and to be released from their punishment. Joseph’s brothers acknowledged their guilt and their lack of punishment for their actions. Joseph chose to forgive his brothers for their actions (Genesis 50:15-21). The natural and usual principle of biblical forgiveness is outlined in 1 John 1:8-9 (King James
Version): A man confesses his sin, asks to be released from punishment, and is awarded forgiveness from the wronged.

Forgiveness is an element of the doctrine of several religions. The majority of research on the relationship between forgiveness and religion is primarily focused on Christianity (Fox & Thomas, 2008). Secular and religious affiliations may differ in the way in which meaning are formed. Fox and Thomas (2008) investigated the impact of religious affiliation and religiousness (faith, interpretation, prayer, attendance) on forgiveness. Fox and Thomas (2008) included Christian, Muslim, Jewish or secular affiliations in the sample (n=475) and the population was middle class Europeans (43.6%), and Australian (23.2%), Asian (12.4%), Middle Eastern (6.3%), and North American (4.2%). The researchers used three instruments to measure types of forgiveness: attitudinal forgiveness, behavioral forgiveness, and projective forgiveness (Fox & Thomas, 2008). Fox and Thomas (2008) found that religiousness across affiliations was positively correlated with each of the forgiveness measures and faith or the belief in the existence of God was the strongest predictor of forgiveness. This seems to indicate that religious individuals are more likely to model their motivation to forgive around their religion’s beliefs regardless of denomination. Similarly, Tsang, McCullough, and Hoyt (2005) linked meaning making systems to the forgiveness disposition. Participants that were able to find meaning and understanding about the transgressions were more likely to forgive. Tsang et al. (2005) were not able to determine if the forgiveness motivation caused individuals to access certain religious meaning systems or if these meaning systems shaped one’s ability to forgive. The inability to identify causal determinants of forgiveness seems to be prevalent in the literature which validates the exploration of predictors of forgiveness as proposed in the present study.
More recently, Ayten (2012) examined the relationship between forgiveness, humility, and pride within Turkish Muslims. Specifically, Ayten (2012) focused on the relationship between forgiveness and socio-demographic variables such as sex and age. Ayten’s research revealed (2012) that religiousness among Turkish Muslims is negatively related to the tendency to seek revenge and positively related to forgiveness. While these results only apply to one denomination, it seems reasonable to assume that other religious denominations might have similar results.

Forgiveness is most detailed in the monotheistic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Repentance was one of the most important distinctions of early Judaism (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Teshuvah (Hebrew for “return” or “repentance”), a focal point of Jewish moral life, made the delivery of forgiveness from God possible (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Repentance involves regret over the moral and interpersonal consequence of an action, the intellectual regret, and the resolve not to repeat the action again (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Forgiveness after a transgressor has followed true repentance is religious duty (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Therefore, in this case, the motivation to forgive would be religiousness or one’s commitment to abide by the principles of their religion.

Christian teachings follow Judaism principles but differ on the emphasis on repentance as a condition for divine forgiveness; instead, repentance is seen as step toward obtaining, declaring, and practicing one’s membership in the Kingdom of God (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Christian scriptures are also more explicit on the importance of interpersonal forgiveness (e.g. Matthew 18:21-35, Matthew 6:12). Christian theories emphasize the importance of seeking forgiveness from God and people and granting forgiveness to each is an exercise in learning to live in the kingdom of God (McCullough & Worthington, 1999).
Forgiveness is also a fundamental element of God’s character in Muslim theology (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). The Qur’an links human’s tendency to commit transgression with God’s unlimited forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Islamic text encourages Muslims to forgive people the same way they want to be forgiven. Forgiveness is associated with being closer to God and more virtuous (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). In the Muslim faith, those who are able to forgive and not retaliate are destined for a special blessing from God, so it appears that the motivation to forgive may be duty to the principles of the religion. Muslims and Christians both turn to God for forgiveness and believe that granting forgiveness brings one closer to God.

Lastly, Hinduism and Buddhism emphasize forgiveness within the context of karma. “Man himself is the architect of his life . . . what he did in the past life is entirely responsible for what he is in the present life” (Sharma, 2005, p. 78). A transgression is not punished by a higher being like the previous religious traditions, but instead the transgression will eventually have consequences (Kidwell, Wade, & Blaedel, 2012). As a result, it is important to forgive a transgressor because it promotes positive karma and possible rewards later. Hinduism and Buddhism emphasizes the reward obtained by the forgiver, unlike Christian and Muslim theology.

In summary, forgiveness is often valued differently by religions (Rye, 2004). Forgiveness is spiritual and transcendent because when people forgive, they have religious and spiritual thoughts (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Religious accounts of forgiveness are most thoroughly expressed in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Judaism emphasizes repentance as a condition for divine forgiveness. The Muslim faith stresses God’s unlimited forgiveness and human nature’s tendency to commit transgressions.
Christianity turns to scripture which places emphasis on interpersonal forgiveness: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12, King James Version). McCullough and Worthington (1999) found studies using a variety of measures to indicate religiousness, ranging from feeling close to God, the frequency of religious attendance, the importance of religion, and personal prayer; the results showed that religious people value forgiving more and are more likely to forgive.

**Religiousness**

Religiousness has been linked to a variety of positive attributes including positive affect, meaning in life, and forgiveness (Gupta & Gupta, 2014; Tix, Dik, Johnson & Steger, 2013). Religiousness will be defined and explored in general and literature on the positive attributes of religiousness will be discussed. The literature review reveals a large gap in the literature on religiousness/spirituality and forgiveness among the African American community.

Worthington (1988) theorized that individuals who are religious typically assess their world based on their religious beliefs and values. Specifically, Worthington (1988) hypothesized that individuals assess their world across three dimensions: “authority of scripture or sacred writings, authority of ecclesiastical leaders, and degree of identity with their religious group” (Worthington et al., 2003, p. 85). Additionally, Worthington (1988) believed that individuals who tolerated different values to a certain extent across those dimensions, would react to values outside their tolerance with either resistance or avoidance (Worthington, 1988). Worthington (1988) cited religiousness as a key part of this model. Religiousness is “defined as the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living” (Worthington et al., 2003, p. 85). In other words, those who are religious will integrate their religion into their lives on a daily basis. Religiousness has been measured in
several ways: membership or non-membership in church, level of participation, beliefs in creeds, and significance of religious experience (Worthington, 1988).

Hicks and King (2008) performed two studies that examined if positive affect and meaning in life were influenced by religiousness. In the first study, the sample consisted of 150 individuals (18-51 years old); the majority of the sample consisted of women (105 women) and Caucasians (84%) (Hicks & King, 2008). Results indicated that religiousness was determined to be a moderator between positive affect and meaning in life; increased religiousness had a stronger relationship to meaningfulness in life than positive affect. In the second study, participants (103 Christian students between 18-24 years old) were either primed with negative words (i.e. hell) or positive words (i.e. heaven) (Hicks & King, 2008). Similar to the first sample, the majority of participants were women (80) and Caucasian (94%). When participants were primed by negative religious words, there was a decrease in the relationship between meaning in life and religiousness (Hicks & King, 2008). The study indicated a strong positive correlation between religiousness and meaningfulness in life and positive mood. The limitations of this study are that the participants were predominantly Caucasian women: thus, the present study will explore similar factors among African Americans.

Tix, Dik, Johnson, Steger (2013) explored how religious traditions influence religiousness and well-being. The sample of 208 college students (16-43 years old) reported being Catholic (35%), Evangelical Protestant (29%), or Mainline Protestant (37%) (Tix et al., 2013, p. 22). The majority of the sample consisted of participants that identified as European (87%) with small minority percentages. The results of the study indicated that Protestants had more meaning in life and religiousness than Catholics and Mainline Protestants (Tix et al., 2013). Religiousness also predicted greater meaning in life for Catholics and greater well-being for
Evangelical Protestants (Tix et al., 2013). However, Mainline Protestants had increased anxiety with increased religiousness (Tix et al., 2013). Overall, the religious traditions of each denomination uniquely influenced the overall well-being of religious committed individuals. Again, the study was limited in the number of participants identifying as minority groups, so the present study will expand the literature specifically with African Americans.

**Religiousness and Religious Activities**

Religion and forgiveness are complementary of each other (Rye et al., 2001; McCullough & Worthington, 1999). The religious community provides individuals with moral expectations, psychosocial support, and a sense of accountability (King & Furrow, 2004; Smith, 2003). It is important that the individual has the freedom to decide to attend church, because spirituality and religiousness has a greater impact when it is freely chosen (Koenig, McGue, & Iacono, 2008). This freedom allows for beliefs to be more internalized into behaviors, self-regulation, and decision making process (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Scholars have shown that religion and forgiveness are linked because of the religious activity, religious affiliation and teaching, and imitation of God (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye et al., 2001; Mullet et al., 2003).

Religious affiliation was found to decrease the odds of frequent interpersonal forgiveness more than intrapersonal forgiveness suggesting that religions are more likely to emphasize interpersonal forgiveness than intrapersonal forgiveness (Escher, 2013). A collaborative relationship with God had a stronger effect on interpersonal forgiveness than intrapersonal (Escher, 2013). However, integrating spiritual beliefs into other relationships or interactions was statistically significantly related to intrapersonal and not interpersonal forgiveness (Escher, 2013). Overall, the research indicates a stronger relationship between interpersonal forgiveness
and religious affiliation than intrapersonal forgiveness; that is, it appears that those who affiliate with religion are more likely to forgive others than to forgive self.

The connection between religious activities and forgiveness is often questioned because the frequency of the activity does not mean an individual internalizes the beliefs and will use religion to cope with negative events (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). Prayer has a stronger positive relationship with interpersonal forgiveness than self-forgiveness, whereas the positive effect of church attendance on interpersonal and self-forgiveness are equal (Escher, 2013). Attendance and prayer were found to have a stronger effect on interpersonal forgiveness than self-forgiveness (Escher, 2013). Escher (2013) discovered, conversely to previous research, that it is the content of what is internalized before, during, and after attending church and praying and not the frequency of attendance that matters most. This implies there may be a relationship between the knowledge learned while attending church and forgiveness.

Additionally, Worthington (1988) linked strong religiousness with being more forgiving. Individuals who have a strong value system are typically influenced by religious beliefs which often promote forgiveness. The research continues to reveal a positive correlation between religiousness and the tendency to forgive (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004; Greer, Berman, Varan, Bobrycki, & Watson, 2005). Kidwell et al. (2012) investigated “(1) how do religious people think about and make use of forgiveness in their lives? (2) do religious beliefs promote forgiveness, and if so, how” (p.124)? Qualitative analysis revealed the participant motivations for forgiveness could be classified as secular and sacred (Kidwell et al., 2012). The results highlighted that religious individuals integrated both their religious traditions and secular strategies to forgive and there were commonalities in the religious strategies used by
participants across religions: prayer, asking for God’s help, and reading religious texts (Kidwell et al., 2012).

Finally, Witvliet, Hinze, and Worthington Jr. (2008) examined the relationship between a transgression and religiousness of self-reported Christians (27 men and 30 women) over the age of 18 years. The majority of participants were Caucasian (89%) and Protestant (77%). When participants were asked to think of unresolved transgression, the motivation to seek revenge reduced and the motivation to forgive and empathy both increased (Witvliet et al., 2008). Increased interpersonal forgiveness and decreased rumination were also linked to religiousness (Witvliet et al., 2008). Wade, Meyer, Goldman, and Post (2008) also explored the relationship between religiousness and forgiveness. The sample of 249 college students consisted of 71.9% men, 65.4% Caucasian, and 22.4 African Americans (Wade et al., 2008). The results indicated that religiousness was linked to the reducing the revenge motivation after psycho-educational treatment (Wade et al., 2008). Individuals with a self-reported strong religiousness were more likely to forgive (Wade et al., 2008). Overall, these results indicated a strong positive correlation between strong religiousness and the motivation to forgive. However, many of these studies are proof of the gap in the research that has not explored these factors within the African American community.

Prayer. Prayer has often been linked to the forgiveness process (Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013). Prayer is used as a way for people to deal with concerns, health, and to process emotions. Research on the effectiveness of prayer as a therapeutic intervention has been inconclusive, however, prayer continues to be an important religious concept that is vital in having a relationship with and experiencing God (Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013). Prayer can be used for variety of reasons, including thanksgiving, contemplation, adoration, sacrifice,
confession, intercession, and petition (Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013). Prayer can provide peace with God and strength and provides a way of connecting with God. The Lord’s Prayer from Matthew 6:5-15 is the clearest example of the connection between prayer and forgiveness in Christian scriptures: “… And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12, King James Version). Colossian 3:13 also speaks to forgiveness and states “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (King James Version). Those who adhere to a particular religious doctrine using the Bible as a guide, to remind that they are to forgive those the way the Lord has forgiven them. Thus, the motivation to forgive appears to be connected to religiousness within the doctrine of a denomination.

Most recently, a study by Vasiliauskas and McMinn (2013) investigated how prayer among undergraduate students at a Christian college influenced forgiveness. Vasiliauskas and McMinn’s (2013) study focused on four themes of prayer: guidance, to disclose pain to God, to ask God for help in forgiving, and to let go of the burden (p.26-27). There were four groups: the prayer group, devotional group, control group, and both devotional and prayer group. Individuals in the prayer and devotional group participated in a 16-day devotional reading and prayer interventions concentrated on forgiveness (Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013). Individuals in the devotional group reflected on devotional readings not related to forgiveness. The results indicated that those in prayer and devotional groups had a significant increase in forgiveness; further, the prayer group indicated significant changes in the empathy toward the transgressor (Vasiliauskas & McMinn, 2013). This implies that factors related to religious activities and practice may have a positive effect on the motivation to forgive.
While there is a wide range of literature on religiousness and general positive attributes, there are few studies that examine the relationship between religiousness and the forgiveness. Additionally, there is no research looking at religiousness/spirituality and Africans Americans specifically, which is one of the factors explored in the present study.

**Spirituality**

Spirituality is an individual’s sense of connection with the sacred (Davis, Hook, & Worthington, 2008). Spirituality is a more intrinsic process where as religiousness is extrinsic in a nature. Spirituality is personal journey and religiousness is the outward expression of one’s spirituality. An individual’s social circumstances and relationship with God is frequently linked to forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Strelan, Acton, & Patrick, 2009). Individuals that view God as partner in the presence of problems will work in conjunction with God to navigate life. The more one believes God forgives, the more likely they are to emulate God and forgive oneself and others (Strelan et al., 2009). Individuals that were more committed to the relationship were more likely to forgive a partner’s of their transgression (Strelan et al., 2009). Strelan et al. (2009) theorized that an individual’s disappointment with God would adversely affect the individual’s commitment to God and, thus, would affect his likeliness to forgive. The results showed there was a strong correlation between an individual’s commitment to God and forgiveness and that disappointment with God was negatively associated with forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2009).

Currently, there is still a gap in the research on how religiousness and spirituality helps or hinders forgiveness. Davis, Hook, VanTongeren, Gartner, and Worthington (2012) designed two studies to understand how spirituality may promote a more fluid effective forgiveness process. The first study had a sample of 425 college students comprised predominantly of women
(61.6%) with a variety of ethnicities (52.1 Caucasian, 17.6% African American, and 15.5% Asian). In the first study, researchers examined how “spiritual appraisals (i.e., how a person views a transgression as having spiritual meaning)” can help or impede forgiveness due to the feeling evoked (Davis et al., 2012, p.253). The results of the second study indicated that spiritual appraisals of the transgression were a predictor of unforgiveness (increase in vengefulness and avoidance) when controlling for feelings of hurt, closeness of the relationship and religiousness (Davis et al., 2012). Empathy was also determined to mediate the relationship between unforgiveness and religiousness (Davis et al., 2012). The second study had a sample of 123 college students with a similar sample make up as the previous study. In the second study, results indicated that appraisal of relational spirituality (i.e. “ways that people may experience a relationship with that which they deem sacred”) predicted unforgiveness and the rate of which unforgiveness declines (Davis et al., 2012, p.254). Strong dedication to the sacred was associated with greater declines in unforgiveness but continued research is needed to have a better understanding of forgiveness and relational spirituality within other religious communities.

Davis et al. (2008) also examined the effect of attachment to God and desecration (e.g. viewing the transgressor/transgression as evil) on forgiveness. Relational spirituality is the way of relating to the Sacred or God (Davis et al., 2008, p. 108). According to the researchers, every transgression has a forgiver, transgressor, and transgression; the results indicated that the anxious attachment (e.g., fluctuation between “feelings of closeness to or distance from God) and avoidant attachment (e.g., “distant relational style in response to stress”) to God reduced forgiveness (Davis et al, 2008, p. 295). The relationship was influenced by the participant’s religious coping and the view of a transgression. Results revealed that participants that viewed the transgression as desecration was associated with anger and rumination and that a healthy
relationship with God was positively correlated with forgiveness (Davis, et al., 2008). This implies that there may be a relationship between closeness to God and the motivation to forgive.

Davis, Hook, Worthington, and Hill (2013) reviewed the current literature on religiousness/spirituality and forgiveness. The meta-analytic review revealed a positive relationship between trait forgiveness (dispositional characteristics), offense type, and intrapersonal forgiveness (Davis et al., 2013). Contextual religious/spiritual factors (e.g. appraisal of transgression as it relates to something sacred) more strongly related to intrapersonal forgiveness than the dispositional measure of religiousness/spirituality (e.g. intrinsic spirituality, relationship with God, and prayer) (Davis et al., 2013). However, dispositional religiousness/spirituality was found to be strongly related to intrapersonal forgiveness, indicating a relationship between intrinsic spirituality and forgiveness.

Hardy, Skalski, Zhang, Melling, Band rinton (2014) examined the relationship between daily spiritual experiences and moral emotions (empathy, gratitude, & forgiveness). The sample (n= 139; ages 18–69) completed daily surveys for 50 days (Hardy et al., 2014). A regression for data revealed the daily spiritual experiences was linked to moral emotions. The quality of the experiences or activities also was found to be moderator of moral emotions such as forgiveness (Hardy et al., 2014), thus, indicating a positive relationship between daily spiritual/religious activity and forgiveness.

Spirituality and religiousness are an intricate part of holistic wellness in counseling (Chandler et al., 1992; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). A holistic approach to mental health recognizes the connection and incorporation of the physical being with the social being and the spiritual being (Parmer & Rogers, 1997). The American Counseling Association (ACA) advocates for a holistic approach in counseling (Parmer & Rogers, 1997), so it seems appropriate
to research religiousness and spirituality as it relates to forgiveness and the absence of research with African American participants factors that predict forgiveness reinforces the significance of the present study.

**African American Religiousness and Spirituality**

Religiousness and spirituality has been linked to increased psychological well-being with African Americans (Helms & Cook, 1999). Additionally, spirituality or religion can be used as a coping mechanism to overcome adversity, illness, loss, trauma, racism, stress, self-esteem, economic issues, and relationship issues (Boyd-Franklin, 2010; McCullough et al., 2000). Chatters, Taylor, Bullard, and Jackson (2009) examined the differences between religious participation and spirituality among Caribbean Blacks, Caucasians, and African Americans. The sample consisted of 3,570 African Americans, 891 non-Hispanic whites, and 1,621 Blacks of Caribbean descent over the age of 18 years (Chatters et al., 2009). The results supported previous findings that Caribbean Blacks and African Americans were more involved in their religion than Caucasians (Chatters et al., 2009). African Americans were found to be formal members of their church, pray, and engage in more religious activities than Caribbean Blacks whereas Caribbean Blacks were found to read more religious materials than African Americans. In general, the study indicated strong religiousness within African Americans.

Historically, religion has functioned as escape from the stress of a majority white world (Frazier, 1974). The Black Baptist and Methodist churches arose as a way to combat the racism of the late 18th century (Swatos, 1996). African American Baptist and Methodist pastors began to create their own churches to combat being treating like second class citizens within the white Baptist churches (Swatos, 1996). The black Baptist church was the first denomination to reach out to enslaved blacks to disseminate the Christian doctrine (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Church
attendance at the Baptist church was contingent on slaves attending service with their masters as a reminder that baptism did not free them (Sewell, 2001). Despite these contingencies, African Americans joined the Baptist church in record numbers.

George Liele created the first black Baptist church in response to slave masters’ poor church attendance which prevented slaves from hearing the principles of Christian doctrine (Sewell, 2001). Liele later created another black Baptist church and the church membership continued to grow as he continued to preach and baptize slaves. Black Baptist churches played a crucial role in the formation of future prominent African American religions. As of 2012 there are approximately 13.5 million African American members in the Baptist church (Baptist World Alliance, 2013). Black churches played an important role in advocating for the needs and rights of African Americans during the Jim Crow Era and desegregation of America (Sewell, 2001). African American church leaders continue to play an important role in advocating for racial justice today.

Research has shown that African Americans are considerably more religious than other ethnic groups (Chatters et al., 2009). U.S. Religious Landscape Survey revealed that 87% African-American reported belonging to one religious group or another (Pew Research Center, 2009). A majority of African Americans report being Protestant (79%) with historically black churches such as Baptist (59%) being the highest percentage followed by Pentecostal (6%), Methodist (5%), others (5%), and Nondenominational (2%) (Pew Research Center, 2009). African Americans also reported membership to Evangelical Protestant churches (15%) and mainline Protestant churches (4%). Catholicism, Judaism, Muslim, Hinduisms were less than or equal to 5% of African Americans. Seventy-nine percent of African Americans reported that religion was an important part of their lives which is significantly higher than the percentage
(56%) reported by all Americans. Additionally, African-Americans (53%) reported attending religious activities at least once a week, more than three-in-four African Americans (76%) report daily prayer, and nearly nine-in-ten (88%) indicated being certain that God exists (Pew Research Center, 2009). The higher level of religiosity and spirituality of the African American community is the reason for selecting this community for the current study.

The research examining African American religious affiliations and forgiveness is limited, so bringing continued awareness to the African American community can help mental health professionals to work successfully with this population. For African Americans, spirituality may shape and influence the thoughts, actions, and behavior of the whole person; the church can help the spiritual needs of individuals and also provide a framework for a healthy lifestyle and healthy cultural identity (Parmer & Rogers, 1997). African American religions are vast and exploring predictors of forgiveness can provide rich data that may be applicable to the world.

Toussaint and Williams (2008) examined the differences in forgiveness levels between Protestants, Catholics, and the nonreligious. The nationally representative sample (n=1,087) of mostly Caucasian (77%) and small percent of African Americans (11%) with even gender representation (Toussaint & Williams, 2008). Protestants included Southern Baptists, Methodists, and Evangelical Lutherans. Protestants and Catholics were found to have higher levels of interpersonal forgiveness, feelings of forgiveness by God, and pursued forgiveness (Toussaint & Williams, 2008). Self-forgiveness levels were determine to have no differences between the religions. Forgiveness was also determined to differ based on personal religiousness and spirituality. The results indicated a possible relationship between religious beliefs and
religiousness with forgiveness but with the small percentage of African American participants, it is difficult to conclude anything specifically about the group.

The research examining African American religious affiliations and forgiveness is limited, so bringing continued awareness to the African American community can help mental health professionals to work successfully with this population. For African Americans, spirituality may shape and influence the thoughts, actions, and behavior of the whole person; the church can help the spiritual needs of individuals and also provide a framework for a healthy lifestyle and healthy cultural identity (Parmer & Rogers, 1997). African American religions are vast and exploring predictors in these groups can provide rich data that is applicable to the world. Further, it is hoped that the current study will facilitate the exploration of other factors that influence forgiveness in religions.

Transgression-Related Factors of Forgiveness

Researchers have found that there may be factors that foster forgiveness and these factors cover a wide range of concepts. Blatt and Wertheim (2014) developed a multifactorial Factors Related to Forgiveness Inventory (FRFI) to measure the social-cognitive factors that inhibit or facilitate forgiveness. Participants (n=512) were used to perform a factor analysis and the results revealed seven factors that impact forgiveness: “positive post-transgression transgressor responses, perceived likelihood of the transgressor repeating offenses, valuing the relationship with the transgressor, social influences to not forgive, believing forgiveness would be condoning or excusing the offense, intent of the transgressor, and spiritual beliefs about forgiveness” (Blatt & Wertheim, 2014, p. 1). Many of these factors are explored in the present study.

McCullough, Root, and Cohen (1997) explored the effects of writing about the transgression on forgiveness. Participants who wrote about the transgression experienced
decreases in avoidance versus benevolence motivation and the revenge motivation and found that exploring the personal benefits as a result of the transgression helped them to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997). In addition, participants reported that writing allowed them to engage in the cognitive process, which provided a structured way of processing the transgression and helped facilitate forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997). It appears that the physical act of writing combined with cognitive processing of the transgression motivated the forgiver to forgive the transgressor.

Another factor that seems to impact forgiveness is time lapse. The longer time has elapsed from the transgression, the more likely one is to forgive (Hantman & Cohen, 2010). Lapsed time means one could get older and forget the transgression; further, time allows for an individual to work through the pain and move on. Finally, time can lead to more time to ruminate about the transgression. Intrapsychic forgiveness involves letting go of the obsessive rumination about the behavior of the transgressor along with the wish for revenge (Horwitz, 2003).

The extent to which the forgiver ruminates about the transgression is also associated with the tendency to forgive (McCullough et al., 2001). Intrusive feelings, thoughts, and images about past events may also hinder forgiveness. Higher levels of revenge and avoidance are associated with those who clutch to the transgression (McCullough et al., 2001). McCullough et al. (2001) discovered that the degree to which individuals decrease their rumination about the transgression predicted how much progress they will make in forgiving the transgressor. McCullough, Bono, and Root (2007) affirmed these results; they found that an increase in rumination about the interpersonal transgression was related to reducing forgiveness. Based on
these findings, the less time spent pondering on or contemplating about the transgression, the greater the likelihood of forgiveness.

Another factor that may predict forgiveness is the nature of the relationship or the desire to renew or maintain the relationship. Lawler-Row et al. (2007) discovered: (1) two-thirds of participants within their study associated forgiving with forgetting, (2) eighty-five percent of the participants indicated having some religious affiliation while 11% indicated no religious affiliation, and (3) twelve percent of participants also included reconciliation in their definitions of forgiveness (Lawler-Row et al, 2007). Participants reported that a continued relationship with their transgressor was a key to forgiveness and associated forgiveness with restoration of trust and reduction of negative feeling and thoughts. The researchers concluded that people are more likely to forgive when they rebuild the relationship and trust while letting go of thoughts of revenge or avoidance (Lawler-Row et al., 2007).

It should be noted that the research does not support that those who have been wronged must deny their feelings. Malcolm, De Courville, and Belicki (2008) suggested that forgivers must acknowledge their right to be angry about the offense before trying to forgive. In addition, restoration of personal power has been linked to individuals becoming less vengeful (Fagenson & Cooper, 1987); that is, the forgiver may be more likely to forgive rather than get revenge if in doing so, personal power is gained.

Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIMs)

McCullough (2000) believed that forgiveness was driven by prosocial motivations. He theorized that forgivers were either motivated by revenge, avoidance, or benevolence. Rumination about the transgression has been linked to both the avoidance and revenge motivation (McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 1998).
Govier (2002) defined revenge as, “When we seek revenge, we seek satisfaction by attempting to harm the other as a retaliatory measure” (p. 2). Revenge is a source of several forms of aggression and violence (McCullough, Kurzban, &Tabak, 2013). Forgiveness has been thought to be the cure for the desire for revenge and has been linked to helping individuals recover from traumatic experiences and vengeful feelings (Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990).

Tooby, Cosmides, Sell, Liebermann, and Sznycer (2008) conceptualized the Welfare Tradeoff Ratio (WTR) concept which is an internal regulatory variable used to guide social decision making according to appropriate criteria (McCullough, Kurzban, &Tabak, 2013, p. 3). In other words, the wronged will do what is in the best interest of self. In these instances, social interaction of the transgressor and forgiver decreases the forgiver’s estimate of the transgressor’s WTR toward the forgiver. This can occur when the costs of harm are lower than the expected cost of regulating the transgressor’s WTR toward self. Acceptance is proposed as a way of tolerating the transgressor’s WTR (Tooby et al., 2008). Benevolence is marked by language or appeasement gestures signaling willingness to accept and the absence of desires to retaliate, but is hard to measure using self-report measures (McCullough et al., 2013, p.1). McCullough et al. (2013) reviewed empirical evidence regarding the operation of these systems, discussed the causes of cultural and individual differences in their outputs, and sketched their computational architecture. They found that the social and cultural norms of an individual determine one’s ability to forgive (McCullough et al., 2013).

Additionally, McCullough, Kurzban, and Tabak (2013) posited that humans have an evolved “cognitive system that implements this strategy—deterrence—which we conceptualize as a revenge system. The revenge system produces a second adaptive problem: losing downstream gains from the individual on whom retaliatory costs have been imposed” (p. 1). McCullough et
al. (2013) concluded that, consequently, a secondary structure reestablished relationships after negative interactions by reducing the revenge and motivating behaviors that prevent benevolence for the transgressor. The operation of these systems depends on estimating the risk of future exploitation by the transgressor and the expected future value of the relationship with the transgressor.

**Appraisal of Transgression and Relationship**

When an individual is wronged, he may ask himself: “How serious was the offense? Should the transgressor be punished? Is forgiveness conceivable?” (Exline et al., 2008, p. 495). An objective answer to these questions is difficult because emotions may cloud judgment when answering. Frequently, in order to reestablish power for the forgiver, punishment is often desirable for the offense (Exline et al., 2008). In valued relationships, the focus is to both reduce the negative experience and increase the positive experience (Exline et al., 2008), however, in non-valued relationships, the focus is only on reducing the negative experience. To restore a sense of personal power, the offended or hurt individuals will demonize their transgressors, exaggerate their innocence emotionally and physically, distance themselves from the transgressor, or seek revenge (Exline & Zell, 2009). Researchers have also explored the risks that may occur with forgiveness. The offended individuals can be at risk if their attempts to forgive are the result of suppressed of anger, minimization of the offense, misplaced trust, or unassertiveness (Exline & Zell, 2009; Lamb & Murphy, 2002). The appraisal of the nature the transgressions and the qualities of the transgressor are directly linked to forgiveness. The forgiver’s appraisal of the severity of the transgression has been linked to the disposition to forgive (Shapiro, 1991).
The research on forgiveness typically investigates common offenses such as relationship betrayals (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). The more severe cases such as crimes involving intent and lingering costs for the forgiver (e.g., “genocide, serial killing, physical and sexual abuse of young children, and other acts involving severe harm of defenseless people”) are harder to forgive (Exline et al., 2003, p. 341). When looking at murder, the target of the harm is dead, but loved ones often feel some stake in the matter and struggle to forgive because it is seen as a betrayal or disloyal. Additionally, some find it morally wrong to forgive murderers. For example, Jewish individuals believe it is impossible for a murderer to be forgiven because the victim can never forgive (Rye et al., 2000). Conversely, individuals believe in unconditional forgiveness. Buddhist and Christian teachings support unconditional forgiveness and transgressor accountability (Rye et al., 2000). Christian writing warns about forgiveness without any repentance or change in the transgressor (Matthew 4:17). Buddhism and Hinduism warn that a transgression in this life will lead to penalties in later lives (Rye et al., 2000). The diverse opinions in the literature concur that the severity and intentionality of a crime influence the motivation to forgive.

Fincham, Jackson, and Beach (2005) explored the transgressor and forgiver perspectives on transgression severity. Undergraduate students (n=232; 63 males and 172 females) described a transgression committed by their dating partner then completed a rating of the event severity and forgiveness (Fincham et al., 2005). The results indicated two perspectives that influenced forgiveness. Transgressor perspective was associated lasting harm, humiliation, and broken trust and the forgiver perspective with pain, emotional dysregulation, self-preservation and maintenance. The transgressor severity perspective is more likely to delay forgiveness whereas the forgiver severity perspective was determined to be promote forgiveness (Fincham et al.,
2005). These results revealed the importance of perspective taking when assessing transgression severity influence on forgiveness.

Exline et al. (2008) investigated how the forgiver’s perspective of how likely they could commit the same offense as their transgressor affected forgiveness. The study was comprised of three factors that connected forgiveness and personal capability to forgive. The factors were: increased empathic understanding, viewing the transgressor’s infraction as less severe, and identifying oneself as comparable to the transgressor (Exline et al., 2008). The reflection on one’s capability to forgive does come with some hazard. If an individual recalls a less severe offense, then the offense of the transgressor could be magnified instead of reduced. The reflection process could also cause self-focused negative emotions to come up for the individual. The results of the study indicated that the individual’s ability to identify with the offense in severity and type influenced forgiveness (Exline et al., 2008). The personal capability effect was less pronounced with women than men, and the perception that one could commit the same offense also shrinks the severity of the offense in question (Exline et al., 2008). These results indicated that the perspectives of the forgiver regarding the appraisal of the transgression may also be a factor in predicting whether or not one forgives.

A year later, Exline and Zell (2009) studied the influence of processing and self-affirmation on the response to transgression. Participants were asked to either recall a self-affirming situation, a situation when they were wronged and had wronged someone in a similar way, and a typical week. When participants were asked to consider the perspective of the transgressor, participants reported feeling more empathy, guilt, sadness, and anger than those participants in the control and self-affirmation groups (Exline & Zell, 2009). Men that recalled a situation when they were wronged and had wronged someone in a similar way were less
vengeful and hostile than the control and self-affirmation conditions (Exline & Zell, 2009). Psychological entitlement was determined to be a moderator for predicting unforgiving responses; individuals who believed they were entitled to a certain level of treatment were less likely to forgive (Exline & Zell, 2009).

Lawler-Row et al. (2007) reinforced the importance of the forgiver’s appraisal of the wronged. Participants were asked to rate their religious involvement from 1 (not at all) to 5 (more than 4 times a month). The majority of individuals participated 2-4 times a month, more than 4 times a month, or a few times a year (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, demographic sheet (race, age, sex), and the Acts of Forgiveness (AF) scale (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). The participants were asked to describe a time when someone had hurt them and if or why they forgave the transgressor, details including the type of relationship, how long ago it occurred, and the seriousness of the offense. Participants in the study frequently mentioned the contextual factors such as the severity, remorse of the transgressor, and the time since the offense. The researchers found: (1) eight percent of participants believed remorse and apology was a factor that influenced forgiveness, and (2) seven percent of the participants mentioned the idea of mistakes, meaning either that people in general make mistakes or they themselves had made mistakes (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). Lawler-Row et al. (2007) concluded that participants’ ability to think about their own transgressions and the perceived remorse of the transgressor increased the instances of forgiveness.

Tsang, McCullough, and Fincham (2006) also investigated how the appraised closeness in the relationship affected the willingness to forgive. Students (n=201) from Southern Methodist University that had been wronged recently completed the Transgression - Related Interpersonal Motivations-12 (TRIM-12) Inventory (McCullough et al., 1998) to measure
participant’s motivation to seek revenge, avoidance, or show benevolence (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). College students that felt closer in the relationship to the transgressor were less likely to end the relationship after a transgression (Tsang et al., 2006). The results indicated that benevolence and revenge later lead to restored closeness and commitment in the restored relationship whereas avoidance had the opposite effect on commitment and closeness in the relationship. These results imply that direct interaction with the transgressor may foster forgiveness better than avoidance.

Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia (2002) explored the role of relationship quality, attributions, and empathy on forgiveness in marriage. The sample consisted of 79 men and 92 women with a mean age in the late 40s for both men and women. The majority of participants were in their first marriage (97% of women and 98% of men) with an average 21.1 years of marriage. Participants were asked to fill out two relationship questionnaires that assess the marital quality and martial attributions, and a five item measure from McCullough, Root, and Cohen (1997) was used to assess forgiveness. The marital quality questionnaire had a high internal consistency with \( \alpha = .66 \) for both husbands and wives (Fincham et al., 2002). The coefficient alphas of the martial attribution questionnaire for causal and responsibility indices were .82 and .78 and .85 and .84 for husbands and wives respectively (Fincham et al., 2002). The forgiveness scales (McCullough et al., 1997) had coefficient alphas of .85 and .83 for husbands and wives respectively. The results indicated that positive marital quality was a predictor for attributions that increased forgiveness via affective reaction and emotional empathy (Fincham et al., 2002). Emotional empathy was linked to the increased forgiveness of wives by their husbands while attributions, on the other hand, were the most important predictors for forgiveness with wives (Fincham et al., 2002). Forgiving spouses tend to place less
responsibility on their spouse for the negative behavior whereas unforgiving spouses place more blame on their partner (Shapiro, 1991). From this study, relationship quality and attributes may be an important factor when understanding forgiveness.

More recently, Hantman and Cohen (2010) examined forgiveness among older adults in Israel and found that participants were more likely to forgive family members than nonfamily. Additionally, the results indicated that forgiveness is associated with meaning making in life and interpersonal relationships are one of the major sources of meaning making (Hantman & Cohen, 2011). When hurt by a significant family and social member, forgiveness may lead to a fresh start that may affect meaning later in life, which could motivate a person to more easily forgive.

In a related vein, Strelan, McKee, Calic, Cook, and Shaw (2013) suggested that individuals forgive to either benefit the relationship, the transgressor, or the self. Strelan et al., (2013) performed three studies ($Ns = 233, 239, and 83$) using the TRIM-12 (McCullough et al., 1998) scale to measure forgiveness. Overall, the researchers discovered the benefits for self and relationship influenced participants’ willing to forgive more than the benefits for the transgressor (Strelan et al., 2013). Participants that focused on the relationship reported increased relationship quality and benevolence along with decreased avoidance and revenge (Strelan et al., 2013). Participants that reported a focus on the transgressor also reported decreased vengeful motivation (Strelan et al., 2013). Participants that focused their self-preservation and well-being on reported increased avoidance indicated increased unforgiving response, and decreased relationship satisfaction (Strelan et al., 2013). The indication is that the quality of the relationship with the transgressor appears to have an impact on whether the forgiver chooses to avoid, seek revenge, or respond with benevolence to the transgression.
Time

The research on time and forgiveness is limited and much of the time research is frequently linked to literature on age and forgiveness. Researchers usually study forgiveness and time in three ways. First, controlling for the amount of time since the transgression allows for researchers to examine the influence of other factors on forgiveness (Wohl & McGrath, 2000). Second, by examining perceived time elapsed between the transgression and current motivation toward forgiveness (Wohl & McGrath, 2000). Lastly, the relationship between time and how forgiveness is expressed has been investigated. Wohl and McGrath (2007) investigated how time perception effects forgiveness by manipulating the temporal distance in two studies. In one study, participants (n=58) that reported greater time since the transgression were more likely to forgive; the second study indicated that participants (n=40) who perceived the transgression to be further away in time were also more likely to forgive. As a result of both studies, Wohl and McGrath (2007) concluded that as the perceived time since the transgression increased, forgiveness increased. McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang (2003) discovered that as time increased there was a decrease in negative motivation (e.g. revenge and avoidance) but no increases in the positive motivation. Therefore, the research indicates that time has shown to be influential on one’s motivation to forgive,

While forgiveness appears to benefit well-being over time, Allemand (2008) explored how age affects one’s tendency to forgive and focused on the role of social proximity and future time perspective. Social proximity was defined as the closeness of the relationship (e.g. close friend versus acquaintance) and future time perspective was defined as “length of one’s personal time horizon” (Allemand, 2008, p. 1138). The study consisted of 132 older participants (60-83 years old) and 225 younger participants (18-35 years old) from Switzerland. Women comprised
75% of older adults and 85% of younger adults. Each participant was asked to either imagine a time in the future that they are healthy to live a full life (open) or have a critical illness with little time left to live (limited). Limited time also meant the possibility of more time lapsed from the transgression. They were then asked to do the same with respect to the transgressor. (Allemand, 2008). The results indicated that, overall, older adults were more willing to forgive than younger adults because of future time perspectives. Social proximity influenced forgiving with younger adults more than older adults (Allemand, 2008). In other words, younger adults reported greater forgiveness with a friend than with an acquaintance. The future time perspective played an essential role in forgiveness; the perception of time as limited influenced one’s willingness to forgive more strongly with younger adults than older adults (Allemand, 2008). The results revealed a possible relationship between forgiveness and time. Currently, there is minimal research that examines the effect of time lapsed on forgiveness and none that examines this factor specifically within the African American community. Continued research is needed to explore the influence of time on forgiveness.

Apology

An apology is often used as a tool to resolve conflict. Transgressors often feel guilt, shame, or moral inferiority after their transgression which leads to their desire to be forgiven especially if there is a desire to continue the relationship with the forgiver (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Researchers have found forgivers believed the remorse and apology was a factor that influenced forgiveness (Lawler-Row et al., 2007).

Kirchhoff, Wagner, and Strack (2012) examined the why and the way in which apologies contribute to conflict resolution in two experiments. The first study used a sample (n=190) of majority female (81%) participants with a college level education and average age of 26 years
old (Kirchhoff et al., 2012). Participants were given a scenario and asked to complete either a forgiveness questionnaire, rate the apology, or complete a scale on religiousness and personal irreconcilability. Results from this study revealed that forgiveness increases when more verbal elements (e.g. “showing emotions, admission of fault, the statement of apology (IFID), and an attempt at explanation”) are used by the transgressor, especially with more severe transgressions (Kirchhoff et al., 2012, p. 123). The second study used a smaller sample (n=88) of majority women (67%) and an average age of 32 years old (Kirchhoff et al., 2012). Participants were asked to assess elements in an apology after reading a scenario. The second study also revealed four elements of an apology (“conveying emotions, admitting fault, a statement of apology such as “I apologize,” and an attempt at explanation”) that were associated with more severe transgressions (Kirchhoff et al., 2012, p. 124). This evidence shows there is a relationship between the elements included in apology and one’s willingness to forgive.

The research has also shown that forgiveness does not always follow an apology. Struthers, Eaton, Santelli, Uchiyama, and Shivani (2008) examined how an apology can influence the forgiveness process depending on the intentionality of the transgression. The study was performed three times using a sample of university students (n=47), a sample of workers with an average age 38 years (n=115), and a sample of workers with an average age of 29 years (n=177) (Struthers et al., 2008). Overall, the results demonstrated that an apology after an intentional transgression did not promote forgiveness (Struthers et al., 2008), however, forgiveness was more likely with apologies after unintentional transgressions. It seems that considering the transgressor’s intentionality may influence whether or not someone accepts an apology.
Takaku, Weiner, and Ohbuchi (2001) examined the influence of an apology in Japanese and American culture. The sample of Japanese participants (n= 77) and the sample of Americans (n=102) were comprised of an equal number of males and females with an average age of 21 years. Participants were assigned to one of three perspectives: “(a) recall times when they mistreated or hurt others in the past; (b) imagine how the victimized classmate would think, feel, and behave in the scenario; or (c) imagine the situation as the personal victim” (Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001, p. 147). Results revealed when both cultures viewed themselves as the transgressor, they were more likely to accept the apology and forgive their transgressor, which suggests that understanding the transgressor’s perspective is important when accepting an apology.

The apology continues to be considered in the justice system. The apology is not found in criminal law, but has appeared in sentencing procedures (Petrucci, 2002). Offenders report wanting to apologize which coincides with victims’ desire for an apology. The apology is also seen a way to empower victims and decrease recidivism (Petrucci, 2002). Petrucci (2002) suggests an apology should include 6 core elements:

(1) an expression of remorse or regret, (2) an overt acceptance of responsibility for the harmful act; (3) some type of offer of compensation, repair, or restitution; and (4) a promise to avoid such behavior in the future, (5) hope for an improved relationship in the future and (6) the expression of emotion by the offender, including feelings of sorrow, sadness, and visible shame. (p. 341)

The apology is thought to promote the forgiver’s likelihood to forgive; apologizing may also result in the possibility of rejection, punishment, and humiliation which can make a transgressor hesitant to apology (Exline, Deshea, & Holeman, 2007). Leunissen, De Cremer, and Reinder
Folmer (2012) discovered that a transgressor’s willingness to apologize is driven by the likelihood of forgiveness. Leunissen et al., (2012) focused on the perspective of the transgressor and focused on how the transgressor’s willingness to apologize influences forgiveness. An individual struggles to forgive apologetic transgressors because of the forgiver’s personal justice beliefs (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Forgiving a transgressor may violate an individual’s values on justice and the relationship between forgiveness and justice may be a factor in forgiveness.

Lawler-Row (2007) found that a small percentage of their participants (8 percent) felt that remorse and apology was a factor that influenced forgiveness. In the present study, a question on the supplemental questionnaire specifically asks whether or not an apology occurred and the effect of the apology, if any, on the forgiver.

**Justice**

The United States justice system typically works from the retributive framework (Exline et al., 2003). Retributive justice focuses on punishing the transgressor without taking into account the forgiver and is intended to deter future transgressions (Darley & Pittman, 2003). Punishment also restores justice by reducing the status and power of the transgressor and reinstating the social norms and laws that have been broken (Vidmar, 2000). Retributive justice is not to be confused with revenge; revenge, unlike retributive justice, is driven by emotion and is retaliation and does not restore balance or provide closure for the forgiver (Exline et al., 2003). Despite the United States’ strong stance of retributive penalties, researchers continue to investigate alternatives or complements to retribution such as forgiveness (Exline et al., 2003; Strelan, Feather, & McKee, 2008; Strelan, Feather, & McKee, 2011; Witvliet et al., 2008).

Forgiveness and restorative justice are the common alternatives that emerged from the current research. Restorative justice focuses on preserving the rights and dignity of both the
transgressor and the forgiver (Exline et al., 2003). Restorative justice promotes interaction
between transgressors where as traditional criminal justice allows for minimal interaction (Exline
et al., 2003). This interaction allows transgressors to make amends, apology, and work toward
forgiveness. Restorative justice tends to facilitate forgiveness because it allows for the
transgressor to apologize, to explain their actions, to understand the forgiver’s perspective, and to
offer restitution, but typically with juveniles and nonviolent crimes (Exline et al., 2003). It is
important to remember that justice is not forgiveness and justice does not always lead to
forgiveness. Recently the term, injustice gap, has been coined which is the discrepancy between
current outcomes and desired outcomes (Exline et al., 2003, p. 343). In other words, when a
transgressor is put in jail for a crime, it does not mean forgiveness is achieved because the
desired outcomes could also include an apology or the return of the stolen items. Forgiveness is
attainable regardless if the justice is restored, but the smaller the injustice gap the more the
victim is motivated to forgive (Worthington, 2003). Consequently, any factor that impacts
perceived injustice could impact one’s motivation to forgive.

Witvliet et al. (2008) assessed the relationship between forgiveness responses and justice
as it related to a common crime. The sample (n=56) of predominantly Caucasian participants
(91%) were asked to visualize their house being burglarized and then they were given 6 different
justice outcomes to read (Witvliet et al., 2008). The six outcomes included (1) no justice or
forgiveness, (2) forgiveness alone, (3) retributive justice, (4) retributive justice plus forgiveness,
(5) restorative justice, and (6) restorative justice plus forgiveness (Witvliet et al., 2008, p. 22-23).
Justice was found to reduce negative emotions (e.g. fear and anger) and unforgiving motivation
while increasing positive emotions (e.g. gratitude and empathy) (Witvliet et al., 2008).
Restorative justice was found to have a stronger association with the positive emotions, thus indicating a positive relationship between forgiveness and justice.

Strelan, Feather, and McKee (2008) investigated the relationship between retributive justice and restorative justice with forgiveness. The sample (n=173) was predominantly female (70%) with an average age of 21 years. The researchers asked participants to read hypothetical transgression scenarios and then complete the TRIM-12 (McCullough et al., 1998). The results revealed that participants associated restorative justice with benevolence and less with revenge and avoidance (Strelan et al., 2008). Participants were also more likely to forgive interpersonal transgression than criminal and workplace issues. This further supports the possible relationship between justice and forgiveness.

Additionally, Strelan and Prooijen (2013) hypothesized that forgivers that get justice first are more likely to forgive. The sample was made up of 40 women and nine men with an average age of 22 years (Strelan & Prooijen, 2013). The results of the study revealed that when participants were able to punish and seek revenge, they could forgive a friend’s transgression (Strelan & Prooijen, 2013). Participants also reported that they more likely to forgive when a transgressor was punished by a judge than if they received no punishment (Strelan & Prooijen, 2013). Ultimately, punishment may influence forgiveness because of its ability to restore justice.

Most recently, Wenzel and Okimoto (2014) examined if the restoration of justice after a transgression promotes forgiveness. Wenzel and Okimoto (2014) used a sample (n=105) of university students (69% female) to perform a correlational recall study and two experimental studies using a scenario. The results revealed that overall restored justice increased forgiveness, but is dependent on the type of justice (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014). Restorative justice promoted a greater increase in forgiveness, yet feelings of justice related to retributive justice were not
related to forgiveness. This shows that there could be a relationship between restorative justice and forgiveness. The use of justice toward the transgressor could positively influences one’s motivation to forgive.

Forgiveness may also hinder justice (Exline et al., 2003). Strelan, Feather, and McKee (2011) supported the hypothesis that retributive justice is negatively related to the motivation to forgive. The sample (n=178) of undergraduate psychology students (127 females and 51 males) answered questionnaires that measure justice, forgiveness, and moral (Strelan et al., 2011). Restorative justice was found to be positively related to forgiveness and the results further supported a move away from retributive justice to restorative justice (Strelan et al., 2011). Apologies, punishment, and restitution can often restore the status of the transgressor to the forgiver and this restoration can then lead to premature forgiveness (Exline et al., 2003). Premature forgiveness can reduce the pressure for transgressors to seek repentance; the restoration of status could then lead to the transgressor over benefiting because forgivers will be less likely to seek out justice because their desired outcome has been met (Exline et al., 2003). Untrustworthy transgressors are likely to use this power over their forgivers (Exline & Baumeister, 2000), therefore, forgivers must be aware of the intentions of the transgressor to prevent unwarranted forgiveness.

Divine forgiveness is based on divine justice, truth, mercy, and love that is granted from God (Worthington, 2006). Divine justice is an important part of punishment for forgivers when justice is not obtained, the injustice can be relinquished to God, to obtain Divine justice (Worthington, 2006). If justice is not obtained, forgivers can close the injustice gap by forgiving and reflecting God’s behavior (Worthington, 2006). Scripture can be interpreted and applied to
transgressions today to help individuals forgive. Research has revealed motivators of forgiveness, but there is a need to study motivation to forgive as it relates to African Americans.

**Empathy**

Empathy may be viewed both emotionally and cognitively. Mellor, Fung, and Muhammad (2012) defined empathy “as the reaction of one individual to the observed experiences of another” (p. 99). Empathy has been broken down to include empathic concern, perspective taking, and personal distress (Mellor et al., 2012). Studies have framed empathy to include feelings such as sympathy or warmth and focusing on understanding or perspective taking (Exline & Zell, 2009; Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Empathic strategies related to forgiveness include focusing on self and focusing on the offending party (Exline et al., 2008). The first strategy has the individual reflect on one’s ability to commit a similar offense (Exline & Zell, 2009). After reflecting, the individual typically requires more information from the transgressor and the information is then used to understand which forgiveness techniques are most effective because they each involve risks (Exline & Zell, 2009). The self-focused reflection can put the individuals at risk for feeling shame, guilt, and sadness when recalling their own offenses (Exline & Zell, 2009). The second strategy involves imagining the offense from the transgressor’s perspective to bring understanding of the actions; however, when the act is perceived to be done out of malice, this approach can lead to higher levels of anger (Exline & Zell, 2009).

Empathy is highlighted as a key part of the Enright theory of forgiveness (Enright, 2001). Studies have revealed a positive correlation between empathy and forgiveness (Exline et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Individuals incapable of empathy had a harder time forgiving, understanding the transgressor’s thoughts, emotions, and motivational factors (Toussaint &
Webb, 2005). Empathy provides individuals with the opportunity to consider the transgressor’s perspective; with empathic understanding, the offense can become smaller and justifiable, which may lead toward a shift in understanding to make forgiveness more likely (Exline et al., 2008).

Overall, although the field has made progress clarifying forgiveness and the role of predictive factors and spirituality, research fails to thoroughly investigate forgiveness within the African American community. The research that exists about race and forgiveness is minimal at best and results have been vaguely conclusive. Additionally, there exists a dearth of research specifically studying cultural factors (age and sex), religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation), transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy), African Americans, and forgiveness. As a result, this researcher addressed the gap in the literature by conducting a quantitative survey to glean data on the predictors of forgiveness among African Americans as well as collect qualitative data to see what other factors may influence the motivation to forgive. This research will provide insight on how to work effectively with African American clients and may eventually assist with counseling religious clients in general, particularly when presenting issues related to forgiveness. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used for this study.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter Three describes the methods used in this study to examine the predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. Information on the following aspects of this study will be included in the chapter: research question, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, and data collection procedures. The mixed methods research design that was used for data analysis in this study is outlined.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. Do cultural factors (age and sex) and religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

2. Do transgression-related factors (apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

3. What other factors impact the motivation to forgive among African Americans?

Research Design

The research was designed to understand if cultural factors, religious/spiritual factors, and transgression-related factors predict forgiveness among African Americans. A self-administered online survey and supplemental questionnaire were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data in the study. Online access helped with decreasing cost and increasing data availability and convenience. The survey helped to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. This research focused on the African American population primarily because of the lack of current
research on this population and predictors of forgiveness. A multiple regression design (quantitative) and Nvivo software (qualitative) were used to analyze the data.

Participants

For participants to be considered, they were required to (1) be African American and (2) be over 18 years of age. Participants (n = 107) consisted of individuals recruited from African American sororities and fraternities (e.g. Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Omega Psi Phi), African American churches in the Washington Metropolitan area, the Counselor Education and Supervision NETwork-Listserv (CESNET-L), and Facebook©. The researcher contacted these organizations to obtain their listserves and to disseminate the recruitment email to members of the organizations. African Americans known to the researcher were sent the recruitment email so they could pass along the recruitment email to those that qualify. The researcher used the data of those participants that self-identified as African American.

Participants ranged in age from 18-60 with 27.1% of participants falling in the 18-29 range, 38.3 in the 30-44 range, 23.4% in the 45-59 range, and 11.2% in the 60 and over range. Participants included individuals that identified with the Northeast (15.9%), Midwest (5%), South (72%), West (6.5), and the U.S. Virgin Islands (0.9%). Sixty-six percent of the sample reported the South influenced their religious/spiritual religious beliefs. Region could not be further evaluated because participants did not report their specific religious denomination. The majority of participants were female (75%) and most participants indicated they were Christian (85%). The participants were primarily female (75%), predominantly Christian (85%), with the highest regional representation from the South (77%). The age range of participants represent a normal distribution with largest percent (38%) of participants falling between the ages of 30-44.
The descriptive data for the sample is outlined in Table 1-Table 5 outlines the descriptive data for the population.

Table 1

*Frequency Data: Sex*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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Table 2

*Frequency Data: Religion*

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>8.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table 3

*Frequency Data: Age*

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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>18-29</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Frequency Data: Region Identification

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
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<td>Midwest</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Virgin Islands</td>
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<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Frequency Data: Region Identification Influence on Religious/Spiritual Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
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<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Virgin Islands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, participants were sampled from the population based on a criterion-based and purposeful sampling procedure. Participants were asked to complete a survey that included the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-18 (TRIM-18) (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006), the Forgiveness Scale (Rye, Loiacono, Folck, Olszewski, Heim, & Madia, 2001), the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999), and a supplemental questionnaire. After completing the survey, participants were given the option to enter their email address if he/she wanted to be entered into a drawing for one of ten $25 American Express Gift cards, awarded by the researcher after closing of the survey.
Participants’ emails were purposefully collected in a separate online survey tool to protect participant confidentiality. The participants’ email addresses obtained for the gift card raffle were entered into an Excel spreadsheet which was saved in an encrypted file on the researcher’s computer. The email addresses were put in alphabetical order and assigned a number from one to whatever the total number of participants is. The researcher randomly selected ten numbers and then sent an email to each person. The email thanked the participant for their participation and informed the individual that he/she had won a gift card. Participants were asked to confirm their acceptance of the gift card by a specific date or the gift card would be awarded to another participant. Sixty-three participants entered the raffle and 10 gift cards were awarded to the randomly selected participants.

Criterion and snowball sampling was used to select the participants before data collection because this type of sampling is useful for quality assurance and a shared experience (Creswell, 2013). Further, criteria sampling is beneficial at accessing the appropriate population to understanding their coping experience (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling intentionally selects a participant to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In the present study, individuals were purposely selected to understand how each factor influences forgiveness among African Americans. Snowball sampling asks all participants to suggest someone else who met the criteria and might be willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2012).

To obtain richness of data and to reach the desired statistical power of .8, the goal was to secure 103 participants. The power analysis determined a total sample size of 103 participants was appropriate with an alpha size of .05 and an effect size of .15. To account for attrition and invalid or incomplete responses, the researcher obtained a sample of 28% larger, or 134. After
analysis of the surveys and identifying those that were completed and could be used in the study, the response rate for this study was 107 participants (3.5%).

The researcher sent the recruitment email to 3,861 emails. Prior to sending the recruitment email to participants, the researcher contacted African American organizations to obtain approval to send the recruitment email. A recruitment email (Appendix I) was disseminated to the target population. This email included the researcher’s contact information and instructions about how to participate in the study and the e-mail provided a link to access the survey on Survey Monkey (Appendix K).

Each participant was asked to complete and sign the informed consent (Appendix A) and the supplemental questionnaire (Appendix H). The researcher used the demographic information to collect data pertaining to the participants’ background including (a) ethnicity, (b) age, (c) sex and (d) geographical information. The supplemental questionnaire were designed to allow for the emergence of transgression-related and other factors that may impact forgiveness among African Americans.

**Instrumentation**

Participants completed the *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory - 18 (TRIM-18)* (McCullough et al., 2006) (Appendix B), the *Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001)* (Appendix D), the *Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS)* (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) (Appendix F), and a supplemental questionnaire (Appendix H). Permission was granted from the primary author of each instrument and is included as part of the appendices (Appendix C, Appendix E, and Appendix G). The instruments were presented as one survey of 75 items and all items are coded so that
responses align (Appendix K). Further, permission was obtained to reverse the order of the Likert scale of the *Rye Forgiveness Scale* to match the *TRIM-18* (Appendix E).

**The Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001)**

The *Forgiveness Scale* (Rye et al., 2001) is a 15-item scale that measures forgiveness toward a transgressor. Likert-type format is used ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Individuals are instructed to think about how they have responded to the transgressor. The scale, like the *Enright Forgiveness Inventory* (Subkoviak et al., 1995) was created to measure affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to a transgression. The measure, like *TRIM-18*, assesses both negative and positive emotional responses, thoughts, and behaviors to a transgression in two subscales: Presence of Positive (PP) and Absence of Negative (AN). The Presence of Positive measures the positive feelings the forgiver has toward their transgressor whereas the Absence of Negative measures the lack of negative feelings toward the transgressor. The two subscales have a Cronbach’s alphas of .86 and .85 respectively with an overall alpha of .87 (Rye et al., 2001). The subscales of the *Forgiveness Scale* were significantly correlated to the *Enright Forgiveness Inventory* (Subkoviak et al., 1995) (Absence of Negative, \( r = .52, p < .001 \); Presence of Positive, \( r = .75, p < .001 \)) (Rye et al., 2001, p. 269), which indicated it is a valid measure of forgiveness.

**Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18)** (McCullough et al., 2006)

Forgiveness has been defined as a reduction in one’s negative motivation and a restoration of one’s positive motivations toward a transgressor (McCullough et al., 1997). McCullough et al. (1998) first created the *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-12 (TRIM-12)*, a 12-item inventory to measure forgiveness. McCullough et al. (2006)
revised the TRIM-12 to include a measure for positive/benevolent motivations and a new 18-item inventory was created (TRIM-18). In this study, the TRIM-18 (McCullough et al., 2006) was used to assess participants’ motivation to forgive toward a transgressor. The TRIM-18 (McCullough et al., 2006) yields three subscales: Avoidance (seven items; e.g., “I withdraw from him/her”), Revenge (five items; e.g., “I’ll make him/her pay”), and Benevolence (six items; e.g., “Even though his or her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her”). For clarity, these subscales indicate more about the motivation for forgiveness rather than ascertaining that forgiveness has occurred.

The items in each of the subscales are rated on the same 5-point Likert scales. The avoidance and revenge subscales of the TRIM-18 Inventory (McCullough et al., 2006) have demonstrated high internal consistency (α = .85) and moderate test–retest reliability (r = .50; McCullough et al., 1998). There is also evidence of construct validity (McCullough et al., 1998, 2001). The instrument was also found to have good internal reliability (α = .78–.89) and good test–retest reliability (.86–.96) (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). Revenge and avoidance can be combined into a single unforgiveness scale (negative motivations) and benevolence (positive motivation) can be analyzed separately because forgiveness is demonstrated by an increase of the positive motivation and a decrease of the negative motivation to forgive (Worthington, 2005). For this study, all three forgiveness subscales were analyzed (avoidance, revenge, and benevolence).

McCullough, Root, and Cohen (2006) performed a factor analysis with oblique rotation on all 18 items of the TRIM-18 Inventory. The results of the factor analysis revealed two factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The factors that explained 65.3% of the item variance were extracted. “The avoidance items loaded strongly and positively on the first factor; the
benevolence items loaded strongly and negatively on this factor (explaining 53.1% of the total item variance)” (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006, p. 890). This factor was named *Avoidance versus Benevolence Motivation* (lower scores indicated benevolence and higher scores indicated avoidance). The second factor was named *Revenge Motivation* because “the five revenge items loaded strongly and positively on the second factor (explaining 12.1% of the total item variance)” (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006, p. 890). These results are consistent with the previous research using the *TRIM-12* (McCullough et al., 1998). Consequently, the *TRIM-18* was a valid and reliable instrument for this study.

**Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999)**

The *Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS)* (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) was developed by a group formed by the Fetzer Institute and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) to measure a person’s religiousness and spirituality. The *BMMRS* consists of 38 items which measure twelve spiritual and religious dimensions (*Daily Spiritual Experiences, Values/Beliefs, Forgiveness, Private Religious Practices, Religious & Spiritual Coping, Religious Support, Religious/Spiritual History, Commitment, Organizational Religiousness, Religious Preference, and Overall Self-Ranking*) (Appendix F). The instrument does not have an overall scale, so each subscale is scored individually. Six items require short answers, but the remaining 32 are rated on a Likert scale indicating frequency or degree of endorsement of the statements. The *BMMRS* is useful for measuring spirituality and religiousness in heterogeneous populations (Idler et al., 2003). The *BBMRS* was used in the *General Social Survey* (GSS), a national survey to examine current American trends. The sample (n=1,445) was representative of the United States population. The
findings revealed reliable indexes (Public Religious Activity $r=.82$, Private Religious Activities $r=.72$, Congregation Benefits $r=.86$, Congregation Problems $r=.64$, Positive Religious Coping $r=.81$, Negative Religious Coping $r=.54$, Religious Intensity $r=.77$, Forgiveness $r=.66$, Daily Spiritual Experiences $r=.91$, Beliefs and Values $r=.64$) within all of the 12 domains of the BMMRS (Idler et al., 2003). The domains were moderately correlated with each other, thus indicating distinct constructs (Idler et al., 2003). Overall, the BMMRS has appropriate reliability and validity to be used to study the relationship between spirituality, religiousness, and forgiveness.

**Supplemental Questionnaire**

In addition to the surveys, participants responded to a supplemental questionnaire (Appendix H) to allow for other factors that predict forgiveness to emerge from the results. The questions were open-ended and focused, as Creswell (2013) suggested, allowing for understanding of a wider range of predictors to emerge. The purpose of these types of qualitative questions is to allow for emergent themes to be used as a basis of collecting and analyzing future data and to allow for the possibility that some predictors may not be measured by the quantitative instruments.

**Data Collection Procedures**

After approval from Marymount University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix J), research was conducted over a three-week period with African American organizations to include African American sororities and fraternities (e.g. Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Omega Psi Phi), African American churches in the Washington Metropolitan area, the Counselor Education and Supervision NETwork-Listserv (CESNET-L), and Facebook©. Initially, the researcher sent out three email
messages over a three-week period. In the first email, the researcher invited participants to complete an online survey on forgiveness (Appendix I). The second and third emails were invitation/reminder emails. Each email sent to participants included: (a) an invitation to complete the survey, (b) the internet address for accessing the survey, (c) study background information, (d) informed consent, and (e) contact information of researcher and the dissertation chair.

After obtaining informed consent, each participant completed the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18) (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006), the Forgiveness Scale (Rye, Loiacono, Folck, Olszewski, Heim, & Madia, 2001), the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) presented as one survey on Survey Monkey© (Appendix K) and the supplemental questionnaire (Appendix H). Using a pseudonym during the process of data collection, analysis, and reporting results protected the confidentiality of the participants. The researcher also deleted emails and contact information after the data was collected.

The survey data was stored in two places (a) on the researcher’s computer, that was password protected, and (b) an external hard drive, that was password protected. The data from the TRIM-18 (McCullough et al., 2006), the Forgiveness Scale (Rye et al., 2001), the BMMRS (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999), and supplemental questionnaire were downloaded from Survey Monkey into an Excel spreadsheet. The information was transferred to SPSS to perform the statistical analysis. The spreadsheet and SPSS file was saved on the researcher’s password-protected computer while analyzing the data.
Mixed Methods Analysis

A mixed method analysis was selected to obtain richness of data. The research design was used to examine the relationship between cultural factors, religious/spiritual factors, and transgression-related factors (independent variables) and forgiveness (dependent variable). A multiple regression was used for the quantitative design to determine what cultural, religious, and transgression-related factors predict forgiveness. A qualitative analysis was used in conjunction with the multiple regression to obtain cultural factors and emergent themes. The supplemental questionnaire was designed to identify other variables that might predict forgiveness among African Americans. The open-ended questions allowed for understanding of a wider range of predictors to emerge (Creswell, 2013).

Pre-Analysis Steps

Pre-analysis steps were conducted to determine patterns of missing data and to examine violations to the assumptions. A frequency report was generated for each study variable. The frequency report and data inspection were conducted to identify any miscoded data, univariate outliers, and patterns of missing data. Twenty-five cases were deleted due to missing data resulting in a final sample size of 107 participants. Case-wise deletion was the method used given the randomness of the missing data and sample size (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The remaining sample was scored according to each assessment’s guidelines and coded into SPSS. Dummy coding was used for religion and gender (0=Female and 1=Male). The two subscales of the Forgiveness Scale (Presence of Positive (PP) and Absence of Negative (AN) were used to perform a multiple regression. Five of the twelve subscales of the BMMRS (Daily Spiritual Experience, Values/Beliefs, Forgive, Private Religious Practice, and
Organizational Religiousness) were selected to answer the specific research questions that guided this study.

Tests for Violations of Assumptions

Tests were conducted to screen for violations to assumptions. The assumption of linearity appears to be satisfied based on the examination of the partial scatterplot (Appendix M) of the predictor variables and the criterion variable. Evidence of linearity was further evident after examining the random display of the data points falling within ±2 on the scatterplot of the unstandardized residuals to predicted values. The assumption of normality was tested using the unstandardized residuals. Analysis of skewness (.234) and kurtosis (.463) indicate that the assumption of normality was met. The scatterplot of the unstandardized residuals (Appendix M) provide further evidence of normality. Mahalanobis distance (5.260) indicated no outliers and undue influence on the regression model. Examination of residual statistics indicated Cook’s distance (.021) and centered leverage values (.050) had no undue influence on the regression model. Assumption of independence was met based on the analysis of scatterplots of standardized residuals with values of the predictor variables and standardized residuals with the predicted values. The Durbin-Watson statistic = 1.717 (PP) and 1.852 (AN) provides further evidence that the assumption for independence of errors was satisfied. Equal variance was assumed after examining residual data points as being equal distributed across the predictor variables. Examining collinearity statistics (Appendix N and Appendix O), tolerance was greater than .10 for age (.808), sex (.892), religious affiliation (.680), avoidance (.451), revenge (.693), benevolence (.361), Daily Spiritual Experience (.330), Values/Beliefs (.513), Forgive (.592), Private Religious Practice (.316), and Organizational Religiousness(.438). Variance inflation factor (Appendix N and Appendix O) was less than 10 for age (1.238), sex (1.122),
religious affiliation (1.470), avoidance (2.219), revenge (1.444), benevolence (2.773), Daily Spiritual Experience (3.032), Values/Beliefs (1.948), Forgive (1.690), Private Religious Practice (3.162), and Organizational Religiousness (2.282). Inspection of the bivariate correlations matrix did not yield inter-correlations among predictor variables indicating the predictor variables do not influence one another. Multicollinearity (Appendix P and Appendix Q) does not appear to be a problem for this sample indicating the predictor variables are not highly correlated.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The supplemental questionnaire responses of participants were read over several times to ensure accuracy and examined to determine other predictors of forgiveness among African Americans in our sample. The responses were uploaded to Nvivo and used to determine emergent themes. Significant phrases or sentences that related directly to forgiveness were identified. The phrases were clustered into themes using Nvivo software to collect and organize them, allowing for the emergence of themes common to all participants. Chapter 4 will identify the themes that resulted from qualitative analysis.

**Triangulation Strategies**

Triangulation strategies were implemented as a way to use multiple sources and methods to ensure validity in the findings (Creswell, 2013); the types of triangulation that were used are (a) clarifying researcher biases, (b) member checking, and (c) using an external auditor. Clarifying researcher biases at the start of the research is important and was used so that the reader understands the experience of the researcher as African American may influence my interpretation of the results. Member checking was utilized so that participants can clarify information, read the results, check themes for accuracy, and build trustworthiness in the
research (Creswell, 2013). An external auditor, Loydis Cummings, was used to address any potential bias. Loydis has a Master’s degree in neuropsychology, a strong background in experimental psychology, and was able to examine the data for accuracy. The external audit allows for an outside consultant who is uninvolved with the study to examine whether the results are supported by the data (Creswell, 2013). The results have been integrated into an exploration of the factors that predict forgiveness among African Americans.

**Summary**

Chapter Three outlined the dissertation method used for a mixed methods study exploring predictive factors in forgiveness among African Americans. Data collected from the *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18)* (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006), *the Forgiveness Scale* (Rye, Loiacono, Folck, Olszewski, Heim, & Madia, 2001), the *Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS)* (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999), and a supplemental questionnaire was analyzed to answer the research questions of this study. Multiple regression procedures were used to analyze data for the quantitative measures and NVIVO qualitative software was used to discover themes that emerged from participant responses to the supplemental questionnaire. In Chapter Four, research results will be discussed and Chapter Five will summarize results and provide further implications and recommendations from the findings of the study.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter Four describes the steps taken to perform the data analysis of the data collected through a mixed methods research design to determine if cultural factors, religious/spiritual factors, and transgression-related factors predict forgiveness among African Americans. A multiple regression was used to analyze quantitative results and a supplemental questionnaire provided qualitative data to address the three research questions:

1. Do cultural factors (age and sex) and religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

2. Do transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

3. What other factors impact the motivation to forgive among African Americans?

The results of the data analysis are included in this chapter.

Quantitative Results

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine if forgiveness (criterion variable) could be predicted by cultural, religious/spiritual, and transgression-related factors (predictor variables). Two null hypotheses were tested: 1) that multiple $R^2$ were equal to 0, and 2) that the beta coefficients (i.e., the slopes) were equal to 0. Multiple regressions were performed to determine if cultural factors, religious/spiritual factors, and transgression-related factors were predictors of forgiveness. Regression equations for forgiveness related to the Presence of Positive and the Absence of Negative were used. For clarification and to increase
understanding of the results, the Presence of Positive refers to factors related to feelings or behaviors of Benevolence toward the aggressor and the Absence of Negative refers to factors indicating a lack of negative feelings toward the transgressor. The results of the multiple linear regression indicate that a moderate proportion of total variation in forgiveness (PP) was predicted by religious affiliation, BMMRS Forgive, and Revenge, $F(11, 106) = 11.830, p > .001$. Additionally, a moderate proportion of total variation in forgiveness (AN) was predicted by Revenge and Benevolence $F(11, 106) = 21.797, p > .001$. The multiple correlation coefficient ($R$) of .760 (PP) and .846 (AN) indicated a strong correlation between participant scores on the Forgiveness Scale and the predict scores from the regression equation. The predictor variables explained 57.8% of the variance in forgiveness (PP) and 71.6% of the variance in forgiveness (AN) (Appendix R).

**Cultural Factors**

In response to Research Question #1 for cultural predictors, Appendix N highlights the results of the regression analysis for the Presence of Positive (PP) subscale. The results of the regression analysis for sex showed the unstandardized partial slope (-.010) and standardized partial slope (-.006) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.091, df = 106, p = .928$), indicating sex was not a predictor for forgiveness (PP). The multiple regression results indicate that for age, the unstandardized partial slope (.046) and standardized partial slope (.064) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = .862, df = 106, p = .391$), indicating age was not a predictor for forgiveness (PP).

Appendix O highlights the results of the regression analysis for the Absence of Negative (AN) subscale. The results of the regression analysis indicate for sex, the unstandardized partial slope (-.233) and standardized partial slope (.117) were statistically different from 0 ($t = -1.993$,
Sex demonstrated a moderate effect (.23) indicating sex was a predictor for forgiveness and with every one point increase in sex, forgiveness will increase by nearly .23 of a point when controlling for the other predictor variables. Males had forgiveness scores (AN) that were .233 lower, on average, than those of women. The multiple regression results indicate that for age, the unstandardized partial slope (.075) and standardized partial slope (.082) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = 1.344, df = 106, p = .182$), indicating age was not a predictor for forgiveness (AN).

In summary, the multiple regression analysis for the PP and AN subscales revealed that age was not a significant predictor of forgiveness for this sample. However, sex was indicated as a significant predictor of forgiveness among the African American participants on the AN subscale; that is, sex was significant when forgiveness was indicated by the absence of negative motivators (avoidance and revenge).

**Religious/Spiritual Factors**

In response to Research Question #2 for religious/spiritual factors, the unstandardized partial slope (.076) and standardized partial slope (.257) of religious affiliation were statistically different from 0 ($t = 3.185, df = 106, p > .05$), indicating religious affiliation was a predictor for forgiveness. Religious affiliation demonstrated a small effect (.07), indicating religious affiliation was a predictor for forgiveness and with every one point increase in affiliation, forgiveness will increase by nearly .07 of a point when controlling for the other predictor variables. Participants that self-identified as Christian had .024 higher forgiveness score (PP), on average, than the other religious affiliations. The PP subscale multiple regression results (Appendix N) indicated that for *BMMRS Forgive*, the unstandardized partial slope (-.356) and standardized partial slope (-.253) were statistically different from 0 ($t = -2.923, df = 106, p < .05$).
BMMRS Forgive demonstrated a large effect (.35). This analysis indicated that BMMRS Forgive was a predictor for forgiveness and with every one point increase in BMMRS Forgive, forgiveness will increase by nearly .35 of a point when controlling for the other predictor variables. For Daily Spiritual Experience, the unstandardized partial slope (.093) and standardized partial slope (.139) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = 1.199$, $df = 106$, $p = .234$). The results of the regression analysis indicated for Values/Beliefs, the unstandardized partial slope (-.085) and standardized partial slope (-.060) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.646$, $df = 106$, $p = .520$). For Private Religious Practice, the unstandardized partial slopes (-.009) and standardized partial slopes (-.020) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.167$, $df = 106$, $p = .867$); For Organizational Religiousness, the unstandardized partial slope (-.082) and standardized partial slope (-.101) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -1.001$, $df = 106$, $p = .319$). In summary, the only religious/spiritual factors that were significant predictors of forgiveness among the participants on the PP subscale were religious affiliation and Forgive (forgiveness of self, others, and forgiveness by God).

The AN subscale multiple regression results indicate that for Daily Spiritual Experience, the unstandardized partial slope (-.075) and standardized partial slope (-.089) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.930$, $df = 106$, $p = .355$). The results of the regression analysis indicate for Values/Beliefs, the unstandardized partial slope (-.019) and standardized partial slope (-.010) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.137$, $df = 106$, $p = .891$). For BMMRS Forgive, the unstandardized partial slope (.119) and standardized partial slope (.067) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = .941$, $df = 106$, $p = .349$). For Private Religious Practice, the unstandardized partial slopes (-.009) and standardized partial slopes (-.017) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.171$, $df = 106$, $p = .865$). For Organizational Religiousness, the
unstandardized partial slope (-.063) and standardized partial slope (-.061) were not statistically different from 0 \((t = -.743, df = 106, p = .459)\). For religious affiliation, the unstandardized partial slope (-.023) and standardized partial slope (-.061) were not statistically different from 0 \((t = -.918, df = 106, p = .361)\), indicating religious affiliation was not a predictor for forgiveness (AN).

In summary, results revealed that *Forgive* (forgiveness of self, others and by God) and religious affiliation were the only significant predictors of forgiveness on the PP subscale among the African American participants. The religious/spiritual factors were not significant predictors on the AN subscale among the African American sample.

**Transgression-Related Factors**

Multiple regression analysis was conducted on the *Avoidance, Revenge, and Benevolence* factors of *TRIM-18* (McCullough et al., 2006). For *Revenge*, the unstandardized partial slope (-.107) and standardized partial slope (-.572) was statistically different from 0 \((t = -7.085, df = 106, p < .001)\), indicating revenge was a predictor for forgiveness and with every one point decrease in *Revenge*, forgiveness will increase by nearly .10 of a point when controlling for the other predictor variables. *Revenge* demonstrated a small to moderate effect. For *Avoidance*, the unstandardized partial slope (-.004) and standardized partial slope (-.034) were not statistically different from 0 \((t = -.344, df = 106, p = .732)\). For *Benevolence*, the unstandardized partial slope (.006) and standardized partial slope (.045) were not statistically different from 0 \((t = .400, df = 106, p = 690)\) indicating *Benevolence* was not a predictor for forgiveness. In summary, the level of feelings of *Revenge* was the only significant predictor of forgiveness in this sample on the PP subscale.
The AN subscale multiple regression results showed that, for Revenge, the unstandardized partial slope (-.073) and standardized partial slope (-.307) were statistically different from 0 ($t = -4.677, df = 106, p < .001$), indicating revenge was a predictor for forgiveness and with every one point decrease in Revenge, forgiveness will increase by nearly .07 of a point when controlling for the other predictor variables. For Benevolence, the unstandardized partial slope (.093) and standardized partial slope (.561) were statistically different from 0 ($t = 6.163, df = 106, p < .001$). Thus, feelings of benevolence were a predictor for forgiveness and with every one point increase in Benevolence, forgiveness will increase by nearly .09 of a point when controlling for the other predictor variables. Revenge and Benevolence demonstrated a small effect. For Avoidance, the unstandardized partial slope (-.005) and standardized partial slope (-.035) were not statistically different from 0 ($t = -.429, df = 106, p = .669$). In summary, the transgression-related factors that were significant predictors of forgiveness in this sample were Revenge (in both the PP and AN subscales) and Benevolence in the AN subscale.

**Summary of Quantitative Analysis**

In this sample, predictors of forgiveness among African Americans were religious affiliation (PP), sex (AN), Revenge (PP and AN), Benevolence (AN), and BMMRS Forgive (PP). Sex (PP), age, and the other subscales of the BMMRS (BMMRS Daily Spiritual Experience, BMMRS Values/Beliefs, BMMRS Private Religious Practices, and BMMRS Organizational Religiousness) (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) do not appear to predict forgiveness in this sample.
Qualitative Analysis Themes

Qualitative analysis of participant responses to the supplemental questionnaire allowed for themes to emerge that may not have been revealed through the quantitative analysis of the survey. Several themes emerged through Nvivo analysis of the responses. Tables 8-14 provide the results for each theme discussed.

Type of Transgression

The data (Table 6) revealed five types of transgressions that participants reported experiencing: (a) betrayal (35%), (b) infidelity/romantic (27%), (c) family (16%), (d) friend (13%), and (e) abuse (sexual, physical, emotional) (9%). Betrayals that participants listed the most and described were “theft,” “lies/deceit,” “personal hurts,” “betrayal of trust,” “judgement,” and “rejection.”

Table 6
Type of Transgression Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Transgression</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betrayal</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infidelity/Romantic</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse (Sexual, Physical, Emotional)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants also described their affiliation with the transgressor when asked about the type of transgression. The association with the transgressor included romantic, familial, and friendship connections. The affiliations within the romantic category was a variety of partners including a “spouse,” “girlfriend,” and “boyfriend.” Participants listed “infidelity,” “cheating,” “adultery,” “heart broken in relationship,” “marital issues” and “divorce” as types of
transgressions that could be classified as infidelity/romantic. In familial connections, participants reported members (e.g. “parent” or “sibling”) of their family committed the transgression. The participants shared that the family transgressions included “abandonment,” “neglect,” “adoption,” and “disrespect.” The friend transgressions were reported as being “betrayed by a friend” and “friend talking about me in a negative false way.” Finally, abuse was cited by a small percentage (9%) of participants. These participants listed their abuse as “physical,” “emotional,” “rape,” and “mental.” In summary, five themes emerged in the qualitative analysis regarding the type of transgression recalled or experienced by the participants.

**Type of Relationship**

Participants revealed four types of relationships when they described their relationship with the transgressor (Table 7). Due to the open ended nature of the questions, participants’ description of the relationship with the transgressor included ones that described the current status, and the status at the time of transgression. Four main themes emerged from the data: (a) cordial (e.g. “friend,” “coworker,” “classmate,” “church member”) (34%), (b) romantic (25%), (c) relationship ended (22%), and (d) family (19%).

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Themes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cordial</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Ended</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Cordial made up the largest percentage of the relationships described by participants and was described as “neutral,” “friend,” “amicable,” “acquaintance,” “politely distant,” and “on speaking terms.” A large percentage of participants reported their relationship with their transgressor was romantic. Romantic relationships were described as a “spouse,” “fiancé,” “girlfriend,” and “boyfriend.” Relationship ended was frequently used by participants to indicate that they terminated the relationship due to the transgression. Participants used terms such as “nonexistent,” “no longer in contact,” “no longer,” and “no contact.” Lastly, family relationships were noted by participants as “father/mother,” “brother/sister,” “son,” and “aunt.” Therefore, the types of relationship represent a variety of relationships between the transgressor and the participants.

Justice

When asked about the consequences faced by their transgressor, 76.6% of participants reported the transgressor did not face consequences for their actions (Table 8). Despite this fact, 73.8% of the sample reported they forgave their transgressor (Table 11). Only two participants shared that their transgressor faced legal consequences.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justice Served?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 9 indicates, participants reported the several consequences as the justice served: (a) karma (38%), (b) religious consequences (32%), (c) loss of relationship (26%), and (d) legal
action (4%). *Karma* included the transgressor experiencing “bad karma,” “emotional and mental anguish (anxiety, pain, or guilt),” or their “life unraveling.” *Religious consequences* were frequently cited by participants as a form of justice. Participants shared statements such as “the Lord will determine the end and the rewards for everyone” and “I do not know only God does.” Participants also described the transgressor “losing the relationship” with forgiver and divorce as a consequence that often lead to “bad karma” as a consequence of the transgression.

Table 9

*Justice Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justice Served?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Consequences</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Relationship</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Action (prison, charges filed)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Apology**

Participants shared primarily three types of apology from the transgressor: (a) *expression* regret (74%), (b) *transgressor improvement* (2%), and (c) *conversation/explanation* (3%). A small percentage (1%) of the participants that did not get an apology from the transgressor indicated they experienced *no regret* (Table 10).
Table 10

Apology Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression of Regret</strong></td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgressor Improvement</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation/Explanation</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Regret</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Expression of regret* was defined as a “private confession,” “told me it was a mistake,” “begging for forgiveness,” or “written” and “verbal” expression of remorse. Participants also shared that their transgressor “apologized multiple times” or “immediately after” the transgression. *Transgressor improvement* was described as the transgressor was able to “make life changes” or “made personal changes.” Additionally, it was noted that “taking steps to do better” or the transgressor “attended a year of long term therapy” were forms of *transgressor improvement*. Participants described *conversation/ explanation* as a transgressor explaining “why they acted the way they did” or “his childhood and inability to be a father.” Participants also added that talking about the hurt “allowed them to release the hurt and anger” they felt. Almost two-thirds (65.4%) of the participants reported that they did not receive an apology from their transgressor (Table 11).
Table 11

*Apology Descriptive Statistics: Did Transgressor Apologize?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, participants who did not receive an apology reported that the transgressor “lacked taking responsibility” or did not “understand what he did wrong.” The participants shared they did not feel the transgressor was “truly remorseful.” The connection between the type of apology and forgiveness will be explored in Chapter 5.

**Time**

Examination of the data regarding time since the transgression occurred was inconsistent. The question allowed for participants to answer freely which resulted in multiple interpretations of the question and multiple impressions of what *time* actually meant. Some participants provided their age when the transgression occurred, others reported the year of the transgression, and some responses indicated number of years since the transgression. Unfortunately, the responses varied so that it was difficult to draw accurate or consistent themes from data. The wording of the question is a limitation of this study that will be further addressed in chapter 5.

**Additional Forgiveness Factors**

Participants reported additional factors that influenced their forgiveness not accounted for in the current study. The additional factors included (a) *personal/self-growth* (40%), (b) *religious/spiritual teaching & beliefs* (30%), (c) *God’s forgiveness of others* (22%), and (d)
maintaining relationship (8%) (Table 12)  When asked if they have forgiven the transgressor, 73.8% of participants reported yes (Table 13).

Table 12
Additional Forgiveness Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Factors</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Self-Growth</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Spiritual Teaching &amp; Beliefs</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Forgiveness of Others</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining the Relationship</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13
Descriptive Statistics: Have you Forgiven?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forgive?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal/Self Growth.** A large percentage (40%) of the sample stated personal/self-growth factors that influenced their willingness to forgive. Participants shared how unforgiveness (or not forgiving) is detrimental stating “not forgiving hurts me not the transgressor” and “forgiveness isn't for the person, it’s for yourself. Holding on to anger and bitterness destroys you more than the other person.” Participants also shared that holding on to the “hatred makes me unhappy” and “unforgiveness is a toxin to your soul” and “Unforgiveness only destroys you, not the transgressor. I choose to forgive.” Participants linked forgiveness with “letting go,” “inner peace,” “freedom,” “moving on,” and “grow and progress positively.”
One participant shared that “I have forgiven them in order for me to move on with my life and to have some sense of peace.” Participants associated forgiveness with self-empowerment stating “forgiving gives the person who hurt me no power” and I believe I forgave them because they have no power over my thoughts.”

**Religious/Spiritual Teaching & Beliefs.** Almost a third (30%) of participants cited their religious “beliefs and values,” “Faith,” “Christianity, and what the Bible says about forgiving” as a factor that influenced their forgiveness. Participants also shared that their relationship with God and desire for God’s forgiveness was a factor stating “my relationship with God motivated me to forgive.” Additionally, participants shared “I want forgiveness from God and so I am required to forgive her.” They also were influenced by their desire to “please God.” Participant’s belief in the transgressor’s retribution from God helped them to forgive stating “knowing that God has forgiven me of my transgressions” and “God will take care of the situation as he always does.” Further, participants associated the future blessings and love of God with forgiving. Participants stated “move on and let God bless you with something better” and “it doesn't do me any good to focus on the wrong because my gift comes from the Lord who blesses me.” Participant’s desire to emulate God’s love and kindness was connected to their forgiveness. They stated “I am told to forgive/pray for my enemies” and “the Bible says to treat others the way I want to be treated and to love each other as God loves me.”

**God’s Forgiveness of Others.** Participants’ (22%) belief that “God forgives” and they should live in the “likeness of God” was cited as an additional factor. Participants shared they “have a Christ like mindset to forgive others” and, thus, were more likely to forgive. In addition, their desire to be forgiven by God was a factor in their forgiveness of others. Participants shared
that “if I do not forgive them I cannot be forgiven” and they felt they should forgive “knowing that God has forgiven me of my transgressions.”

**Maintaining the Relationship with the Transgressor.** A small percentage of participants (8%) shared that “love” and “understanding” for the transgressor’s past influenced their forgiveness because they “loved them and valued their friendship” so they “weren't willing to not forgive to jeopardize a future relationship.” The strength and importance of relationship helped participants to forgive because it allowed them to protect the relationship. One participant shared that “we will continue to see one another throughout our lives because we love our college and we have many common associates. I can love her and still understand how much to share with her.”

**Summary of Qualitative Analysis**

Several themes emerged from the data regarding the transgression-related factors; type of transgression, relationship, justice, and apology. The types of transgressions were *betrayal* (35%), *infidelity/romantic* (27%), and *family* (16%). The relationship themes that emerged were *cordial* (34%), *romantic* (25%), *relationship ended* (22%), and *family* (19%). The results revealed the transgressors did not face consequences (76%) and did not apology (65%) for the transgression. *Karma* (38%), *religious consequences* (32%), and *loss of relationship* (26%) were the major justice themes that arose from the data and even though the majority of participants did not feel justice was served, a majority of them also forgave the transgressor. The prominent apology theme was the *expression of regret* (74%). Finally, four themes emerged as forgiveness factors in the qualitative analysis: *personal/self-growth, religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs, God’s forgiveness of others, and maintaining the relationship.*
Summary of Mixed Methods Results

The quantitative results revealed the predictors of forgiveness among African Americans are religious affiliation (PP), sex (AN), Revenge (PP and AN), Benevolence (AN), and BMMRS Forgive (PP). The qualitative results provided further information about the transgression-related factors that influenced forgiveness. The majority of transgressions were a betrayal (35%) or infidelity/romantic (27%) and the predominant relationships were cordial (34%) or romantic (25%). Over fifty percent of the sample reported that justice and an apology was not experienced, however, 73.8% of the participants reported they had forgiven the transgressor. The consequences that transgressors faced were karma, religious consequences, and expression of regret were cited by participants. Additionally, the qualitative analysis revealed that religious/spiritual teachings and consequences, personal/self-growth, God’s forgiveness of others, and maintaining the relationship were additional factors that may predict forgiveness among African Americans. These factors should be considered in future research on predictors of African American forgiveness.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data. Limitations of the study and implications for practice, training, and research are shared. Finally, implications for future research on this topic will be explored.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter Five discusses the results of the mixed methods analysis described in Chapter 4. Findings will be explored within the framework of the research questions as well as previous research. In addition, limitations to the current study will be revealed as well as implications for practice, training, and research. Finally, suggestions for future research on this topic will be explored.

Discussion of Results

This section will discuss the results that specifically address the research questions that guided the study.

1. Do cultural factors (age and sex) and religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

2. Do transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

3. What other factors impact the motivation to forgive among African Americans?

Cultural Factors

For question one, Do cultural factors (age and sex) and religious/spiritual factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation) predict forgiveness among African Americans?

Age. Previous research has indicated that older adults are most willing to forgive and young children and adolescents are least willing to forgive (Toussaint et al., 2001; Mullet et al.,
Toussaint et al. (2001) found both older adults (65 years and older) and middle aged (45-64 years old) were more forgiving than the 18-44 age group. Conversely, Hayward and Kraus (2013) discovered that younger adults were less conditional in their forgiveness of others and there was no difference in overall forgiveness across age. In the current study, age was not found to be a predictor of forgiveness among African Americans. There were no statistical differences on forgiveness scores on either the Presence of Positive (PP) or Absence of Negative (AN) subscales (PP and AN) of participants across age groups. The age groups were normally distributed across the sample, indicating that most participants fell in the middle age range of participants, however, there was no statistical significance between age groups on forgiveness. The results of the present study do not support previous the findings of Toussaint et al., (2001) or Mullet et al., (2003) regarding the relationship between age and forgiveness; however, results do support one of the finding of Hayward and Krause (2013) which was no difference in overall forgiveness across age.

**Sex.** Previous research has indicated that women put more effort into forgiving because perceived forgiveness is a healing process that requires personal, emotional healing (Root & Exline, 2011). Men, on the other hand, were more forgiving when they were asked to take the perspective of the transgressor (Root & Exline, 2011). When examining what motivated men and women to forgive, goodwill was found to be the most effective motivation for men; for women, the forgiveness motivations (personal benefit, moral obligation, and goodwill) did not facilitate forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2006). Toussaint and Webb (2005) revealed that women were more empathic than men, but there were no apparent sex differences for forgiveness. The results indicated that sex plays a limited role in forgiveness and the role
decreases when religious involvement is taken into account (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000).

The current study found that, regardless of religious affiliation, sex was a predictor of forgiveness among African Americans. Sex was a predictor on the AN subscale and not the PP, indicating that sex differences exist on neutral or negative feelings or behaviors (Avoidance or Revenge). Males had forgiveness scores (AN) that were lower on average than those of women, indicating men had more negative feeling toward their transgressor supporting the findings of Exline et al., (2008) and Miller et al., (2008) that men are more vengeful. However, the current study does not support Wilkowski et al. (2012) that found men were less vengeful when prompted to be empathetic. The positive feelings and behaviors (benevolence) toward a transgressor did not differ across gender in the sample. The current study revealed sex differences in the neutral or negative feelings or behaviors which support previous findings of Lawler-Row et al. (2007) that women and men are motivated differently when forgiving.

**Religious/Spiritual Factors**

Forgiveness is frequently valued differently by religions (Rye, 2004). Additionally, Worthington (1988) linked those with a strong religiousness with being more forgiving. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity have the most thoroughly religious accounts of forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Repentance is a condition for divine forgiveness in Judaism. God’s unlimited forgiveness and human nature’s tendency to commit transgressions is stressed among the Muslim faith (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Christianity emphasizes scripture and interpersonal forgiveness. Muslims and Christians both turn to God for forgiveness and believe that granting forgiveness brings one closer to God. Hinduism and Buddhism emphasizes the reward obtained by the forgiver, unlike Christian and Muslim theology. Because
the sample is the present study identified primarily as Christian (85%), results may be more
generalizable to Christians than other religious groups.

For research question one (Do cultural factors (age and sex) and religious/spiritual
factors (religiousness, spirituality, and religious affiliation) predict forgiveness among African
Americans?), religious affiliation was found to be a significant predictor of forgiveness on the
Presence of Positive (PP) subscale. These results indicated the presence of positive feelings
toward the transgressor across religious affiliation supporting the previous findings that religious
affiliation influences forgiveness (Escher, 2013; Fox & Thomas, 2008).

Christians believe that if one is forgiven of your sins, then she should be forgiving of
someone else. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant from Matthew 18:21-35 is frequently
referenced because of God’s forgiveness of sin is enormous, and this enormous magnitude of
forgiveness should be an example for the way Christians should forgive others over and over
again. Additionally, Christian teaching emphasize the importance of seeking forgiveness from
God and people and granting forgiveness to each is an exercise in learning to live in the kingdom
of God (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Fox and Thomas (2008) determined that religious
individuals are more likely to model their motivation to forgive around their religion’s beliefs
regardless of denomination. The current study supported these findings. In the qualitative
analysis, participants reported that strong religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs and God’s
forgiveness of others and cited them as alternative predictors of forgiveness. The Forgive
subscale of the BMMRS that focused on God’s forgiveness and self-forgiveness was also found
to be significant for the participants in the current study, supporting previous research. Religious
consequences was also listed by participants when asked about consequences faced by their
transgressor. Participants stated “the Lord will determine the end and the rewards for everyone,”
provided additional support of a positive relationship between religious teachings/beliefs and forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Fox & Thomas 2008). Additionally, the current study revealed that participants who self-identified as Christians had higher forgiveness score (PP) on average than the other religious affiliations which supports that individuals are more likely to model their motivation to forgive around their religion’s beliefs (Fox & Thomas 2008).

The results of the present study support previous research that has indicated that those who consider themselves religious or spiritual tend to value forgiveness more (Yonker et al., 2012). There is a strong correlation between an individual’s commitment to God and the sacred and forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2012). Several studies have found a strong positive relationship between intrapersonal forgiveness and intrinsic spirituality (Davis et al., 2013; Hardy et al., 2014). Religion and forgiveness have been linked because of the religious activity, religious affiliation and teaching, and imitation of God (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye et al., 2001; Mullet et al., 2003). Additionally, research traditionally revealed a positive correlation between religiousness and the tendency to forgive (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004; Greer, Berman, Varan, Bobrycki, & Watson, 2005).

The quantitative results of the present study did not support previous conclusions regarding religiousness and religious activity. The BMMRS subscales of Daily Spiritual Experience, Values/Beliefs, Private Religious Practice, and Organizational Religiousness were not significant predictors of African American forgiveness. These subscales evaluated participants’ spiritual experiences, relationship with a higher power, involvement their religious organization, and religious practices. Results of the present study indicated participation in religious activities (prayer, reading religious teachings), attendance in religious activities, spirituality were not found to be predictors of forgiveness (PP and AN) of African Americans.
These results do not support previous findings on the influences of religious activities (Escher, 2013; Vasilaukas & McMinn, 2013), religiousness (Witvliet et al., 2008), and spirituality (Davis et al., 2013; Hardy et al., 2014) on forgiveness.

**African American Religiousness and Spirituality**

The literature review has revealed that African-Americans attend church more frequently than Caucasians (Regnerus & Uecker, 2006) and 87% of African-Americans reported belonging to a religious group (Pew Research Center, 2009). This is supported by the demographic information of the sample in the present study in which 85% of the participants identified themselves as Christian.

The research examining African American religious affiliation and forgiveness is limited; the present study helped to bring awareness to the predictors of forgiveness among this group. This study supported previous findings by McFarland et al. (2012) because participants shared that personal/self-growth was an additional factor in forgiveness of the transgressor. The largely religious sample reported that 73.8% of them forgave their transgressor. The participants also reported religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs and God’s forgiveness of others as factors that predict forgiveness. Participants shared that “if I do not forgive them I cannot be forgiven” and they felt they should forgive “knowing that God has forgiven me of my transgressions.” The frequent citation of God’s forgiveness of others further supports the notion that religions are more likely to emphasize interpersonal forgiveness than intrapersonal forgiveness (Escher, 2013). However, all but one scale, Forgive (forgiveness of self, others, and forgiveness by God), of the BMMRSS was found not to be significant. Additionally, participants shared “I want forgiveness from God and so I am required to forgive her.” This supports participant self-reported desire to be forgiven by God as a factor in their forgiveness of others. Sex (AN) and
religious (PP) affiliation were statistically significant predictors of forgiveness in this unique culture.

**Transgression –Related Factors**

For the second Research question (*Do transgression-related factors (interpersonal motivation, apology, justice, time, type of transgression, type of relationship, and empathy) predict forgiveness among African Americans*?), participant responses were separated by factor, then analyzed; findings will be discussed by each of the six factors.

McCullough (2000) theorized forgivers were either motivated by revenge, avoidance, or benevolence. Forgiveness is the presence of positive feelings, experiences, and thoughts (benevolence) toward the transgressor and the absence of negative feelings, experiences, and thoughts (avoidance and revenge). The current study examined if the TRIMs predicted forgiveness. *Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18)* (McCullough et al., 2006) was used to assess if participants felt benevolence, revenge, or avoidance feelings, experiences, and thoughts toward their transgressor. In the current study, participants’ scores on the Revenge (PP and AN) and benevolence (AN) subscales were found to be significant predictors of forgiveness. Consequently, as revenge decreased, there was an increase in forgiveness. In addition, increased *Benevolence* was also associated with an increase of neutral feelings and behaviors toward the transgressor. The results provide an examination of the relationship between TRIMs and Rye’s *Forgiveness Scale* that currently is not found in the research.

**Time.** Research indicates that the longer time has elapsed since the transgression, the more likely one is to forgive (Hantman & Cohen, 2010). Women were found to need more time to forgive and process the transgression than men, indicating a possible relationship between sex
and time given to forgive (Root & Exline, 2011). Wohl and McGrath (2000) results revealed that greater time since the transgression made participants more likely to forgive. Allemand (2008) discovered that future time perspective played an essential role in forgiveness; the perception of time as limited influenced one’s willingness to forgive more strongly with younger adults than older adults. The present study explored sex, age, and time as predictors of forgiveness, and, as indicated previously, sex was determined to be a predictor of forgiveness on the Absence of Negative Subscale. Age was determined not to be a predictor, indicating no differences in forgiveness across age. Unfortunately, the findings on length of time as a factor in forgiveness were inconclusive due to the misinterpretation of the question on the questionnaire and the variety of responses based on individual interpretation of what time actually meant.

Apology. Merolla et al. (2012) found that transgressor apology and transgressor acceptance of blame were the best predictors of forgiveness communication and were positively correlated to conditional forgiveness (forgive granted when the forgiver’s conditions are met) with in the United States culture. Additionally, apology has been positively correlated to direct forgiveness in cultures. Transgressors tend to have more verbal elements (e.g. “showing emotions, admission of fault, the statement of apology (IFID), and an attempt at explanation”) especially with more severe transgressions (Kirchhoff et al., 2012, p. 123). Lawler-Row (2007) found that a small percentage of their participants (8%) felt that remorse and apology was a factor that influenced forgiveness. The current study supported Lawler-Row’s (2007) results with 74% of the sample stating expression of regret as an important factor of the apology and a predictor of forgiveness. Less than five percent of the sample listed transgressor improvement and conversation/explanation as an important part of an apology. It should be noted that only 34.6% of the sample reported getting an apology yet, 73.8% of the participants indicated
forgiving the transgressor. For the majority of participants in the present study, a verbal or written apology was not necessary for forgiveness, which does not support Merolla et al.’s (2012) previous findings. However, the finding do support the studies of Struthers et al., (2008) finding that an apology after an intentional transgression did not promote forgiveness.

**Appraisal of the Transgression/Relationship.** Forgiveness has been linked to forgiver’s appraisal of the severity of the transgression (Shapiro, 1991). The research on forgiveness typically investigates common offenses such as relationship betrayals (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). Lawler-Row et al., (2007) examined how forgiveness was influenced by the severity, remorse of the transgressor, and the time since the offense. The more severe cases such as crimes involving intent and lingering costs for the forgiver (e.g., “genocide, serial killing, physical and sexual abuse of young children, and other acts involving severe harm of defenseless people”) are harder to forgive (Exline et al., 2003, p. 341). The current study supported the conclusions of Exline et al. (2003) as more than a third of the sample (35%) reported betrayals as the type of transgression and only 9% reported abuse or more severe crimes. Additionally, the findings of Lawler-Row et al. (2007) can be strengthened with these results because of the present study’s limited amount of severe transgression reported and the high percent of granted forgiveness (73.8%).

Individuals are more likely to forgive when they rebuild the relationship and trust while letting go of thoughts of revenge or avoidance (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). Additionally, relationships with positive qualities were linked to increased forgiveness (Fincham et al., 2002). In valued relationships, the focus is to both reduce the negative experience and increase the positive experience (Exline et al., 2008), however, in non-valued relationships, the focus is only on reducing the negative experience. The present study supports previous research because the
nature of the relationship was a factor in forgiveness as indicated by responses to the supplemental questionnaire. Participants broke down the relationships as *cordial* (34%), *romantic* (25%), *relationship ended* (22%), and *family* (19%) with the large percent of the sample reporting significant relationships with their transgressor. The nature of the relationship or the desire to renew or *maintaining the relationship* emerged as factors that influenced participants’ forgiveness in this study, thus, further supporting the influence that relationship quality has on forgiveness (Exline et al., 2008).

**Justice.** Researchers have indicated that individuals are more likely to forgive when a transgressor is punished by a judge than if they received no punishment because of the ability of consequences to restore justice (Strelan & Prooijen, 2013). Overall, restored justice can also increase forgiveness, but is dependent on the type of justice (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014). Restorative justice promoted a greater increase in forgiveness yet feelings of justice related to retributive justice were not related to forgiveness (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014).

Twenty-three percent of the participants in the present study reported that their transgressor faced consequences for their actions and less than one percent reported that retributive justice was served. Instead, participants in the present study listed factors of restorative justice: Karma (38%), Religious Consequences (32%), and Loss of Relationship (26%), and also reported a high percentage (73.4%) of overall forgiveness. These results support previous findings that restorative justice does predict forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2008; Strelan et al., 2011).

**Empathy.** Historically, empathy has been defined as feelings such as sympathy or warmth and focusing on understanding or perspective taking (Exline & Zell, 2009; Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Empathy provides
individuals with the opportunity to consider the transgressor’s perspective which may lead toward a shift in understanding thus making forgiveness more likely (Exline et al., 2008). The participants in the present study demonstrated empathy when describing additional factors that influenced their forgiveness. Participants stated “If I do not forgive them I cannot be forgiven” and “knowing that God has forgiven me of my transgressions” as indicators of forgiveness of the transgressor. These statement further support previous results (Exline et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005) that revealed a positive correlation between empathy and forgiveness as 73.8% of the sample in the present study reported being able to forgive.

**Additional Forgiveness Factors**

In examining the third research question (*What other factors impact the motivation to forgive among African Americans?*), four additional factors emerged from participant responses. The four themes from the data were *personal/self-growth, religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs, God’s forgiveness of others, and maintaining the relationship*. Participants shared that “forgiveness isn't for the person, it’s for yourself. Holding on to anger and bitterness destroys you more than the other person” supporting that forgiveness is related to a personal process of letting go of negative experience and taking back the power from the transgressor (Worthington, 2005; Lawler-Row et al., 2007). “Christianity, and what the Bible says about forgiving” and “having a Christ like mindset to forgive others” was frequently cited by participants as an influential factor in their forgiveness of others which supports the current findings in the research that those who prescribe to the religious internalize and follow these religious texts (Cohen, Malka, Rozin, & Cherfas, 2006; Mullet et al., 2003; Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005). Finally the participants in the present study indicated that they “loved them and valued their friendship
so they weren't willing to not forgive to jeopardize a future relationship” which supports research that forgiveness is often about reconciling with the transgressor (Lawler-Row et al, 2007).

**Summary of Mixed Methods Research**

The following factors that were researched in the present study reinforced prior research on predictors of forgiveness; sex, religious affiliation, religious teachings/beliefs, God’s forgiveness of others, self-forgiveness, personal growth, expression of regret, restorative justice, and empathy. Conversely, age, religious activities (prayer, reading religious teachings), attendance in religious activities, and spirituality were not found to be significant predictors of forgiveness, which is in contrast to previous research results. Additionally, the findings of the present study strengthen the argument that transgression severity and relationship quality influence one’s willingness to forgive as indicated by the small percent of severe transgression (9%) and the large percent (73.8%) of participants that had forgiven their transgressor.

**Limitations of the Study**

The current study had the following limitations: limited sample, instrumentation issues, and the predictors or factors assessed. These limitations will be examined in the following sections.

**Sample**

The limited sample size and demographics were a limitation of the current study. The sample was not representative of all African Americans. First, the sample consisted of participants from a limited geographic location. Seventy-two percent of the sample reported being from the South Region with 15.9% from the Northeast. The remaining regions comprised the remaining 12.1%. Second, the sample was also majority female (74.8%) and Christian (85%), therefore, any conclusions about sex as a predictor of forgiveness must be interpreted
carefully as the sample was primarily female. The recruitment of a sample from a large Christian population is one reason for the large percentage of participants who self-identified as Christian. Additionally, the sex of the researcher could be a factor that influenced the large female percentage because the researcher contacts were primarily female.

The low response rate to the survey and questionnaire is also a limitation. The small sample and large percentage of incomplete surveys could be due to (1) the length of the questionnaire, (2) negative emotions related to subject matter (transgression), or (3) including both quantitative and qualitative surveys. Participants may have gotten to the end of the quantitative survey and then found that the short answers required on the questionnaire were too time-consuming. It might be helpful to have asked participants how long the entire survey took them to see if the 25 minutes projected was correct.

**Instrumentation Issues**

The research questions in the study called for use of multiple instruments to measure the constructs. The use of multiple surveys that each had several subscales that did not combine into one overall score is a limitation because the analysis then was of similar constructs. Scoring of the measures could have convoluted the findings. Multicollinearity was not a problem for the sample, however, due to the similarity of the constructs and the use of numerous factors, the findings were hard to interpret. The results could have been statistically different if each instrument had one overall score; in that case, there would have been six factors instead of the eleven factors used in the current study.

The format of the supplemental questionnaire was also a limitation. The supplemental questions for *relationship* and *time since the transgression* allowed for participants to answer openly. While the intent was to allow for the emergence of themes or factors not measured by
the quantitative methods, the researcher could have given more direction to set parameters for the participants to answer so the responses would be streamlined, allowing for themes to emerge from the data. The responses to the nature of the relationship provided substantial data that broke down into relationship at the time of transgression and relationship after the transgression. Unfortunately, the supplemental question referring to time did not provide consistent data for theming.

Additionally, the type of relationship question would have benefited from providing participants with a specific point in time (e.g. relationship before the transgression or the relationship after the transgression) to further understand how the relationship with the transgressor impacts forgiveness.

Variables

The large number of independent variables examined was a limitation of the study. The multiple variables may have caused the survey to be too long for participants and the relatedness of variables could have confused the participants. The excessive number of variables also made it more difficult to analyze data and interpret results. Future research should focus on a smaller number of variables at one time, thus, allowing for more for more in-depth analysis of a specific category of predictors, in addition to shortening the time needed to complete the entire survey. Focus on the prominent factors or only one category of variables (cultural, religious/spiritual, or transgression-specific) could allow for a larger sample and more rich results in one specific area.

Implications for Practice, Training, and Research

African American history is founded on overcoming slavery and racism. These unjust transgressions that African Americans face provide a crucial backdrop of forgiveness. The current tensions between the justice system and African Americans and racial inequalities
continue to be transgressions that African Americans face. Religion historically served as an escape from the stress of a majority white world (Frazier, 1974). Forgiveness is a way for African Americans to break the mental shackles that still resonate in the culture.

Traditionally, forgiveness is often valued by various religions (Rye, 2004). Forgiveness is an important factor in the restoration of relationships after a conflict; the forgiveness process can help improve the overall well-being of the African American community (Worthington, et al., 2000). African American church leaders continue to be an important resource because of their advocacy for racial justice and equality. African American clergy is where African Americans tend to turn to for support instead of clinical or therapeutic help.

Prior to this study, the research on cultural, religious/spiritual, and transgression-related factors related to forgiveness among African Americans was limited. Some factors have been research more extensively than others, often in isolation. This study, which looks at the factors collectively, begins to fill this gap by providing predictors that influence forgiveness among African Americans and has implications for African American organizations, religious organizations and leaders, counselors, counselor education and preparation programs, and counselors.

**African American Organizations**

The current study can help African American organizations to assist African Americans move toward forgiveness of transgressors. The qualitative theme of personal/self-growth should be highlighted because it can help African Americans suffering from the burden that often comes from not forgiving. This factor serves as a reminder that, as participants in the present study noted, “Holding on to anger and bitterness destroys you more than the other person”. Further,
forgiveness does not mean a person condones the actions, but instead helps them to “move on with my life and to have some sense of peace.”

The personal/self-growth reported by this study’s participants supports previous research that describes forgiveness as an intrapsychic process that often requires an individual to work through conscious and unconscious anger (Horwitz, 2003) which allows for the letting go and replacing bitter and vengeful feelings with positive feelings (Worthington, 2005). The ability to move on can help individuals who want to have a positive impact on these injustices to be more effective because they will be working for a place of peace and not anger.

A second theme that emerged from this study was maintaining the relationship because frequently, those who are victims of injustice still have contact with their transgressor because they have “many common associates” while understanding “how much” of themselves to freely “share” with another. This provides the groundwork for African Americans to create boundaries necessary and repair relationships to bring about global change and improvements in African American organizations that unite for a common cause. Additionally, the present research found that the transgressor expressing regret, making Improvements, karma, and legal & religious consequences were an important part of the African American forgiveness because of the participant’s restored a sense of justice. Unfortunately, a formal apology and justice is not always served in cases of racial injustice, which often hinders forgiveness and moving forward.

**Religious Organizations and Leaders**

Participants in the present study reported strong religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs and God’s forgiveness of others as predictors of their forgiveness. Participants frequently listed texts of the Bible and living a “Christ like mindset” as reasons why they were able to forgive. The Forgive subscale of the BMMRS that focused on God’s forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and
forgiveness of others was also found to be significant for the participants in the current study. Additionally, these findings can be generalized to other religious cultures or groups that use the Bible as their religious text. The prominent citation of the Bible teaching by the participants in the study implies that studying the Bible and applying its scriptures to our interactions with others may provide clients with the support to achieve forgiveness. These religious/spiritual factors can also be used by religious leaders to help support members as they forgive themselves and others.

**Counselor Educators**

The knowledge from the study can assist counselor educators with preparing counselors to work with African American clients, especially those who are dealing with a betrayal. The present study can help counselor educators be prepared to educate on African American religiousness and spirituality. The strong religious stance of this sample reinforces the importance of counselors being sensitive and aware of a client’s values and beliefs. The findings from the present study indicate that spirituality and religiousness are a crucial part of African Americans’ lives. Counselor educators must continue to be well trained and educate students on how to integrate religious beliefs into counseling when working with African American clients on forgiveness because of the robust responses that included citation of religious teachings. Counselor preparation must include awareness, knowledge, and skills in working with clients on issues that are influenced by cultural and religious/spiritual factors, particularly around being wronged.

**Counselors**

The research and results from the present study on African Americans and the predictors of forgiveness will increase counselor awareness, knowledge, and skills. Awareness of the
African American community will help counselors as they provide therapy for members of the African American communities, particularly those who exhibit issues around their personal betrayals or injustices. For African Americans that struggle with forgiveness, this study helped identify factors that can help them to forgive and will help prepare counselors to work with the unique African American culture.

The present study indicated that sex is a predictor of the Absence of Negative (AN) factors related to forgiveness among African Americans. Awareness and knowledge of the impact of sex (gender) on forgiveness may have implications for counseling, so counselors should be sensitive to this cultural predictor.

Additionally, the research presented in this study highlights the importance of religious affiliation among African Americans in terms of their willingness and ability to forgive. Spirituality and religiousness are an intricate part of holistic wellness in counseling (Chandler et al., 1992; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). A holistic approach to mental health recognizes the connection and incorporation of the physical being with the social being and the spiritual being (Parmer & Rogers, 1997). Consequently, it is important that counselors are educated about this extremely religious and spiritual group and understand the connections between religiousness and forgiveness.

Counselors may use awareness and knowledge of the information presented in this study as an opportunity for their African American clients to educate them because not all African Americans prescribe to the same cultural or religious beliefs. Counselors should explore their client’s current cultural and religious beliefs and how important these beliefs are to the client. Counselors can also use this opportunity to collaborate with the client’s religious leader if the client seeks guidance and support from the leader.
In addition, therapists can use the knowledge gleaned from the present study to educate clients on how cultural characteristics such as their sex could be a factor in their forgiveness process. This information can normalize the client experience by providing them with the information on how men and women experience forgiveness. Additionally, it can bring client awareness as to what transgression-related motivation can influence them and their forgiveness. This research allows for a dialogue about avoidance, revenge, and benevolence feelings, experiences, and behaviors in terms of movement toward forgiveness. If the counselor can increase the client’s awareness of the positive correlations of benevolence and the negative correlation of avoidance and revenge with forgiveness, clients may normalize the feelings they experience after a transgression. Clients’ awareness as to how these factors can positively and negatively influence their forgiveness can help them regain the power necessary to forgive their transgressor, which, as research supports, leads to a healthier and more productive life.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The main theme for future research on predictors of forgiveness is using the survey with a wider variety of participants. Future studies should not limit ethnicity/race of the participants and could provide critical information about similarities and differences in predictors of forgiveness across cultures. The inclusion of other groups will provide results that more accurately reflect the general population.

The inclusion of more religions, males, and ethnicities/races will allow for a better understanding of the cultural and religious/spiritual factors that influence forgiveness across cultures. A greater focus on more ethnicities/races will allow for the voices of additional ethnicities/races to be heard. The wider variety of participants will ensure the sample is more
representative of the overall population of the United States, which will increase the generalizability of the results.

Expanding the variety of religions will allow for more robust data about specific religious groups and the similarities and differences in predictors and factors of forgiveness. Research involving additional religions would lead to a more in-depth comparison of the religious/spiritual factors that influence forgiveness. This current study revealed a major focus on the Bible by participants. Research on additional religions will bring a greater understanding of the forgiveness process and practices across religions. This can help normalize the experience of members of the religions and also provide insight for those interacting with members of various religious groups.

Future research should also target a sample that has a more balanced number of male and female participants to allow for further analysis to determine how sex influences forgiveness. The current study demonstrated that sex is a predictor of forgiveness, but it did not provide an explanation of how the sexes differ because the sample was predominately female it is difficult to draw a conclusion about sex as a predictor of forgiveness. Further research would provide a clearer understanding of how sex may affect one’s ability to forgive. This information could enhance the current literature on the difference in predictors of forgiveness between men and women.

In the current study, all the transgressors were known to participants which could influenced their responses and willingness to forgive. In future research, those who do not know their transgressor should be examined because it will provide a better understanding of how the relationship or the lack of a relationship with the transgressor can influence forgiveness.
Finally, the alternative factors that were listed by participants in the qualitative portion of the study should be examined in future research. *Personal/self-growth, religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs, God’s forgiveness of others,* and *maintaining the relationship* emerged as themes that may help to better understand the predictors of forgiveness. Future research would help determine if these factors were significantly different across sex, religion, and ethnicity/race. Researching these factors using a sample that represents the overall population would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the predictors of forgiveness.

**Conclusion**

The present study was designed to determine the cultural, religious/spiritual, and transgression-related factors that predict forgiveness among African Americans. The results of the study (n=107) helped to bring clarity to factors that influenced African American forgiveness. The results lead to several implication and recommendations for future research and practice including (a) for African American fighting racial injustice and inequalities, (b) counselor awareness of African American forgiveness factors and religiousness/spirituality, (c) the importance of educating counselors on religiousness/spiritual sensitivity, and (d) conducting research with a broader range of religions, regions, sex, and ethnicities/races participants with less variables and possibly different instrumentation.

One of the biggest findings in this study was the positive correlation between *revenge* and *benevolence* and forgiveness. The research provided the first look at the relationship between *TRIMs* and the Rye’s *Forgiveness Scale* within the African American community. Second, the substantial expression of religious teachings/beliefs and God’s forgiveness emerged as a significant predictor of forgiveness. The sample overall was forgiving of their transgressor, with 73.8% reporting they have forgiven which can be linked to the high percent of participants who
identified with a religion (predominantly Christian) in the sample. Thus, counselor educators must better prepare counseling students on working with the cultural and religious beliefs of clients. Furthermore, sex, religious affiliation, self-forgiveness, personal growth, expression of regret, restorative justice, and empathy were significant factors that reinforced prior research on predictors of forgiveness. On the other hand, age, religious activities (prayer, reading religious teachings), attendance in religious activities, and spirituality were found not to be predictors of forgiveness, which contradicts previous findings.

Additionally, the findings in this study strengthen the argument that transgression severity and relationship quality with the transgressor influence forgiveness. The less severe transgressions and valued relationships were determined to be a positive influence on forgiveness. The research also provided new factors, personal/self-growth, religious/spiritual teachings and beliefs, God’s forgiveness of others, and maintaining the relationship, to be the focus of future research on predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. Expanding the research to include various cultural and spiritual groups will enhance the depth and richness of research on forgiveness and identifying the predictors of forgiveness may result in improved human well-being overall.
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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness

Among African Americans

Invitation to participate

You are invited to participate in a research study by Dominique Adkins, a student at Marymount University, examining the cultural factors, religious/spiritual, and transgression-related factors that influence forgiveness in the African American Community. Dr. Tamara Davis, Ed.D. is the project advisor. If you are (1) African American and (2) at least 18 years of age, you are invited to participate in the study. Please read the following information carefully before agreeing to take part in the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study to examine your forgiveness experience and to understand what factors may predict forgiveness. The results of the study will be disseminated in the form of a research paper for the purpose of a doctoral dissertation. The results of the study may also be shared at an academic conference and published in an academic journal.

If you agree to participate in this study, it will consist of an online survey and 6 short answer questions. It may take 20-30 minutes to complete the survey and short answer questions. If you agree to participate, the link to access the survey is found in this email.

Possible Risks

There is some risk that you may experience emotional discomfort when answering the questions regarding a time when you were hurt. The risks associated with this survey process are low and comparable to those encountered in your daily life. In case you experience any emotional discomfort that hinders your ability to function as a result of participating in the interview, the following resources can be used.

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

- National Sexual Assault Hotline
  1.800.656.HOPE (4673)
  www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-hotline

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
  1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
  www.thelast.org

Confidentiality of Identity and Information:

Your identity will be kept confidential. The survey does not ask any questions that could potentially identify you. Additionally, your email address and IP address will not be stored. The indirect identifiers obtained from the demographic questions will not enable the primary researcher to identify participants. The data will be SSL encrypted and all data will be stored in
a password protected electronic format. All answers will be presented in aggregate form and no one will know how any one participant answered the questions. Data will be stored until the study is complete.

**Benefits to Participants:**

Participants will have the opportunity to provide their email address if he/she wants to be entered into a drawing for one of ten $25 American Express Gift cards, awarded by the researcher after closing of the survey. The results of this study will provide researchers with a better understanding of what factors predict forgiveness.

**Rights of the Participant:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. As a participant, you have the right to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting the relationship with the investigator/researcher or your status in the community. You may stop participating at any time by closing the survey.

**Contact information:**

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

This research project was approved by the Marymount IRB on [insert date and approval number once approved]. If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dominique Adkins at dadkins@marymount.edu or 516-448-3515 or Dr. Tamara Davis, Ed.D. at tmdavis@marymount.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact Marymount University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email, irb@marymount.edu, or call at (703)-526-6898.

By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey. I hereby consent to participate in this research study and I verify that:

- I understand the information regarding the study
- I voluntarily agree to participate, and
- I am African-American and at least 18 years of age

_____ No
_____ Yes
Appendix B: Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory -18 (TRIM-18) (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006)

For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you; that is, we want to know how you feel about that person right now. Next to each item, circle the number that best describes your current thoughts and feelings.

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

**Scoring Instructions**

**Avoidance Motivations**: Add up the scores for items 2, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, and 18  
**Revenge Motivations**: Add up the scores for items 1, 4, 9, 13, and 17  
**Benevolence Motivations**: Add up the scores for items 3, 6, 8, 12, 14, and 16
Appendix C: *TRIM-18 Approval*

---

**Dominique Addlins**

10/17/14

To: Dr. McCullough

Subject: Request for Permission to Use TRIM-18

Dear Dr. McCullough,

I am a doctoral candidate at Marymount University in the Counselor Education and Supervision program. I am currently working on my dissertation and plan to research how gender affects forgiveness in the Seventh Day Adventist community. I would like to use the Transgression-Related Intergroup Relations Inventory—TRIM-18 as my instrument. This email is for your permission to see the instrument. Please let me know your decision at your earliest convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

---

**Michael McCullough**

10/19/14

To: [Recipient's Email]

Subject: Permission to Use TRIM-18

Dear [Recipient's Name],

Thanks for your note. You are very welcome to use the TRIM-18 in your research.

Good luck!

Michael McCullough
Professor of Psychology
Director, Evolution and Social Behavior Laboratory
University of Miami
MI Box 259000
Appendix D: The *Forgiveness Scale*  
*(Rye, Loiacono, Folck, Olszewski, Heim, & Madia, 2001)*

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>11.</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reverse code: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14  
Absence of Negative subscale items: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14  
Presence of Positive subscale items: 2, 6, 7, 13, 15
Appendix E: Forgiveness Scale Approval

Re: Permission to use the Forgiveness Scale

Mark Rye <mrye@stjohns.edu>

To: Dominique

May 20 (2 days ago)

Subject: Permission to use the Forgiveness Scale

Hello Dominique,

Yes, you are welcome to use the scale for your research (the scale can be found in the appendix of the attached article). Sounds like you are working on an interesting project. Good luck with it.

Mark

On May 27, 2015, at 5:55 PM, Dominique Adkins wrote:

> Dear Dr. Rye,
> > I'm a doctoral candidate at Marymount University in the Counseling Education and Supervision program. I'm currently working on my dissertation and plan to research if transgression-specific factors, religious commitment, age, gender, and cultural identity are predictors of forgiveness among African Americans. I am interested in using the Forgiveness Scale (Rye, 1999) as one of my instruments. This email is to ask for your permission to use the instrument. Please let me know your decision at your earliest convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.
> > Thank you,
> > Dominique
> >
> > Dominique Adkins, MA, NCC
> > Marymount University Doctoral Candidate

Dominique Adkins <dskim@marymount.edu>

Thank you for allowing me to use your scale. I am adding the scale with a 5-point (strongly disagree to strongly agree) Likert scale. In order to have the Likert scale the same for convenience in data analysis, I would like to change the scoring from 0 to 100 for the Likert factor. I hope changing the company would be easy?

Thanks again.

Dominique

Mark Rye <mrye@stjohns.edu>

Hi Dominique,

Sure. That's no problem. Good luck with your project.

Mark
Appendix F: Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS)

(Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999)

Daily Spiritual Experiences
The following questions deal with possible spiritual experiences. To what extent can you say you experience the following?

1. I feel God’s presence.
   1. Many times a day
   2. Every day
   3. Most days
   4. Some days
   5. Once in a while
   6. Never or almost never

2. I find strength and comfort in my religion. 1 –
   1. Many times a day
   2. Every day
   3. Most days
   4. Some days
   5. Once in a while
   6. Never or almost never

3. I feel deep inner peace or harmony.
   1. Many times a day
   2. Every day
   3. Most days
   4. Some days
   5. Once in a while
   6. Never or almost never

4. I desire to be closer to or in union with God.
   1. Many times a day
   2. Every day
   3. Most days
   4. Some days
   5. Once in a while
   6. Never or almost never

5. I feel God’s love for me, directly or through others.
   1. Many times a day
   2. Every day
   3. Most days
   4. Some days
   5. Once in a while
   6. Never or almost never

6. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.
   1. Many times a day
   2. Every day
3. Most days  
4. Some days  
5. Once in a while  
6. Never or almost never

**Values/Beliefs**

7. I believe in a God who watches over me.  
   1. Strongly agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly disagree

8. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world  
   1. Strongly agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly disagree

**Forgiveness**

Because of my religious or spiritual beliefs:

9. I have forgiven myself for things that I have done wrong.  
   1. Always or almost always  
   2. Often  
   3. Seldom  
   4. Never

10. I have forgiven those who hurt me.  
    1. Always or almost always  
    2. Often  
    3. Seldom  
    4. Never

11. I know that God forgives me.  
    1. Always or almost always  
    2. Often  
    3. Seldom  
    4. Never

**Private Religious Practices**

12. How often do you pray privately in places other than at church or synagogue?  
    1. More than once a day  
    2. Once a day  
    3. A few times a week  
    4. Once a week  
    5. A few times a month  
    6. Once a month  
    7. Less than once a month  
    8. Never

13. Within your religious or spiritual tradition, how often do you meditate?  
    1. More than once a day
2. Once a day
3. A few times a week
4. Once a week
5. A few times a month
6. Once a month
7. Less than once a month
8. Never

14. How often do you watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio?
   1. More than once a day
   2. Once a day
   3. A few times a week
   4. Once a week
   5. A few times a month
   6. Once a month
   7. Less than once a month
   8. Never

15. How often do you read the Bible or other religious literature?
   1. More than once a day
   2. Once a day
   3. A few times a week
   4. Once a week
   5. A few times a month
   6. Once a month
   7. Less than once a month
   8. Never

16. How often are prayers or grace said before or after meals in your home?
   1. More than once a day
   2. Once a day
   3. A few times a week
   4. Once a week
   5. A few times a month
   6. Once a month
   7. Less than once a month
   8. Never

Religious and Spiritual Coping
Think about how you try to understand and deal with major problems in your life. To what extent is each of the following involved in the way you cope?

17. I think about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force.
   1. A great deal
   2. Quite a bit
   3. Somewhat
   4. Not at all

18. I work together with God as partners.
   1. A great deal
   2. Quite a bit
19. I look to God for strength, support, and guidance.
   1. A great deal
   2. Quite a bit
   3. Somewhat
   4. Not at all

20. I feel God is punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality.
   1. A great deal
   2. Quite a bit
   3. Somewhat
   4. Not at all

21. I wonder whether God has abandoned me.
   1. A great deal
   2. Quite a bit
   3. Somewhat
   4. Not at all

22. I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God.
   1. A great deal
   2. Quite a bit
   3. Somewhat
   4. Not at all

23. To what extent is your religion involved in understanding or dealing with stressful situations in any way?
   1. Very involved
   2. Somewhat involved
   3. Not very involved
   4. Not involved at all

**Religious Support**
These questions are designed to find out how much help the people in your congregation would provide if you need it in the future.

24. If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation help you out?
   1. A great deal
   2. Some
   3. A little
   4. None

25. If you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people in your congregation be willing to give you?
   1. A great deal
   2. Some
   3. A little
   4. None

Sometimes the contact we have with others is not always pleasant.

26. How often do the people in your congregation make too many demands on you?
   1. Very often
   2. Fairly often
3. Once in a while
4. Never

27. How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?
   1. Very often
   2. Fairly often
   3. Once in a while
   4. Never

**Religious/Spiritual History**
28. Did you ever have a religious or spiritual experience that changed your life? No Yes
   IF YES: How old were you when this experience occurred?

29. Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith? No Yes
   IF YES: How old were you when this occurred?

30. Have you ever had a significant loss in your faith? No Yes
   IF YES: How old were you when this occurred?

**Commitment**
31. I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life.
   1. Strongly agree
   2. Agree
   3. Disagree
   4. Strongly disagree

32. During the last year about how much was the average monthly contribution of your household to your congregation or to religious causes?
   $________________ OR $________________ Contribution
   Contribution per year per month

33. In an average week, how many hours do you spend in activities on behalf of your church or activities that you do for religious or spiritual reasons?

**Organizational Religiousness**
34. How often do you go to religious services?
   1. More than once a week
   2. Every week or more often
   3. Once or twice a month
   4. Every month or so
   5. Once or twice a year
   6. Never

35. Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at a place of worship?
   1. More than once a week
2. Every week or more often
3. Once or twice a month
4. Every month or so
5. Once or twice a year
6. Never

Religious Preference
36. What is your current religious preference? ______________________

IF PROTESTANT: Which specific denomination is that? ______________________

Overall Self-Ranking
37. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?
   1. Very spiritual
   2. Moderately spiritual
   3. Slightly spiritual
   4. Not spiritual at all

38. To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?
   1. Very spiritual
   2. Moderately spiritual
   3. Slightly spiritual
   4. Not spiritual at all
Appendix G: *BMMRS (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) Approval*
Appendix H: Supplemental Questionnaire

1. Age Range
   Age range as defined by US Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau, 2010)
   [ ] 18-29
   [ ] 30 to 44
   [ ] 44 to 59
   [ ] 60 and Over

2. Sex:
   ___ Male
   ___ Female
   __________________________ Other; please specify

3. Which best describes your religious/spiritual affiliation?
   ✅ Christianity
   ✅ Islam
   ✅ Judaism
   ✅ Hinduism
   ✅ Buddhism
   ✅ Non-denominational
   ✅ Agnostic
   ✅ Atheism
   ✅ Other (please specify)
   If you selected other, please specify ____________________________

4. What geographical region do you predominantly identify in general?
   Regions and Territories as defined by Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau, 2010)

   _____REGION I: NORTHEAST
   Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

   _____REGION 2: MIDWEST
   Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota

   _____REGION 3: SOUTH
   Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi,

   Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas

   _____REGION 4: WEST

   _____ Puerto Rico
   _____ U.S. Virgin Islands
   _____ Guam
   _____ American Samoa
   _____ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island
5. What geographical region has influenced your religious/spiritual practices?
   Regions and Territories as defined by Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau, 2010)
   ______REGION I: NORTHEAST
   Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
   ______REGION 2: MIDWEST
   Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota
   ______REGION 3: SOUTH
   Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas
   ______REGION 4: WEST
   ______Puerto Rico
   ______U.S. Virgin Islands
   ______Guam
   ______American Samoa
   ______Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Island

6. When completing the TRIM-18, what was the transgression that you remember that had been committed against you?

7. When did the transgression occur?

8. Describe your relationship with the transgressor?

9. Did the transgressor face just consequences for his/her actions? If yes, please describe.
10. Did the transgressor apologize and/or make amends for what they did? If yes, how?

11. Have you forgiven that individual? If yes, what factors motivated you to forgive? If no, what prevented you from forgiving?
Appendix I: Recruitment Email

Recruiting participants for a dissertation research study on: Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans

Good afternoon,

This is an invitation to participate in a dissertation study examining Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans. The survey will close Monday August 10th. The Marymount University IRB approval is attached. The criteria for eligibility: (1) identify yourself as an African American and (2) are over the age of 18 years. If you meet this criteria, you are invited to share your thoughts in one 20-30 minute online survey. Additionally, please send this recruitment email to anyone that may meet the criteria.

I realize your time is valuable and I appreciate if you are able to help with this research. At the end of the survey, you will also have the opportunity to enter into a drawing for one of ten $25 American Express gift cards. If you are willing to participate in sharing your thoughts and experiences with forgiveness, please click on this link or visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FORGIVEN. The survey will close on 8/7/15. The website will review informed consent and study background information. Please call me at (516)448-3515 or email me at Dadkins@marymount.edu if you have any questions about the process. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dominique Adkins, MA, NCC
Marymount University Doctoral Candidate
Georgetown College ’08

Marymount University IRB Approval Notification

To: Tamara Davis
From: IRB
Subject: IRB Application #259
Date: 07/17/2015

The application "Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans" has been approved under the rules for expedited review on 07/17/2015.
Appendix J: IRB Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marymount University IRB Approval Notification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To: Tamara Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From: IRB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject: IRB Application #259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: 07/17/2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The application "Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans" has been approved under the rules for expedited review on 07/17/2016.

Currently, the file on Mentor titled Adkins IRBAttachments.REVISED is not able to be opened, however, we were able to review the edited survey via the online link. Could you please upload this attachment on Mentor as either a .doc or .pdf file so that the Mentor system has accurate representation of all edits made.

IRB approval of your study will expire on 07/16/2016. An Annual Report terminating the project or requesting continuing review of the project is due by 06/25/2016 via the Mentor System.

We wish you great success in your research!

Julie Ries, PhD
IRB Chair
irb@marymount.edu
(703)284-5983
http://irb.marymount.edu
Appendix K: Survey Monkey

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important.

Invitation to participate: You are invited to participate in a research study by Dominique Adkins, a student at Marymount University, examining the cultural factors, religious/spiritual, and transgression-specific factors that influence forgiveness in the African American Community. Dr. Tamara Davis, PhD is the project advisor. If you are (1) African American and (2) at least 18 years of age, you are invited to participate in the study. Please read the following information carefully before agreeing to take part in the study.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine your forgiveness experience and its association with cultural factors that predict forgiveness. The results of the study will be disseminated in the form of a research paper for the purposes of a doctoral dissertation. The results of this study may also be shared at an academic conference and published in an academic journal. If you agree to participate in this study, it will consist of an online survey and four short answer questions. If you agree to participate, we will ask if you are interested in completing the survey. If you choose to complete the survey, the survey is found on this survey.

Precautionary: There is some risk that you may experience emotional discomfort when answering the questions regarding a time when you were hurt. The risks associated with this survey process are low and comparable to those encountered in your daily life. In case you experience any emotional discomfort that makes you decide to halt your participation in the survey, the following resources can be used:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) www.thehotline.org
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) www.rainn.org

Confidentiality of Identity and Information: Your identity will be kept confidential. The server does not ask any questions that could potentially identify you. Additionally, your email address and IP address will not be stored. The data will be SSL encrypted and all data will be stored in a secure password-protected electronic format. All answers will be presented in aggregate form and no one will know how any one participant answered the questions. Only be stored until the study is complete.

Benefit to Participants: Participants will have the opportunity to provide their email address if they would like to be entered into a drawing for one of ten $25 American Express Gift cards. Contact the researcher after closing of the survey. The results of this study will provide researchers with better understanding of all factors that predict forgiveness.

Rights of the Participant: Your participation in this research is voluntary. As a participant, you have the rights to decline to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting the relationship with the investigator, researcher or your status in the community. You may stop participating at any time by closing the survey.

Contact Information: This research project was approved by the Marymount IBC at 11/17/13, Application #286. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dominique Adkins at doma18@marymount.edu or 516-369-2014 x 4 Dr. Tamara Davis, PhD at tamird@marymount.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact Marymount University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email: irb@marymount.edu or call 703-524-6985.

1. I hereby consent to participate in this research study and I verify that:
   - I have read the information regarding the study
   - I voluntarily agree to participate, and
   - I am African American and at least 18 years of age

   By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

   Yes
   No
The following definitions should be used to guide the completion of the survey.

**Spirituality** is "the universal human capacity to experience self-transcendence and awareness of sacred immanence, with resulting increases in greater self-other compassion and love" (Cashwell & Young, 2011, p. 7). "Each person defines spirituality in her or his personal way, and this changes over time so that each person defines spirituality differently at various periods in her/his life" (Cashwell & Young, 2005, p. 197). One does not have to belong to a religious affiliation (see definition of religion) to be spiritual.

Religion provides a social context within a set of beliefs, practices, and experiences occur. Religion is, by definition, institutional and creedal, and often socially defined (Cashwell & Young, 2011, p. 9).

Religiosity is "the degree to which a person adheres to her or his religious values, beliefs, and practices and obeys them in daily living" (Witherington et al., 2002, p. 85).

Ritualistic justice focuses on punishing the transgressor without taking into account the forgiver. Retributive justice is designed to deter future transgressions (Darley & Pittman, 2003).

Rape, unlike retributive justice, is driven by emotion and is retaliatory and does not restore balance or provide closure (Kohlwagen et al., 2003).
Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory - 18 (TRIM-18)

For the following questions think about a time you were hurt and please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you; that is, we want to know how you feel about that person right now. For each item, select the number that best describes your current thoughts and feelings.

1. I’ll make him/her pay.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. I wish something bad would happen to him/her.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

5. I am living as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

6. I want to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. I don’t trust him/her.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

8. Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

11. I am avoiding him/her.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurt aside so we can resume our relationship.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I'm going to get even.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I have given up my hurt and resentment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I cut off the relationship with him/her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. I withdraw from him/her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans

**The Forgiveness Scale**

Think of how you have responded to the person who has wronged or mistreated you. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I wish for good things to happen to the person who wronged me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I spend time thinking about ways to get back at the person who wronged me</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I feel resentful toward the person who wronged me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I avoid certain people and/or places because they remind me of the person who wronged me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I pray for the person who wronged me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. If I encountered the person who wronged me I would feel at peace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. This person’s wrongful actions have kept me from enjoying life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I have been able to let go of my anger toward the person who wronged me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I become depressed when I think of how I was mistreated by this person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I think that many of the emotional wounds related to this person’s wrongful actions have healed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I feel hatred whenever I think about the person who wronged me.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
11. I think that many of the emotional wounds related to this person’s wrongful actions have healed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. I feel harmed whenever I think about the person who wronged me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. I have compassion for the person who wronged me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. I think my life is ruined because of this person’s wrongful actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. I hope the person who wronged me is treated fairly by others in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Predictors of African American Forgiveness

#### Cultural, Religious/Spirtual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans

**Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMS-R)**

**Daily Spiritual Experiences**

The following questions deal with possible spiritual experiences. To what extent can you say you experience the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. I feel God's presence.</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many times a day</td>
<td>Every</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some days</td>
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<td>Once in a while</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. I feel strength and comfort in my religion.</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many times a day</td>
<td>Every</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
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<td>Once in a while</td>
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<td>Never or almost never</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. I feel deep inner peace and harmony.</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many times a day</td>
<td>Every</td>
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<td>Never</td>
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<td>Often</td>
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<td>Never or almost never</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. I desire to be closer to or in union with God.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many times a day</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. I feel God's love for me, directly or through others.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many times a day</td>
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<td>Never</td>
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<td>Often</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Values/Beliefs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many times a day</td>
<td>Every</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
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<td>Some days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once in a while</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never or almost never</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Forgiveness**

**Because of my religious or spiritual beliefs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. I have forgiven myself for things that I have done wrong.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
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<td>Never</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. I have forgiven those who hurt me.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Often</td>
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<td>Never</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. I know that God forgives me.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Religious and Spiritual Coping

This is about how you try to understand and deal with major problems in your life. To what extent is each of the following involved in the way you cope?

**17. I think about how my life is part of a larger spiritual forces.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**18. I work together with God as partners.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**19. I look to God for strength, support, and guidance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**20. I feel God is punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**21. I wonder whether God has abandoned me.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**22. I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**23. To what extent is your religion involved in understanding or dealing with stressful situations in any way?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very involved</th>
<th>Somewhat involved</th>
<th>Not very involved</th>
<th>Not involved at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Religious Support
These questions are designed to find out how much help the people in your congregation would provide if you needed it in the future.

24. If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation help you out?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

25. If you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people in your congregation be willing to give you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes the contact we have with others is not always pleasant.

26. How often do the people in your congregation make too many demands on you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Fairly often</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

27. How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Fairly often</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Religious/Spiritual History

28. Did you ever have a religious or spiritual experience that changed your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If YES, please tell me about this experience now.

29. Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If YES, how did this occur?

30. Have you ever had a significant loss in your faith?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If YES, how did this occur?

Commitment

31. I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

32. During the last year about how much was the average monthly contribution of your household to your congregation or to religious causes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution per year</th>
<th>Contribution per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

33. In an average week, how many hours do you spend in activities on behalf of your church or activities that you do for religious or spiritual reasons?
35. In an average week, how many hours do you spend in activities on behalf of your church or activities that you do for religious or spiritual reasons?

Organizational Religiousness

34. How often do you go to religious services?

- More than once a week
- Every week or more often
- Once or twice a month
- Every month or so
- Once or twice a year
- Never

35. Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at a place of worship?

- More than once a week
- Every week or more often
- Once or twice a month
- Every month or so
- Once or twice a year
- Never

Religious Preference

36. What is your current religious preference?

37. If PROTESTANT: Which specific denomination is that?

38. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?

- Very spiritual
- Moderately spiritual
- Slightly spiritual
- Not spiritual at all

39. To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

- Very spiritual
- Moderately spiritual
- Slightly spiritual
- Not spiritual at all
9. Did the transgressor face just consequences for his/her actions?
   - No
   - Yes
   If yes, please describe:

10. Did the transgressor apologize and/or make amends for what they did?
    - No
    - Yes
    If yes, how?

11. Have you forgiven that individual?
    - No
    - Yes
    If yes, what factors motivated you to forgive? If no, what prevented you from forgiving?

Thank you for completing the survey!

1. Would you like to be entered into a drawing for one of ten $25 American Express Gift cards, awarded by the researcher after closing of the survey?
   - No
   - Yes
Cultural, Religious/Spiritual, and Transgression-Related Predictors of Forgiveness Among African Americans

Below is a link to enter the raffle for one of the ten $25 American Express gift cards.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/ SHARESAMPLE1

Presented by SurveyMonkey
Check out our sample survey and create your own now!
### Appendix L: Descriptive Statistics

#### Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Avoidance</th>
<th>Revenge</th>
<th>Benevolence</th>
<th>Rye_PP</th>
<th>Rye_AN</th>
<th>DailySpirit</th>
<th>ValBeliefs</th>
<th>BMMR_SForgive</th>
<th>PrivRelPrac</th>
<th>OrgRel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>22.6822</td>
<td>8.9813</td>
<td>18.6262</td>
<td>3.9897</td>
<td>3.4710</td>
<td>2.1323</td>
<td>1.4439</td>
<td>1.4673</td>
<td>3.1900</td>
<td>2.196</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>24.0000</td>
<td>8.0000</td>
<td>19.0000</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
<td>3.6000</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>1.5000</td>
<td>1.3333</td>
<td>2.8333</td>
<td>2.000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mode</strong></td>
<td>28.0000</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
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<td>1.0000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Deviation</strong></td>
<td>6.6865</td>
<td>3.7366</td>
<td>5.34388</td>
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<td>.49708</td>
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<td><strong>Skewness</strong></td>
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<td>.169</td>
<td>-.885</td>
<td>-.410</td>
<td>1.245</td>
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<td>.445</td>
<td>.346</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Error of Skewness</strong></td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.234</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kurtosis</strong></td>
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<td>1.447</td>
<td>-.522</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>1.449</td>
<td>1.320</td>
<td>2.698</td>
<td>-.906</td>
<td>-.523</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Error of Kurtosis</strong></td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.463</td>
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<td>.463</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.463</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M: Histograms, P-P Plots, and Scatterplots for Tests of Violation of Assumptions

Histograms

**Sex**

- Mean = 1.25
- Std. Dev. = .436
- N = 107

**Religion**

- Mean = 1.91
- Std. Dev. = 2.373
- N = 107
PREDICTORS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FORGIVENESS

BMMRS_PrivReligiousPrac

- Mean = 2.19
- Std. Dev. = 1.567
- N = 107

BMMRS_OrgReligiousness

- Mean = 2.20
- Std. Dev. = .855
- N = 107
PPlots
TRIM_18_Avoidance

Normal P-P Plot of TRIM_18_Avoidance

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of TRIM_18_Avoidance
TRIM_18_Revenge

Normal P-P Plot of TRIM_18_Revenge

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of TRIM_18_Revenge
TRIM_18_Benevolence
Rye_Forgive_PP

Normal P-P Plot of Rye_Forgive_PP

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of Rye_Forgive_PP
PREDICTORS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FORGIVENESS

Rye_Forgive_AN

Normal P-P Plot of Rye_Forgive_AN

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of Rye_Forgive_AN
BMMRS_DailySpiritualExp

Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_DailySpiritualExp

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_DailySpiritualExp
BMMRS_ValuesBeliefs

Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_ValuesBeliefs

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_ValuesBeliefs
BMMRS_Forgive

Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_Forgive

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_Forgive
**BMMRS_PrivReligiousPrac**

Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_PrivReligiousPrac

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_PrivReligiousPrac
BMMRS_OrgReligiousness

Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_OrgReligiousness

Detrended Normal P-P Plot of BMMRS_OrgReligiousness
Appendix N: Regression Analysis (PP)

Coefficients – Presence of Positive (PP)\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>5.350</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>8.640</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>.928</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rel. Affil.</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>3.185</td>
<td>.002</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.391</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TRIM_18_Avoidance</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>-3.444</td>
<td>.732</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TRIM_18_Revenge</td>
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<td>.015</td>
<td>-7.136</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TRIM_18_Benevolence</td>
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<td>.015</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BMMRS_DailySpiritualExp</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>1.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BMMRS_ValuesBeliefs</td>
<td>-.085</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-1.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BMMRS_Forgive</td>
<td>-.356</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>-2.923</td>
<td>.004</td>
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a. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_PP

Bold: Statistically Significant
### Appendix O: Regression Analysis (AN)

**Coefficients – Absence of Negative (AN)**

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b. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_AN

**Bold:** Statistically Significant
Appendix P: Bivariate Correlations (PP)

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## Appendix Q: Bivariate Correlations (AN)

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Appendix R: Model Summaries

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a. Predictors: (Constant), BMMRS_OrgReligiousness, Sex, TRIM_18_Revenge, Age, BMMRS_ValuesBeliefs, TRIM_18_Avoidance, Religion, BMMRS_Forgive, BMMRS_DailySpiritualExp, TRIM_18_Benevolence, BMMRS_PrivReligiousPrac

b. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_PP

### ANOVA

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a. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_PP

### Model Summary

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a. Predictors: (Constant), BMMRS_OrgReligiousness, Sex, TRIM_18_Revenge, Age, BMMRS_ValuesBeliefs, TRIM_18_Avoidance, Religion, BMMRS_Forgive, BMMRS_DailySpiritualExp, TRIM_18_Benevolence, BMMRS_PrivReligiousPrac

b. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_AN

### ANOVA

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a. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_AN
### Appendix S: Residual Statistics

#### Residuals Statistics

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a. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_PP

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#### Residuals Statistics

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a. Dependent Variable: Rye_Forgive_AN