1-1-2008

Ho'oponopono: Assessing the effects of a traditional Hawaiian forgiveness technique on unforgiveness

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Matthew B. James

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ABSTRACT

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by

Matthew B. James

M.A., University of Phoenix, 2004
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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Health Psychology

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November 2008

ABSTRACT

This study expanded on the existing empirical research on forgiveness and specifically ho‘oponopono, a traditional Hawaiian forgiveness process. An extensive literature review revealed that while forgiveness has gained in popularity among researchers and clinicians, few therapeutic process-based models have been researched. Furthermore, ho‘oponopono has not been studied as a process-based approach to forgiveness. Therefore, the purpose of the present between-groups, within-groups, repeated measures study was to assess the effects of the application of ho‘oponopono (focused on a specific transgressor) on levels of unforgiveness, as measured by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM). The participants ($N = 79$) were randomly divided into a test group and a control group. Both groups completed the TRIM twice and the test group engaged in the process of ho'oponopono between the pre- and post-test assessments. Two separate paired-sample t tests were used to examine the control group ($n = 39$) and the test group ($n = 40$), and a 1-way ANOVA was conducted between groups to examine the effectiveness of ho‘oponopono with the test group in comparison to the control group. The results demonstrated that those who engaged in the ho‘oponopono process subsequently experienced a statistically significant reduction in unforgiveness, whereas those in the control group showed no statistically significant change in negative affect over the course of the study. Based on these findings and by validating ho‘oponopono as an effective therapeutic forgiveness method, this study lays the groundwork for future research of this specific forgiveness process. Strong implications for positive social change through the application of ho‘oponopono include improved health, and improved interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Soomi James. For almost a decade now, you have pushed, pulled, kicked, and encouraged me down the path towards this goal. You have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help me make time to do this, and I know that you have made sacrifices so that I could focus on my work. You are an amazing wife, a wonderful mother, and you are the one who keeps me going. Thank you for making me a better person!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to acknowledging my wife in the Dedication section, I would also like to acknowledge my two children, Ethan and Skylar, for helping me focus on my schoolwork and my research and for forgiving me for all the time I have had to spend on this. The three of you together made it possible for me to do this work, and now that I am done, it is playtime!

I would also like to acknowledge my parents for encouraging me to go back to school and for helping me realize that it is great to focus on research that is near and dear to my heart. You have both been an inspiration to me and a model of how I should conduct myself in my life.

Next, I would like to acknowledge my grandfather Jimmy and my grandfather Rod. At an early age, my grandfather Jimmy showed me what it took to be a lifetime learner. With a PhD in Geography, he wrote textbooks and inspired others to learn and improve their lives. My grandfather Rod was the most forgiving person I have ever met. He demonstrated how to balance amazing intelligence with tenderness from the heart.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee. Dr. Jobe, Dr. Piferi, Dr. Frederick, and Dr. Marsh have all been instrumental in my progress and success. Thank you, Dr. Marsh, for stepping in for Dr. Frederick when she had to leave the committee; I appreciated your insight into the research process and my methodology. Dr. Frederick, thank you for all the knowledge I gained in Stats 1 and 2, where I first met you. From that first class back in 2006, you offered to be a part of this, and you helped to create the foundation for my research 3 years ago. Thank you, Dr. Piferi and Dr. Jobe, for

all the help and guidance. We met in 2005 at the summer residency and even though I had only been with the university for a short time, you both took me under your wings and made a commitment to see this through with me. I am glad that you have been there from the beginning. The university is lucky to have you! Lastly, Dr. Jobe, a special thank you for everything. Your time, insight, guidance, and help made this possible. It has been a wonderful journey!

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Over 100 years ago, early psychologists so strongly desired to take the research and study of the mind out of philosophy that they began to find ways to scientifically examine consciousness. Of course, early approaches viewed the mind as a type of device that just needed to be fine tuned. Groundbreaking research by individuals such as Ebbinghaus (1885), Wundt (1874), Galton (1889), and James (1890) looked at the mental function of the individual and examined the role of consciousness. While these steps were historically necessary to create credibility for the field, they took us away, in part, from some of the roots of early psychology (Mandler, 1985). These roots include, among many things, the fundamental desire for practicing psychologists to help individuals improve their lives.

The research of higher mental function provided a deeper understanding of the human mind and established the foundation for future studies, yet it also created a need to research components and constructs that were sometimes not applicable to practice or individual application (Mandler, 1985). On the surface, this focus on the specific constructs and components may seem simple, yet it provides a focus that was not necessarily present 100 years ago. The desire of early researchers was to prove that psychology deserved its own separate identity from other schools, and the change of focus to the study of higher mental function provided this identity (Mandler). Again,

while this was necessary at the time, it did create a disconnect from the social effect or impact of the research.

Today, with greater emphasis on the social ramifications of research, students now look at how their research can do more than support a theory (Zimmerman, 2000). Forgiveness research is no different. Although it is grounded in a clear theoretical base, research in this area has moved to a more applied focus. As will be shown in the literature review, while the definition of forgiveness is still debated, there is agreement that achieving forgiveness is very beneficial to overall physical and psychological health. For example, less forgiving people have more depressive symptoms (Brown & Phillips, 2005) and higher rates of being diagnosed with depression, general anxiety disorder, and panic disorder (Kendler et al., 2003).

Much of the research is focused on forgiveness models and education-based forgiveness. While the studies conducted have shown that these models improve forgiveness, few have looked at a specific process experienced by an individual (as opposed to a group). Ho‘oponopono is a Hawaiian forgiveness process that has a rich history in the islands of Hawai‘i and one that has also been studied primarily with groups. Historically, this process has been used for conflict resolution (Brinson & Fisher, 1999) and improved family dynamics (Miura, 2000; Tengan, 2004). However, as a part of the cultural history of the Hawaiians, ho‘oponopono was used for emotional and mental healing, often in conjunction with other methods (Ito, 1985). With the foundation of research for forgiveness in place and the agreement that forgiveness models work in

improving well-being, ho‘oponopono can now be studied as a process specifically for individuals to potentially improve their health.

Statement of the Problem

Current literature shows that forgiveness research and the use of forgiveness as a therapeutic approach have recently gained in popularity (Berecz, 2001) and are considered a promising area in practice and research (Orr, Sprague, Goetzen, Cornock, & Taylor, 2004). A driving force behind this interest in forgiveness is due to the findings that forgiveness is able to assist an individual with intrapersonal and interpersonal issues (Berecz, 2001; Denton & Martin, 1998). However, while there has been a great deal of success in the use of forgiveness as a therapeutic tool, many clinicians and counselors have avoided the process due to its past association with religion and spirituality (Denton & Martin; Frommer, 2005). While many forgiveness models have been proposed and theories of forgiveness have been researched and discussed, further empirical research on a specific process is needed (Strelan & Covic, 2006).

An extensive literature review has revealed that in addition to the disagreement on the definition of forgiveness (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006), of 25 models reviewed by Strelan and Covic (2006), only four therapeutic or process-based models have been empirically validated. This is in spite of the findings of Baskin and Enright (2004), who explained that there was a greater effect with process-focused forgiveness approaches. In their review of nine published studies, they found that a forgiveness intervention that was process focused resulted in higher rates of reduced negative affect than those that were education based alone. Therefore, while the research shows that process-focused

forgiveness interventions are more effective, few specific forgiveness processes have been studied outside of a group setting. This continues to be a gap in this research area that warrants further examination.

Purpose of the Study

Ho‘oponopono is a specific process of forgiveness that has been shown to be effective in relieving stress when taught as an education-based approach (Kretzer, Davis, Easa, Johnson, & Harrigan, 2007); however, the process has not been studied in terms of process-based forgiveness models. The purpose of this between-groups, within-group, repeated measures study was to discover the relationship between ho‘oponopono and the reduction of negative affect (specifically, unforgiveness) towards a single transgressor, as measured by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM). As will be discussed, participants experienced the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process individually as a process-based model. The experience of the process was done alone in a private setting to demonstrate that this process is simple and easy for the participant, as well as effective in reducing unforgiveness.

Research Question and Hypotheses

For this specific research on the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process, the research question was as follows: What relationship exists between the application of ho‘oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations)? Additionally, what is the difference between the group that experienced the ho‘oponopono process (the test group) and the group that did not (the control group)? Finally, the difference in forgiveness between men and women was

examined. It was expected that the application of the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process with a specific transgressor would result in the reduction of TRIMs.

Hypothesis 1

Research question: What relationship exists between the application of ho‘oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations)?

The null hypothesis is there will be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis is that the application of ho’oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A paired-sample *t* test was used to examine the test group and control group separately.

Hypothesis 2

Research question: Is there a difference between the test group that will experience the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process and the control group that will not experience the process?

The null hypothesis is there will be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis is that the application of ho’oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the

TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A one-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the difference between groups for the pretest and posttest.

Hypothesis 3

Research question: Does the sex of the participant affect the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations?

The null hypothesis for this research question is there will be no differences in unforgiveness between men and women towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis is that there will be a difference in unforgiveness between men and women towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A one-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the difference between groups for the men and women.

Theoretical Framework

Various theoretical constructs align with the process of ho‘oponopono. They include forgiveness, emotional disclosure, guided imagery, and stress and coping.

Forgiveness

The first theoretical construct for this study is forgiveness. As with many concepts and terms in the field of psychology, forgiveness is theoretically diverse and there is little agreement on a definition (Orr et al., 2004). Ferch (1998) described forgiveness as a release of the feelings of anger and resentment towards a person who has committed a wrong against them. Forgiveness has also been defined as a process of counteracting the tendency to exact revenge or retribution, thus releasing the transgressor from further

accountability for his or her transgression (Enright, 1996; Ferch). Many of the researchers and authors define forgiveness based on their own approach and theory; however, there are a few "generic" theoretical definitions that are accepted in psychological research that are discussed below.

In counseling and clinical work research, the definition of forgiveness usually involves the concept of a transgressor and a forgiver. Denton and Martin (1998) also explained that the process can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, or combination of the two. Current research suggests that most authors and theorists define interpersonal forgiveness similarly to the definition provided by Enright (1996), which can be summarized as an experience involving a minimum of two individuals: one who has been hurt and one who has caused the injury or injustice. Additionally, the injury is often moral, emotional, physical, and/or psychological in nature. The process of forgiveness is subsequently viewed as an inner process in which the individual who has been injured releases the need for revenge, retribution, and/or retaliation.

Religious and spiritual approaches to forgiveness incorporate many of the concepts defined by Enright (1996); however, they also include or introduce the concept of a higher power or greater source during the process (Burchard, et al., 2003; Lindquist, 2004). In contrast to clinical and counseling approaches, new-age, spiritual, and religious approaches to forgiveness see a link between forgiveness and the concept of spirit, god, a higher source, and/or the soul (Ferch, 1998; Lindquist). The final difference is in the language of the approach, which, according to West (2001), is evident in the motivation

for the forgiveness. In religious and spiritual approaches, the motivation comes from a higher source as opposed to coming from the individual.

In addition to Enright's (1996) theory, the theoretical framework used for this study was largely based on the concept of unforgiveness. While forgiveness as a construct may be debated, there is greater agreement on the concept of unforgiveness (Konstam, Holmes, & Levine, 2003). Simply put, when someone forgives a transgressor, his or her view of the transgressor becomes less negative and more positive (Konstam et al.; Orr et al., 2004). This theory is much more consistent in the literature, in contrast to the theory and definition of forgiveness itself. Therefore, for this study, the theory of forgiveness was defined as a prosocial change in TRIMs (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006).

Emotional Disclosure

The second theoretical construct for this study is emotional disclosure. Emotional disclosure, which is a form of expressive therapy, has been found to have physical, mental, and emotional health benefits (Radcliffe, Lumley, Kendall, Stevenson, & Beltran, 2007; Zech & Rime, 2005). In essence, emotional disclosure is process of expressing negative feelings or thoughts, either verbally or in writing (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Feldman Barrett, 2004). Research on this topic has ranged from disclosing negative feelings about a stressful event (Zech & Rime, 2005) to the effects of disclosure and positive focus in relationship to forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2006). Ho'oponopono utilizes the concept of emotional disclosure as a part of the process in achieving

forgiveness. Emotional disclosure and its relationship to ho‘oponopono will be further discussed in the literature review.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is a mental function of imagination, in which the client or patient imagines an event (real or perceived) in a positive way (Menzies & Taylor, 2004). Ho‘oponopono draws on the concept of guided imagery in that the process occurs in the mind of the person who has experienced the transgression. Menzies and Taylor (2004) explain that imagery is an effective means of improving a view or perception of an otherwise negative situation. Furthermore, it is a dynamic process that has gained in popularity and acceptance in the mental health field (Goldberg, 1997; Menzies & Taylor, 2004).

Stress and Coping

The literature and research available concerning stress and coping is immense. The primary focus of this theoretical construct in relationship to ho‘oponopono deals with the perception of a stressful event and the problem-focused coping nature of the process. Theorists such as Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believed that the interpretation of the event or the perception of the event is more important than the event itself. Lazarus and Folkman’s model explains that people use three different types of appraisals: primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and reappraisal. These appraisals have the ability to reduce the experience of the stress based on the individual’s perception of the stress.

In addition to the appraisal of an event, the concept of coping with stress is a theoretical construct for this study. Strelan and Covic (2006) explain that forgiveness is a

form of coping with a stressful experience through the change of the perception of the event. Furthermore, when applied as a continues process, a forgiveness model could be seen as an adaptive strategy to coping with transgressions. Both the perception and the ability to cope with a transgression is a part of ho‘oponopono and this study. This theoretical construct will be more closely examined in the literature review.

Definition of Terms

In this study, *forgiveness* was defined as a prosocial change in transgression-related interpersonal motivations or TRIMs (McCullough et al., 2006). “When people forgive, they become less avoidant, less vengeful, and more benevolent towards the people who have hurt them” (McCullough et al., p. 887). The aspect of less avoidant and less vengeful is conceptualized as unforgiveness. Therefore, the level of unforgiveness can be measured based on the motivation to seek out revenge towards a transgressor or the motivation to avoid a transgressor.

Ho‘oponopono is the Hawaiian word or label given to a process that has been used in the islands of Hawai‘i to achieve forgiveness (Ito, 1985; Simeona, 1992). This process has been a part of the culture for hundreds of years and has been orally passed down generation to generation. *Ho‘o* means “to make” (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972) and is a word that is commonly used in conjunction with other words. *Pono* means “right,” but not in the sense of right versus wrong. In the context of forgiveness, pono refers to a resolution of conflict in which the person achieves resolution at a very deep level. Ito (1985) refers to it as a means of becoming mentally and emotionally cleansed. While this explains the result or outcome of the process, for this study, ho‘oponopono is the label of

the forgiveness process and refers to a specific approach to achieving forgiveness (which will be discussed in further detail in chapter 2).

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were as follows:

1. Participants in the study were capable of answering the surveys and tests used in the study.

2. The participants in the study followed the instructions and the steps involved in completing the ho‘oponopono process.

Limitations

The limitations involved in this study were as follows:

1. This study used a sample of individuals who contacted a company seeking out this type of information. Thus, the study may not generalize to the entire population.

2. The repeated measures test relies on the participant following specific instructions. The participants used surveymonkey.com and a downloaded audio file to experience ho‘oponopono. While every precaution was taken to ensure adherence to the instructions, there was the potential of deviation from the directions.

3. There was no way of controlling for the influence of other stress-relieving factors on the perception of the transgression between the application of ho‘oponopono and the second test. Therefore, some other external factors might have influenced the reduction of unforgiveness.

Significance

The significance of the study as well as the social implications can be summarized in two key points. First, so much of psychology research is spent arguing over a definition like forgiveness that we might have lost sight of the most important reason why we do what we do. Psychologists and counselors are on the frontline, wanting to help people. The purpose of this study was to take an applied approach to the study of forgiveness and assess the effectiveness of a specific forgiveness process on reduction of negative affect. This brings up the second significance of the study, which is the overall health benefit of forgiveness. Unforgiving or vengeful people are prone to depressive symptoms (Brown & Phillips, 2005) and have a higher rate of being diagnosed with depression, GAD, and panic disorder (Kendler et al., 2003). Therefore, studying this construct and building upon the existing literature in this area is essential in gaining a better understanding of how to assist individuals in working towards forgiveness following an interpersonal transgression.

By studying a specific forgiveness (i.e., ho‘oponopono), this study aimed to demonstrate that a process can be validated and utilized in helping individuals reduce unforgiveness towards a transgressor. Due to the relative simplicity in the process of ho‘oponopono, this research investigated whether or not this specific forgiveness process can be used by individuals on their own to improve their overall health (through the reduction of unforgiveness).

Summary

Existing forgiveness studies have shown that models aimed to improve forgiveness have been effective, yet few have specifically focused on a process experienced by an individual (as opposed to a group). Ho‘oponopono is a specific process of forgiveness that has been shown to be effective in relieving stress when taught as an education-based approach (Kretzer, et al., 2007); however, the process has not been studied in terms of process-based forgiveness models. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to address the lack of research concerning ho‘oponopono and to discover the relationship between ho‘oponopono and the reduction of negative affect (specifically, unforgiveness) towards a single transgressor.

Chapter 2 will examine the existing literature related to forgiveness, ho‘oponopono, and the related theoretical constructs. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the research methods and procedures that were used in the study of ho‘oponopono. Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the study and research, and chapter 5 will interpret the findings and discusses the implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The use of forgiveness as a process in counseling and for research has emerged as a major focus in recent years (Berecz, 2001; Orr, et al., 2004). While forgiveness has long been thought of as a tool for theology, spirituality, and philosophy, the application of various forgiveness processes and models has more recently been applied in a variety of contexts including counseling, social, business, and cultural (Strelan & Covic, 2006). Forgiveness has also been correlated with a reduction of perceived stress as measured by lowered blood pressure and heart rate (Lawler et al., 2003). While there has been an increase in attention to forgiveness research, there has yet to emerge a unifying theory or model. Furthermore, some authors (Strelan & Covic, 2006) explain that there have been very few validations of a specific forgiveness processes.

Ho‘oponopono is a specific process that has been used for some time, in various forms and contexts, in the Hawaiian culture (Ito, 1985; Simeona, 1992). Recently the relationship between ho‘oponopono and stress has been researched and the process has been found to be correlated with a reduction of stress (Kretzer, et al., 2007). While this longitudinal study looked at a very specific sample of the population, it has laid the groundwork to begin research of a specific forgiveness process, which has been lacking in the literature.

The focus of this literature review is to demonstrate that forgiveness as an education-based model and as a process-based model has been validated and shown to be

effective in reducing negative affect associated with a transgression. Furthermore, the focus of this review is to demonstrate that there is a lack of research in the area of process-based one-on-one models of forgiveness, especially when looking at ho‘oponopono.

To explore the relationship between a specific forgiveness process such as ho‘oponopono and the reduction of negative affect, the theoretical constructs that are related to ho‘oponopono must be explored. The theoretical basis of this dissertation and the process of ho‘oponopono is based on (a) forgiveness research and models, (b) emotional disclosure, (c) guided imagery, and (d) stress and coping. An exploration of the literature in these four areas as it relates to forgiveness and ho‘oponopono will provide the framework for the research and the research approach.

Strategy for Literature Search

Databases utilized for this literature review included Academic Search Premier, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), MEDLINE, PsycARTICLES, and PsycINFO. Keywords used included betrayal, coping, disclosure, emotion, emotional, empathize, empathy, false, false-forgiveness, forgive, forgiveness, guided imagery, Hawaiian forgiveness, hooponopono, ho‘oponopono, hypnosis, perceive, perception, pono, positive focus, positive thinking, pseudo, pseudo-forgiveness, rumination, self-forgiveness, sorry, stress, stress management, support, transgression, transgressor, TRIM, and visualization. To thoroughly search the literature, these keywords were used in various search combinations in abstracts, titles, and as author-supplied keywords. Reference lists of the articles were also reviewed to find related literature. Finally, a

search in the University of Hawaii at Manoa: Hamilton-Hawaiian Library provided specific literature on ho‘oponopono and two primary practitioners in the history of this research approach, George Naope, Ph.D. and Morrnah Simeona. Versions of the literature for this dissertation were gathered in both digital and print format.

Forgiveness

Much of the research in the area of forgiveness and ho‘oponopono explored in this literature review has focused on education-based models and process-based approaches to forgiveness. While there is a lack of agreement on the definition of forgiveness (as will be discussed), the definition of forgiveness that was used for this research was based primarily on the explanation by Enright (1996) and his colleagues. Enright explains that forgiveness involves two people: a transgressor and the person affected by the transgression. The transgression itself may be moral, emotional, physical, and/or psychological in nature. Furthermore, the process of forgiving involves the reduction or elimination of negative feelings towards the transgressor as well as the removal or release of the need for revenge, retribution, and/or retaliation towards the transgressor.

Specific studies using ho‘oponopono or addressing the concept of pono are limited. The focus of studies has been primarily case studies involving the use of the process in an educational or counseling setting or as a means of improving family relations (Miura, 2000; Tengan, 2004). Shook (2002) presents five case studies in which ho‘oponopono was used to facilitate conflict resolution and bring about forgiveness. Andres (2002), in his dissertation, presents research and theory to support the use of the

face-to-face approach of ho‘oponopono as well as case studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of the process. Finally, Kretzer, et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal study on the affects of ho’oponopono in an educational-based approach. However, beyond these available studies and sources, there are few available references studying the specific process of ho‘oponopono.

Concepts of Forgiveness

While there are various aspects of forgiveness that researchers and clinicians do agree upon, one of the concerns raised by many authors is that there is no agreed upon definition of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2006; Orr, et al., 2004; Strelan & Covic, 2006). Interestingly, Orr et al. explain that there is agreement on what forgiveness is not. Based on their research it is agreed that forgiveness is not pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, or reconciling. These terms are utilized in contexts such as legal arenas (e.g., pardoning) and should therefore be seen as a different concept.

Orr et al. (2004) further explain that before the 1980s, forgiveness was almost exclusively linked with religion or spirituality. Therefore, the variations in definitions may come from the fact that the background and history of approaches come from different areas of focus. For example, Berecz (2001) describes the role of a divine aspect in spiritual or religious approaches that is not present in clinical approaches. From this perspective, the motivating factor for forgiveness comes from an external source such as god or a spirit. In many cases, the rest of the technique is very similar to an educational or counseling approach. Berecz (2001) further explains that in this type of approach, there is an emphasis on the three Rs of forgiveness: rapport, reframing, and reconciliation.

From a clinical or counseling perspective, there is little to no emphasis on the divine as there is in the spiritual approach (Murray 2002). Furthermore, nonreligious approaches to forgiveness that discuss the three Rs refer to the third R as release as opposed to reconciliation, which has a more religious aspect (Berecz, 2001; Murray, 2002). Even with the similarity of no divine aspect, the counseling approaches available do not have an agreed upon definition.

Some researchers refer to the definition established by Enright (1996) as the basis for the current view or concept of forgiveness. Enright's definition is summarized as an experience involving at least two people: one who has been hurt and one who has caused the injury or injustice. The process of forgiveness, according to Enright (1996), is then seen as an inner process in which the individual who has been injured releases the need for revenge, retribution, and/or retaliation. Orr et al. (2004) point out that some view this definition as containing concepts of absolving or excusing a transgressor. Since this absolution and excusing of a transgressor is a separate function from forgiveness, this definition is sometimes rejected.

There is one feature that is constant in the various approaches to forgiveness, and that is that the individual's view of the transgressor becomes more positive and less negative (Konstam et al., 2003; Orr et al., 2004). McCullough et al. (2006) refer to the change as a prosocial change in transgression-related interpersonal motivations or TRIMs. "When people forgive, they become less avoidant, less vengeful, and more benevolent towards the people who have hurt them" (p. 887). Regardless of the other

differences, this concept of less negative and more positive is a constant in forgiveness research that is measurable.

In this specific research study on ho‘oponopono, the prosocial change was measured using the TRIM Inventory because of the generally accepted concept described above. While other studies, which will be discussed later in this paper, look at different variables as a means of measuring forgiveness, there is less disagreement regarding the measurement of the reduction of unforgiveness as opposed to the measurement of forgiveness itself. That is to say, the literature available demonstrates that because of the lack of agreement as to what forgiveness is, the measurement of achieving forgiveness is problematic in research. However, because unforgiveness (i.e., the lack of forgiving someone) is measurable and less debated, this variable may be considered more acceptable and thus was measured in this research.

Trait Versus Episodic Forgiveness

In addition to the lack of agreement concerning the definitions and concepts of forgiveness, there is also debate regarding the role of trait forgiveness versus episodic forgiveness. Much of the research that is conducted focuses on episodic forgiveness (Allemand, Amberg, Zimprich, & Fincham, 2007). Episodic forgiveness thus could be defined as the reduction of TRIMs towards a transgressor based on a specific event as the focal point. In this definition, the focus of the research would be in the reduction of TRIMs for the specific event or with one specific transgressor. However, one variable that has largely been ignored is that of trait forgiveness (Allemand et al.).

Allemand et al. (2007) explain that trait forgiveness is the aspect of one's personality that contributes to his or her willingness to be forgiving. In other words, based on a personality trait, one individual may be more forgiving than another. This difference in personality trait may then be a confounding variable in studies that focus specifically on episodic forgiveness. Allemand et al. studied the role of trait forgiveness in relationship to episodic forgiveness. In their study with 180 students from the University of Zurich, the authors examined the relationship between episodic forgiveness, trait forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction. The focus of the study was on students who were in committed relationships in which a transgression by the partner had been experienced. The transgression by the participant's partner was the focus of the measurements for forgiveness and relationship satisfaction.

The first hypothesis of the study was that higher scores of trait forgiveness would be correlated with higher scores of episodic forgiveness (Allemand et al., 2007). However, taking into account relationship satisfaction, the authors found that trait forgiveness and episodic forgiveness were inversely related for individuals that had low relationship satisfaction. In fact, the conclusion of the study was that relationship satisfaction had a stronger correlation with episodic forgiveness in relationships than trait forgiveness. Thus, the first hypothesis, that trait forgiveness and episodic forgiveness would be positively correlated, was found to be invalid.

The significance of this finding is that while trait forgiveness has a correlation to episodic forgiveness, there are other variables that have a greater affect on trait forgiveness (Allemand et al., 2007). Furthermore, for the individuals that had low reports

of relationship satisfaction, episodic forgiveness was still achievable, there was just less of a reduction in negative affect in comparison to individuals with high scores of relationship satisfaction. In other words, episodic forgiveness is measurable even with low relationship satisfaction and low trait forgiveness. Therefore, while the two variables of trait forgiveness and relationship satisfaction are important for further research in the area of forgiveness, for the purpose of this research study, the measurement of the reduction of TRIMs (i.e., episodic forgiveness) was still possible without taking into account trait forgiveness.

Forgiveness Education Versus Process

One final comparison that is made in many of the studies and in the literature is the comparison between forgiveness education or awareness and a specific process to achieve forgiveness. As will be discussed in the Stress and Coping section in this chapter, one approach to coping is that of knowledge and understanding (Snyder, 1999). Furthermore, perceptions of an event that is experienced as a transgression will play a role in the reaction to the event (Strelan & Covic, 2006). In other words, by gaining knowledge and understand about a concept (e.g., through education), the individual's perceptions about the concept may be affected.

Orr, et al. (2004) emphasize this by pointing out that forgiveness education alone has been shown to reduce negative affect for an individual. In one study by Al-Mabuk and Enright (1995), instruction and lecture on the importance of forgiveness alone increased a willingness to forgive. By understanding the benefits and concepts of forgiveness, a person is able to become more willing to experience forgiveness. Orr et al.

(2004) describe this as more decision-making approach to forgiveness in comparison to a process-focused approach. In other words, by learning about forgiveness, it is assumed that one will become more willing to make a decision to forgive regardless of whether or not a process is introduced.

However, when comparing literature and studies on forgiveness, Baskin and Enright (2004) found that there was a greater effect with process-focused approaches. In their analysis of nine published studies, they found that a forgiveness intervention that was process-focused resulted in higher rates of reduced negative affect. In fact, the conclusion of the analysis was that education or decision-focused interventions alone were insufficient as a process of forgiveness. Orr et al. (2004) suggest that a combination of education and process-focused forgiveness produces the best results.

The complete process of ho'oponopono includes an explanation of the importance of forgiveness, which acts as an educational-focused approach, and a specific forgiveness intervention, which acts as a process-focused approach. Orr et al. (2004) describe this combination as being the most effective for the reduction of negative affect towards a transgressor.

Models and Approaches to Forgiveness

While there are many different approaches to forgiveness, there are a couple of models that are accepted as overviews to the process of forgiveness. These models will be more closely examined in a later section in this chapter.

First, Enright (1996) describes three aspects of forgiveness and forgiveness research. The three aspects are: (a) the study of forgiving a transgressor, (b) the study of

self-forgiving, and (c) the study of seeking forgiveness. Techniques in the various modalities will include at least one of these concepts, and in some instances, there is the inclusion of all three aspects of forgiveness research.

The four-step process to forgiveness developed by Brandsma (1982) is an example of an early approach that summarizes many other basic approaches to forgiveness (Denton & Martin, 1998). In the first step, the patient or client needs to establish a willingness to let go of the negative affect associated with the transgression. This willingness can come from education and discussion with the individual. The second step is a willingness on the part of the individual to face the experience of the transgression. Here, the person who has experienced the wrong becomes willing to face the event for the purpose of achieving forgiveness. The next step is to separate the transgressor from the behaviors that were present in the transgression. This is to see the needs, motives, and reasons for the event so that forgiveness is possible. Finally, there is a release of the negativity associated with the event. This release is possible because of the previous steps and the willingness to view the behaviors of the transgression as being separate from the person that committed the transgression.

Another approach to forgiveness is based on a five-step model developed by Worthington (1998). In this approach, the first step is to simply recall the past event in which the transgression occurred. Next, the individual empathizes with the transgressor. Third, the individual offers an altruistic gift of forgiveness to the offender. Fourth, there is a commitment made to forgiveness and forgiving the transgressor. Finally, the individual focuses on and holds on to the forgiveness rather than the offense.

Shook (2002) explains that ho‘oponopono is an ancient form of forgiveness that was prevalent in the Hawaiian culture for many years before Western influence. Furthermore, while there are variations of the ho‘oponopono technique in comparison to other forgiveness models, most of the steps in the technique have a similarity in comparison to the various forgiveness processes. As is demonstrated by the explanation of the four-step and five-step processes above, ho‘oponopono takes a similar approach to forgiveness, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Forgiveness as a Process

There are three basic approaches a forgiveness process may take: forgiveness of others, forgiveness of self, and/or the seeking of forgiveness from another (Enright, 1996; Enright & Eastin, 1992). Various authors (Brandsma, 1982; Enright, 1996; Worthington, 1998) have outlined specific steps in a forgiveness process. These specific steps vary based on the theory, context, and application. A major difference occurs when comparing therapeutic approaches with religious approaches. The difference between religious and therapeutic approaches is the inclusion of the aspect of God in the religious approaches (Strelan & Covic, 2006). However, other than this one aspect, the differences between the two types of models are indistinguishable.

Denton and Martin (1998) outline a revised four-step approach to forgiveness originally developed by Brandsma (1982) that is a religious/therapeutic approach. The four steps are:

1. A willingness to let go of the negativity related to the transgression.
2. A willingness to face the event and the negativity that occurred.

3. A new perception of the transgressor that focuses on behaviors, motives, and reasons.

4. Forgive the transgressor.

Worthington (1998) describes a therapeutic model (i.e., clinical and counseling) of forgiveness that is a five-step approach. The five steps are:

1. Recall the hurt and negativity associated with the specific event.

2. Empathize with the transgressor.

3. Offer a true and honest gift of forgiveness to the transgressor.

4. Make a commitment to forgiving the transgressor.

5. Maintain the forgiveness.

There are similarities between the two approaches outlined above. However, ho‘oponopono more closely resembles the second approach that was originally developed by Worthington (1998). The difference is that ho‘oponopono incorporates a spiritual yet nonreligious aspect that the other two do not include.

According to Berecz (2001) and Murray (2002), spiritual approaches to forgiveness include the concept of connecting to a divine source or a connection to the divine self. In the ho‘oponopono process, Morrnah Simeona (1992) specifically explains that there is a connection to divine source or self when the individual visualizes and experiences the light/healing step in the process (Ito, 1985; James, 1993; King, 1989). However, this concept of source was not labeled as God but rather just a healing light. Furthermore, the forgiveness came from the individual rather than from God as is the case in most spiritual and religious approaches to forgiveness (Strelan & Covic, 2006).

The inclusion and association with spiritual or religious aspects has caused counselors and clinicians to avoid the use of forgiveness in therapeutic settings (Denton & Martin, 1998; Frommer, 2005). However, current research that has demonstrated the importance of forgiveness has begun to shift the thinking of the role of forgiveness in the context of therapy (West, 2001).

Including spiritual, religious, counseling and clinical approaches, there are enough variations of forgiveness processes and models to warrant a study of the processes and models alone. In fact, recent articles (e.g., Strelan & Covic, 2006) have begun to look at all the different approaches and models. A full examination of all the models will not be reviewed for the purpose of this study; however, the impact on forgiveness research of the various models and approaches is noteworthy.

Forgiveness and Rumination

There is a large body of research to demonstrate that stress and stressors are correlated with a negative effect on overall health. Depending on the type of stress or the stressor, the decrease in health may be physical, emotional, or mental in nature. In addition to the effect on the body, prolonged stress has also been linked to rumination (Morrison & O'Connor, 2005). As a person experiences stress, there is a tendency to think about the event more consistently.

McCullough, Bono, and Root (2007) conducted three studies to measure the relationship between forgiveness and rumination. One of the purposes of the study included a focus of linking forgiveness to other models of stress reduction. Since stress reduction is correlated with a reduction in rumination, if the application of a forgiveness

process was also correlated with a reduction in rumination, then forgiveness as a process could be viewed as a form of stress reduction.

The first study consisted of 89 undergraduate students and the second study consisted of 115 undergraduate students. In both studies, rumination and forgiveness were measured and there was a negative relationship found. That is, when a person experienced forgiveness, there was less rumination. In Study 1, the focus was on temporary or short-term forgiveness. In Study 2, negative mood was added as a measured variable to determine if negative or positive mood affected the findings in the first study. The results were the same, and a negative relationship between forgiveness and rumination was found.

In the third study with 163 undergraduate students, anger and fear were analyzed as a mediator and the temporal aspect of the forgiveness and the rumination were examined. Study 3 revealed that forgiveness and rumination have a negative correlation and that forgiveness precedes the reduction in rumination. Furthermore, without forgiveness it is shown that there is an increase in rumination focused on the transgressor. The conclusion of McCullough et al. (2007) was that while it is difficult to establish a causal relationship, the three studies demonstrate that forgiveness, as a process that reduces rumination, is a form of stress reduction.

While the above studies on forgiveness and rumination had limitations based on the samples being primarily made up of U.S.-based participants, Suchday, Friedberg, and Almeida (2006) found that forgiveness is cross cultural. In their study of Indian college students (n = 188), the authors found that there is no significant difference in results when

compared to a U.S. sample. The researchers looked at forgiveness, rumination, and stress when comparing the two groups.

As a means of reducing stress, the use of a specific forgiveness process such as ho‘oponopono has many contextual applications. The sample used in this study will consist of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as various contextual transgressions. The reason the criteria of the specific transgression is broad rather than narrowed (e.g., looking specifically at transgressions in relationships) is because forgiveness has been shown to be beneficial in areas ranging from marriage (DiBlasio, 1993) to cultural issues such as recovering from mass genocide (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005). The following is a summary of the various applications of forgives models and processes.

Marriages and Couples Relationships

The ability to resolve conflict is essential to a successful relationship, and forgiveness plays a role in this (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2007). To assist families in taking corrective actions to improve relationships, DiBlasio (1993) found that the family member might have an easier time overcoming issues such as anger, when forgiveness is achieved first. In a survey of 30 clinical members of the American Association of Marital and Family Therapist, DiBlasio found that the majority of the respondents favored the use of forgiveness as a part of an intervention. However, a lack of a validated approach caused some to avoid forgiveness.

In a similar survey of 381 members of the American Mental Health Counselors Association, 88% responded positively that forgiveness is a common part of their

practice, and 94% suggested that forgiveness should be brought to the attention of clients as a part of a therapeutic process (Konstam, Marx, Schurer, Harrington, Lombardo & Deveney, 2000). These findings suggest that forgiveness is viewed as an important part of the healing process in marriage and family counseling.

In addition to surveys, case studies have demonstrated the usefulness of forgiveness as a part of reconciliation in clinical settings. DiBlasio (1998) explains that a 35-year-old mother of two was able to resolve anger, resentment, and bitterness that she had experienced for over 30 years by using a forgiveness approach. Before using the forgiveness in therapy, the mother had experienced conflicts in her marriage, depression, and, by her own account, was close to the point of suicide. Based on her reporting, these issues had originated with her negative feelings towards her brother and father. By using a face-to-face forgiveness process with her brother and father, she was able to reduce the negative affects and begin the healing process.

Family Relationships

Al-Mabuk and Enright (1995) demonstrated the usefulness of a forgiveness process with a group of college students who had perceived a lack of love in their family relationships while growing up. By using lecture, instruction, and training, the authors demonstrated that hopefulness and a willingness to forgive could be increased through the explanation and discussion of forgiveness alone. In a second study, the authors further showed that forgiveness could be achieved in the same means.

Both studies by Al-Mabuk and Enright (1995) were conducted in lecture type settings and they did not involve one-on-one meetings. The focus of the lecture was to

present the benefits of forgiving as well as the concept that forgiveness could be a positive approach to dealing with interpersonal issues. This study is important because it demonstrates the usefulness of one of the key components in the process of ho‘oponopono. In the process of ho‘oponopono, the explanation of the importance of forgiveness is a critical component (Ito, 1985; Shook, 2002; Simeona, 1992). By understanding the benefits of forgiving as well as the potential health repercussions of not forgiving (i.e., stress related health issues), a person may be more willing to forgive a transgressor.

In an older study on forgiveness, Hulnick and Hulnick (1989) found that self-forgiveness played an important part of the healing process for an individual that had the role of caregiver for a family member with a disability. When caring for a family member that has a disability, there are certain hardships and difficulties that occur. To cope with the mixed emotions that a family member or caregiver may experience when caring for a disabled person the authors found that self-forgiveness played an important role. An issue that may be present in this type of situation is the difficulty in reconciling personal needs with the needs of the disabled person.

According to Hulnick and Hulnick (1989), the care of an individual or family member that is disabled creates a great deal of sacrifice and responsibility for the caregiver. The burden has the potential of resulting in actions that the caregiver does not intend; however, once done, the caregiver may then feel that they have committed a wrong against the family member. This is the case even in situations where the disabled family member is not able to appreciate the wrong (e.g., Alzheimer’s). The focus of the

one-on-one forgiveness interventions was different in that the person that person that was the patient was also the transgressor. This is why the approach of self-forgiveness was used.

Using a model of self-forgiveness, the caregiver is able to put the behaviors into perspective and find a balance between the needs of the family member and their own personal needs. Hulnick and Hulnick (1989) explain that the major benefit in the self-forgiveness approach is the reduction of guilt. Since the caregiver perceives him/herself as the transgressor, there was a self-reported level of guilt based on the actions taken. Once the self-forgiveness model had been applied, the individuals were able to begin to focus on both the needs of the family member and their own personal needs.

Forgiveness After Abuse

Working with incest survivors, Freedman and Enright (1996) conducted interventions to facilitate and promote forgiveness. The group that they worked with consisted of 12 adult women who as children had been abused by a male relative. Various measurements were used during the intervention to analyze anxiety, depression, and forgiveness. Each intervention was conducted individually over an average of 14.3 months. A control group was established and each female met with an interview that facilitated the process. Face-to-face interventions, phone contact, journaling and reading were used to promote forgiveness and over the course of the study, the overall health and well-being improved for the participants in comparison to the control groups.

Social Impact of Forgiveness

A major example of the use of forgiveness in a social context is with the work of Staub et al. (2005). The researchers created a theory-based intervention that was focused on promoting healing and reconciliation in Rwanda using forgiveness. Many individuals were left in a state of emotional stress after surviving the violence, genocide, and horrors that had occurred in Rwanda. To combat the emotional stress, Staub et al. created a training program that utilized psycho-educational lectures that had an emphasis on healing, understanding, and reconciliation. Based on this approach, they were able to demonstrate the benefits of a large-scale forgiveness approach the resulted in an improvement in positive views of the conflicts that had occurred, and an overall reduction in symptoms from the trauma.

Staub et al. (2005) were able to demonstrate on a large scale that a forgiveness process is able to change the perceptions and attitudes towards transgressors. These changes in attitude were statistically measured and the results sparked a program to train others in the approach. Based on the work, other individuals were trained to facilitate meetings and lectures that could be run in the same approach as the study.

Thesnaar (2003) points out that in areas that have undergone conflict, such as in South Africa, forgiveness is an important part of the process of moving forward and restoring unity and hope. “Sociopolitical forgiveness occurs when a whole group of offended people engages in the forgiveness process in relation to another group that is perceived to have caused a social offense” (Montiel, 2002, p. 271).

In the case of South Africa, years of apartheid and oppression have created conflict against the government as well as against other groups within the geographical region (Thesnaar, 2003). The struggle for freedom in this region resulted in individuals feeling that they were a victim of a wrong by a single transgressor. Additionally, this transgressor sometimes took on the form of a government rather than a specific individual. Therefore, for the country to move forward and unite the healing process must begin. While the focus of forgiveness that Thesnaar describes is more religious and/or spiritual in nature, it still involves the basic approach of the forgiveness process. Thesnaar proposes that the process of reconciliation take the form similar to the approach in Rwanda. Through lecture, education, and guidance, the forgiveness process can begin and help to move the country forward towards healing.

The limitation of the Rwanda and South Africa studies is that there may be cultural and social variables that limit the generalization. While this is a potential limitation, the fact that they are being conducted in two separate geographical regions demonstrates the fundamental aspects of the forgiveness process are applicable across various cultures.

Ho‘oponopono Forgiveness Process

Ho‘oponopono is a process of problem solving and forgiveness that has been used on the islands of Hawai‘i for centuries (Ito, 1985; Simeona, 1992). Recently, it has been found to be an effective conflict resolution model in agencies, corporate organizations and in school counseling settings (Brinson & Fisher, 1999). Pukui et al. (1972) as well as Ito refer to the process as a means of making things right with family and others. The

translation of ho‘oponopono is simple; however, the meaning of the word pono requires a more in-depth explanation. On the surface level, ho‘o means, “to make” and pono means “right, correct, or in perfect order” (Chun, 1995; Ito; Pukui et al.; Shook, 2002).

The process of ho‘oponopono has been used successfully in educational and therapeutic settings in Hawaii (Brinson & Fisher, 1999); however, overall very little research has been conducted in the use of ho‘oponopono as a forgiveness process. The research that has been conducted is based on one form of ho‘oponopono that is done face-to-face (Shook, 2002) or within group settings (Kretzer et al., 2007). Traditionally, there were at least three approaches to ho‘oponopono that were used in the islands, and the decision to use a specific approach was based on the transgression that had occurred and the desired outcome (Ito, 1985; Naope, 2006; Simeona, 1992).

Background on Ho‘oponopono

The information gathered on this specific version of the process of ho‘oponopono forgiveness process primarily comes from three sources. The first source is Morrnah Nalamaku Simeona (1913-1992), the second is available literature and research in the University of Hawaii at Manoa: Hamilton-Hawaiian Library, and the third is George Naope, Ph.D. The teachings of Morrnah Simeona are referenced in James (1993), and a similar process of ho‘oponopono is discussed in Long (1953). Additionally, the University of Hawaii at Manoa: Hamilton-Hawaiian Library has a collection of papers gathered in 1992 about Morrnah Simeona and her life’s work. Finally, in the late 1980s, Morrnah Simeona taught the process of ho’oponopono to the researcher’s father, Everett W. James. The process was then taught to the researcher in the early 1990s and the

researcher has been teaching it to individuals and groups since 1998. The information on ho‘oponopono from George Naope, Ph.D. came from a personal conversation in March of 2006. As will be discussed below, Dr. Naope is considered a living expert on Hawaiian culture and history. Unfortunately, there are no articles published by Naope, as the Hawaiian culture was an oral tradition with regards to teaching and the passing of knowledge.

Simeona taught the process of ho‘oponopono to hundreds of people in Hawaii and around the world (Simeona, 1992). She was designated a Living Golden Treasure by the Governor and Hawai‘i State Legislature for her work in this area and at one point was invited to speak with the members of the United Nations and the World Health Organization on the subject of forgiveness and ho‘oponopono (King, 1989; Simeona). The foundation that continues her work is called The Foundation of I, and may be found at www.hooponopono.org.

The governor and Hawaii state legislature also designated Dr. Naope as a Living Golden Treasure and Dr. Naope is most widely known as the founder of the Merrie Monarch Hula festival in Hilo, Hawaii. The festival is sometimes referred to as the Olympics of Hawaiian Hula. Dr. Naope is recognized around the world as an expert on Hawaiian culture and is one of the key individuals that preserved the ancient customs in the islands. He is recognized for his specific work with preserving ancient hula and chant during the period that Western customs were influencing the culture in Hawaii.

Explanation of the Process

First, the concept of pono from a Hawaiian perspective needs to be explored. While the most common translation of the word pono is "right" or "correct" (Chun, 1995; Ito, 1985; Shook, 2002), this does not clearly explain the concept of pono from the Hawaiian perspective. Pono does not mean right in the sense that someone or something else is wrong, but rather it means that things in general are right for the person or situation (Ito). More specifically, when things are pono between two people, everything is right and there is a feeling or state of peace and harmony (Ito; Shook). While it does not assure that the feeling of peace and harmony will be permanent, the culture perpetuates the belief that the event in which the transgression occurred is considered complete and resolved (Ito; Naope, 2006).

Dr. Naope explains that in ancient times in Hawai'i, forgiveness was not only a fundamental part of the culture, it was required regardless of the transgression (personal communication, Naope, 2006). It was believed that holding on to negative feelings towards a transgressor only hurt the individual, not the transgressor (see also Ito, 1985). Furthermore, when forgiveness takes place, the event is then done or complete, and there is no need to speak of it again. In current or Western thinking, Dr. Naope explains that a person will say sorry to someone, and both individuals will think forgiveness has occurred. However, sometime later, the transgression is brought up again or relived. At that point, it is clear that the event is not over and forgiveness has not yet been achieved. This is similar to the current concept of pseudo-forgiveness or false-forgiveness, where

the individual expresses forgiveness, but internally the individual believes that he or she did nothing wrong (Hall & Fincham, 2005).

There were three ways that ho‘oponopono was conducted in pre-Western Hawai‘i (Naope, 2006). The first way, which is currently being researched and studied the most, was a face-to-face forgiveness approach with a mediator or facilitator to assist in the process. This approach was primarily conducted within the family and was used to resolve family issues (Ito, 1985; Shook, 2002). The second was first conducted in the individual's mind, and then a follow-up conversation or discussion would be conducted with the parties involved in the transgression. Finally, the third approach, which is the approach taught by Simeona (1992), was done entirely in the mind, and any conversation was conducted within the individual. The explanation of this version of the process is described in the following section.

Overview of the Process

According to Morrnah Simeona and Dr. Stan Hew Len in an interview with King (1989), individuals carry inside them all the significant people in their lives. Furthermore, James (1993), who studied directly with Morrnah Simeona, describes the process as a means of changing one's perspective on the transgression. This idea of changing perspectives is similar to the concept of stress appraisal by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which will be further discussed in the Stress and Coping section.

The process of ho‘oponopono varies within the different communities in Hawai‘i because of the diversity of the various islands. The following is a process described by

James (1993), which is commonly accepted in Hawai‘i and was taught by Morrnah Simeona (the process has been adapted to work with one specific transgressor):

The Process of Ho‘oponopono:

1. Bring to mind the individual whom you view as the transgressor that has wronged you.

2. In your “mind’s eye” or imagination, construct a small stage below you and be willing to forgive the person in question (be willing to become pono with him or her).

3. Imagine an infinite source of love and healing light/energy flowing from a source above the top of your head; open up the top of your head; let the source of love and healing flow down inside your body, fill up your body, and heal you. Then, let the light/energy overflow your heart to heal the person on the stage. Be sure it is all right for you to heal the person and that he or she accepts the healing.

4. When the healing is complete, have a discussion with the person, forgive him or her, and have him or her forgive you. Make sure that the forgiveness is honest, and that anything that needs to be communicated is expressed and disclosed in a positive beneficial way.

5. Once the forgiveness has occurred, let go of the person, and see them floating away. As they do, cut any connection that connects the two of you (if appropriate).

As was previously discussed, this is similar to the five-step model proposed by Worthington (1998): (a) Recall the hurt and negativity associated with the specific event,

(b) empathize with the transgressor, (c) offer a true and honest gift of forgiveness to the transgressor, (d) make a commitment to forgiving the transgressor, and (e) maintain the forgiveness. In the forgiveness process of ho‘oponopono, Step 1 is similar to that of step 1 in proposed by Worthington (1998). The purpose of step 1 in ho‘oponopono is to recall and bring to mind the person, the event, and the feelings/thoughts associated with the transgression. In step 2 of ho‘oponopono, the individual is preparing to forgive the transgressor as well as preparing to have the ability for emotional disclosure with the transgressor. During steps 3 and 4 of ho‘oponopono, the intention is to empathize with the person and seeing them as being healed. Additionally, during step 4, the individual is guided in having a discussion with the transgressor in which the forgiveness is given as a true and honest gift, and the individual is to make a commitment to forgive. Furthermore, the discussion is meant to be positive, constructive, and beneficial as opposed to negative or unconstructive (Ito, 1985). Finally, in step 5, the release or letting go of the person is done as a metaphor of maintaining the forgiveness. Essentially, the individual is letting go of the event and the negativity associated with the event.

The optional cutting of the connection in ho‘oponopono is a point of contention in forgiveness research and literature. However, the debate is often centered on cutting ties with the transgressor (e.g., not having anything to do with them anymore). This step in the ho‘oponopono process differs from the focus in the debate about cutting ties, which is present in forgiveness research. In the process of ho‘oponopono, the individual is cutting the connection with the aspects of the transgressor that contributed to the transgression. In fact, once the ho‘oponopono process was complete the individual would be

encouraged to then talk with the transgressor to notice the difference in feelings, if appropriate (e.g., during marital transgressions; Ito, 1985). Therefore, while there is debate on the use of "cutting the connection," this step in ho'oponopono is optional and with a different intention.

Research Methodology With Forgiveness and Ho'oponopono

As was previously discussed in this chapter, for this specific research on ho'oponopono, the prosocial change was measured using the TRIM Inventory. Other studies discussed later in this paper looked at different variables as a means of measuring forgiveness; however, there is far less disagreement regarding the measurement of the reduction of unforgiveness as opposed the measurement of forgiveness itself. In other words, the literature available demonstrates that because of the lack of agreement as to what forgiveness is, the measurement of achieving forgiveness is problematic in research. Unforgiveness (i.e., the lack of forgiving someone) is measureable and less debated, and therefore, this variable may be considered more acceptable.

The research method picked for this study was based on previous studies that have utilized the TRIM as well as recent studies on forgiveness. Various studies using the TRIM (e.g., McCullough et al., 2007; McCullough et al., 2006; McCullough et al., 1998) have used a pretest posttest (i.e., repeated measures) approach to evaluate the effectiveness of a variable related to forgiveness. Furthermore, McCullough et al. (2006) utilized a mixed method, repeated measures approach (similar to the one being utilized in this study) to compare the test group with a control group. Finally, Kretzer, et al. (2007) utilized a repeated measures approach to test the ho'oponopono forgiveness process as an

educational based approach to improving health. Therefore, the approach to research utilized in this study has a foundation in both forgiveness research and in research on ho‘oponopono.

Emotional Disclosure

Emotional self-disclosure, which is a form of expressive therapy, has been found to improve both psychological and physical health in randomized trials (Radcliffe et al., 2007; Zech & Rime, 2005). In this approach to therapy, either the client or patient is encouraged to express, verbally or in writing, the feelings and thoughts associated with a negative event. The theory is that holding onto the negative feelings and thoughts without disclosing them in some form can have negative consequences on overall health.

In two separate experiments ($N = 51$ and $N = 329$), Zech and Rime (2005) found that that talking about and disclosing negative emotions concerning a uncomfortable experience, resulted greater subjective benefits of the disclosure in comparison to the control group (repeatedly measured at 3 days, 7 days, and 2 months). The interesting aspect of this study is the findings in the second experiment. The researchers hypothesized that emotional disclosure alone would reduce negative feeling related to the event. However, in the second experiment, participants assigned to a group instructed to disclose factual descriptions of the event experienced a greater reduction in negative emotions. With ho‘oponopono in step 4, the individual is asked to disclose everything that is needed to be said, and is guided in expressing emotions as well as details about the event that will allow for the release of negative affect from the event.

In randomized study with 165 undergraduate students with unresolved stress, Radcliffe et al. (2007) found that emotional disclosure reduces cognitive intrusion and avoidance as compared to control groups. In this experiment, participants were assigned to one of four groups: shared written disclosure, private written disclosure, time-management writing (control group), and no writing (control group). After a 3-month follow-up, the two control groups were equal on outcomes, and the two disclosure groups improved. The shared writing group had the greatest result in the area of physical measurements of stress (in comparison to the private writing group). The conclusion of the authors was that social disclosure matters in relationship to reduced stress and negative affect. However, the private writing group did experience reduction in cognitive stress.

The results of this study (Radcliffe et al., 2007) are in alignment with the traditional practices of ho‘oponopono. For some transgressions, the disclosure of what occurred was to be done aloud so others could hear. This would be similar to the social disclosure described in the study. However, the disclosure study was limited in that the nature of the transgression was not used to determine what group the participant was assigned to. While the study was designed as a randomized experiment, this did produce a limitation. Nonetheless, the disclosure itself produces a reduction of stress effects and therefore validates the use in the ho‘oponopono process.

Finally, in a study with 304 participants, McCullough et al. (2006) looked at the concept of positive focused (i.e., beneficial) emotional disclosure in the context of forgiveness. The participants in the study were randomly assigned to one of three groups

that each wrote for 20 minutes. The first group wrote about the trauma associated with a transgression. The second group wrote about the personal benefits resulting from the transgression. The third group was a control group that wrote about something that had no relationship to transgressions. Results indicated that the personal benefits group became more forgiving towards the transgressor in comparison to the other two groups. This study demonstrates that positive emotion disclosure is an approach that reduces transgression related interpersonal motivations (TRIMs) towards a transgressor.

Emotional disclosure is a part of the ho‘oponopono process specifically in step number 4 at the point where the transgressor is on stage. The individual is encouraged to disclose anything that needs to be said to the individual. Furthermore, while this is not done face-to-face with the transgressor, research has shown that the disclosure alone is sufficient to reduce TRIMs (McCullough et al., 2006). Furthermore, Ito (1985) explains that in face-to-face ho‘oponopono the participants are to remain calm and express what is needed to be expressed in a positive, construct way. In other words, the benefits of the experience are to be explored and focused on as opposed to the negativity associated with the event. The studies presented in this section validate the use of this approach in ho‘oponopono. Constructive and positive disclosure is correlated with an improvement of cognitive stress (Radcliffe et al., 2007) and a reduction in unforgiveness (McCullough et al.).

Guided Imagery

The process of guided imagery is based on imagining events (real or perceived) as being positive (Menzies & Taylor, 2004). It is a mental function in which can be used by

a patient or client to imagine an event as being positive rather then being negative. This in turn is meant to produce a changed point of view for a person, an event, or a situation. It is a dynamic process that has gained in popularity in the field of mental health according to Goldberg (1997) and Menzies and Taylor (2004). Furthermore, guided imagery has been used successfully in the treatment of mood (Gruzelier, Levy, Williams, & Henderson, 2001) and pain control (McCaffrey, Frock, & Garduilo, 2003).

There is a variety of different ways the positive effects of guided imagery on the individual have been measured. The simplest approach that researchers have used to analyze the effect of guided imagery on the individual is in the area of stress-related immune deficiency. According to Solloway (2004), research has demonstrated that guided imagery has been found to reduce stress-related changes in immune functioning. For example, in a review of existing studies on imagery, Gruzelier (2002) explains that guided imagery increased NKC (Natural Killer Cell) activity and decreased antibody levels to HSV (Herpes Simplex Virus) in a study working with elderly subjects during four weeks of guided imagery, positive result immune imagery training. This is in comparison to the relaxation group.

Gruzelier (2002) found in another study that guided imagery decreases anxiety and tension while increasing energy in certain stress-inducing situations. This was evidenced by an increase in the Natural Killer Cell counts of students during tests and exams, which are usually stressful situations. When compared to the control group, the guided imagery group experienced an increase in NKC count. The review demonstrates

that visualizing positive changes in immune function, results in a measureable change in immune function.

In a randomized, controlled trial on the use of guided imagery, Toth et al. (2007) found that hospitalized medial patients ($N = 23$) experienced a reduction anxiety as compared to the control group. Twenty-three patients ranging in age from 18 to 75 years old were randomly put into two groups: a guided imagery group or a quiet time group. There was a statistically significant correlation found between the reduction in anxiety and guided imagery. While the study consisted of a low number of participants, thus producing a low power, the authors explain that the findings are consistent with existing literature and that future research is necessary.

The link between the purpose of guided imagery and ho‘oponopono is based on the effects of positive thinking and visualization on measurable changes in the participants. With forgiveness research, focusing on the positive by the participant in a study (i.e., focusing on forgiveness as opposed to unforgiveness) has been shown to be more effective (Luskin, 2004). To be clear, measuring unforgiveness, as is occurring in this research, is different from the focus or intention of the participant. Luskin (2004), in an overview of available studies, found that positive focus in forgiveness research is associated greater positive affect. This is similar to the focus on benefits as opposed to the transgression (McCullough et al., 2006) as previously described in Emotional Disclosure section.

The process of ho‘oponopono utilizes the approach of guided imagery during the visualization of the light as well as the discussion with the transgressor on the stage.

Similar to the description by Menzies and Taylor (2004) the person on the stage is visualized as being healed before the process of forgiveness begins. This allows the patient/client to imagine the transgressor in a more positive view. Then the discussion with the transgressor allows the client to communicate or disclose information to create a form of disclosure (as already discussed).

Stress and Coping

The literature and research available on stress and coping is immense. From the groundbreaking concepts by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which brought about a focus on the concept of perception of stress as a critical factor in the stress response, to current research on rumination and stress (Morrison & O'Connor, 2005; Suchday et al., 2006), the available literature is extensive. The intention of incorporating the theory of stress and coping in this dissertation is to explain the relationship between forgiveness research and stress research. This in turn explains the social impact of this study as well as the social implications of forgiveness research as a whole.

How a person perceives the stress as well as the perception of the individual's ability to cope with the stress is a factor in the response (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The primary appraisal is the first response with regards to time; however, it may not be the more important of the two. During the primary appraisal, the situation is evaluated and the person determines the affects the event will have on him/her. Once the initial appraisal is complete, the secondary appraisal occurs. During the secondary appraisal, the ability to control or cope with stressor is analyzed. During this phase, an individual is attempting to determine what they are able to do to deal with the perceived stressor.

While this is an older concept, it is important because it allows for an individual after an event to cope with the event. Similar to the approach that ho‘oponopono takes as a forgiveness process.

According to McCullough et al. (2006), interpersonal transgressions are a type of interpersonal stressors. With an interpersonal transgression, a person perceives that another has harmed them in some way. This harm is usually experienced as painful and morally wrong. The concept of perceptions of stress as well as the ability to cope with the perceived stress is an important concept in forgiveness research (Strelan & Covic, 2006). Through specific studies (e.g., McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; Suchday et al., 2006) rumination has been found to be a mediator between forgiveness and stress. That is to say that an increase in forgiveness (as measureable through a reduction in unforgiveness) reduces rumination on the transgression, which in turn reduces stress. Furthermore, Morrison and O’Connor (2005) found that rumination and stress were strongly correlated and that rumination was a predictor of social dysfunction related to psychological stress. In their study with 161 undergraduates, stress and rumination were measured over the span of six months, and was found to be an accurate predictor for stress related social dysfunction.

In addition to the concept of the perception of stress, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) discussed the difference between problem-focused coping behaviors and emotional-focused coping behaviors. Simply put, problem-focused coping behaviors are strategies aimed to solve the situation or event, and emotion-focused coping behaviors are strategies aimed at controlling the emotions that are occurring because of the event. For

example, if a person were trapped in an elevator that was stuck between floors, there may be an emotion of fear present. Emotion-focused coping would be skills used to reduce the fear, such as talking to oneself or focusing on breathing. Problem-focused coping would be the person's attempts to get out of the elevator or find a way to call someone for assistance.

Strelan and Covic (2006) note that it is also important to understand that the coping process is a separate function from the outcome of stress reduction. Coping is seen as an ongoing approach to managing stressful demands. Furthermore, a stressful event is not a fixed or static event; rather it is a fluid experience that evolves over time. Therefore, coping could be seen as a continuous experience between the stressor, the primary and secondary appraisal, and the stress response. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explain that based on this, over time, the behaviors of coping will change.

With regards to coping and forgiveness, Strelan and Covic (2006) outline six ways in which coping is related to a forgiveness process: (a) a forgiveness process is type of reaction to a stressful event, (b) how an individual reacts to a transgressor is an appraisal as explained by Lazarus and Folkman, (c) various coping strategies are a way of explaining how individuals forgive, (d) stress coping behaviors including forgiveness have the potential of being future based processes, (e) the process of forgiveness is intrapersonal and interpersonal, and (f) the process of forgiveness is dynamic and ever changing.

Based on these concepts, forgiveness as it relates to stress and coping would be seen as a "process of neutralizing a stressor that has resulted from a perception of an

interpersonal hurt" (Strelan & Covic, 2006). Regardless of whether the process is applied immediately after a transgression or at any point in the future, the process itself is a means of changing the perceptions and appraisal of the event. Additionally, the continued application of a forgiveness process in relationship to a specific transgression could thus have the potential of becoming an adaptive strategy to coping with the transgression as well as future transgressions. This is seen in the specific research on ho'oponopono by Kretzer, et al. (2007) previously discussed in this chapter.

The significance of the relationship between coping and forgiveness is important because a ho'oponopono as a forgiveness process could become an adaptive coping strategy for an individual. In addition, based on perceptions, the appraisal of a stressor, rumination, and the fluid continuous nature of coping strategies, a ho'oponopono could serve as a means to reduce the negative affect from a specific event in the past. The additional implication is that the continued application of this process would further reduce the negative affect associated with a transgression as well as serve to be a means of coping with future transgressions.

Summary

This literature review describes forgiveness, ho'oponopono, emotional disclosure, guided imagery, and stress and coping. The existing literature relevant to this study demonstrates that forgiveness and models of forgiveness have been effective in reducing negative affect, reducing stress, as well as improving health. The review narrowed the focus from forgiveness models, to examples of applications of forgiveness models, to the

specific model of ho‘oponopono, and finally to the theoretical constructs that support ho‘oponopono as a process of forgiveness.

The studies that present a reduction of unforgiveness in the literature review demonstrate the social impact of this study. By showing that a specific forgiveness process contributes to the reduction of unforgiveness, the researcher hopes to show that a specific process can be utilized by individuals.

Ho‘oponopono is a process that has been utilized in Hawai‘i for centuries, and current studies have begun to look at the various applications. While these studies have narrowed their focus on specific groups or specific contexts, this study was aimed to demonstrate the usefulness of ho‘oponopono in a broader context. The gap in literature calls for a study not only on a specific process of forgiveness applied to individuals, but for a study on ho‘oponopono as a viable approach to forgiveness.

The next chapter will review the methodology for the research in this study based on the research question discussed in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this between-groups, within-group, repeated measures study was to discover the relationship between ho‘oponopono and the reduction unforgiveness towards a single transgressor, as measured by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM). The IRB approval number for this study was 07-22-08-0308112.

In this chapter, there will be a discussion of (a) the choice of research design and the approach to research, (b) the sample that was used as well as the setting for the participants, (c) a review of the instrumentation and materials used, (d) the data collection approach and analysis, and (e) the ethics and protection of participants rights.

Research Design and Approach

There were five primary stages to the research method. The stages were: (a) initial contact for consent and inclusion/exclusion criteria, (b) gathering of demographics and information, (c) pretest measurement with TRIM, (d) application of ho‘oponopono forgiveness process for the test group as well as no application of a forgiveness process for the control group, and (e) the follow-up posttest measurement with TRIM.

Initial Contact for Consent

In the initial contact, the potential participant received an e-mail letter explaining the research and purpose of the study. In the letter, a Web address was provided so that the potential participant was able to go to a Web site to read the consent form and

digitally approve the form. The participant was also required to read the online explanation of the nature of the process and an initial explanation of exclusion criteria, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Surveymonkey.com was used for this process as well as for the following steps. Once the participant approved being a part of the research, the second stage of the research began immediately.

Demographics and Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

When potential participants read and approved the consent form online at surveymonkey.com, they also agreed that the specific exclusion criteria related to trauma (as will be described in the Setting and Sample section) did not apply to them. They were then taken to the next step, where the demographics information and information concerning the nature of the transgression were collected. The data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for later entry into SPSS. While in the Excel spreadsheet, participants were randomly assigned either to the test group or to the control group based on the order in which they logged in. The first participant who logged in was assigned to the test group. The second was assigned to the control group, and the random assignment continued in that order.

Pretest

From the demographic information gathered in the previous stage, the participants were contacted by e-mail and provided the link to the next step in the study at surveymonkey.com. There the participants were provided with an overview and steps of the study. Once they read the overview, they were taken to the TRIM pretest. When the pretest was complete, the individuals in the test group were immediately given a link to

download the audio MP3 file of the explanation and process of ho‘oponopono. The individuals in the control group were thanked for their participation and told that they would be contacted in approximately two weeks for a follow-up test.

Ho‘oponopono

Once they had downloaded the audio recording, the participants in the test group were instructed to listen to the recording immediately after taking the pretest. The recording included an explanation of the process of ho’oponopono, an explanation of forgiveness, the importance of forgiveness, and the concept of the Hawaiian view of forgiveness. At the completion of the explanation, there was a guided experience of the process of ho‘oponopono for a single transgressor. At the end of the recorded experience, the participants were given a specific instruction to follow. This instruction ensured that they did listen to the entire process, and if someone did not follow the instruction, they were excluded from the results.

Posttest

Two weeks after the completion of the previous step, the participants from both groups were contacted and reminded to go back to surveymonkey.com so they could complete the TRIM posttest. To ensure that participants did not take the test earlier, the test was not made available until two weeks after the completion of the previous section. Also, after three weeks, the test was taken down (offline) and was no longer available. When the test group logged in, they were first asked a question related to the process. This question was “What did the Hawaiians call the connection between people that could be cut as a part of the ho‘oponopono process?” The answer is “aka” and

participants that did not answer this correctly were excluded. This was a measure taken to ensure that the participants in the test group did complete the process.

Sample and Setting

Sample Population

The goal of the study was to have a sample size of 72 individuals (36 per group). The goal was to achieve the desired power based on the reliability of the TRIM, as measured by test-retest, over 3 weeks (r's = .86 and .79) and 9 weeks (r's = .64 and .65). Additionally, the sample of 36 per group was based on the desired power of .80 with an Eta-Squared of .10 (based on mixed model ANOVA, *df* = 1, alpha = .05). To achieve this size, the initial mailing targeted 500 individuals that had contacted a training company for information concerning general communication skills. The contact of the company was voluntary and generated through the routine marketing and advertising that the company conducts. Furthermore, the 500 customers were randomly chosen by the shipping manager of the company. While a higher than 15% response rate from the initial 500 mailing was anticipated, the number was chosen to ensure adequate response.

Of the 500 customers e-mailed, 113 logged into surveymonkey.com during the 3-day opportunity to fill out the consent and demographics form. Of the 113 customers, 102 filled out the demographic survey (1 decided not to take the survey, another 10 entered no data). The 102 were randomly assigned to the two groups (the test group and the control group). The test group had 51 initial participants and ended with 40 participants (8 never took the first survey and 3 answered the control question wrong). The control group had

51 initial participants and ended with 39 participants (12 did not take the survey after logging in).

Setting of Study

As was outlined in the Research and Design Approach section, the test group participants were guided through the process of ho'oponopono via an audio recording. The participants were instructed to listen to the recording on their computer in a quite, uninterrupted environment, immediately after having completed the initial TRIM. Since they were being guided through a process of forgiveness without supervision, exclusion criteria to ensure their safety was employed.

Exclusion Criteria

In the initial contact and consent, there were questions to categorize the nature of the transgression. While forgiveness models have been shown to be useful in reducing negative affect in cases of trauma and abuse (Freedman & Enright, 1996; Shook, 2001), the setting of this study would have been inappropriate for transgressions of this nature. Therefore, reported physical attacks, rape, abuse, severe emotional/mental trauma, and other similar physical abuse were excluded from this study. Additionally, individuals under the age of 18 were excluded also because of the isolation during the application of the ho'oponopono forgiveness process. Other than the above-mentioned exclusions, all other individuals were included in the study.

Instrumentation and Materials

Demographic Questionnaire

The participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire at surverymonkey.com prior to the administration of the pretest to obtain information on gender, age, race, marital status, education, nature of the transgression, relationship to the transgressor, time elapsed since the transgression, and work done to cope with the transgression (e.g., therapy). See Appendix A for the demographic survey.

Transgression-Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM)

The Transgression-Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) is a 12-item measure, answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with two subscales measuring Revenge and Avoidance (McCullough et al., 1998). Chronbach's alpha has ranged from .86 to .93 in two administrations (McCullough et al., 1998). The reliability was adequate, as measured by test-retest, over 3 weeks (*r*'s = .86 and .79) and 9 weeks (*r*'s = .64 and .65). See Appendix B for the TRIM survey.

The Revenge and Avoidance subscales include questions such as "I want to see him/her hurt and miserable" (revenge), and "I cut off the relationship with him/her" (avoidance). In a sample of 239 students (McCullough et al., 1998) the mean score of the Revenge subscale was 8.7 (*SD* = 4.5) and the mean score of the Avoidance subscale was 18.1 (*SD* = 8.4).

The construct measured by the TRIM is unforgiveness. As was discussed in chapter 1, forgiveness is defined as a prosocial change in transgression-related interpersonal motivations or TRIMs (McCullough et al., 2006). "When people forgive,

they become less avoidant, less vengeful, and more benevolent towards the people who have hurt them" (p. 887). The aspect of less avoidant and less vengeful is conceptualized as unforgiveness. Therefore, the level of unforgiveness can be measured based on the motivation to seek out revenge towards a transgressor or to avoid a transgressor.

The TRIM has been shown to be reliable and valid in measuring unforgiveness (i.e., TRIMs) and is therefore an appropriate test for this study. Utilizing the same constructs as McCullough et al. (1998), and McCullough et al. (2007), the TRIM served as a valid measurement of unforgiveness in this study (see Appendix B).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

The demographics survey, the pretest, and the posttest were administered on surveymonkey.com. Once the participant entered the information from the initial demographics survey, the data was downloaded and entered into an Excel spreadsheet to be organized before being entered into SPSS. After the information was entered and the assignment to the test group and control group had been done, the participants were contacted by e-mail and given the link to participate in the study. (Once the final contact had been made after the posttest, the e-mail address, which is the only link to the participant's identity, was erased from the computer, leaving only the assigned number.)

The included participants were then contacted by e-mail and given instructions to login to surveymonkey.com to take part in the pretest and application of ho'oponopono. After they took the pretest, the information was downloaded and entered into the Excel spreadsheet to prepare for entry into SPSS. The participants were then contacted by e-

mail two weeks later for the posttest, which they logged in to surveymonkey.com for as well. Once entered, the data was downloaded into the Excel spreadsheet and then entered into SPSS for the final analysis.

Data Analysis

In this study of ho'oponopono, a summary of the research questions are as follows: What relationship exists between the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations). Additionally, what is the difference between the group that experienced the ho'oponopono process (the test group) and the group that did not (the control group)? Finally, the difference in forgiveness between men and women was examined. It was expected that the application of the ho'oponopono forgiveness process with a specific transgressor would result in the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations (TRIMs).

Hypothesis 1

Research question: What relationship exists between the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations)?

The null hypothesis is there will be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis is that the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM

(HA: u1 > u2). A paired-sample *t* test was used to examine the test group and control group separately.

Hypothesis 2

Research question: Is there a difference between the test group that will experience the ho'oponopono forgiveness process and the control group that will not experience the process?

The null hypothesis is there will be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis is that the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A One-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the difference between groups for the pretest and posttest.

Hypothesis 3

Research question: Does the sex of the participant affect the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations?

The null hypothesis for this research question is there will be no differences in unforgiveness between men and women, towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis is that there would be a differences in unforgiveness between men and women, towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as

measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A One-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the difference between groups for the men and women.

Subscales of the TRIM

In addition to the overall TRIM scores, the subscales of Avoidance and Revenge was examined. The hypothesis was that there will be an overall reduction in unforgiveness as measured by the TRIM and its two subscales of Revenge and Avoidance. Findings are reported in chapter 4.

Ethics and Participants' Rights

As with any study, the ethical considerations pertain to the rights of the participants. A researcher's job is to ensure that participants do not suffer physical harm, discomfort, pain, embarrassment, or loss of privacy. Furthermore, applicable APA guidelines for research state that (a) participation should be voluntary, (b) all deception be disclosed upon completion of the research, and (c) approval should be obtained prior to conducting the study.

In this study, every care was taken to ensure and protect the rights, privacy, and safety of the participants. Since there was no deception used in this study, there was no potential harm from this. All participation was voluntary with full disclosure of the nature of the study before the administration of the first TRIM. Additionally, the exclusion criteria ensured that participants that might have experienced trauma were excluded from the study. This minimized the risk of a participant experiencing emotional discomfort during the application of ho'oponopono.

All data collected from the respondents entered at surveymonkey.com from the initial contact are being kept on a laptop hard drive that is encrypted as well as password protected. Once entered, numbers were randomly assigned to the participants so that all data collected are anonymous and private. There were no physical papers containing demographic data or test data because the data entry and collection took place at surveymonkey.com. Finally, once all data had been collected and downloaded from surveymonkey.com, the data online was erased based on the procedures set by surveymonkey.com. Finally, at the conclusion of the research analysis, participants were invited to read the reports either in this dissertation or in summary and they were invited to take the forgiveness process is they had not been able to based on assignment into the control group.

Summary

The study assessed the relationship between ho‘oponopono and unforgiveness as measured by the TRIM Inventory. The research design used was a between-groups, within-group, repeated measures study. The focus of the transgression was narrowed to a single event and a single transgressor. Finally, exclusion measures were taken to ensure the safety of the participants due to the isolation during the application of ho‘oponopono. The results are discussed next in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study on the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process. The first section will restate the research questions as well as review the null and alternative hypothesis. There will then be a section describing the data collection and coding based on the research methods reviewed in chapter 3. The third section will present and summarize the demographics data gathered from the sample. The final sections will address the three research hypotheses and the various data analysis completed conducted using SPSS.

Research Question

The data analysis was based on the research questions described in chapters 1 and 3. In this study of ho‘oponopono, a summary of the research questions are as follows: What relationship exists between the application of ho‘oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations). Additionally, what is the difference between the group that experienced the ho‘oponopono process (the test group) and the group that did not (the control group)? Finally, the difference in forgiveness between men and women was examined. To summarize, it was expected that the application of the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process with a specific transgressor would result in the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations (TRIMs).

Hypothesis 1

Research question: What relationship exists between the application of ho‘oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations)?

The null hypothesis was there will be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis was that the application of ho’oponopono with a specific transgressor will be associated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A paired-sample *t* test was used to examine the test group. (The data gathered for the control group is also presented.)

Hypothesis 2

Research question: Is there a difference between the test group that will experience the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process and the control group that will not experience the process?

The null hypothesis was there will be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis was that the application of ho’oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A One-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the difference between groups for the pretest and posttest.

Hypothesis 3

Research question: Does the sex of the participant affect the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations?

The null hypothesis for this research question was there will be no differences in unforgiveness between men and women, towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2). The alternative hypothesis was that there would be a differences in unforgiveness between men and women, towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2). A One-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the difference between groups for the men and women.

Data Collection, Coding, and Instrumentation

The data collected from the initial participants (N = 113) that logged into surveymonkey.com was downloaded into an Excel file. As described in chapter 3, of the initial 113 participants, 102 filled out the demographic survey and agreed to take part in the research. Based on the order they logged into the online Web site, the participants were randomly placed into two groups, with 51 in each group. Of the 51 in the test group, 40 ended up completing the entire process and answering the control question correctly. Of the 51 in the control group, 39 ended up completing the process.

Once the process and surveys were complete, the e-mail addresses of the participants were deleted from the Excel spreadsheet, and each participant was randomly given a participant ID starting with 101 and ending with 179. The downloaded file from

surveymonkey.com was then transferred into SPSS, to begin the process of demographic and statistical analysis.

Demographic Questionnaire

The participants in both groups completed a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) at surverymonkey.com prior to the administration of the Transgression-Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) pretest to obtain information on gender, age, race, marital status, education, nature of the transgression, relationship to the transgressor, time elapsed since the transgression, and work done to cope with the transgression (e.g., therapy). The information collected in the survey was coded into SPSS.

Transgression-Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM)

The TRIM is a 12-item measure, answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with two subscales measuring revenge motivations and avoidance motivations (McCullough et al., 1998; see Appendix B.)

The analysis of the data for this study focused on the mean scores from the overall TRIM, as well as the mean scores from the Revenge Scale and the Avoidance Scale. Using SPPS, the seven scores from the Avoidance Scale and the 5 scores from the Revenge Scale were averaged for each participant. Finally, the 12 scores from TRIM were averaged. The analysis of the relationship between the pretest and the posttest scores for each of the three scales (Overall TRIM, Avoidance, and Revenge) is presented after the Demographics section.

Demographics

The first demographic question for the participants ($N = 79$) related to age. Ages were separated into 6 groups: 18-25 years of age ($n = 2$), 26-35 years of age ($n = 13$), 36-45 years of age ($n = 17$), 46-55 years of age ($n = 27$), 56-65 years of age ($n = 18$), and 66 and Older ($n = 2$).

The next demographic question gathered information regarding the sex of the participants in the sample. There were a greater number of female participants ($n = 54$) in relationship to male participants ($n = 25$). The limitations of the small sample of male participants on the analysis of research question and Hypothesis 3 will be discussed.

Third, the ethnicity of the participants was gathered. The largest group represented was Caucasian ($n = 58$); however, in previous ho‘oponopono research, the primary focus was with Pacific Islanders and/or Native Hawaiians. The purpose of this study was to generalize the results to a larger population. Therefore, this is acceptable based on the focus of this study. The other groups included Hispanic ($n = 4$), African American ($n = 1$), Asian ($n = 5$), Pacific Islander ($n = 4$), and Other ($n = 7$).

The fourth question gathered the demographics related to the marital status of the participants. There were four groups: single ($n = 22$), married ($n = 33$), divorced ($n = 20$), and widowed ($n = 4$).

Next, the educational background of the participants was gathered. The largest group was graduates ($n = 38$) with undergraduates second ($n = 30$). The other two groups were less than 12 years ($n = 2$), and high school/GED ($n = 9$).

Table 1 describes the nature of the transgression that is being used as the focus for the study. These answers came from Question 6 of the demographic survey. The one answer of "other" was defined as a transgression related to sexual addiction.

Table 1

Demographics: Nature of the Transgression

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Other	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
Personal	15	19.0	19.0	20.3
Work/Business	24	30.4	30.4	50.6
Family	22	27.8	27.8	78.5
Relationship	17	21.5	21.5	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 provides the relationship to the transgressor. The largest group represented was that of family (n = 20). For the choice of Other, participants included the following as answers: Tenant, Trainer, Business Partner, Employee, Coaching Assistant, Ex-Wife, Father's Widow, My Self, and other descriptions of Significant Other (e.g., girlfriend, fiancé).

Table 2

Demographics: Relationship to the Transgression

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Other	11	13.9	13.9	13.9
Significant Other	16	20.3	20.3	34.2
Family	20	25.3	25.3	59.5
Friend	14	17.7	17.7	77.2
Coworker	4	5.1	5.1	82.3
Boss	13	16.5	16.5	98.7
Stranger	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

Finally, Table 3 summarizes responses from Question 8, concerning the time elapsed since the transgression occurred.

Table 3

Demographics: Length of Time Since the Transgression Occurred

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 3 Mo	14	17.7	17.7	17.7
3 to 6 Mo	6	7.6	7.6	25.3
6 Mo to 1 Yr	9	11.4	11.4	36.7
1 to 2 Yr	12	15.2	15.2	51.9
2 to 5 Yr	13	16.5	16.5	68.4
5 to 10 Yr	11	13.9	13.9	82.3
More than 10 Yr	14	17.7	17.7	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

Hypothesis 1

Test of Hypothesis 1: What relationship exists between the application of ho‘oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations)?

Using SPSS, a paired-samples *t* test was conducted for the test group and the control group for each of the pairs (Overall TRIM, Avoidance Motivation, and Revenge Motivation). The pairs are labeled as Pre or Post (for Pretest or Posttest) followed by the scale (i.e., Avoid, Revenge, TRIM).

Table 4 displays the paired-samples statistics for the within-group comparison of the test group ($n = 40$) for all three pairs. For the test group, the mean Pretest mean TRIM

score (Pre-TRIM) was 2.99 (*SD* = .79) and the mean Posttest mean TRIM score (Post-TRIM) was 2.03 (*SD* = .55).

Table 4

Within-Group Paired-Samples Statistics for Test Group

	Pre / Post	Mean	Number	Std. Deviation	Std Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Avoid	3.6393	40	.93201	.14736
	Post-Avoid	2.3321	40	.78472	.12408
Pair 2	Pre-Revenge	2.0700	40	.80326	.12701
	Post-Revenge	1.6000	40	.59914	.09473
Pair 3	Pre-TRIM	2.9854	40	.77806	.12302
	Post-TRIM	2.0271	40	.55128	.08717

Table 5 displays the within-group comparison of the control group (*n* = 39) for all three pairs. For the control group Pre-TRIM was 2.70 (*SD* = .68) and the Post-TRIM was 2.47 (*SD* = .69).

Table 5

Within-Group Paired-Samples Statistics for Control Group

	Pre / Post	Mean	Number	Std. Deviation	Std Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Avoid	3.3077	39	.86558	.13860
	Post-Avoid	3.0659	39	.92515	.14814
Pair 2	Pre-Revenge	1.8564	39	.71370	.11428
	Post-Revenge	1.6462	39	.61808	.09897
Pair 3	Pre-TRIM	2.7030	39	.68313	.10939
	Post-TRIM	2.4744	39	.68961	.11043

Table 6 displays the within-group paired-samples *t* test correlations for both the test group and the control group.

Table 6

Within-Group Paired-Samples Correlations for Test and Control Group

	Pre / Post	Number	Correlation	Sig.
Test Group	Pre-Avoid & Post-Avoid	40	.693	.000
	Pre-Revenge & Post-Revenge	40	.656	.000
	Pre-TRIM & Post-TRIM	40	.804	.000
Control Group	Pre-Avoid & Post-Avoid	39	.795	.000
	Pre-Revenge & Post-Revenge	39	.746	.000
	Pre-TRIM & Post-TRIM	39	.765	.000

The within-group paired-samples *t* test (Table 7), at a 95% confidence, revealed a statistically significant correlation between all three pairs for the test group. At an alpha level of .05, the difference in the Pre-TRIM mean and Post-TRIM mean for the test group was .96 ($SD = .47$, $t(39) = 12.93$, $p < .005$). The results from the subscales (Avoidance and Revenge) are also reported.

Table 7

Within-Group Paired-Samples Test for Test Group

				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre/Post-Avoid	1.30714	.68592	.10845	1.08777	1.52651	12.053	39	.000
Pre/Post-Revenge	.47000	.61025	.09649	.27483	.66517	4.871	39	.000
Pre/Post-TRIM	.95833	.46875	.07412	.80842	1.10825	12.930	39	.000

The control group within-group paired-samples *t* test (Table 8), at a 95% confidence, revealed a statistically significant correlation between all three pairs for the control group. At an alpha level of .05, the difference in the Pre-TRIM mean and Post-TRIM mean for the control group was .23 ($SD = .47$, $t(38) = 3.03$, $p < .005$). The results from the subscales (Avoidance and Revenge) are also reported.

Table 8

Within-Group Paired-Samples Test for Control Group

	Mean	Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre/Post-Avoid	.24176	.57625	.09227	.05496	.42856	2.620	38	.013
Pre/Post-Revenge	.21026	.48330	.07739	.05359	.36692	2.717	38	.010
Pre/Post-TRIM	.22863	.47091	.07541	.07598	.38128	3.032	38	.004

Hypothesis 1 Summary

The null hypothesis that there would be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2) was rejected. The alternative hypothesis that the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor would be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2) was supported based on the statistically significant decrease of TRIM scores from Pre-TRIM to Post-TRIM. The eta squared statistic (.81) indicated a large effect size.

Overall, a statistically significant decrease in overall TRIM scores and a statistically significant decrease in TRIM subscale scores with an eta squared of .81 indicates that ho'oponopono is an effective approach to reducing unforgiveness when

applied to a single transgression or transgressor. Further discussion regarding the implications of the results, and the limitations will be discussed in chapter 5.

Hypothesis 2

Test of Hypothesis 2: Is there a difference between the test group that experienced the ho'oponopono forgiveness process and the control group that did not experience the process?

A series of one-way between-group analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to explore the impact of ho'oponopono on TRIM scores. Participants were divided into two groups (test group and control group). For the pretest scores (Pre-TRIM), there was no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 77) = 2.93$, $p > .05$]. For the Avoidance subscale (Pre-Avoid) there was also no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 77) = 2.68$, $p > .05$]. Finally, for the Revenge subscale (Pre-Revenge) there was also no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 77) = 1.56$, $p > .05$]. Thus, both groups performed similarly on the TRIM during the first assessment, prior to the manipulation of the independent variable.

A series of one-way between-group analyses of variance were conducted to explore the impact of ho'oponopono on TRIM scores from the posttest (see Table 9). Participants were divided into two groups (test group and control group). For the posttest scores (Post-TRIM), there was a statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 77) = 10.17$, $p < .001$]. For the Avoidance subscale (Post-Avoid) there was also a statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 77) = 14.48$, $p < .001$]. Finally,

for the Revenge subscale (Post-Revenge) there was no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 77) = .11$, $p > .05$].

Table 9

Posttest One-Way Between-Groups ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Post-TRIM	Between Groups	3.950	1	3.950	10.165	.002
	Within Groups	29.924	77	.389		
	Total	33.875	78			
Post-Avoid	Between Groups	10.633	1	10.633	14.480	.000
	Within Groups	56.540	77	.734		
	Total	67.173	78			
Post-Revenge	Between Groups	.042	1	.042	.114	.737
	Within Groups	28.517	77	.370		
	Total	28.559	78			

Hypothesis 2 Summary

The null hypothesis stated there would be no differences in unforgiveness towards the transgressor when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2) was rejected. The alternative hypothesis that the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a

reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM (HA: u1 > u2) was supported.

The mean TRIM pretest score (Pre-TRIM) did not differ significantly between groups. This was also the case for the two subscales (Pre-Avoid and Pre-Revenge). The focus of this hypothesis was on the total TRIM score after the manipulation of the independent variable, and therefore, the null was rejected because there was a statistically significant difference in the mean TRIM posttest score (Post-TRIM). However, further analysis of the subscales revealed that this difference was driven by the Avoidance subscale (Post-Avoid) as significant differences were found across that dimension of the TRIM, but not the Revenge subscale of the TRIM.

Further discussion regarding the implications of the results of the subscales, the lack of a statistically significant difference in the Revenge subscale (Post-Revenge), and the limitations will be discussed in chapter 5.

Hypothesis 3

Test of Hypothesis 3: Does the sex of the participant affect the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations?

A series of one-way between-group analyses of variance were conducted to explore the impact of ho‘oponopono on TRIM scores. Test group participants were divided into two groups (men and women). For the pretest scores (Pre-TRIM), there was no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 38) = .13$, $p > .05$]. For the Avoidance subscale (Pre-Avoid) there was also no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 38) = .24$, $p > .05$]. Finally, for the Revenge subscale (Pre-

Revenge) there was also no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 38) = .002$, $p > .05$].

A series of one-way between-group analyses of variance were conducted to explore the impact of ho‘oponopono on TRIM scores. Test group participants were divided into two groups (men and women). For the posttest scores (Post-TRIM), there was no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 38) = .10$, $p > .05$]. For the Avoidance subscale (Post-Avoid) there was also no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 38) = .50$, $p > .05$]. Finally, for the Revenge subscale (Post-Revenge) there was also no statistically significant difference between groups [$F(1, 38) = .37$, $p > .05$].

Hypothesis 3 Summary

The null hypothesis that there would be no differences in unforgiveness between men and women, towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory (H0: u1 = u2) was not rejected.

While there is a clear limitation with a small group size for male participants ($n = 10$), the one-way between-groups analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant differences between men and women, pretest and posttest.

Further discussion regarding the implications of the results, and the limitations will be discussed in chapter 5.

Summary

This chapter presents the results of the study on ho‘oponopono as described in chapter 3. Data was collected on 79 participants randomly assigned into a test group ($n =$

40) and a control group (n = 39). The data collection and coding was explained, and the demographics data were reported.

For the first hypothesis, a t test was conducted using SPSS, and a statistically significant difference was found comparing the pretest with the posttest. For the first hypothesis the null was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis that the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM was supported.

A One-way Between-Groups ANOVA was used to test Hypothesis 2, and again the null was rejected based on the finding. The alternative hypothesis that the application of ho'oponopono with a specific transgressor will be correlated with a reduction in unforgiveness when comparing the test group with the control group, as measured by the TRIM was supported.

Finally, the One-way Between-Groups ANOVA to compare men and women in the test group found no difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there would be no differences in unforgiveness between men and women, towards the transgressor when comparing the posttest with the pretest, as measured by the TRIM Inventory was not rejected.

An interpretation of the findings, as well as a discussion regarding the limitation and significance of the study will be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to discover the relationship between ho‘oponopono and the reduction of unforgiveness towards a single transgressor, as measured by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations inventory (TRIM). The literature review revealed a gap in the research on specific process-based forgiveness models. While ho‘oponopono has been shown to be effective in relieving stress when taught as an education-based approach (Kretzer et al., 2007), it has not been studied as a process-based approach to forgiveness. Furthermore, an aim of the research was to determine if an individual in isolation could experience the ho’oponopono forgiveness process with success.

This study did in fact find a statistically significant effect in the reduction of unforgiveness for those who engaged in the ho‘oponopono process. Furthermore, the significance that participants were able to achieve this without direct supervision demonstrates the effectiveness of ho‘oponopono as a forgiveness process that may be experienced by an individual.

This chapter starts with an interpretation of the findings as well as an interpretation of the subscales of the TRIM. Next, the limitations of the study will be addressed. The chapter will then continue with the significance of the study as well as the implications for social change. Finally, recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Interpretation of the Findings

The research questions and hypotheses provided the focus for this study. Although the literature review revealed that forgiveness (as a process based approach and educational based approach) has been studied and validated (Strelan & Covic, 2006), it is important to validate ho‘oponopono specifically in addition to studying the effectiveness of the process itself. This was the reasoning behind the within-groups and between-groups approach.

Interpretation of the Test Group

The research question for Hypothesis 1 was, what relationship exists between the application of ho‘oponopono with a specific transgressor and unforgiveness (i.e., transgression-related interpersonal motivations).

A statistically significant decrease in TRIM scores and a statistically significant decrease in TRIM subscale scores with an eta squared of .81 indicates that ho‘oponopono is an effective approach to reducing unforgiveness. While this was not surprising based on the literature review of forgiveness and ho‘oponopono (see Brinson & Fisher, 1999; Ito, 1985; Miura, 2000; Tengan, 2004), it was important to establish this based on the process-based approach and the setting.

In other words, since much of the literature has focused on educational-based approaches and models of forgiveness, the validation of a specific process that may also be experienced by an individual in isolation was significant. The pretest posttest (PTPT) method was chosen to look specifically at the within-group effect of ho‘oponopono by testing prior to manipulation and post manipulation. This allowed for an analysis of the

effect of ho‘oponopono on a specific transgression and/or transgressor. Finally, the subscales of Avoidance and Revenge were analyzed with the PTPT approach, and a statistically significant degrease in both was found.

In chapter 4, the control group was also presented in the data analysis; however, the hypothesis focused on the within-groups aspect of the test group for this research question. The second research question addressed the between-groups analysis to further validate ho‘oponopono as an effective process in reducing unforgiveness.

Between-Group Interpretation

For Hypothesis 2, the research question was, is there a difference between the test group that experienced the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process and the control group that did not experience the process? As was previously discussed, while various processes of forgiveness have been validated, in addition to examining the effectiveness of ho‘oponopono as a process (with research Question 1), it was important to validate the process in comparison to a control group. The decision to conduct the control group was based on the limited research on ho‘oponopono specifically as a process-based approach to forgiveness.

A series of one-way between-group analysis of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to explore the impact of ho‘oponopono on pretest TRIM scores. Participants were divided into two groups (test group and control group). The TRIM pretest score (Pre-TRIM) did not differ significantly between groups. This was also the case for the two subscales (Pre-Avoid and Pre-Revenge). The focus of this hypothesis was on the TRIM score after the manipulation of the independent variable. No significant difference

between groups indicates that there was a solid baseline for the between-group comparison of the pretest.

With a consistent baseline for the pretest, a series of one-way between-group analysis of variance were conducted to explore the impact of ho‘oponopono on posttest TRIM scores. Participants, again, were divided into two groups (test group and control group). For the posttest scores (Post-TRIM), there was a statistically significant difference between the test group and control group. This means that the ho‘oponopono process is effective in reducing unforgiveness in comparison to no process at all (i.e., the control group).

While this allowed for the rejection of the null hypothesis, it was important to further examine the two subscales of the TRIM. For the Avoidance subscale (Post-Avoid) there was also a statistically significant difference between the test group and the control group; however, there was no statistically significant difference between the test group and control group for the subscale of Revenge (Post-Revenge). The focus of the research question was on the TRIM scores. As was explained above, based on the between-group comparison of TRIM scores, ho‘oponopono is a validated forgiveness process for the reduction of unforgiveness.

The analysis of the two subscales provided greater understanding of the relationship between ho‘oponopono and unforgiveness. The findings showed that the reduction of unforgiveness was driven entirely by a reduction in Avoidance motivations, with no statistically significant reduction in the Revenge subscale between the test and control group. When looking at the paired-samples *t* test within each group (for revenge

motivations), the test group did experience a higher mean reduction in revenge motivations in comparison to the control group; however, the between groups analysis found that the reduction was not statistically significant.

This reduction in avoidance and not revenge may be caused by the approach to the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process utilized for the purpose of this study. The traditional approach for a person who was experiencing the processes for the first time is to go through the process with everyone related to the transgression. For the individual’s first experience, it was believed that while the transgression might have been with one person, there are other people that are connected to the event and a part of the event or experience. To become pono (right) with yourself, you must become right with others (Simeona, 1992) and in some instances, Naope (2006) believed this went beyond the one person we focus on with a transgression (i.e., the transgressor).

The decision to use the one-to-one approach of ho‘oponopono was to limit the confounding variables that would have been introduced with the process that includes everyone related to the event. Furthermore, the research question was based on one transgression and one transgressor.

Another potential limitation found during the analysis of the revenge motivations subscale was the rather low scores of revenge at baseline. Due to this result, the measurement of revenge should be viewed with caution as it is unclear if there is no statistically significant difference pretest and posttest, or if there was a floor effect experienced.

Finally, it should also be noted that while the between-groups analysis did not find a statistically significant reduction in revenge motivations, there was a reduction none-the-less. Meaning that this specific ho‘oponopono process does reduce revenge motivations; however, the one-to-one approach may be more effective in reducing avoidance motivations. Future action and research regarding this finding will be discussed in the recommendation for future research below.

Interpretation of Analysis Between Men and Women

The research question for Hypothesis 3 was, does the sex of the participant affect the reduction of transgression-related interpersonal motivations? As with the previous research question, the focus was on the overall TRIM scores; however, the subscales were also analyzed to establish a greater understanding of the relationship between-groups for men and women.

A series of one-way between-group analysis of variance were conducted to explore the impact of ho‘oponopono on TRIM scores between men and women. No difference was found across the three scales pre-manipulation, which indicates a solid baseline for between-group comparison. (See chapter 4 for the specific results.)

A series of one-way between-group analysis of variance were then conducted to explore the impact of ho‘oponopono on TRIM scores post-manipulation. Test group participants were divided into two groups (men and women). No difference was found across the three scales post manipulation, which indicates no statistically significant difference between-groups. (See chapter 4 for the specific results.)

In this hypothesis, the results failed to reject the null; however, no difference between men and women was expected, based on the reviews of studies on forgiveness and on ho‘oponopono. One limitation of this research question is the small sample of men in the test group (n = 10). In future research, a large sample size would provide a greater between groups comparison.

Summary of Interpretations

Overall, this study on ho‘oponopono found what it was looking for. Ho‘oponopono does reduce overall motivations of unforgiveness within-groups, and it does reduce forgiveness in comparison to a control group (as measured by the TRIM). Furthermore, there is no difference between men and women in the experience of ho‘oponopono. In a closer analysis of the subscales (Avoidance and Revenge) it was found that the reduction in overall unforgiveness through the experience of this version of ho‘oponopono was driven by the reduction of avoidance motivations. The lack of a statistically significant reduction in revenge motivations in the between-groups analysis provides future action in researching ho‘oponopono as well as future research on the full version of ho‘oponopono.

Limitations

In chapter 1, specific limitations were presented based on the method of research. The following are the limitations discussed, and the steps taken to minimize the limitations in this study.

1. This study used a sample of individuals that have contacted a company seeking out this type of information. Thus, the study may not generalize to the entire population.

The issue with this limitation is that the sample potentially consisted of participants that are interested in forgiving. However, based on the process of ho‘oponopono and on the work of Simeona (1992), a participant needs to be willing to forgive to achieve forgiveness. Furthermore, Worthington (1998) explains that to achieve forgiveness, one must make an altruistic gift of forgiveness to the offender. Therefore, the population that this study would generalize to would be made up of people that want to forgive.

2. The repeated measures test relies on the participant following specific instructions. The participants used surveymonkey.com and a downloaded audio file to experience ho‘oponopono. While every precaution was taken to ensure adherence to the instructions, there is the potential of deviation from the directions. The control question for the test-group (described in chapter 3) assisted in minimizing this limitation. Additionally, the sample size was chosen to achieve a greater power and larger effect size. While this is still a limitation, the results from the study were significant.

3. There was no way of controlling for other stress relieving factors to influence the perception of the transgression between the application of ho‘oponopono and the second test. Therefore, some other external factors may have influenced the reduction of unforgiveness. Again, with the sample size, this limitation was minimized to the greatest extent possible considering that the aim of the research was to validate a forgiveness process that can be done in isolation. In other words, a controlled environment would have been counter-productive to the focus of the research question.

Significance of the Study and Implications for Social Change

Chapter 1 summarized the significance of this study and the implications for social change. These implications may be obvious; however, they deserve further exploration. The significance may be summarized in two key points.

First, much of the research in psychology is bogged down in arguing over a definition like forgiveness. The literature review revealed that the disagreement over what forgiveness is, what causes forgiveness, and what mediates forgiveness, takes up a lot of the focus. These studies were and are important because they create a foundation for future research. And, having said that, it is possible that we may have lost sight of the most important reason why we conduct research. Psychologists and counselors are on the frontline, wanting to help people. This concept drove the purpose of this study, which was to assess the effectiveness of the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process on the reduction of unforgiveness. According to Strelan and Covic (2006), previous studies had validated models and theories; however, this study of ho‘oponopono looked at a specific process of forgiveness that does correspond to models of forgiveness and psychological constructs. With this process validated, future research may examine the full extent of the effectiveness of ho‘oponopono.

This brings up the second significance of the study, which is the overall health benefit of forgiveness. Unforgiving or vengeful people are prone to depressive symptoms (Brown & Phillips, 2005) and have a higher rate of being diagnosed with depression, GAD, and panic disorder (Kendler et al., 2003). Therefore, studying ho‘oponopono by building upon the existing literature in this area has helped in gaining a better

understanding of how to assist individuals in working towards the reduction of unforgiveness following an interpersonal transgression.

By studying this specific forgiveness (i.e., ho‘oponopono), this study aimed to demonstrate that a process could be validated and utilized in helping individuals reduce unforgiveness towards a transgressor. Due to the relative simplicity of the process of ho‘oponopono, this research investigated whether or not this specific forgiveness process can be used by individuals on their own to improve their overall health (through the reduction of unforgiveness). To summarize, the implication for social change is that individuals, upon learning ho‘oponopono, will have a greater control over their experience of a transgression and have an ability to reduce the feelings of unforgiveness on their own.

Recommendations for Action and Future Research

This present study is a pioneering study on the specific forgiveness process of ho‘oponopono. Since the concept of forgiveness is multifaceted, with many constructs and variables, there is an abundance of potential recommendations for future research. Based on this study and the findings in this study, the recommendations for action and future research will be limited to the scope of this study and the discussion within this paper.

Based on the focus of this study and the research question, the one-to-one approach of ho‘oponopono was used. This was done to limit the confounding variables that would have been introduced with the process that includes everyone related to the transgression. Future studies should include in their focus the full version of

ho‘oponopono. The findings in the between-groups analysis related to the subscale of Revenge in the TRIM, warrants a focus on the ho‘oponopono forgiveness process that includes other individuals related to the transgression. The research question created from this finding would be: what is the relationship between the approach to ho‘oponopono that includes everyone related to the transgression and the reduction of TRIM scores as well as the subscales of Avoidance and Revenge motivations? This question could be examined using the same methodology from this study, and the ho‘oponopono approach that includes all the individuals in the participant’s life (as opposed to the one-to-one process).

Next, in this study, the demographics included questions related to the relationship to the transgressor as well as the time elapsed since the transgression. Future research should include further examination of these other demographics to determine if length of time and/or relationship to the transgressor is correlated to the reduction of unforgiveness. Additionally, in this recommendation, a larger group of men would provide a better sample to analyze the between groups relationship for men and women.

Another recommendation would be for a longitudinal study to examine trait and episodic forgiveness. This could be another area of future research that would be related to ho‘oponopono. This study looked specifically at episodic forgiveness related to a single transgression with a single transgressor. Simeona (1992) believed that ho‘oponopono should be practiced on a daily basis to improve health and strengthen relationships. She also believed that ho‘oponopono practiced regularly increased an individuals ability to cope with future transgressions. With this study validating

ho‘oponopono, the first step has been completed. The next step would be to research Simeona’s belief that could be restated as “the long-term use of ho‘oponopono increases trait forgiveness for an individual.”

Finally, as a recommendation for action, a participant of the study suggested that this specific process of ho‘oponopono be provided to individuals on a CD for purchase. This recommendation will be made to the board of directors of the training company to consider creating a product with this process on it.

Conclusion

The findings reported in this study validate ho‘oponopono as a forgiveness process that is effective in reducing feelings of unforgiveness. These findings are significant, and they establish a foundation for future research on this specific process of forgiveness. Over a decade ago, McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) wrote that “forgiving can be promoted through clinical intervention” (p. 333). More recently, Strelan and Covic (2006) emphasized further empirical research on a specific process is needed. This study addressed those calls for action.

The purpose of this study was met in that forgiveness can not only be promoted in clinical interventions, the reduction of unforgiveness can be reached by an individual through a simple process. While further research is recommended, this study provides a foundation and framework for individuals to have a greater control over their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

This study lays the foundation for future research to examine the effectiveness of ho‘oponopono in specific contexts and transgressions across various samples. The ability

for an individual to reduce the negative affect of a transgression and therefore improve his/her health is not only a significant finding; it has a strong implication for social change.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66 and older

2. Sex: Sex, Male

3. Ethnicity: Hispanic, Caucasian, African-American, Asian, Pacific-Islander, Other (please specify)

4. Marital Status: Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed

5. Education: Less Than 12 Years, High School / GED, Undergraduate, Graduate

During the next four questions you will be asked to think of a transgression and/or a transgressor. This is the same transgression/transgressor that you will be asked to think about throughout this study. It is important that you focus on one transgression/transgressor for the entire study based on the nature of this approach.

Please take a moment to think of the transgression/transgressor that you will be focusing on for this study.

6. Nature of the Transgression (What Context did the Transgression Occur In)?: Personal, Work / Business, Family, Relationship, Other (please specify)

7. Relationship to Transgressor: Significant Other, Family, Friend, Co-Worker, Boss, Stranger, Other (please specify)

8. Length of Time Since Transgression Occurred (i.e., How Long Ago Did the Transgression Occur)?: Less Than 3 Months Ago, 3 to 6 Months Ago, 6 Months to 1 Year Ago, 1 to 2 Years Ago, 2 to 5 Years Ago, 5 to 10 Years Ago, 10 Years Ago or More

9. Work Done to Cope with the Transgression (Please Answer All That Apply): Therapy / Counseling, Self-Help, Talking With Friends / Family, No Work Done, Other (please specify)

APPENDIX B: TRIM

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale--12-Item Form (TRIM-12)

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

1= Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

____1. I'll make him/her pay.

____2. I keep as much distance between us as possible.

____3. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.

____4. I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.

____5. I don't trust him/her.

____6. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.

____7. I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.

____8. I avoid him/her.

____9. I'm going to get even.

____10. I cut off the relationship with him/her.

____11. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.

____12. I withdraw from him/her.

Source: McCullough, M.E., Rachal, K.C., Sandage, S.J., Worthington, E.L., Jr., Brown, S.W., & Hight, T.L. (1998). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76, 1586-1603.

APPENDIX C: FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

The following is unsolicited feedback that received from three participants. Permission, by the participants, was given to share this information. (The labels Participant 1, 2, & 3 are used below as identifiers to respect the identity of the participants.)

Participant 1: I had an amazing experience I wanted to add to your research and it was the first or second night after I heard of ho‘oponopono. If you are collecting stories, I would love to throw my short one in. It was startling enough to make a believer out of me.

Participant 2: Although I still carry some stress about the situation, (which is more like anxiety of what's going to happen next), the intense angry emotions are not there. I think that this is a very profound exercise.

Participant 3: I was able to cut the ‘umbilical cord’ that bounded me to the company I previously worked for and to break away from the old ‘identity’ that I built there over 15 years of service. It is a bit scary, but I feel free. This was I believe unexpectedly related to the forgiveness process I did as part of your research on ho‘oponopono: there was this one boss that I felt let me down badly and despite all the processes I did I could not forgive and let go. The one on one ho‘oponopono was so powerful that I am finally at peace and flat with this person!!! I do hope that you make that recording available as a CD, it is most powerful, brilliant sound, excellent guided process, and the pace is absolutely perfect.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Matthew B. James
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Education

Ph.D. Health Psychology. Walden University. Anticipated Grad 2008. GPA 4.0.
M.A. Organizational Management. University of Phoenix, 2004. GPA 3.97.
B.S. Business Management. University of Phoenix, 2002. GPA 3.92.

Experience

Advanced Neuro Dynamics, 1992 - Present
President, Owner
Expanded company from one office in Honolulu to four offices worldwide

Teaching Experience

Huna Hawaiiana Workshop 1998 - Present
- Study of the Psychology of the Ancient Hawaiians
- Teach groups ranging from 80 to 120 participants twice a year.

Various Weekend Seminars 2000 - Present
- Two and three day introductions to communication skills, goal setting, stress reduction
- Teach groups (as primary teacher) ranging from 20 to 60 participants, approximately 10 to 12 times a year.

Experience

At the age of 5 (in 1976), I was formally instructed in Transcendental Mediation
At the age of 9, I was formally instructed in Sidha Yoga Mediation and studied with Baba Muktananda
At the age of 14, I began to study with my father and learn the lineage of Huna and Ho‘oponopono that was taught to him by the son of a Kumu (teacher) named Pappa Bray, who lived in Kailua-Kona
- Since then, I have practiced and taught Huna as a part of the tradition
- I continue my studies with Etua Lopes and George Naope, both of whom are considered to be living experts in Hawaiian culture. I take drumming and chanting from both.