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Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders

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The University of Southern Mississippi

DIVORCE AND FORGIVENESS:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN GENDERS

by

Alison Kathleen Johnson

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014

ABSTRACT

DIVORCE AND FORGIVENESS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN GENDERS

by Alison Kathleen Johnson

May 2014

Divorce has become more commonplace throughout time. This study was conducted to determine if there were any differences between genders concerning forgiveness of their ex-spouses. Four instruments including the Enright Forgiveness Inventory, Fisher Divorce Assessment, Learning Activities Survey, and structured qualitative interviews were used to determine the differences specifically with regard to how men and women forgive and at what rate they forgive.

The sample included divorced adults employed by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and graduate students in the Department of Educational Studies and Research at a local university. A total of 31 completed surveys were returned, and 10 participants participated in the interviews. According to the findings, there was neither significant difference in how men and women forgive their ex-spouses post divorce, nor was there a significant difference in how quickly men and women forgave their ex-spouses.

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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I would be remiss if I did not extend a very special thank you to my parents, as they have been with me every step of the way. Without their love, support, prayers, and encouragement, I would have never had the desire to begin this journey, much less complete it. Finally, to my son, giving up is not an option.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Adult learning and lifelong learning have been topics of interest to educators to years. The traditional post secondary classroom is not required to foster adult learning as it was once thought. Adults have the ability to learn in all different types of settings such as while at work, in social settings, at church, at home, and online (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). One of the most common means for adult learning is everyday life; therefore, as adults move through adulthood, they learn more and more about life and all that it entails. Mezirow (1997) wrote

A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience. For some, any uncritically assimilated explanation by an authority figure will suffice. But in contemporary societies we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others. Facilitating such understanding is the cardinal goal of adult education.

(p. 5)

Adults are often faced with life issues that are far from pleasurable such as illness, financial instability, and substantial loss. Many are faced with loss of a profound nature, which for many include the loss of a child, a spouse, or a parent including the loss of a spouse, not to death, but to divorce. The plethora of emotions from this loss can leave an individual paralyzed in many aspects of life, which is supported by a study conducted by Webb et al. (2010) where they proposed that divorce is an unfortunate and unhappy process for many.

Unfortunately, the prevalence of divorce is common in the United States, as evidenced by the most recent report compiled by the National Vital Statistics System (USDHHS, 2009) of the total population in 2008; there were 2,162,000 marriages or 7.1 marriages per 1,000 people. Divorce occurred in 304,500 of those marriages, which equated to 3.5 per 1,000 people. There were only six states that were not considered in this report including California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota.

Types of Divorce

Past research acknowledged numerous reasons for divorce including gender, socioeconomic status, and life course as noted by Amato and Previti (2003); changes in the economy according to Ishida (2003); and finances, religion, and lack of employment were noted by Sember (2009). Most divorces were considered a no-fault divorce, which was also referred to as a divorce granted based on irreconcilable differences. In other words, the reason for the divorce was due to the couple's inability to resolve issues within their marriage. The words *irreconcilable differences* runs the gamut with regard to underlying reasons for divorce, and Sember (2009) suggested that reasons may include the couple simply growing apart, issues arising from gender roles, media influences, financial difficulties, religion, child rearing, employment or lack of employment, infidelity or lack of commitment, and communication difficulties.

Ishida (2003) and Sember (2009) both wrote of two specific reasons for the increase in divorce rates since the 1960s: the no-fault divorce and changes in the economy. With the introduction of the *no-fault* divorce in many western countries, individuals were given the opportunity to remove themselves from marriages in which the two spouses were simply no longer compatible, which often removed blame from one

particular spouse being solely responsible for the failure of the marriage. Also, with changes in the economy, more women moved into the work force and began to receive wages comparable to men, which rendered a woman to be more financially independent and removed the feeling of having to stay in the marriage to simply survive (Sember, 2009).

Amato and Previti (2003) proposed that gender, socioeconomic status, and life course events were reasons for divorce. With gender, the authors noted that women were aware of marital problems more quickly and were more apt to initiate discussions between the spouses. Socioeconomic status (i.e., level of education and income level) may interfere with a successful marriage as well, and the authors noted that while a higher level of education was beneficial to good communication between the spouses in working through problems, education could also serve as a hindrance. When spouses have different levels of education, this may lead to superior and/or inferior comments or actions, thereby leading to argument as opposed to agreement. The authors claimed the same was true for the couples' individual levels of income. Life course events, such as children within the marriage, age when each spouse married, and length of the marriage, may contribute to divorce as well. Another reason for divorce was that the couple often grew apart and became bored with the monotony of everyday life with one another, and this seemed to be related to the length of time they were married and the age of each when they married.

While divorce may occur for many reasons, it may be pursued by both spouses in mutual agreement for the dissolution of the marriage, or it may be pursued by only one of the spouses due to one spouse's wrongdoing. The current study allowed participation by

those who divorced by mutual agreement and those where only one spouse prompted the divorce. The researcher noted that most research available to date focused on profound loss being defined as the death of a loved one as opposed to involving the loss of a spouse due to divorce. Due to this lack of research, it was difficult to effectively assist those suffering through the healing process after divorce.

Forgiveness

There are numerous definitions for and interpretations of the word *forgiveness* and many are quite similar. Forgiveness was defined by McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen (2000) as an individual, positive change towards the transgressor. Rye and Pargament (2002) and Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1996) more specifically defined forgiveness as the art of an individual putting negative thoughts and negative behaviors behind them and actually working towards developing a positive response toward or a positive rapport with their transgressor; moving away from revenge, aggression and towards a positive mind set. Wade, Worthington, and Haake (2009) defined forgiveness with regard to a valued relationship as involving fewer thoughts of vengeance, avoidance, and bitterness and more positive responses, behaviors, and thoughts. For the purposes of this study, the researcher defined forgiveness as the act of no longer holding a feeling of resentment towards the person by whom an individual feels he or she was wronged.

Forgiveness was paramount for an adult to continue with a healthy mental and physical life (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004). Ramsey (2008) suggested that two of the major components of a happy and full life included forgiveness and healing. Proper healing is also of great importance in maintaining a stable, loving

environment for children involved (Ramsey, 2008). Forgiveness plays a major role in healing; however, forgiveness may be the most difficult obstacle following divorce (Ramsey, 2008). Forgiveness may not salvage the post-divorce spousal relationship, but the forgiver will be able to obtain and maintain a better rapport with their offender, thereby allowing the forgiver to move forward in life and relationships (Metts & Cupach, 2007). Coyle (2002) suggested that it takes effort to forgive and the process is difficult, but the forgiver benefits in numerous ways such as lessened anger, sadness, depression, and anxiety as well as a sense of freedom from the hurt that once controlled the forgiver; the forgiver develops a sense of control of his or her life after fully forgiving.

Waldron and Kelley (2005) noted the level of difficulty with regard to forgiving a transgressor depends on the transgression. Further, the transgression may occur at the hand of a person(s) or through life circumstances. Within the process of forgiving a transgressor after divorce, many questions should be considered including why a marriage ended, whether there was financial difficulty, infidelity and/or a child born or brought into the marriage, and which spouse decided to end the marriage.

Theoretical Foundation

It is important to understand the adult developmental process and the events, challenges, and other life circumstances that influence a person's development into adulthood. Kegan (1994) proposed that society expects more from adults than often realized, thereby making adult development a more daunting task.

Kegan (1994) described four stages of consciousness or social development: including (a) adolescence, (b) parenting and partnering, (c) work and self-expansion, and (d) postmodern life. The third order of consciousness, work and self-expansion, which

was of primary interest in the current study, suggests that when the work and self-expansion stage is reached, the adult recognizes that he or she, as well as other adults, have specific needs and that his/her decisions, actions, and behaviors concerning those needs change and are governed by what should be unwavering values. At this stage, the adult recognizes that he or she has a unique point of view, has preferences, and has a specific role in society and moves away from the beliefs once held.

With adult development comes life experience. With life experiences come changes in individual thought processes and beliefs. Such changes are often achieved through transformational learning. Mezirow (2000) defined transformational learning as the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or justified to guide action. (pp. 7-8)

Merriam et al. (2007) found that transformational learning was about the dramatic and fundamental change in how people perceive themselves in the world in which they live. Transformational learning plays a large part in one's ability to forgive another, as an adult might discover that forgiveness is almost effortless in a certain part of life, but with additional life experience and transformational learning, forgiveness may become easier or even more difficult depending on the act that is to be forgiven. Transformational learning changes who we are, how we think, how we feel, how we respond, and what we believe.

The researcher discovered that while there is research available that addressed the factors that lead to divorce, most involved personality types and mental health issues such as depression and anger management. Koutsos, Wertheim, and Kornblum (2008), as well as Neto (2007), suggested that personality can be a predictor of one's willingness to forgive, while conversely, Hodgson and Wertheim (2007) reported that the ability to forgive is based on one's ability to manage his or her emotions. Rye et al. (2004) and Bonach (2007) reported the importance of forgiveness in establishing positive relationships between the ex-spouses. Brown (2003) and Ramsey (2008) agreed there is still much to be explained with regard to divorce and forgiveness; Hopper (1993) also noted divorce as being increasingly more common and supported the need for further research, and Worthington and Scherer (2004) supported the assertion that there is a need for additional research into what variables are involved in the process of forgiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore variables that differ between the two genders relevant to forgiveness post-divorce. While there was research available, there were many questions left unanswered, and with scores of self-help books available for assistance with divorce recovery, most did not discuss or explain the forgiveness process with regard to how it differed among gender.

Additional research outlining the differences in forgiveness between genders could in many cases be helpful to both ex-spouses, as it could allow them to understand each other and hopefully foster a healthier relationship than may exist otherwise. Additionally, information obtained from this study may provide assistance in self recovery and/or provide health care providers (i.e., psychiatrists, psychologists, marriage,

and family counselors) with a more in-depth look at the differences in men and women so they may provide more effective therapy and counseling sessions for their clients.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to determine if adults differ in the manner in which they forgive and, specifically, to answer these research questions:

1. Is there a difference in how men and women forgive the transgressor post divorce?
2. Does forgiveness occur more rapidly in men or women post divorce?

Hypotheses

The following were the hypotheses to be addressed by this study:

- H₁: There is a significant difference in how men and women forgive a transgressor post divorce.
- H₂: There is a significant difference in the rate at which men and women forgive post divorce.

Definitions

Divorce: Divorce is the legal termination of marriage (Sember, 2009).

For cause divorce: A divorce based on specific grounds such as adultery, inhumane treatment, and/or abandonment (Kurdek & Kennedy, 2001).

Forgiveness: Forgiveness is the act of no longer holding a feeling of resentment towards the person by whom an individual feels he/she was wronged (Enright & Human Development Study Group, 1996).

No-fault divorce: A divorce where neither spouse is guilty of any wrongdoing; divorce due to incompatibility (Kurdek & Kennedy, 2001).

Transformational learning: Learning that involves an individual moving from the mindset they have always had involving their view of beliefs and behaviors to a mindset that is more open minded, opinionated, and well rounded (Mezirow, 2000).

Delimitations

Participants were delimited to three categories including those who had been divorced less than five years, divorced five to 10 years, and divorced 10 years or more. Data collection was delimited to survey methodology and qualitative interviews. Participant selection was delimited to divorced adults who were employed by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and graduate students within the Department of Educational Studies and Research at a local state university.

Justification

While there was a tremendous amount of literature available on certain variables associated with divorce and the forgiveness process such as personality (Wigle & Parish, 1998), mental health condition (Barrett, 2003; Chatav & Whisman, 2007), and the management of emotions (Coyle, 2002), there was very little research available with regard to gender and forgiveness following divorce. The purpose of this study was to determine if gender influences forgiveness and hopefully provide additional information that was not currently available to therapists, counselors, pastors, and teachers that may in turn be helpful in the healing process of those dealing with divorce.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The foundation of the adult learning process comprises the development, exploration, and validation of reliable beliefs, as well as the ability to make grounded decisions, whereas transformative learning theory is noted as the adult's ability to devise new and modified interpretations of their understanding of life experiences (Taylor, 2008). With maturity gained in adulthood and the continuous changes in life, adults are forced to explore a more critical view of the world in an effort to better understand the world in which they live (Taylor, 2008). Forgiveness is one of many processes in life adults must face.

There was little information concerning the differences in the forgiveness process among genders. Much of the literature related to forgiveness has focused on personality traits, management of emotions, contextual factors, attachment styles, and religious affiliation as determinants of the ability or willingness and inability or unwillingness to forgive. Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia (2002) noted that the act of forgiveness has received little attention despite its common presence. The lack of information concerning gender differences reinforces the need for additional research.

Taylor (2008) found that as adults mature, they go through numerous life changes. Further, adults learn how to reflect on their views of life and adapt as necessary. This adaptation to the life changes was the transformative learning that Mezirow (1997) wrote about in earlier years. In this study, divorce was the life change that adults experienced, and their adaptation to their *new life* or *new way of thinking* was through transformative learning.

Mezirow's study provided a better understanding of transformative learning and what influences it had on adults. Mezirow (1997) suggested that transformative learning was deep-seated in how people communicate, and although a common learning experience, it is not only concerned with one's personal change. It is a process where adults change their thoughts and opinions of life experiences through critical reflection and confirm their beliefs through communication. This occurs while taking time for reflection and critical assessment.

Moon's (2011) study was similar to that of Mezirow (1997) in that they shared the same definition of transformative learning, but Moon took it a step further and looked at the older adult population. Moon (2011) examined bereavement among older adults and transformative learning and suggested the transformation process involved self-reflection, one's aptitude to accept a different perspective, and a willingness to change old behaviors to accept new ones. The findings of the study revealed the older adults experienced a change in their priorities with regard to personal and social goals and intra-/interpersonal relationships. Additionally, the older adults recognized a greater acceptance of death and issues related to death, as well as learning a new appreciation for life. The author suggests future research to involve a broader sample with greater diversity along with a longitudinal and cross-sectional study.

Like Mezirow (1997) and Moon (2011), Baumgartner (2001) also studied transformative learning, yet used terminology to provide a visual explanation of the transformation. Baumgartner (2001) defined transformation as significant, psychological change and suggested transformation may be further explained visually as a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. The author noted the growing interest in transformational

learning is due to the fact that the changes born from transformational learning have reached many people. The theory of transformational learning has provided a wealth of understanding to the world of adult education, as it has expounded on the meaning-making process. Baumgartner also found that decisive and specific reflection on the theory of transformational learning in addition to participation in serious discussion led to a better understanding of transformational learning.

While Mercer (2006) was in agreement with others such as Mezirow (1997) and Moon (2011) in defining transformational learning, he chose to study transformational learning in a different setting. He studied it in the area of theology. Mercer (2006) studied the idea of utilizing transformational learning theory in the development of critical theological thinking in hopes of provoking more action from adult lay Christians. An ordained Presbyterian theologian, Mercer suggested a need for lay and ordained deacons or elders who intend to minister to others at home and abroad to have a theological education in an effort to educate and transform Christians practices of faith that would give them the tools to transform the world. The author noted transformational learning theory was the best means by which to foster the critical thinking and reflection necessary to minister to others.

Similarly to Mercer (2006), Merriam and Ntseane (2008) also studied transformational learning in an understudied population. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) conducted a study to determine how culture shapes transformational learning. The study was conducted in the African nation of Botswana and took place with Merriam serving as the *outsider* and Ntseane as the *insider*. The study revealed several life events that *triggered* the transformational learning of certain individuals including death of family or

loved ones, health problems, and broken relationships. The transformation of those studied was noted as psychological, as they questioned their feelings and ways of thinking. Three cultural factors were identified as having part in the shaping of transformational learning for those studied. First, individual spirituality and the metaphysical world played a part in shaping the participants' learning. Witchdoctors and ancestor spirits were very real and important to the participants. The importance of witchdoctors and ancestor spirits reaffirm the traditional cultural and religious values, beliefs, ideas, and behaviors. For example, one man attributed the death of his child to a witchdoctor, but based on his religious and spiritual beliefs, he also believed his daughter was a saint. Second, each participant displayed a sense of family with regard to his or her responsibilities and relationships. A child was abused by his father. In an effort to turn his personal experience into a way to help his community, he later opted to help troubled children on the streets. Third, gender roles were evident in the learning experience, especially for women. Women in Botswana were not treated as equals to their male counterparts. With that being said, the nation has now moved towards gender equality.

Although Merriam and Ntseane (2008) conducted a productive study in Africa that brought about significant change among its people, Bennetts (2003) did the same in the United States years earlier. Bennetts (2003) studied a group of 197 individuals and the influence of transformational learning on the individuals, their relationships and communities. The individuals were part of a larger study, which involved the Second Chance Trust (SCT). The SCT was a trust that offered money to individuals over the age of 30 to assist in the production of change within one's life that would be beneficial to the community as a whole. Transformational learning was evaluated based on the extent to

which change occurred within the individuals in the areas of thought, emotion, behavior, relationships, and being. The categories where significant transformation was observed were individual transformation, dealing with and starting change within self and others, changed relationships, increased desire for education, career changes for the better, and an overall positive change in the quality of life. The author found that significant transformation was seen in the individuals as a result of small grants they received.

While Bennetts (2003) studied the extent to which participants changed in the areas of thought, emotion, and behavior, Merriam (2004) studied cognitive development, proposing it was involved in transformational learning by allowing the changes in thought, emotion, and behavior. Merriam (2004) suggested cognitive development plays a role in transformational learning because one must be at a level of maturity with regard to cognitive function in order to engage in transformational learning. Moreover, for transformational learning to occur, one must possess the ability to communicate rationally and to reflect critically, which are characteristic of higher levels of cognitive function. While suggesting cognitive development played a role in transformational learning, Merriam noted additional research was necessary to determine the extent to which cognitive development is essential and which variables influence its role.

Like many previous researchers, Brock (2010) agreed that transformational learning was important in the lives of adults; however, Brock not only studied the changes in adults through transformative learning, but also did so through reports of the participants themselves. Brock (2010) suggested that transformative learning has been of utmost importance in adult education for more than 35 years, when Mezirow classified it as part of the process adults engage in to change their worldviews. This study consisted

of 256 undergraduate business students and examined the students' reports of transformative learning and the 10 precursor steps experienced. The study noted the more incidences of transformative learning reported, the more precursor steps the students recalled experiencing. Of the 10 steps, the three that were most prevalent were critical reflection on assumptions, disorienting dilemmas concerning social roles, and trying on new roles. Brock suggested that with the increased prevalence of three of the 10 steps, these steps may be the three that were most important on which to focus to foster transformational learning.

Along with many colleagues, Taylor (2007) wrote about transformative learning and shared their beliefs about critical reflection, but Taylor also examined past research, noting future projections. In a review of past research, Taylor (2007) discussed transformative learning and the changes in research throughout the years of 1999 to 2005. The focus of research on transformative learning had been to identify occurrences and environments in which the learning took place. Taylor notes the focus had moved more recently not only to enabling transformative learning, but also to encouraging critical reflection, relationships, a personal viewpoint on transformation, and the meaning of experiences. Taylor also proposed that research on transformative learning would require methodology that was beyond traditional means such as longitudinal and mixed-method studies to learn more about fostering transformative learning in the future.

Studies of Divorce

Reasons and Predictions

Numerous authors wrote about transformational learning and the influences it had on adults throughout life events. The same was true about those who studied divorce, the

reasons for divorce and predictions for the future. Amato and Previti (2003) examined national data collected between the years of 1980 and 1997 to determine the reasons for the marriages of 208 couples ending in divorce. The research revealed the most common reason for divorce was infidelity. Following infidelity were incompatibility, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and growing apart. The reasons given for divorce varied by gender, socioeconomic status, specifically level of income and education, as well as life events such as the number of years married, age at time of marriage, and number of children involved. Further, the authors found that the ex-spouse who initiated the divorce proceedings seemed to exhibit more positive post-divorce adjustment, rendering a happier life.

Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, and Ragan (2010) took a different approach in their study as opposed to their colleagues in that they studied the influences of communication. They used data collected from 210 couples from the first five years of marriage to determine the influences, if any, of premarital communication on marital problems and divorce. From the study, the results concluded that premarital positive and negative communication was almost significant in predicting divorce. Negative communication that was reported by the couples was found to be a significant predictor of divorce. Additionally, negative self-reported and observed premarital communication was significant with regard to marital adjustment. The authors also discovered through this study that all the couples involved showed less and less frequency of negative communication over time in the marriage. Future research was suggested with regard to the topics of relationship distress and couples' intervention programs.

Similar to Markman et al. (2010), Amato and Rogers (1997) also conducted a study to see if they could pinpoint predictors of divorce. Their study aimed to determine if marital problems in the year 1980 could predict divorce between the years of 1980 and 1992. Specifically, the authors investigated the extent to which marital problems were influenced by demographics, life events, and gender. As a rule, women reported more problems within the marriage than the men; however, this was attributed to the men's tendency to report very few problems between the married couple and to blame the origin of those problems on the women. The authors determined that marital problems involving infidelity, alcohol and/or substance abuse, moodiness, jealousy, lack of communication, anger, and careless money spending were all good predictors of divorce between 1980 and 1992.

While Markman et al. (2010) as well as Amato and Rogers (1997) conducted studies to determine what factors could predict divorce among married couples, Knoester and Booth (2000) did just the opposite. They wanted to know what barriers within a marriage were capable of delaying or preventing divorce. They noted that barriers played a monumental role in the divorce process, as they may allow marriages to survive, prolong the decision for divorce, or prevent divorce altogether. Barriers which seemed to be of major importance or concern to those in the study included questions or issues related to suffering of the children involved, spousal religious beliefs about divorce, one spouse's dependence on the other, fear of losing a child, financial concerns, living within the residence, and the perceptions of family and friends. Of these, the most important barriers were those centered on the children involved. Even though the respondents in the

study noted certain barriers as important, none of the barriers seemed to deter divorce and became somewhat unimportant after the couple began to consider living apart.

Gender Roles

Authors such as Markman et al. (2010), Amato and Rogers (1997), and Amato and Priviti (2003) studied several factors or barriers that may predict, delay, or deter divorce, but Vannoy (2000) focused on gender roles alone. Vannoy (2000) studied a group of Catholic divorced women to determine how the women perceived their role in divorce and the divorce process. The study examined the women based on gender alone and then based on the women's level of nurturing. According to the study, women were more likely to initiate divorce proceedings than men, and the more nurturing the woman, the more likely she was to initiate the proceedings as well. Additionally, women in the study were found to be more likely to initiate the legal proceedings even when the women were not the ones who wanted the divorce. The third finding was centered on identity/ego strength. Vannoy defined identity/ego strength as synonymous terms referring to an awareness of one's self and an obligation to the makeup of one's self. Women who preferred to save their marriages scored higher on the identity strength components than did women who wished to divorce.

Similar to the study conducted by Vannoy (2000), Crane, Soderquist, and Gardner (1995) also explored the differences between genders, yet they focused on the differences in the cognitive and behavioral steps adults make in the divorce process. The only instrument used was the Marital Status Inventory (MSI). Responses were recorded for all 589 married couples in two trials. The authors found that women make a plan by which to move through the divorce process and follow it closely, whereas men do not. Also,

women were more prone to talk with friends about the divorce process than men, especially when making decisions. Lastly, the authors believed women articulate the thoughts, emotions, and actions of the divorce process more accurately than the men studied.

Walzer (2008) also examined the differences among gender and referred to gender differences as the “redoing” of gender after divorce (p. 6). Walzer noted that past research suggested couples in heterosexual marriages differ in their thoughts and opinions of career and love based on their gender. Additionally, Walzer suggested these same couples have a tendency to change their thoughts and feelings following divorce. In other words, men and women may unintentionally and unnoticeably swap roles after divorce. The author pinpointed four areas of gender differentiation including job salary, housework, parental role, and expression or communication of emotion. Walzer stated that if marriage was where gender became more identified then divorce is where those roles swapped meaning; masculine and feminine behaviors often change in marriage and divorce.

Children were thought to influence divorce and/or gender roles as well, according to study by Devine and Forehand in 1996. Through a longitudinal study, over a seven year period, Devine and Forehand explored the influences of marital roles and child factors on divorce. One hundred and forty young adolescents and their parents participated. The authors postulated that marital roles and children served as predictors of divorce. The study determined that both men and women with low levels of marital satisfaction were predictors of an increase in the potential for future divorce. This

increase in divorce potential predicted a greater chance of the couple's divorce even seven years later.

While studies had been conducted to determine the influences of children on divorce, Catlett and McKenry (2004) focused on the family structure as a whole. They examined the changes in the family structure with regard to gender during divorce. Twenty fathers were asked to provide written narratives to note feelings concerning divorce, specifically whether they felt their role as father and husband was negatively affected by the divorce. There were a significant number of men who reported transformation in their role of power within the family following divorce. The men reported they felt they lost authority they once had and felt they still deserved after divorce. Also, the financial and parenting authority they once held was no longer intact as it was prior to the divorce.

While his colleagues such as Vannoy (2000), Crane et al. (1995), and Catlett and McKenry (2004) explored gender roles in divorced couples, Kalmijn (2007) explored the differences in gender with regard to divorce, widowhood, and remarriage. Specifically, the author examined the differences in how children support their parents in times of divorce, widowhood, and remarriage. Kalmijn hypothesized that mothers would maintain their relationships with their children while fathers would not. There was a significant decrease in the relationship of support between children and their fathers following divorce, widowhood, and remarriage. Understanding fathers were not normally as close to their children as mothers during marriage and the differences in the ties of their relationships showed even more significantly depleted following the breakup of the

marriage. Additionally, gender differences were even more prominent when the marriage ended due to widowhood.

Pines, Gat, and Tal's (2002) colleagues had not examined gender differences as it relates to the divorce mediation; therefore, their study was somewhat different than the others. They investigated the gender differences in divorce mediation, particularly content and argument style. The study consisted of 30 Israeli couples undergoing divorce mediation. Results indicated significant differences among genders with regard to the content of the argument and the style by which they argued during mediation. While men argued as an attorney would from a legal standpoint with little or no emotion, women used a softer, more emotional tone which often came across as experiencing insult or pain. The authors' results of this study would prove beneficial to healthcare professionals and other professionals such as mediators, counselors, therapists, etc.

While Pines et al. (2002) examined gender differences during the mediation process, Kapinus and Flowers (2008) examined gender attitudes. They conducted a study to determine the gender differences, if any, in individuals' attitudes towards divorce, and the authors reported that in past studies women seemed to be more tolerant during the divorce process; however, this study seemed to show the results depended on the method used to measure the differences. The authors noted women to be more likely to make divorce more difficult in this study; however, other studies showed the opposite. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between those of the Protestant faith and those that maintained a conservative attitude about divorce.

Psychological and Physical Well-Being

In addition to gender roles, the psychological and physical well-being of those involved in divorce was of concern for some researchers. Duffy, Thomas, and Trayner (2002) conducted a study involving women who had been divorced for 10 years and the women's feelings since divorce. Of the 95 women studied, less than half remarried and of those who remarried, 10 had divorced for a second time. More women were involved in committed relationships, but did not remarry. One-quarter of those studied actually felt the same or even worse than when the divorce was final. Level of income was the variable most closely correlated with the women's level of self-esteem, self-control, and assessment of life. Most participants reported a gain in personal strength and feeling of well-being, but the authors suggested further research to detect culturally important strategies to assist women with strength that is needed in the early stages of separation and divorce and later strategies to move forward afterwards.

Four years after the study conducted by Duffy et al. (2002), which explored divorcees' feelings concerning well-being and personal strength, Lorenz, Wickrama, Conger, and Elder (2006) studied a group of 416 Iowa women through repeated interviews in the 1990s and again in 2001 to examine their levels of psychological stress and physical illness. Shortly following the participants' divorces from 1991 through 1994, the women reported a more noteworthy increase in the psychological distress than those who were married, but there was no difference noted with regard to physical illness. In 2001, the same women reported major increase in illness, although issues such as education, health, remarriage, level of financial stability, and age were controlled. Additionally, these women reported an increase in stressful life events beginning in 1994

through 2000, which led to an increase in feelings of depression in 2001 as compared to married counterparts.

After Duffy et al. (2002) studied the influences of divorce on well-being and personal strength of those involved in divorce, Williams and Dunne-Bryant (2006) conducted their own study. They suggested that divorce was persistent in American society and its toll on the health and well-being of adults was astonishing. With that belief in mind, the authors conducted a study to determine the influences of divorce on adult well-being. The authors were interested in determining who suffered the greatest negative effects on well-being, i.e., those who still had young children at home at the time of the divorce or those who did not. According to this study, women suffered the greatest with regard to well-being and the sufferings were more significant in the women who had young children at home. Women without children at home at the time of divorce did not seem to experience as many negative consequences on their psychological well-being.

Kalmijn and Monden (2006) also explored the well-being of divorced individuals and referred to the concentration of their study as the “escape” hypothesis (p. 1197). This hypothesis explained that people who divorced from an unhealthy or unhappy marriage experienced a lessened negative effect or even a positive effect on personal well-being. Data was analyzed from the National Survey of Families and Households, but the results were not as informative as the authors had hoped. When individuals from unhealthy or unhappy marriages divorced, the individuals experienced more depression than those who divorced from less unhealthy and less unhappy marriages; however, an increase in depression was mainly seen in women. Additionally, the study revealed that marital

aggression seems to increase the negative effects of divorce, but primarily in women, which suggested further research in the area of post-divorce adjustment.

Unlike most other researchers discussed thus far, Bevvino and Sharkin (2003) examined numerous factors that may have influenced divorce. The study examined the relationship between divorce, meaning of the divorce to those involved, adjustment, and gender. A sample of 119 volunteers were surveyed using five different instruments including the Constructed Meaning Scale, Sense of Coherence Questionnaire, Disentanglement subscale, Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, and the Scales of Psychological Well-Being. Additionally, volunteers provided answers to open-ended questions concerning the reasons for and outcome of their divorce. The authors selected seven variables to determine the psychological well-being of those surveyed after divorce. The variables included gender, level of education, which party initiated the divorce, length of separation, the separation itself, the level of understanding of those involved, and what the divorce meant to those involved. The study revealed that meaning was the most important variable analyzed. Those who found meaning or obtained meaning behind the divorce seemed to have an increased level of psychological well-being as opposed to those who did not discover meaning. Gender had no significant influence on meaning or level of well-being; however, women did tend to experience more positive experiences after divorce than men. With regard to reasons for divorce, women reported physical, emotional and mental abuse.

Like Duffy et al. (2002), Kalmijn and Monden (2006), and many others, Gahler's (2006) study examined divorced individuals to determine their psychological well-being. They reported on data collected as part of the Swedish Level of Living Surveys in 1981

and 1991, focusing on the divorced individuals' psychological well-being following divorce. This particular data was chosen as it would provide information on the same respondents from 1981 to 1991, thereby allowing for a longitudinal study. In the 1991 data, men and women reported higher incidences of psychological stress as opposed to their married friends and/or friends living with a partner. The author noted the distress experienced can only be to a very small extent, as some already suffered from poor psychological well-being before divorcing. Also, Gahler concluded there was an observable difference in the level of distress experienced which was gender based. The study revealed women tend to experience increased levels of stress prior to the divorce, whereas men tend to experience the like for a longer period of time following divorce.

Psychological well-being had been examined in the past, but Chatav and Whisman (2007) were more invasive with their participants, as their study involved the examination of the risk factors associated with divorce and psychiatric illness. The authors evaluated the association of divorce with mood, level of anxiety, and substance use/abuse over a 12 month period. Certain demographic information was obtained which including number of years married, gender, and race/ethnicity, while other information obtained included questions about parental unit, parental marital status, and parental mental illness. Results showed those who had gone through divorce were at a higher risk for mood swings, anxiety, and substance abuse. Additionally, whites were more likely to experience mood swings, while those who had parental units with no history of substance abuse were more likely to partake in substance abuse themselves.

Another study that examined the mental health of individuals going through divorce was Barrett (2003). The study examined the influences of divorce on the mental

health of individuals during the divorce process, specifically among African Americans and Caucasians. The author felt it was important to also include the timing or the stage at which an individual was in the divorce process, as timing had not been considered in most research prior to Barrett's. With regard to mental health, the variables considered are primarily depression and substance abuse/dependence. The author used data collected for the 1983 Piedmont Health Survey of the National Institute of Mental Health Epidemiologic Catchment Area Program for the study. Findings suggested gender did not affect the effects of mental health of divorced individuals; however, race contributed to the type of mental health issue(s) and the effect(s) associated with the mental issue.

Financial Issues

Gadalla (2008) conducted a study that did not focus on one's mental health, well-being, or personal strength; rather, Gadalla focused on income level, studying data collected from the Canadian Survey of Labor and Income Dynamics to determine the number of men and women who reported low income following divorce. The earnings reported were for the years 1999 through 2004. After analysis, the study revealed one in every five women reported low earnings in the year of divorce as opposed to one in every 13 men. Only 9.8% of men remained in the low income range for a year after divorce, whereas one-quarter of women remained for the same amount of time. Additionally, women below the age of 40 were at a much higher risk of continued poverty. The authors suggested additional research to include the length of time individuals remained in the low income status and risk of poverty for married couples that divorced versus couples who live together.

While gender had been examined in several studies, Sheets and Braver (1996) took interest in examining the differences among gender with regard to one's level of satisfaction following a divorce settlement. The authors began with the hypothesis that women were less satisfied with what they were awarded in the divorce proceedings than men. The study suggested women were actually more satisfied with the outcome than the men, especially in the areas of child custody/visitation, financial payments (excluding child support), and property. While investigating the reasons for the dissatisfaction, the authors determined the couples were more bothered by the actual process, which they felt was inequitable, as opposed to being bothered by the actual outcome of the divorce. The authors suggested that in an effort to prevent the men's dissatisfaction, they should be encouraged to speak out more during the decision-making process to protect them.

Following the study of Sheets and Braver (1996), Smock, Manning, and Gupta (1999) reported there being a call to the government by social scientists and commentators for the strengthening of divorce laws because research showed marriage is more advantageous economically speaking for women and their children. With that being said, the authors investigated whether or not divorced women would experience the same economic stability if they had stayed married as those who are married. Additionally, the authors explored the idea that all women were prey to the economy by examining married women's financial stability if they were to divorce. The study revealed that women who divorced would actually have had a more stable financial environment if they had stayed married, but the women's financial environment would not reach the heights of those who remained married. Additionally, of the married women studied, their financial stability would be equal to that of a divorced woman.

The findings of the study conducted by Sheets and Braver (1996) noted women were more financially stable than men following divorce. Rettig (2007) went a step further in conducting a study of women who married wealthy men and examined the outcomes when the marriages ended in divorce. The women studied reported injustices such as they were not treated fairly in the decision process nor did they receive fair distribution of assets, which led to the loss of some that were not divided. Additionally, the women were faced with other crises stemming from finances, such as tremendous debt, tax fraud, and bankruptcy. Some also lost custody of children and faced litigation to resolve some of the wrongdoings that went on for years without any relief. The author further noted the importance of education in the way of legal rights during marriage and divorce including education concerning the marital relationship, finances, custody, and non-marital assets.

Along the same lines of the study of Rettig (2007), Fisher and Lyons (2005) conducted a study to examine the effects of divorce on debt repayment following divorce. The authors hypothesized there would be a significant difference in debt repayment based on gender. The results of the study revealed divorced men did not have as much difficulty with debt repayment as women after divorce. Also, women on welfare had significantly less difficulty with debt repayment. Additionally, receiving child support and/or alimony had no significant bearing on one's ability to repay debt.

Similarly to Rettig (2007) and Sheets and Braver (1996), Barber (2003) conducted a cross-national study that involved 76 countries. The author entered the study with two hypotheses where Barber predicted the divorce rate would increase as women were more economically independent and as the spouses' emotional commitment to marriage

lessened. The results of the study supported the author's two hypotheses. Also, in countries where women outnumbered men, divorce was more prevalent than in countries where men outnumbered women. Barber noted the findings of the study were consistent with the analyses within countries, which suggested the difference between countries may be accounted for by the processes that affect divorce rates over time.

Race and Gender

While many factors that may influence divorce have been discussed, especially gender, McKenry and Fine (1993) conducted a study that examined not only gender, but race as well. They examined the differences in parenting of African American and Caucasian single mothers following divorce. The National Survey of Families and Households was analyzed for differences between the two races with regard to parenting style, expectations, and parental involvement. The study revealed African American single mothers are more stringent in a parental role and have higher expectations for children than do Caucasian single mothers. Further, in support of the more authoritative African American single mother, the belief was that the mother was more authoritative and expected more from the children in an effort to prepare the children for a life of hardship, violence, crime, unemployment, and racism. Even with higher expectations by the African American single mothers, the expectations although higher were not extreme. Additionally, the response of the black single mothers was somewhat expected as this parenting style is more normal for the black community.

McKenry and Fine (1993) were not the only researchers interested in the differences between the African American and Caucasian races. Orbuch, Veroff, Hassan, and Horrocks (2002) investigated the first 14 years of marriage in a sample of African

American couples and Caucasian couples. The authors were interested in predicting the stability of the marriages. The first hypothesis was that social and economic environments were predictors of divorce, while the second hypothesis was concerned with the interactions of the couples. With regard to the couples' social and economic environments, the authors honed in on the cruel social conditions including status, obstacles faced with being a parent, and familial obligations. The results of the study revealed that race and education were the two most common variables in divorce over 14 years of marriage. Additionally, while interpersonal relationships between the couples were also very common variables leading to divorce, these were more often dependent on race and gender.

Post-divorce Adjustment

To thoroughly assess different processes by which to increase positive post-divorce adjustment, Vukalovich and Caltabiano (2008) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of group intervention programs within communities on the adjustment to separation and divorce of married couples. Participants were interviewed prior to actual acceptance into the study and were required to complete questionnaires concerning demographics, the Self-Esteem Scale, the Social Support Appraisal Scale, and the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale. A total of 30 participated and completed the group intervention program. While there were some differences between the men and women with regard to adjustment following divorce or separation shown via the pre-intervention questionnaires, there were no differences in adjustment between men and women seen on the post-intervention questionnaires. The group as a whole made significant improvement in adjustment following their participation on the adjustment scales.

As a part of post-divorce adjustment, Kitson (1982) was interested in the influences of spousal attachment following divorce and investigated the influences of attachment to a spouse in a divorce. Using a sample of Cleveland men and women who were currently experiencing divorce, Kitson reported 86% of those involved displayed signs of attachment to the ex-spouses. Further determined, individuals who had recently decided to divorce and/or individuals who had been asked for a divorce experienced stronger feelings of attachment to the soon to be ex-spouse. Attachment feelings were more prevalent in the presence of feelings of distress and less prevalent in regard to resources and support. Kitson also determined that while distress and feelings of attachment were direct consequences of divorce, in some cases, feelings of attachment actually caused individuals to be distressed.

The study by Finzi, Cohen, and Ram (2000) was more specific than that of Kitson in 1982. Whereas Kitson only examined attachment in terms of whether it existed or not in those he studied, Finzi et al. (2000) studied the influences of attachment to a spouse on divorce by using Ainsworth's taxonomy of secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant attachment styles. This taxonomy presented six types of couples plus combinations. The authors hypothesized that one's pattern of attachment would determine what he or she experienced and how he or she dealt with the divorce, and the couple's patterns of attachment would determine a distinct group of dynamics between them. The first group, "secure-secure partners – semi separated couple" had low divorce rates and had a tendency to handle the divorce process with little adversity (Finzi et al., 2000, p. 6). "Secure-avoidant partners: emotionally withdrawn and non-communicative couples" revealed the avoidant partner as the individual to instigate the divorce proceedings in an

attempt to avoid rejection (Finzi et al., 2000, p. 7). This type of couple is likely to respond to the problematic relationship by flight. The third group, “secure-anxious/ambivalent partners: push-pull divorces” revealed the secure partner as the care provider and the anxious/ambivalent partner as the care seeker (Finzi et al., 2000, p. 9). Eventually, the secure partner will become quite frustrated and begin to resent the anxious/ambivalent partner due to his/her unwillingness to let go. “Anxious/ambivalent-avoidant: power struggle” causes the anxious/ambivalent partner to feel constant disappointment as the avoidant partner is unconcerned and unfocused (Finzi et al., 2000, p. 10). Throughout the divorce process, they tend to exhibit the fight and flight mentality. “Anxious/ambivalent-anxious/ambivalent partnership: enmeshed conflict” is comprised of individuals who search for a partner that is kind, and wish for closeness and responsiveness (Finzi et al., 2000, p. 12). These individuals tend to become one very easily and when the day of divorce proceedings arrives, they become very fearful of the outcome. The final type, “avoidant-avoidant couples: war” typically choose each other because they want to keep intimacy to a minimum (Finzi et al., 2000, p. 14). Upon divorce, the couple does whatever necessary to inflict hurt on the other as a form of retaliation.

Although post-divorce adjustment involves attachment to a soon to be ex-spouse, Sakraida (2005) claimed transitioning was also a factor in post-divorce adjustment. He explored the commonalities among middle-aged women (ages 40 to 54) who were transitioning from married to divorced life. These women were divided into three categories of women who (a) initiated the divorce, (b) did not initiate the divorce, and (c) mutually agreed with their spouse to divorce. Commonalities among the three groups

included depression, promotion of better health, new and meaningful relationships, new adult roles, and survival. New roles were taken on by the divorced partners as they had to learn how to move from a married person to a divorcee and/or single parent. With divorce comes a flood of emotions, and one has to cope with the situation and move through the emotions often leading to feelings of depression. The attitude of becoming healthier was not directly a result of divorce; rather the *new life* had a way of allowing one to focus on *self* more. Also, most reported wanting to move forward with dating in hopes of developing a new relationship.

Other factors in the process of adjustment after divorce are cognitive coping and psychological adjustment, according to Garnefski and Kraaij (2009). They examined stressful life events and the influences of those events on cognitive coping and psychological adjustment. Within the study, three categories of life events were established including divorce, bereavement, and physical illness. Throughout the different life events, there was significant evidence of the use of coping strategies. Those who experienced bereavement had significantly lower scores in the areas of “self-blame, planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective and other blame” (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2009, p. 176) as opposed to no significant differences in the scores of those experiencing physical illness or divorce. Also, there were no significant differences reported among the three life events with regard to depression.

Like Garnefski and Kraaij (2009), Hilton and Kopera-Frye (2004) explored psychological adjustment as well; however, their study involved divorced parents who had custody of their children. Several areas of adjustment were covered such as hostility, alcohol use/abuse, personal well-being, and depression. Custodial mothers and fathers

were examined. From the study, as a rule, custodial mothers in comparison with custodial fathers were significantly younger, less likely to *live with* another partner, and experienced more financial instability. Also, custodial mothers were less likely to participate in substance abuse, were more depressed, and were more hostile. Finally, the authors noted there was no difference in how the family functioned, satisfaction with life, personal mastery, or the well-being of the custodial parents.

Unlike their colleagues, Quinney and Fouts (2003) were interested in the aspect of divorce recovery groups while in the divorce adjustment process and conducted a study to analyze the influences of dispositional resilience on pre/post-divorce adjustment while in a divorce recovery group. A total of 75 adults participated and were given the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale along with another instrument to measure resilience. The resilience instrument was administered before and after the actual divorce. The divorce recovery workshops proved to be very beneficial to those involved and the level of individual resilience increased after workshop participation. The authors had several suggestions for further research including: (a) longitudinal study to assess resilience at different times throughout the adjustment period, (b) the use of a control group to measure the outside variable to ensure the divorce recovery workshop was solely responsible for the individual's increase in their level of resilience, (c) utilization of a more diverse population, i.e., individual ethnicity and adults facing different life events, and (d) development of divorce prevention strategies and intervention programs for adults in troubled marriages and then in divorce.

Divorce and Forgiveness

In 2008, Koutsos et al. studied the correlation between personality and the prediction of forgiveness. More specifically, they wanted to determine if three particular personality variables could predict one's disposition to forgive. Additionally, they wanted to know if those variables could predict one's willingness to forgive for a particular transgression while in the presence of certain contextual factors related to the type of transgression. The three types of variables examined included neuroticism, agreeableness, and spirituality. The results of their study showed that these three variables could in fact predict an individual's ability to forgive in general, but with regard to a specific transgression, agreeableness was the only variable that could be considered a predictor.

While Koutsos et al. (2008) explored personality and its ability to predict forgiveness, Yaben (2009) explored the actual role, if any, that forgiveness played in divorce and took into consideration gender, age, income, years of marriage, years since divorce, and moving forward with a new life. Gender was not a determinant of one's attachment style or any level of forgiveness according to Yaben's study. Yaben did determine forgiveness was dependent on income level, age at the time of divorce, years of marriage and years since divorce, loneliness, and being involved in a relationship. The actual level at which one had forgiven another was based on the ex-spouse being remarried or in an intimate relationship, loneliness, and being pro-marriage. The author suggested this study as a first step in investigating the relationship of forgiveness with other variables outside the scope of this study with the hopes of it being useful in future intervention programs for divorced individuals.

Similarly to Koutsos et al. (2008), Neto (2007) studied the role of personality in the process of forgiveness, thereby employing Costa and McCrae's Five-Factor Model of Personality to assess the relationship between personality and forgiveness. This particular model focuses on five factors of personality, which included "neuroticism-emotional stability, extraversion-introversion, openness-closedness to experience, agreeableness-antagonism, and conscientiousness-undirectedness" (Neto, 2007, pp. 2314-2315). Gratitude was the final factor that was analyzed. Neto found that neuroticism seemed to be positively associated with resentment and negatively with willingness to forgive. Additionally, agreeableness was found to be negatively correlated to resentment and positively with willingness to forgive. Finally, openness to new experience was positively correlated with one's sensitivity to surrounding circumstances. The other five factor domains were not significantly correlated with forgiveness.

Following a similar approach, Hodgson and Wertheim (2007) also conducted a study about predicting forgiveness. They proposed that one's ability to forgive was paramount for a successful relationship; therefore, this team investigated the influences of one's ability to forgive based on the individual's ability to manage his/her emotions. Hodgson and Wertheim utilized a multi-factor model for predicting forgiveness among individuals within a community and university, and the study determined that adults with the ability to manage their emotions had a greater probability of forgiving others.

In addition to forgiveness and post-divorce adjustment, Rye et al. (2004) studied the relationship between forgiveness of a past spouse and adjustment following divorce; the study measured forgiveness in regards to several mental health states. The authors concluded that divorced adults without negative feelings towards the ex-spouse and

divorced adults with positive feelings towards the ex-spouse were positively correlated with existential well-being. Existential well-being refers to a balance between one's physical, social, spiritual, and psychological aspects of life. Further, the majority of subjects within this study noted forgiveness was important to emotional healing post divorce.

Religious influences were the focus of Lawler-Row's (2010) study, which found that forgiveness is thought to be important by serving as a pathway for one to experience the religious influences on their health. To explore this idea, the author conducted three separate studies. Study 1 consisted of 605 older adults who reported they felt they had been forgiven of wrongdoing by God. The feeling of forgiveness was positively associated with the group's frequency in attendance of religious based meetings and prayer as well as belief in a caring God. Study 2 consisted of older adults who completed instruments focusing on state and trait forgiveness in addition to religiosity and health. Those who exhibited trait forgiveness showed an association between prayer and internal religious feelings or beliefs in regard to their symptoms when ill. Study 3 used middle aged adults who completed the same instruments as Study 2, and this group found that state forgiveness was the driving force in the relationship of their existing well-being, including symptoms and medication, while trait forgiveness was the driving force between their religious health, internal religiosity, and their sleep quality. This demonstrated that, overall, forgiveness played a significant role in the religion-health relationship.

As in the study of Rye et al. (2004), Lawler et al. (2005) examined the association of personal health, forgiveness, and divorce. Specifically, they investigated the

relationship between state and trait forgiveness and personal health. State forgiveness referred to the influence a certain recalled memory of an act of betrayal has on a person, while trait forgiveness referred to a person's ability to forgive in general. Four means by which forgiveness could increase physical health were analyzed including spirituality, social skills, reduction in negative effect, and reduction in stress. All four of the factors investigated proved to influence forgiveness either partially or in full, thereby supporting the idea that forgiveness or the lack thereof had a direct influence on physical health.

While maintaining focus on forgiveness, Bonach (2007) also considered the influence of a positive relationship between ex-spouses on forgiveness. She noted a positive, supportive relationship between divorced spouses was in the best interest of the adults as well as children involved. Bonach proposed that the interjection of a forgiveness intervention model would prove helpful in allowing divorced adults to move beyond the resentment and negative feeling held by each in an effort to harbor a more positive, supportive, and civil relationship. The forgiveness intervention model discussed in this article involved three stages, which include the crisis, transition, and readjustment. The crisis stage focused on the individual being able to assess, manage, and recognize the crisis at hand. Adult actions included setting boundaries and developing a support system for the duration of the crisis. The transition stage involved the adult working through the crisis by finding meaning in and understanding the reason for the crisis. In this phase, adult actions included obtaining and maintaining civility with the ex-spouse and focusing on the needs of the involved children. The readjustment stage involved adult actions such as forgiveness of the ex-spouse and quality co-parenting.

Much like Lawler-Row in 2010, Krumrei, Mahoney, and Pargament (2008) conducted a study focused on forgiveness and religion. They studied a group of divorced individuals identified from divorce records that reported turning to God in order to forgive during and after divorce. The study involved two time periods. The first group, referred to as “Time 1 or T1” (Krumrei et al., 2008, p. 302), referenced those who turned to God to forgive themselves, the ex-spouse, and God at the time of the divorce, whereas “Time 2 or T2” (Krumrei et al., 2008, p. 302) referred to those that turned to God to offer forgiveness one year after divorce. Of those studied, 75% reported turning to God to forgive. Additionally, T1 individuals “predicted higher levels of T2 positive spiritual emotions, T2 verbal aggression by the participant and ex-spouse, and T2 demonization of ex-spouse” (Krumrei et al., 2008, p. 302).

Along the lines of the study conducted by Rye et al. (2004), Murray (2002) also conducted a study that involved mental health, concluding that forgiveness had a positive influence on those in varying types of relationships including marriage, family, interpersonal, and those who were committed to one person. Family therapists have felt forgiveness was of great importance in working with clients undergoing psychotherapy and interest has increased since the mid-1980s. Further, Murray stated forgiveness could be utilized as a therapeutic tool with which to work through a host of issues involving relationships, chemical dependency, anger, divorce, and loss.

Spirituality and well-being were the focus of the study by Ramsey (2008), who found that one of the most profound areas where one’s spirituality and well-being meet was where one’s internal conflicts met forgiveness and healing. Ramsey, along with others, believed forgiveness was vital to a healthy life because forgiveness and healing,

from a spiritual sense, were the medications necessary for people to become whole again and live healthy lives. While the study supported forgiveness as a positive factor in life, Ramsey also suggested forgiveness was as difficult to explain theoretically as it was to practice in real life.

Worthington and Scherer (2004) proposed forgiveness to be a survival strategy devised purely of emotion that leads to better health. In this study, the authors provided evidence that unforgiveness, one's unwillingness to forgive, proves to be stressful and can lead to poorer health. Forgiveness is viewed as the strategy by which an individual can move through a stressful situation into a positive one, thereby allowing an individual to become healthier than before.

Along with Yaben (2009), Sidelinger, Frisby, and McMullen (2009) suggested gender played a significant role in forgiveness following divorce. This study utilized the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) to measure forgiveness. These researchers suggested forgiveness required several emotions or actions including the ability to understand another's hardships, hurts, or issues and caring about them to the extent that one could be responsive to their needs. The study concluded that men were more forgiving than women when transgressed by a partner. Additionally, men who were transgressed by a partner felt less hurt than women when confronted with transgression.

In summary, divorce may come about for a multitude of reasons including infidelity, communication, finances, and children. Additionally, in past research, many significant differences have been shown between gender and other divorce-related issues such as post-divorce adjustment, financial stability, psychological and physical well-being as well as parent-child relationships. With the plethora of research in the area of

divorce, the research was still somewhat lacking in the area of the relationship between gender and forgiveness.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods approach to explore forgiveness after divorce. The four instruments used were the Enright Forgiveness Inventory, the Learning Activities Survey, the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, and a structured interview.

Participants

The participants consisted of divorced adults throughout the state of Mississippi who were employed by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and graduate students in the Department of Educational Studies and Research at a local state university. Participants were categorized as divorced for less than five years, divorced five to 10 years, or divorced 10 years or more. It was anticipated a minimum of 75 individuals would participate and a minimum of 65 would submit completed questionnaire packets. Only 31 completed packets were returned. Of the completed packets, it was anticipated 10 to 12 participants would volunteer for a structured interview. Ten participants were interviewed.

Instrumentation and Research Design

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) (Appendix A) was developed by Enright and Rique (2000) to measure psychological variables of forgiveness that were not scientifically measurable by the instruments available including the Interpersonal Relationship Resolution Scale, Forgiveness of Others, and the Wade Forgiveness Scale. Existing instruments, such as the Interpersonal Relationship Resolution Scale (Hargrave & Sells, 1997), Forgiveness of Others (Mauger et al., 1992), and the Wade Forgiveness Scale (Wade, 1989), focused on identifying the offender, feelings of hurt within a family,

global interpretation of holding a grudge, and seeking revenge. The EFI focused on the measurement of the degree to which the offended forgives his or her transgressor through subscales involving cognition, behavior, and affect (Enright & Rique, 2000).

The EFI began as a 150-item scale; however, after it was administered to a group of 197 college students and their same-sex parents, the design team narrowed the scale to its current 60-item scale based of the “statistical criteria of excellence” (Enright Forgiveness Inventory, 2004, p. 14), i.e., the items had to show a moderate or positive correlation with the relative subscale scores as well as low correlation with the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. The 60-item version allowed a six-choice Likert-type scale ranging from 1 being “strongly disagree” to 6 being “strongly agree.”

According to the EFI (Enright Forgiveness Inventory, 2004), the reliability estimate for this inventory is Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient of internal reliability across the 60-item scale. The first four times the EFI was administered, the findings provided results that supported internal reliability with strong Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients, which ranged from .98 to .99. For further testing of the EFI’s reliability, a group of college students were tested on two different occasions with a four week time span in between each test, and this study revealed positive correlations ranging from +.67 to +.91 during the two administrations. The small variation in the results is attributed to the forgiveness process taking different frames of time depending on the person forgiving. The EFI was administered to the participants to evaluate forgiveness of their former spouses.

According to Enright and Rique (2000), the most important question on the EFI was whether or not participants reported forgiving their offender. In other words, the

EFI's ability to measure forgiveness was dependent on whether or not the respondents reported forgiving their offender. The expected correlation between the EFI and the 1-item Forgiveness scale is reported as .70. If the respondent did not answer the question, the level of forgiveness of their offender could not be calculated. The Wade Forgiveness Scale has also been used to evaluate the validity of the EFI and Pearson's Correlation Coefficients between the EFT, 1-item Forgiveness Scale and the Wade Forgiveness Scale was found to be strongly positive across the three studies ranging from .53 to .79. The EFI was administered to the participants to analyze their scores with regard to affect, cognition, and behavior.

The Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) (Appendix B) was created by Fisher in 1976 as part of his doctoral dissertation while at the University of Northern Colorado. The instrument was later revised and improved in 1978. The FDAS consists of 100 questions and utilizes a five-choice Likert-type scale ranging from 1 being "almost always" to 5, "almost never." The reliability of the FDAS has been measured through the Alpha Internal Reliability test, rendering a total score of .985. The FDAS contains six subscales including feelings of self worth, disentanglement of love relationship, feelings of anger, symptoms of grief, rebuilding social trust, and social self worth. The subscale reliability scores range from .87 to .95. The Divorce Seminar Center, which now has the rights to the FDAS since Fisher's death, followed a group of 100 people over a three-year period. The FDAS was administered to the group of 100 after one year of divorce and then again after three years. The scores increased after one year, but increased even more as they reached the three year mark, thus indicating the FDAS was a valid instrument.

The FDAS was administered to the participants of this study to evaluate each participant's feelings about divorce.

The Learning Activities Survey (LAS) (Appendix C) was developed by King (2009) to identify and evaluate transformative learning experiences in adults. The original version of the survey consisted of 14 questions with multiple-choice answers, some with requests for explanation from the participant. The reliability of the LAS was more difficult to establish due to the fact the instrument was completed at different points in time, which may lead to obtaining different responses about different points of view. King (2009) wrote with regard to reliability process of the LAS that several items were used in the final evaluation of the instrument to determine if the adult experienced a transformation in his or her thinking, beliefs, or point of view in relation to his or her educational experience. In King's evaluation of each of the items in the survey individually, a PT-Index was determined, which strengthened the reliability of the LAS.

Validity of the LAS was reached through several different procedures. Pilot studies were conducted involving structured interviews utilizing critical incidents, repeated sampling, real time changes to the instrument, and successive interviews. Additionally, a panel of experts in the field of transformational learning made suggestions for changes in the instrument. The validity of the LAS was strengthened through the use of the instrument accompanied by structured interviews.

Demographic data were collected through survey methodology. Data included gender, length of marriage upon divorce, time passed between divorce and this study, and age group, which was divided into five categories including ages 21 to 30, 31 to 40, 41 to

50, 51 to 60, and 61 plus. Participants were also asked if they would be willing to participate in a structured interview.

Structured interviews (Appendix D) were conducted with 10 participants to produce a mixed-methods study. Demographic data were collected about the participants who consented to be interviewed, as well as the length of time since an individual's divorce, who filed for divorce, had they forgiven their ex-spouse, at what point between marriage and divorce did they forgive their ex-spouse, and the number of children involved at the time of the divorce. The interview questions, developed by the researcher, were focused on the emotions and perceptions the participant had or still has concerning the divorce, the process the participant used in an effort to forgive the ex-spouse, and feelings about the forgiveness of the ex-spouse for the purpose of obtaining a more in-depth explanation of each participant's individual experience.

Procedures

An application was sent to The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain approval to proceed with the study and use the requested subjects, employees from the Department of Mental Health (DMH). Following IRB approval (Appendix E), a written request was sent to the Executive Director of the Department of Mental Health (Appendix F) providing information on the study and requesting permission to use DMH employees as participants in this study. Upon receiving written approval from the DMH Executive Director (Appendix G), a written announcement (Appendix H) was provided to the Program Directors throughout DMH programs by the Executive Director at a monthly meeting. The announcement provided an explanation of the study and the instruments being used. The Program Directors

provided the program Human Resource (HR) Directors with the announcement and dispersed it to staff members at their programs through program-wide e-mails and newsletters. A letter (Appendix I) was sent from the researcher to each Program Director reminding them of the announcement the Executive Director had given them previous weeks. Additionally, the letter included more information about this study and copies of the instrument packets. Those willing to participate were provided with a packet from the HR Offices that included the three questionnaires and a cover letter (Appendix J) explaining the study along with the researcher's contact information and instructions on how to return the completed packets. Additionally, the packets contained an authorization to participate (Appendix K) as required through the IRB. All completed questionnaires returned were collected by the HR Offices and sent to the researcher in envelopes with no return address to maintain anonymity. The researcher randomly placed the completed surveys in a box until the time of data analysis. For those willing to participate in the structured interview, they were asked to provide their name, address, and telephone number when they completed the three questionnaires.

Upon review of all completed questionnaires, the researcher did not have enough participants to move forward with data analysis as there were only 31 returned completed. The researcher requested approval from the university's IRB to add another sample group to the study, the graduate students enrolled in a department at a local state university. Once approved by the IRB (Appendix L), the researcher e-mailed 10 instructors within or affiliated with the department and asked that they forward the survey information to their students (Appendix M). The researcher used Qualtrics software for designing and distributing online surveys for the students to complete. None of the

graduate students completed a questionnaire. The researcher sent a second e-mail to the instructors to be sent out to the graduate students and, again, there was no response.

Data Analysis

Once the data were collected and the questionnaires were scored, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine the significance of the results obtained based on gender with regard to the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) and the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS). Due to the format of the Learning Activities Survey (LAS) and structured interviews being qualitative in nature, content analysis was used to determine the influence of gender on transformational learning and on forgiveness post divorce.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore variables that differ among the two genders relevant to forgiveness post divorce. The researcher analyzed the collected data utilizing a MANOVA to determine if the hypotheses were supported. The hypotheses were as follows:

H₁: There is a significant difference in how men and women forgive a transgressor post divorce.

H₂: There is a significant difference in the rate at which men and women forgive post divorce.

Three instruments were analyzed including responses to the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS), and the Learning Activities Survey (LAS). All three instruments included questions that were answered by using a five or six-value Likert-type scale. Short answers were also required for questions pertinent to the participant on the LAS. A fourth instrument, the structured interview, was completed by 10 participants who agreed to be interviewed by the researcher, and those responses were also analyzed.

After receiving IRB approval, data were collected from individuals employed with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and from graduate students enrolled in one department at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). The data were collected to determine if there is a difference in how men and women forgive following divorce and if one gender forgives more quickly than the other.

DMH employees were allowed access to paper copies of the instruments while USM students were allowed electronic access. The electronic questionnaires were designed using Qualtrics and a link was provided to the students for access through the e-mails provided to their instructors. The students used the link to reach the site and logged in using their university usernames and passwords to complete the questionnaires. The return rate of completed surveys was much lower than anticipated. It was anticipated that at least 65 completed surveys, including the EFI, FDAS, and LAS, would be collected; however, only 31 surveys were returned completed. Additionally, it was anticipated that 10 to 12 participants would agree to participate in the structured interviews; 10 individuals participated in the interviews.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The EFI included 60 items that were divided into three subscales: affect, behavior, and cognition. All positive subscale responses were coded during the data entry process as they were provided by the participants, while the negative subscales were reverse scored through reverse coding in SPSS. SPSS, Standard GradPack version 21 for Windows was the statistical software the researcher used for this project. Positive and negative scores were combined to obtain a Cronbach's alpha for each subscale total as well. A pseudo-forgiveness scale was also analyzed from five items that were not measured in any other subscale. Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the reliability of the instrument, which required an alpha of 0.7 or greater. Table 1 displays the Cronbach's alpha obtained for each subscale, as well as the item numbers involved in each calculation.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha and Subscales for the Enright Forgiveness Inventory

EFI subscale	Cronbach's alpha	EFI item number
Positive Affect	.938	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19
Negative Affect	.962	2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20
Total Affect	.968	1 – 20
Positive Behavior	.948	21, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 38, 40
Negative Behavior	.916	22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 39
Total Behavior	.961	21 – 40
Positive Cognition	.929	44, 45, 47, 50, 51, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60
Negative Cognition	.947	41, 42, 43, 46, 48, 49, 52, 53, 55, 58
Total Cognition	.964	41 – 60
Total EFI	.978	1 – 60
Pseudo-Forgiveness	.843	61, 62, 63, 64, 65

Following the determination of reliability of each subscale using Cronbach's alpha, independent *t*-tests were completed for the same subscales. The *t*-tests were completed to aid in the determination of statistical significance of each subscale to accept or reject the study's hypotheses. Results of each *t*-test were interpreted by the researcher to determine if these were significant differences for each subscale. Levene's Test of

Equality of Variances yielded an F-value and a significance value, and the *t*-test for Equality of Means yielded a two-tailed significance value. The researcher selected which data row to analyze based on which row tested at Levene's significance value greater than .05 and the *t*-test two-tailed significance value of greater than .05. If the two values were greater than .05, it was concluded that there was no significant difference between men and women with regard to a subscale. If the two values were less than or equal to .05, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between men and women in a subscale. As with the reliability testing, the subscales included were positive, negative and total subscale results for affect, behavior, and cognition. Additionally, results were obtained for pseudo-forgiveness, a total for all subscales combined, and for the attitude scale. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was not significant for any subscale; therefore, the *t*-test reported was that assuming equal variances. Table 2 displays the findings the *t*-test for significance.

Table 2

t-test Results for the Enright Forgiveness Inventory

EFI subscale	2 tailed <i>t</i> -test significance
Positive Affect	.88
Negative Affect	.20
Total Affect	.43
Positive Behavior	.82
Negative Behavior	.93
Total Behavior	.87

Table 2 (continued).

EFI subscale	2 tailed <i>t</i> -test significance
Positive Cognition	.64
Negative Cognition	.47
Total Cognition	.53
Total EFI	.89
Pseudo-Forgiveness	.97
Attitude Scale	.30

With all significance values exceeding a significance level of .05, the positive, negative, and total values of the subscales including affect, behavior, cognition were not statistically significant; therefore, the researcher rejected Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference in how men and women forgive a transgressor post-divorce. Additionally, the values obtained for the total EFI and pseudo-forgiveness subscales were not statistically significant. The attitude scale was used to determine the extent to which participants had forgiven their ex-spouses. With Levene's and two-tailed significance values of greater than .05, there was no significant difference found in the rate at which men and women forgive their ex-spouses post divorce; therefore, the researcher rejected Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in the rate at which men and women forgive post divorce.

The FDAS was administered using all six subscales and percentages were calculated to determine participant percentile scores in order to determine where their total scores fell on the FDAS profile. The 84th percentile is one standard deviation above

the mean and the 16th percentile is one standard deviation below the mean. The results concluded that the participants' scores fell between the seventh percentile with a total score of 258 of a possible 500 and the 59th percentile with a total score of 395 of a possible 500. The statistical importance of these findings is that the score at the seventh percentile means seven out of 100 people scored lower than this participant and 93 scored higher, while the score at the 59th percentile means that out of 100 people, 59 scored lower than this participant and 41 scored higher. The total score represents how well the participant adjusted to the ending of a love relationship, which in this study represents divorce meaning the participants had not adjusted to divorce as well as most.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to obtain more specific information concerning the events that led to the participants' divorces as well as the participants' thoughts, feelings, and emotions about the events that were not made evident through their responses to the other instruments. Responses to the structured interviews were reviewed by the researcher for commonalities among participants. To ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity for this study, the names of each participant were changed. There were 10 structured interviews, conducted with four males and six females, all with varying years since divorce, occupations, races, educational levels, and ages. Demographic data were collected utilizing the Learning Activities Survey. All of the participants referenced below were employees with the Department of Mental Health as none of the questionnaires were returned completed by the graduate students. Table 3 displays demographics about each participant interviewed.

Table 3

Demographics for Structured Interview Participants

Name	Age/ Gender	Race	Education	Occupation	Years Post divorce
Bob	36/M	Caucasian	Bachelor's	Management	3 years
Cindy	28/F	Caucasian	Bachelor's	Management	5 years
Mike	39/M	African American	High school	Other	14 years
Ray	56/M	Caucasian	High school	Manual Laborer	23 years
Grace	31/F	Caucasian	Master's	Education	2.8 years
Susan	42/F	African American	Master's	Psych/Social	6 years
Amy	24/F	Caucasian	High school	Other	1 year
Deb	38/F	Caucasian	Bachelor's	Management	8 years
Christy	35/F	Caucasian	High school	Clerical	7 years
Tim	51/M	Caucasian	Master's	Administration	13 years

Numerous commonalities among interview participants were noted. Six of the 10 participants asked their spouses for a divorce, while only three were asked for a divorce by their spouses. One divorce was a mutual decision. The six participants who asked their spouses for a divorce were all women, and this finding supported an earlier study conducted by Vannoy (2000) in which women were found to be more prone to initiate a divorce, and in relationships where the male initiated the divorce, the woman still initiated the divorce proceedings process.

When asked about the most difficult problem following divorce, excluding forgiveness, the three main responses involved children and finances. Cindy, who works in management, noted “Raising my child alone for sure. It’s really hard to work two jobs and get him to and from school, after school events, doctors’ appointments, etc.” Bob, who also works in management, noted “. . . not being able to see and talk to my girls every day” as his greatest problem following divorce. Both admitted that prior to the divorce they did not consider the stress that accompanies raising their children alone and/or not seeing their children on a regular basis, as well as the anxiety that is felt in such situations.

Financial instability was reported as a problem for participants ranging from financial issues with regard to raising children and household bills. Deb, a manager with DMH, discussed her lack of money as the major problem following her divorce and also claimed it as the one disadvantage of being divorced, stating, “Most people would probably say raising two kids by myself if they were in my situation, but for me, it’s mostly finances. There’s never enough and when there is, something else always comes up! Like right now, I have a negative \$800 balance in my checking account. Just do what you can, ya know?” Ray, a manual laborer, also reported concerns with finances stating, “Paying the bills. T (what he called his wife) made most the money so I didn’t have to worry about what I spent when she was there. Now, I don’t have enough to make ends meet.” Both of these participants were extremely concerned with a lack of money once they were alone, as neither seemed to expect financial instability to be their main problem following divorce.

When participants were asked to offer the main disadvantage to being divorced, Tim, Amy, and Susan stated that loneliness was the main disadvantage for them, with Susan stating, "I have no one to share my life with anymore. Going home to an empty house is extremely lonely." Tim stated, "the loneliness. . . it's bad. You can only play so much on the computer, clean, and stuff. I guess I'm one of those men that, umm, I said I wasn't gonna be, but I like having a woman around." Amy seemed to relate more to Tim in regard to the loneliness, as she stated, "I don't have any family so his family was my family, too, and now I don't have them to talk to, go places with, etc. I not only get to come home to an empty house because he's not there, but he took my family, too. The loneliness is often unbearable." Interestingly, Susan who works in psychology with a master's degree and had been divorced for six years seemed as though she had accepted her situation more so than Tim, who works in administration with a master's degree and had been divorced for 13 years.

Further, when all of the participants were asked at what point they realized their views and/or perspectives had changed, they attributed the change to their divorce. They began to question their thoughts and behaviors towards others, especially of the opposite gender, and some verbalized they were no longer as comfortable in social settings as they had been prior to divorce. Additionally, those with social setting issues reported they chose to stay at home when given the option to do so as opposed to engaging in any type of social network and gathering. Both the change in their views/perspectives and questioning their behaviors and social roles supported Mezirow's definition of transformational learning. Mezirow (1997) defined transformational learning as a process

that involved one's ability to examine their beliefs through critical thinking and reflection and then act on their reflective insight.

Additionally, female participants seemed more willing to share their feelings and emotions with the researcher than the male participants. Most of the male responses were in the form of yes or no, whereas the females tended to expound on their responses. When asked if the participants were angry with or disappointed in themselves because the marriage ended, the male participants would provide really short answers or place blame on the other party regardless of the events that led to the divorce. The women would answer with yes or no then expound, as in the interview with Cindy, who stated "Yes, to both. I consider myself an intelligent person and to fail at marriage was a huge blow to my self-esteem and self-worth. I felt like a failure [laughing]; heck, I still do at times." These findings supported the findings of Crane et al. (1995), who wrote that women are more articulate in their thoughts, emotions, and actions during divorce. The women seemed relaxed when sharing their thoughts, often smiling throughout the interview, and were even able to laugh at themselves after realizing what they had said. The men answered the questions, but seemed more hesitant in doing so and seemed somewhat uncomfortable at times.

When analyzing the results of the LAS with regard to the 10 participants that were interviewed, common themes were also seen among the interviewed participants. When provided a list of options that may have been used to work through the divorce process, common choices selected were talking with friends or others about their concerns, journaling, and personal reflection. In talking with friends, some participants noted they chose the friend with whom they discussed their divorce based on the friend having been

through divorce as well. All the participants reportedly took time for personal reflection and several noted personal reflection as the most difficult option to work through. Reportedly, personal reflection required them to rethink certain situations that took place during their marriages, and they realized how they could have behaved differently to possibly lead to a more positive result. Personal reflection allowed them to *see* parts of themselves they did not like.

When provided a list of statements that may have applied to the participants when they thought about past experiences, they chose two; they had a past experience where they questioned their normal behavior and their ideas about social roles, which correlated with the findings of the qualitative interview responses. They questioned if their behavior was more or less inappropriate or unwelcomed when in contact with those of the opposite gender in contrast to their pre-divorce behavior; divorce provided a sense of uncertainty in how others viewed them after divorce. Social roles were just as uncomfortable for the participants; Cindy replied, “I don’t get to hang out with people much after the divorce because I’m so busy with the house, kids, and work, so I’m always unsure of what to say; I’m really conscious of how others respond to me, and I feel like a stranger to those I’ve known all my life. It sounds crazy, but it’s true!”

Summary

Among the commonalities discovered when comparing results of the interviews and LAS, participants chose the same options for assistance in working through the divorce process as well as their social roles, behavior, and thoughts. More often than not, participants sought out a friend who had experienced divorce in the past to talk with about his or her situation and often found additional comfort through personal reflection

and journal writing. Additionally, participants agreed they felt differently post divorce about their thoughts, behavior, and social roles as opposed to when they were married.

CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW

Relationship of the Literature to the Findings

There was no significant difference in how men and women forgive post-divorce, or how rapidly men and women forgive post-divorce according to the results of the FDAS and the EFI. Yaben's study in 2009 supported the findings of the FDAS and EFI in this study in that Yaben noted that gender was not a determinant of any level of forgiveness. Conversely, Sidelinger et al. (2009) disagreed with Yaben (2009), as their study suggested gender played a significant role in forgiveness following divorce.

The six females who were interviewed each reported that she asked her spouse for a divorce. Four men who were interviewed asked their wives for a divorce, while the tenth interview noted the divorce was a mutual agreement. This finding was supported in a study by Vannoy (2000) in which women were found to be more prone to initiate a divorce and in relationships where the male initiated the divorce, the woman typically initiated the divorce proceedings process.

In the current study, women were also more apt to discuss their feelings and emotions without reservation and expound on the topics, while the men often answered with a yes or no response. The women seemed more relaxed when sharing their thoughts, often smiling throughout the interview, and were even able to laugh at themselves after realizing what they had said. Crane et al. (1995) found that women are more articulate in their thoughts, emotions, and actions during divorce and their findings supported those of the researcher as well.

Yaben (2009) conducted a study about what role forgiveness played in divorce and incorporated several variables for consideration including gender, income, years of marriage, and years since divorce. According to the study, Yaben found that gender was not a determinant of the level of forgiveness, and these findings were supported by the present study as there was no significant difference between genders with regard to participants' level of forgiveness when the EFI was analyzed. Conversely, Sidelinger et al. (2009) concluded from their study that gender played a significant role in forgiveness and, further, that men were more forgiving than women. The present study may not support Sidelinger et al. due to a small sample size mostly composed of women.

Limitations

The study had several limitations including the sample group and low response rate. Initially, the sample was to be taken from those employed with the DMH. Even though the project was advertised to all programs under DMH supervision and deadlines were extended twice, there was still very low participation. In an effort to increase the sample size, graduate students who were enrolled within the department of Educational Studies and Research at a local university were included in the study. With this group, access to the surveys was made available in electronic format in hopes of a better return. Again, the response rate was low. A total of 31 surveys was collected from the combined groups.

It is possible the limited participation may have been due to the project topic, as many find talking about or revisiting the emotions that come with divorce too painful to relive or too embarrassing to discuss freely. Others may have been fearful of discussing the topic because divorce is quite personal; some may not have wanted their feelings,

thoughts, and actions made public despite the researcher's assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Pending custody arrangements and/or pending court cases may have had some bearing on participation, as in many legal matters those involved are often instructed not to discuss the case with others. Some may have been unable to take the necessary time to complete three surveys, which was time consuming. The results may be limited in that more women than men elected to participate. Additionally, race may have factored in as a limitation in that of 10 participants, only two were African American.

It was also possible that the study had limitations due to the researcher being a 39-year old, Caucasian, female manager in mental health and teacher with a Master's degree. The researcher had been divorced for seven years and had a nine-year-old son.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of the study, the researcher has several recommendations for further research:

1. The study needs to be replicated with a larger sample group.
2. The study should use fewer instruments.
3. The researcher should offer incentives.
4. The researcher should not be divorced.

Conclusion

This study sought to determine if there was a significant difference in how men and women forgive after divorce and if there is a significant difference in the rate at which men and women forgive post divorce. Neither hypothesis could be supported by the findings of this study; however, the study provided an opportunity to add new

information from these participants that may lead to additional research.

Certain areas of the study coincided with past research in findings such as women being more articulate when discussing their emotions with others than men, as seen in responses to the LAS and structured interviews. Another area that supported past research was that transformational learning took place for participants through the experience of divorce and through the use of journaling, personal reflection, and talking with friends or others about their experience as evidenced in the LAS. The results of the FDAS were surprising; they rendered a less than favorable result, as the participants had not made significant progress in adjusting to life after divorce. The results of this study may have been different and supported one or both of the hypotheses if a larger return had been achieved or a different sample group had been used.

Several of the participants have contacted the researcher inquiring as to the findings of the study, which was surprising; however, it is a request that will be accommodated by the researcher. Additionally, a few participants have contacted the researcher inquiring as to whether their responses were similar to others, which made the researcher wonder if those participants were still looking for some sort of validation of their feelings, and their interest alone made the study worthwhile to the researcher. The interests of these participants in that information may have been due to their unresolved feelings about divorce and/or they had not adjusted to life after divorce.

APPENDIX A
ENRIGHT FORGIVENESS INVENTORY
ATTITUDE SCALE

1. How deeply were you hurt when the incident occurred?

No hurt A little hurt Some hurt Much hurt A great deal of hurt

I feel...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 negative	1	2	3	4	5	6
I do or would...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22 avoid	1	2	3	4	5	6
I think he or she is...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
47 loving	1	2	3	4	5	6
I think he or she is...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
64 My feelings were never hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX B

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE

The following statements are feelings and attitudes that people frequently experience while they are ending a love relationship. Keeping in mind one specific relationship you have ended or are ending, read each statement and decide how frequently the statement applies to your present feelings and attitudes. (You may want to take the FDAS again for another relationship.) Mark your response on your answer sheet. Do not leave any statements blank on the answer sheet. If the statement is not appropriate for you in your present situation, answer the way you feel you might if that statement were appropriate.

The five responses to choose from on the answer sheet are:

1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

1. I am comfortable telling people I am separated from my love partner.
2. I am physically and emotionally exhausted from morning until night.
3. I am constantly thinking of my former love partner.
4. I feel rejected by many of the friends I had when I was in the love relationship.
5. I become upset when I think about my former love partner.
6. I like being the person I am.
7. I feel like crying because I feel so sad.
8. I can communicate with my former love partner in a calm and rational manner.
9. There are many things about my personality I would like to change.
10. It is easy for me to accept my becoming a single person.
11. I feel depressed.
12. I feel emotionally separated from my former love partner.
13. People would not like me if they got to know me.
14. I feel comfortable seeing and talking to my former love partner.
15. I feel like I am an attractive person.
16. I feel as though I am in a daze and the world doesn't seem real.
17. I find myself doing things just to please my former love partner.
18. I feel lonely.
19. There are many things about my body I would like to change.
20. I have many plans and goals for the future.
21. I feel I don't have much sex appeal.
22. I am relating and interacting in many new ways with people since my separation.
23. Joining a singles' group would make me feel I was a loser like them.
24. It is easy for me to organize my daily routine of living.
25. I find myself making excuses to see and talk to my former love partner.
26. Because my love relationship failed, I must be a failure.
27. I feel like unloading my feelings of anger and hurt upon my former love partner.
28. I feel comfortable being with people.
29. I have trouble concentrating.
30. I think of my former love partner as related to me rather than as a separate person.

31. I feel like an okay person.
32. I hope my former love partner is feeling as much or more emotional pain than I am.
33. I have close friends who know and understand me.
34. I am unable to control my emotions.
35. I feel capable of building a deep and meaningful love relationship.
36. I have trouble sleeping.
37. I easily become angry at my former love partner.
38. I am afraid to trust people who might become love partners.
39. Because my love relationship ended, I feel there must be something wrong with me.
40. I either have no appetite or eat continuously which is unusual for me.
41. I don't want to accept the fact that our love relationship is ending.
42. I force myself to eat even though I'm not hungry.
43. I have given up on my former love partner and I getting back together.
44. I feel very frightened inside.
45. It is important that my family, friends, and associates be on my side rather than on my former love partner's side.
46. I feel uncomfortable even thinking about dating.
47. I feel capable of living the kind of life I would like to live.
48. I have noticed my body weight is changing a great deal.
49. I believe if we try, my love partner and I can save our love relationship.
50. My abdomen feels empty and hollow.
51. I have feelings of romantic love for my former love partner.
52. I can make decisions I need to because I know and trust my feelings.
53. I would like to get even with my former love partner for hurting me.
54. I avoid people even though I want and need friends.
55. I have really made a mess of my life.
56. I sigh a lot.
57. I believe it is best for all concerned to have our love relationship end.
58. I perform my daily activities in a mechanical and unfeeling manner.
59. I become upset when I think about my love partner having a relationship with someone else.
60. I feel capable of facing and dealing with my problems.
61. I blame my former love partner for the failure of our love relationship.
62. I am afraid of becoming sexually involved with another person.
63. I feel adequate as a fe/male love partner.
64. It will only be a matter of time until my love partner and I get back together.
65. I feel detached and removed from activities around me as though I were watching them on a movie screen.
66. I would like to continue having a sexual relationship with my former love partner.
67. Life is somehow passing me by.
68. I feel comfortable going by myself to a public place such as a movie.
69. It is good to feel alive again after having felt numb and emotionally dead.
70. I feel I know and understand myself.
71. I feel emotionally committed to my former love partner.
72. I want to be with people but I feel emotionally distant from them.
73. I am the type of person I would like to have for a friend.

74. I am afraid of becoming emotionally close to another love partner.
75. Even on the days when I am feeling good, I may suddenly become sad and start crying.
76. I can't believe our love relationship is ending.
77. I become upset when I think about my love partner dating someone else.
78. I have a normal amount of self-confidence.
79. People seem to enjoy being with me.
80. Morally and spiritually, I believe it is wrong for our love relationship to end.
81. I wake up in the morning feeling there is no good reason to get out of bed.
82. I find myself daydreaming about all the good times I had with my love partner.
83. People want to have a love relationship with me because I feel like a lovable person.
84. I want to hurt my former love partner by letting him/her know how much I hurt emotionally.
85. I feel comfortable going to social events even though I am single.
86. I feel guilty about my love relationship ending.
87. I feel emotionally insecure.
88. I feel uncomfortable even thinking about having a sexual relationship.
89. I feel emotionally weak and helpless.
90. I think about ending my life with suicide.
91. I understand the reasons why our love relationship did not work out.
92. I feel comfortable having my friends know our love relationship is ending.
93. I am angry about the things my former love partner has been doing.
94. I feel like I am going crazy.
95. I am unable to perform sexually.
96. I feel as though I am the only single person in a couples-only society.
97. I feel like a single person rather than a married person.
98. I feel my friends look at me as unstable now that I'm separated.
99. I daydream about being with and talking to my former love partner.
100. I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a man/woman.

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE
ANSWER SHEET

First name	Last name	Address			
City	Province	PC	Home phone	Work phone	Date

I am ___ male ___ female. I am _____ years old. I have been separated _____ months.
 Who decided to end our relationship? ___ I did, ___ my spouse did, ___ both of us did.
 Please fill in the following circles to answer the questions on the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale. The five responses to choose from are:

1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
1.	0	0	0	0	0	26.	0	0	0	0	51.	0	0	0	0	76.	0	0	0	0
2.	0	0	0	0	0	27.	0	0	0	0	52.	0	0	0	0	77.	0	0	0	0
3.	0	0	0	0	0	28.	0	0	0	0	53.	0	0	0	0	78.	0	0	0	0
4.	0	0	0	0	0	29.	0	0	0	0	54.	0	0	0	0	79.	0	0	0	0
5.	0	0	0	0	0	30.	0	0	0	0	55.	0	0	0	0	80.	0	0	0	0
6.	0	0	0	0	0	31.	0	0	0	0	56.	0	0	0	0	81.	0	0	0	0
7.	0	0	0	0	0	32.	0	0	0	0	57.	0	0	0	0	82.	0	0	0	0
8.	0	0	0	0	0	33.	0	0	0	0	58.	0	0	0	0	83.	0	0	0	0
9.	0	0	0	0	0	34.	0	0	0	0	59.	0	0	0	0	84.	0	0	0	0
10.	0	0	0	0	0	35.	0	0	0	0	60.	0	0	0	0	85.	0	0	0	0
11.	0	0	0	0	0	36.	0	0	0	0	61.	0	0	0	0	86.	0	0	0	0
12.	0	0	0	0	0	37.	0	0	0	0	62.	0	0	0	0	87.	0	0	0	0
13.	0	0	0	0	0	38.	0	0	0	0	63.	0	0	0	0	88.	0	0	0	0
14.	0	0	0	0	0	39.	0	0	0	0	64.	0	0	0	0	89.	0	0	0	0
15.	0	0	0	0	0	40.	0	0	0	0	65.	0	0	0	0	90.	0	0	0	0
16.	0	0	0	0	0	41.	0	0	0	0	66.	0	0	0	0	91.	0	0	0	0
17.	0	0	0	0	0	42.	0	0	0	0	67.	0	0	0	0	92.	0	0	0	0
18.	0	0	0	0	0	43.	0	0	0	0	68.	0	0	0	0	93.	0	0	0	0
19.	0	0	0	0	0	44.	0	0	0	0	69.	0	0	0	0	94.	0	0	0	0
20.	0	0	0	0	0	45.	0	0	0	0	70.	0	0	0	0	95.	0	0	0	0
21.	0	0	0	0	0	46.	0	0	0	0	71.	0	0	0	0	96.	0	0	0	0
22.	0	0	0	0	0	47.	0	0	0	0	72.	0	0	0	0	97.	0	0	0	0
23.	0	0	0	0	0	48.	0	0	0	0	73.	0	0	0	0	98.	0	0	0	0
24.	0	0	0	0	0	49.	0	0	0	0	74.	0	0	0	0	99.	0	0	0	0
25.	0	0	0	0	0	50.	0	0	0	0	75.	0	0	0	0	100.	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX C

LEARNING ACTIVITIES SURVEY

1. Thinking about your previous experiences, check off any statements that may apply.
 - I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act.
 - I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (Examples of social roles include what a mother or father should do or how an adult child should act.)
 - As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my previous beliefs or role expectations.
 - Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs or role expectations.
 - I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs.
 - I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles.
 - I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations.
 - I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them.
 - I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting.
 - I gathered the information I needed to adopt these new ways of acting.
 - I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior.
 - I took action and adopted these new ways of acting.
 - I do not identify with any of the statements above.

2. Do you believe you have experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed? Yes No
- If “Yes,” please go to question #3 and continue the survey.
If “No,” please go to question #6 to continue the survey.
3. Briefly describe what happened.
4. What did you do to learn how to implement your changing ideas about social roles, personal expectations or beliefs?
5. Did you use any of the following? Please check all that apply.
- Learning opportunity (e.g. a class, workshop or seminar)
 - Writing about your concerns
 - Personal journal
 - Verbally discussing your concerns
 - Self-evaluation
 - Self-help book or materials
 - Personal reflection
 - Deep concentrated thought
 - Study group
 - Support group
 - Personal learning assessment
6. Was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?
 Yes No
- If “Yes,” what was it? (Check all that apply)
- Marriage Change of job
 - Birth/adoption of a child Loss of job
 - Moving Retirement
 - Divorce/separation Other: _____
 - Death of a loved one
7. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed, what prompted the change?
8. Would you characterize yourself as one who usually thinks back over previous decisions or past behaviors? Yes No
9. Would you say that you frequently reflect upon the meaning of your decisions for yourself, personally? Yes No

10. Which of the following occurred within the past year? Please check all that apply.
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> Change of job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birth/adoption of a child | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moving | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce/separation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a loved one | |
11. Your gender:
- Male Female
12. Marital Status:
- Single Married Partner
- Widowed Divorced/separated
13. Race:
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White, non-Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Black, non-Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |
14. Current line of work:
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management/Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Direct patient care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology/Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> Physician |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clerical | <input type="checkbox"/> Manual laborer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Therapy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
15. Education level:
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma/GED | <input type="checkbox"/> Masters degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
16. Age:
- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 | <input type="checkbox"/> 61+ | | |

APPENDIX D

STRUCTURED (QUALITATIVE) INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If you had to choose one problem following divorce, other than forgiveness, that was very difficult for you to deal with due to no longer having a spouse, what would it be?
2. If you had to choose one disadvantage to being divorced, what would it be?
3. If you had to choose one advantage to being divorced, what would it be?
4. At any time before your marriage, did you ever doubt it would be successful? If yes, when was that?
5. Do you find yourself angry with or disappointed in yourself for your marriage not being successful? If yes, why is that?
6. If you had to choose one reason for your marriage not being successful, what would it be?
7. Do you think your ex-spouse would agree with the reason you chose for your marriage not being successful? Why or why not?
8. Who asked for the divorce? You or your ex-spouse?
9. **(Only to be asked of those who answered ex-spouse to question 8.)** Do you think you would feel differently about your marriage, divorce and following your divorce if you had been the one who asked for divorce? If so, please explain.

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DECISION

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **12032906**

PROJECT TITLE: **Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**

RESEARCHER/S: **Alison Kathleen Johnson**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Studies & Research**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: **04/12/2012 to 04/11/2013**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board Chair

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 13, 2011

Jim Doe
Executive Director
Department of Mental Health
239 North XXXXX Street
Johnstown MS 39222

Re: Request for Research Approval

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am currently enrolled in the Adult Education doctoral program at The University of Southern Mississippi and am in the final phase of completing my degree. My dissertation topic is Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders and I would like my sample group for my research to be comprised of employees of the Department of Mental Health (DMH). My research will involve the use of four instruments and would be limited to volunteers who were divorced.

My project consists of two forms of data collection. The first is a series of three questionnaires and the second is a structured interview. Results of the instruments would be kept strictly confidential and all, but the structured interview, would be kept anonymous. I would greatly appreciate your approval to use DMH employees as my sample group.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and please let me know if you need any additional information. I may be reached by phone at (601) XXX-XXXX or e-mail at alisonkjohnson@xxxxx.net.

Sincerely,

Alison K. Johnson

APPENDIX G

APPROVAL LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

State of Mississippi

239 North Lamar Street
1101 Robert E. Lee Building
Jackson, Mississippi 39201



(601) 359-1288
FAX (601) 359-6295
TDD (601) 359-6230

Edwin C. LeGrand III - Executive Director

February 14, 2012

Alison Johnson
Hudspeth Regional Center
P.O. Box 127-B
Whitfield, Mississippi 39193

Re: Department of Mental Health Institutional Review Board

Dear Ms. Johnson:

It is my understanding that you will be seeking approval of the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board regarding a research proposal necessary for the completion of your dissertation. I will be happy to accept the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board's approval of such proposal for the purposes of Department of Mental Health approval.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. Should you have any questions or need any assistance whatsoever, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin C. LeGrand III".

Edwin C. LeGrand III
Executive Director

APPENDIX H

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Divorce and Forgiveness – Call for Volunteers

Do men and women differ in how they forgive their ex-spouses following divorce? Your help is needed in answering this question! Alison Johnson, an employee with Hudspeth Regional Center, is asking for volunteers to participate in a study involving divorced individuals. Participation is completely voluntary and all responses will be submitted anonymously and kept strictly confidential. Specifically, the study will explore the process of forgiveness following divorce. Employees between the ages of 18 and beyond are invited to participate. The hope for this study is to provide some sort of insight to counselors, therapists, pastors, and other professionals in therapeutic environments so that they are better equipped to assist divorcees in the healing process following divorce. If you are willing to volunteer, please contact Jane Doe in Personnel at extension 6080.

APPENDIX I

LETTER TO PROGRAM DIRECTORS

May 17, 2012

Mr. John Doe, Director
John Doe Regional Center
Post Office Box 128
John Doe MS 35431

Re: Dissertation surveys

Dear Mr. Doe:

Mr. Doe has been kind enough to allow me to survey Mississippi Department of Mental Health employees for data collection for the completion of my doctoral degree in Adult Education at the University of Southern Mississippi. You may recall he mentioned my project to you earlier this year during one of your monthly facility director/board meetings. I would like to thank you for your support by allowing your staff to participate in this project if they so choose.

My hope is that you will ask your Personnel or Human Resources Director to distribute a blurb in your campus newsletter or via e-mail that will inform your staff of the opportunity to participate and how to obtain a packet. The blurb that I prepared for Mr. Doe was distributed at the aforementioned meeting, but I will certainly send another should you need it.

I have enclosed several survey packets that also have a cover letter attached to provide pertinent information to each participant. The cover letter will inform the participant how to proceed with completing the packets and how to forward their packets back to me. I have also enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for you to use when returning the completed and/or unused survey packets to me. If you should need more survey packets for your staff, please let me know and I will mail them to you.

Again, thank you so much for allowing me to survey your staff. Should you have any questions, concerns or need additional survey packets, please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail at the number or address above.

Sincerely,

Alison K. Johnson

APPENDIX J

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

May 17, 2012

Dear Prospective Participant:

My name is Alison Johnson, and I am a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am writing in hopes that you would be willing to participate in my study for the completion of my dissertation in Adult Education. My dissertation is titled "Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders". This is a great opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings about forgiveness of your ex-spouse following divorce. As a divorcee, I understand firsthand the difficulties of adjustment following divorce and am excited to hear your responses to those difficulties as well.

My project consists of two forms of data collection. The first is a series of three surveys that I would like for you to complete in their entirety. Additionally, you may also choose to participate in a structured interview. The structured interview is simply a list of questions that you would be asked to provide oral responses to each of the questions to me in person or by phone. Please know all of the data collected will be completely confidential and all responses to the surveys are completely anonymous. If you should be so kind to assist me in the structured interview portion, of course, I would need for you to provide me with your name and contact information so that I would be able to contact you to go over the list of questions for the interview.

If you are willing to participate, please know that I will only be able to use your survey information if all three surveys are entirely completed. Those that are not completed in their entirety cannot be used in my analysis for use in my dissertation. To begin participation, please see the information attached. Once you have completed the packet, please return it as soon as possible back to your Personnel or Human Resources Office. The sooner I receive your responses, the sooner we can determine if there is a difference in how men and women forgive their ex-spouses following divorce.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by e-mail at alisonkjohnson@xxxxxxxx.net or by phone at (601) XXX-XXXX.

Thanks in advance for your participation!

Sincerely,

Alison K. Johnson

APPENDIX K
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study titled:
Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders

1. **Purpose:** This study is being pursued to determine the differences in how men and women forgive an ex-spouse following divorce. The hope of the researcher is that the difference found in this study will in some way provide professional counselors, teachers and pastors with additional information to better assist divorcees in the healing process.
2. **Description of Study:** This study consists of three surveys involving questions concerning divorce as well as an individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions concerning divorce. To fully complete a research packet of surveys, it should take no long than one hour. Data will be collected over a period of three to four weeks through the completed surveys. It is hoped a minimum of 65 participants will complete their packets for data analysis. Additionally, it is hoped that at least 10 to 12 participants will also volunteer to submit to a structured interview conducted by the researcher.
3. **Benefits:** The hope of the researcher is that the differences found between males and females will in some way provide professional counselors, teachers and pastors with additional information to better assist divorcees in the healing process. While some research is available, any additional information obtained through this study will hopefully provide professionals with a better understanding of divorcees and how forgiveness occurs in this group of individuals.
4. **Risks:** Participants may experience some discomfort as their participation may require them to recall certain unpleasant events from the past and even some from present times. Participants may also find the survey packet somewhat of an inconvenience since more than one survey is being utilized; however, the packet is designed to require as little time as possible for completion.
5. **Confidentiality:** Each participant will be allowed to participate on a completely voluntary and anonymous basis. Subjects who choose to participate will not be required to provide any demographic information which might threaten their confidentiality in any way. If participants are willing to participate in the

structured interviews, they will then need to provide their names and contact information for the researcher to contact them for said interview. All results will be tabulated based on gender, age and length of time since divorce. The researcher plans to use all survey packets that are complete. Partial survey packets will not be useful as the researcher is utilizing more than one survey for the purposes of this study. The surveys will be kept in the researcher's possession and it is anticipated the only other individuals to whom the information might be provided is to the members of the researcher's dissertation committee. After some time following the completion of this study, all surveys and other participation information will be shredded.

6. **Participant's Assurance:** Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted), the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Questions concerning the research should be directed to Alison Johnson at 601-XXX-XXXX. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.
7. **Signatures:** For participants willing to participate in the structured interview portion of the study, please provide your name and contact information below.

Signature for participant (**structured interview only**):

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact information for participant above:

Address:

Phone number(s):

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX L

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DECISION

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **C12032906**

PROJECT TITLE: **Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders**

PROJECT TYPE: **Change to a Previously Approved Project**

RESEARCHER(S): **Alison Kathleen Johnson**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Studies & Research**

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **04/04/2013 to 04/03/2014**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX M

EMAIL TO STUDENTS FOR PROFESSORS

My name is Alison Johnson, and I am a doctoral student in the Adult Education Program at USM. I am writing in hopes that you will share the following information with your students as I am in need of participants for data collection for my dissertation.

My dissertation is titled “Divorce and Forgiveness: A Comparison Between Genders”. Participation in this project will be limited to divorced students only and would be a great opportunity for them to share their thoughts and feelings about forgiveness of their ex-spouse following divorce. My project consists of two forms of data collection. The first is a series of three surveys that may be completed electronically and the second is a structured interview in which they may wish to participate.

Please share this information with your students. The web link for student participation is listed below. Thank you in advance for your support!

Web link for surveys:

https://usmep.us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_aWY1pOz3lWz4HmV

Sincerely,

Alison K. Johnson

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