Chu Kim-Prieto *Editor*

Religion and Spirituality Across Cultures

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Religion and Spirituality Across Cultures

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Contents

v

Part II   Variations in the Paths to Positivity and Religiosity

Chapter 1
Introduction: Positive Psychology of Religion Across Traditions and Beliefs

Chu Kim-Prieto

Religion has a checkered history within the discipline of psychology. Freud (1929/2005) theorized religion to be an infantile search for bliss and attempts to resolve the Oedipal complex, a form of neurosis and a reaction to feelings of helplessness. More recently, research has noted the negative aspects of religiosity, including the evidence pointing to the positive correlation between religiosity and prejudice (e.g., Hunsburger & Wilfrid, 1995). And in extreme cases, religion has been blamed for negative outcomes, such as withholding of medical care for religious reasons and abuse related to attempts to rid a child of evil, as well as abuse perpetrated by those in religious authority (Bottoms, Shaver, Goodman, & Qin, 1995). On the other hand, however, research has also noted the pervasive appeal of religion. Using a population weighed estimate, Diener, Tay, and Myers (2011) estimated that 68 % of the world's population (about 4.6 billion) believe religion to be an important part of their lives. Indeed, its nearly universal existence and powerful appeal has led some to theorize that humans might be driven by a "faith instinct" (Wade, 2010).

Then, might there be some benefit that can help explain such pervasive appeal? Group evolutionary theory posits that while religion may require and enforce self-sacrifice on the part of the individual, it provides benefits to the social order (e.g., Wilson, 2003; Wright, 2009). For example, Wilson theorized that while forgiveness requires sacrifice on part of the individual, it has benefits for the group, including social unity and intergroup harmony. Others, however, have noted the growing evidence on the benefits of religion to the individual and not just to the social group. While the group evolutionary view might consider forgiveness to be self-sacrificial, research evidence has indicated that forgiveness has considerable benefits to the individual: Outcomes have included fewer self-reported illnesses, decreased

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depression, and greater well-being (Lawler et al., 2005; Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008).

Indeed, as psychology as a discipline has increased its focus on the positive, salutary, and subjective and psychological well-being of individuals and societies, psychology of religion, too, has increased its focus on the investigation of the ways in which religion benefits individuals. Thus, this volume brings together the wealth of findings in the intersection of positive psychology and the psychology of religion. Chapters are devoted to the ways in which different religions promote psychological well-being. Religions include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, indigenous religions of North America, and Hinduism. Of course, these religions are not an exhaustive list religions of the world; but rather, they offer a sampling of different religions practiced today, including many of the major religions in the world, as well as different types of religions, such as monotheistic as well as polytheistic religions. The second half of this volume is devoted to specific aspects of religious practice, such as meditation and yoga, as well as possible process variables that mediate the relation between religiosity and well-being, such as coping and meaning making. While some chapters offer broad theoretical reviews, others provide narrowly focused examples, thus providing complementary views on religion's contribution to well-being. Religion's contribution to emotion regulation as well as fostering of positive emotions, such as forgiveness, gratitude, humility, and ecstasy are also considered in the second section. Below, I provide background on the psychology of religion as well as positive psychology, and review the research on religion's contribution to the science of well-being.

1.1   Psychology of Religion

While Freud may have considered religion to be a neurosis, others have advocated for the importance of religion for understanding individual experiences. James (1901–1902/2002) noted that since belief in God resulted in significant and profound impact on the individual, this impact needed to be better understood, outside of speculations about the existence of God. Unfortunately, the Freudian perspective seem to have held sway for most of psychology's history, and research on religion had languished for many years. In the past several decades, however, the psychological investigation of religion has increased by leaps and bounds (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). A PsychInfo search returned over 23,985 publications on religion or spirituality, with over 15,000 of those since 2003.

Then, what exactly is religion? According to sociologist Durkheim (1912/1995, p. 44), it is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Within the discipline of psychology, some have used religion to refer to the institution and its structural manifestations, such as beliefs and practices, while deferring to the term spirituality to refer to an individual's relation with the divine. Thus, religion might

be considered to be faith communities with teachings and customs that are rooted in spiritual traditions that promote transcendence from the personal to larger realities (see Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). In contrast, spirituality has been defined as the permeating of the sacred into everyday experiences, and existing within or outside the context of a religious community (see Pargament, 2002 for review). Rather than separating out the two and divorcing religion from spirituality, still others have preferred a unified and broad definition that encompasses religion as having both characteristics of organizational structures as well as personal experiences of the sacred (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Thus, in this volume we have also conceptualized religion as combining both, and inclusive of feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviors that support the search for the sacred and receive validation and support from a community of seekers who provide a sense of personal and social identity to the seeker (Hill et al., 2000).

1.2 Positive Psychology

The recent boom in positive psychology dovetails with the boom in the psychology of religion because both can provide answers to human flourishing – the characteristics of people who live optimal lives, as well as the conditions that promote well-being. Traditionally, research in positive psychology has been thought of as having three branches – the study of virtues, investigations into lives well lived (eudemonia), and research on positive emotions (hedonia). The study of virtues have included concepts such as forgiveness, gratitude, and wisdom, among others, while eudemonia has included research on meaning, purpose, and self-actualization. Last, research on positive emotions have included research on the benefits and correlates of positive affect (for reviews, see Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Frederickson, 2001; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The study of virtues gained much ground with research by Peterson and Seligman (2004), who worked to create a taxonomy of characteristics that were deemed to be virtuous and a sign of strength across a multitude of cultures. They examined multiple philosophical and religious traditions considered to be historically and culturally influential: Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These were chosen because of their historical and cultural influence, but also because the traditions, mores, and beliefs could be discerned through written texts. Using this method, the virtues found across multiple traditions and thus considered universal were: Courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence. Peterson and Seligman (2004) noted that there are other cultures and traditions that have been influential, but do not lend themselves to analysis because the precepts were not written down, or because a common agreed upon authoritative text does not exist, thus making it difficult to compare and discern virtues.

Courage includes bravery, perseverance, honesty and authenticity, whereas justice include civic strengths, such as fairness, leadership, citizenship or teamwork.

Humanity includes love and kindness; temperance includes forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self control. Wisdom includes curiosity, judgment, creativity and perspective, while transcendence includes strengths that allow for connecting with the larger universe for the creation of meaning, and include concepts such as gratitude, hope, and spirituality. As can be seen from the examples, considerable overlap exists between the universal strengths that are listed here and those strengths that are valued by various religious traditions. Of course, that there is overlap is not surprising, since religious traditions were the mainstays of the historically and culturally influential traditions considered in the discernment process.

Eudaimonia includes research on lives well lived and encompasses life lived in accordance with one's daimon, or true self. As enumerated in the virtues above, a sense of honesty with one's true beliefs (e.g., authenticity) and a life lived in accordance with these beliefs would encompass an authentic life (Waterman, 1993). In addition, meaning and purpose is also an important aspect of living in accordance to one's true self (King & Napa, 1998). Religion plays an important role in the search for an authentic life because religion, through its tenets, provides meaning to its adherents. In addition, many find purpose through their religious beliefs.

Last, research on positive emotions have included benefits of various positive emotions as well as correlates of emotions. For example, Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005) reviewed research evidence on happiness and concluded that high chronic levels of positive affect is not only correlated with better social relationships, income, creativity and productivity, but may in fact play a causal role. That is, while better social relationships might result in positive affect, research seemed to indicate that the causal direction may also include the reverse, such that chronic positive affect may result in improved social relationships, as well as other positive outcomes listed above. Research has included a range of positive emotions, such as gratitude, forgiveness, and humility on subjective well-being, physical health, and other aspects of well-being (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Religion not only provides tenets and strictures about behaviors, it also regulates the types and extents of emotions that is considered valuable (e.g., Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). For example, Christians are expected to express gratitude, while many religions promote the expression of forgiveness. These three branches of positive psychology are intricately intertwined with various aspects of religion. Thus, perhaps it may not be surprising that evidence has indicated that religiosity is correlated with all three aspects of positive psychology. Below, I review the research on the connection between positive psychology and religiosity.

1.3 Religion's Contributions to Well-Being and Life Well Lived

A growing set of evidence has indicated that religiosity is linked to well-being and other positive outcomes. Empirical evidence has shown that religiosity also seems to buffer the practitioner against the negative impact of discrimination, work stress,

and other negative life circumstances (e.g., Jasperse, Ward, & Jose, 2012; Lechner, Tomasik, Silbereisen, & Wasilewski, 2013). It has been suggested that adherents use religiosity to cope with adversity, accept reality, gain courage, confront limitation, and recognize purpose and achieve growth (Mattis, 2002). For example, religious faith provided significant contribution to resiliency for Black emerging adults who are lesbian, gay or bisexual with high internalized homonegativity (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2013). A meta-analysis by Witter, Stock, Okun, and Haring (1985) found mean effect size of $r=.16$ on religion's contribution to positive functioning. More recent meta-analyses have found similar results as well: When 75 recent studies on adolescents and emerging adults were considered, Yonker, Schnabelrauch, and DeHaan (2012) found mean effect size of $r=.16$ for spirituality and well being, similar to findings by Cheung and Yeung (2011) in their meta-analysis just a year earlier.

This positive relation holds across differing measures of religiosity, such as religiosity, church membership, or importance of religiosity (e.g., Hill & Argyle, 1998), although some have found that the strength of relationship varies across specific constructs and measures. For example, for some religious groups, intrinsic religiosity has been found to correlate more strongly to positive outcomes, whereas extrinsic religiosity has at times been found to be linked with negative outcomes, thus resulting in a "watered-down" effect size when research that use varying measures had been lumped into one. In addition to meta-analyses, large-scale datasets and longitudinal analyses have also provided supporting evidence on the facilitative effects of religiosity on well-being. Using a dataset of 34,129 adolescents, Donahue (1995) found that religiosity was positively associated with pro-social values and behavior, and negatively related to suicide attempts and ideation, substance abuse, premature sexual involvement and delinquency, even after controlling for socio-demographic variables (for review, see Dew et al., 2008). In her analysis of longitudinal data, Snell (2009) found a positive effect of youth ministries on well-being, even after controlling for self-selection effects.

Much of this research, however, has been focused on participants living in the United States and in Western Europe, and has largely relied on research on Christians. Indeed, this focus on European-based traditions has been a criticism of Positive Psychology as well (e.g., Bermant, Talwar, & Rozin, 2011). More recently, however, increasing evidence from around the world, representing a diverse range of cultures as well as religions, indicate that the positive effect of religiosity is not limited to Christians from the United States and Western Europe. For example, religiosity predicted well-being for Muslim undergraduates in Egypt and Kuwait, (Abdel-Khalek, 2006, 2012; Sahraian, Gholami, Javadpour, & Omidvar, 2013), Iran (Alavi, 2007) and Ghana (Addai, Opoku-Agyeman, & Amanfu, 2013). In addition, Patel, Ramgoon, and Paruk (2009) found positive relation between religiosity and life satisfaction for Hindu, Muslim, and Christian students in South Africa, while Francis, Robbins, Santosh, and Bhanot (2008) found similar results for Hindu students in the United Kingdom. In addition, Ariyabuddhiphongs (2009) reported similar positive relations for Buddhists in Thailand. Religiousness and trust in God was associated with greater personal happiness for adult Jewish participants

(Rosmarin, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2009) as well as for older Jewish adults (Kalkstein & Tower, 2009). In addition, using a representative national sample of 455,104 individuals from 154 nations representing 80 % of the world population, Diener et al. (2011) found that at the nation-level, religiosity was correlated at $r = .48$ with life evaluations (the correlation coefficients were smaller at the individual level). Indeed, in reviewing research on effects of religiosity on adolescent well being outcomes, Regnerus (2003) found that while some differences existed across religions and denominations, these differences were few compared to the overall positive relation between religiosity and well-being. Thus, a growing body of evidence indicates that the positive association for religiosity and well-being is not just limited to Christians, but valid across cultures and religions.

If religiosity predicts well-being across religions, what might be the mechanism or the process that mediates this effect? In his review of the connection between religion and subjective well-being, Myers (2000) offered two possible pathways: social support provided by organized religion, and the provision of meaning and purpose provided by religious tenets. Research on the benefits of positive emotions have indicated that the nurturing of specific emotions might be another pathway. In addition, Smith (2003) also theorized additional pathways that include strategies for coping and other learned competencies, such as social and leadership skills, and cultural capital earned through religiosity. Below, I highlight some of these pathways.

1.3.1 Social Support and Social Capital

For many religions, organized communal worship, as well as fellowship with other adherents of the religious tradition, help define what it means to be an adherent of that religion. In addition, even if the religion does not define worship as a communal event, social support and a sense of commonality and belonging can also provide support to individual worshippers, as well as provide social capital that may provide benefits. For example, evidence has indicated that it is spiritual support from church members that predicts positive religious coping, as opposed to emotional support from church members, which has no effect on coping (Krause, Ellison, Shaw, Marcum, & Boardman, 2001). In addition, research seemed to indicate that mediation by social support may be especially beneficial to marginalized or minority group members within a given society. Indeed, for single mothers living in economically depressed areas, church membership and attendance provided a positive sense of self, a sense of shared values with a socially valued community, and a sense of belonging (Brodsky, 2000). Similarly, for Asian Americans, social support fully mediated the relation between church attendance and reduced likelihood of major depression (Ai, Huang, Bjork, & Appel, 2013). Emerging research seems to indicate that engaging in religious practices, even if one might not be an adherent of that religion, may have the benefit of providing social support as well. For example, Loving-Kindness Meditation, a meditation technique based on Buddhist meditation

practices, resulted in increased social support, with positive emotions as a mediating factor (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008).

In addition to the benefit of social support, religiosity may also be a source of social capital. For example, Shkolnik, Weiner, Malik, and Festinger (2001) found that for elderly Jewish participants in Israel, religiosity provided social status that resulted in additional social capital, which then led to greater personal efficacy. Similarly, King and Furrow (2004) found that religious activity was related to higher social capital, which mediated positive outcomes for adolescents. In evaluating their multinational data, Diener et al. (2011) found that the link for social support was stronger in cultures where religiosity is positively regarded, thus lending further credence to the social capital theory. Indeed, this may explain some of the null results between religiosity and social support that have been found, especially for non-marginalized groups who perhaps have additional pathways for social support and social capital (e.g., Lewis, 2002).

It is important to note, however, that social support has not always mediated the relation between religiosity and well-being (e.g., Menagi, Harrell, & June, 2008). It appears that when one is expecting church to provide a sense of belonging and community, the failure to reach a sense a connection with other members or failure to fit in has resulted in negative outcomes of alienation (Brodsky, 2000). Thus, it is important to consider other possible intervening variables and mechanisms that might further explicate the relation between religiosity and life satisfaction.

1.3.2 Meaning and Purpose

In addition to social support, religion imparts among its followers a sense of meaning and purpose, which is in turn linked to positive functioning. Meaning in life as a mediating variable in the link between religiosity and well-being is important since the provision of meaning is a basic function of most religions. Indeed, research have found that meaning in life mediated the positive relation between religiosity and psychological health (Steber & Frazier, 2005). This link has been established for different religions as well: Banth and Talwar (2012) found greater relation between religiosity and meaning in life for Hindu yogic population compared to non-yogic population, and Vilchinsky and Kravetz (2005) found that for Jewish Israeli students, meaning in life mediated the positive relation between religious beliefs and psychosocial well-being for those who were high on religious identity as well as those who were high on secular identity. In addition, as with social support, research found that the benefit accrued by this meaning and purpose is especially useful for those facing difficult life circumstances. In a prospective study of survivors of natural disasters, Chan, Rhodes, and Perez (2012) found that pre-disaster religiousness predicted higher levels for post-disaster optimism and sense of purpose, and that this mediated better post-disaster psychological outcomes (see also Furrow, King, & White, 2004).

1.3.3 Emotion

A long tradition of thought has existed within various religions on the rule and mastery of emotions. In their review, Emmons and Paloutzian (2002) noted the intersection of psychology of religion and psychology of emotions. Religion prescribes appropriate emotions and the intensity at which they should be experienced. For example, Schimmel (1997) wrote about the Judeo-Christian teachings on the mastery of destructive emotions, such as anger, pride, and envy. In addition, Watts (1996) discussed the distinction between the charismatic traditions and the contemplative traditions, with the former emphasizing the cultivation of intense positive emotions and the latter focusing on low intensity and calming emotions. Different religions consider specific emotions to be desirable and other emotions to be less desirable (e.g., Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). Intense positive emotions, such as awe or ecstasy, for example, are valued in some religious traditions (Silberman, 2005). In reviewing recent research on gratitude, Nelson (2009) noted that gratitude is considered to be a fundamental virtue in many religions. Other religious emotions include ecstasy, humility and forgiveness. For example, Ayten (2012) found that religiosity is positively correlated with forgiveness among Turkish Muslims. Others have found that religiosity mediated the positive relation between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth (Sahraian et al., 2013; Schultz, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2010).

In addition, religion promotes emotion regulation as well as self-regulation in general. Indeed, McCullough and Willoughby (2009) suggested that the benefits to health and well-being enjoyed by religious individuals may be due to their greater capacity for self-regulation. Watterson and Giesler (2012) experimentally manipulated ego depletion, providing evidence of greater self-regulation among highly religious participants. It is not clear, however, whether those who are high in self regulation are self-selecting into high religiosity, or whether various practices associated with religiosity has the effect of boosting self-regulatory processes. For example, evidence indicated that meditation training can strengthen emotion regulation as well as self-regulation in general (e.g., Geschwind, Peeters, Drukker, van Os, & Wichers, 2011; Sahdra et al., 2011).

1.3.4 Coping

The link between religiosity and coping is one of the more robust areas of research in the psychology of religion. For example, evidence indicated that religiosity promotes coping with chronic pain (e.g., Büssing et al., 2009), and in the aftermath of a natural disaster (e.g., Smith, Pargament, Brant, & Oliver, 2000). Pargament and Park (1995) have noted that religion provides a coping mechanism that is both proactive as well as defensive against difficult circumstances.

In reviewing 73 published studies on the relation between bereavement and religiosity, Wortmann and Park (2008) noted the general positive relation between

coping and religiosity, though they did note some inconsistencies. Other reviews and meta-analyses have also found similar results, especially when effects of positive coping and negative coping were considered separately (e.g., Cowchock, Lasker, Toedter, Skumanich, & Koenig, 2010). For example, a meta-analytic review of 147 studies that examined the relation between religiosity and depressive symptoms found a small negative correlation between the two (average effect size $r=-.09$). But when positive religious coping, intrinsic religious orientation and positive regard of God were considered separately from extrinsic religious orientation and negative religious coping, the strength of relation between religiosity and depressive symptoms rose to between $-.20$ and $-.18$ (Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003; see also Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). Others also found similarly strong effects when positive coping was teased apart from negative coping and considered separately. For example, Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) found mean $r=.33$ for positive religious coping and positive psychological outcomes, such as life satisfaction and happiness, with negative coping associated with negative outcomes at mean $r=.22$. Similarly, Chan and Rhodes (2013) found that research on survivors of large-scale natural disasters showed that positive religious coping was associated with posttraumatic growth following a large-scale natural disaster, whereas negative religious coping was associated with posttraumatic stress (see also Gerber & Adriel Schuettler, 2011; Harris et al., 2008).

Cross-cultural data also have found supporting evidence as well: Moussa and Bates (2011) found that religious coping predicted posttraumatic growth for Lebanese college students in Beirut. And for Muslim participants, positive coping was related to posttraumatic growth following stressful interpersonal events, whereas negative religious coping was associated with depression (Abu-Raiya, Israel, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2011).

1.4 Influence on Well Being Across Religions

As noted above, religiosity's effect on well-being is not always positive. Some have accounted for this conflicting evidence as being due to the use of different measures or different definitions of religiosity (e.g., Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Lewis & Cruise, 2006). Others have noted, however, that some of the differences could be due to needing to have a more nuanced and context-dependent understanding of the effects of religion on well being. For example, Gorsuch (1995) found that while nurturing and supportive religions were negatively related with substance abuse, restrictive and negativistic form of religiosity had a positive relationship with abuse. Similarly, while religion can provide social support, it can also increase feelings of isolation and alienation when members feel that they do not fit in with the church community (Pearce, Little, & Perez, 2003).

Other factor that may mediate the impact of religion on well-being also include the importance of religion within a given culture. As can be seen above, religion can provide social capital, but this would only be of use where religion is valued, and

therefore result in social capital. Research evidence has also indicated support, showing that the relation between well being and religiosity is mediated by the importance of religiosity in that culture. For example, Stavrova, Fetchenhauer, and Schlosser (2013) found that while the overall effect of religiosity on well-being is small, the effect is stronger in more religious countries, and that this relation is partially mediated by increased respect that religious people receive from others in countries that were high on religiosity. Similarly, Lun and Bond (2013) found that spiritual practice and subjective well-being were positively related in national cultures that emphasized religious socialization, with a reverse pattern for countries with less religious socialization.

In addition, it also appears that while religiosity predicts well being across religions, the mediating or moderating variables may vary across religions. For example, some have noted that the link between well being and religiosity may be dependent on various factors, such as whether the religion is internalized, based on a secure relationship with God, and intrinsically motivated. Research have also noted the stronger relationship between well-being and religiosity for those who are internally motivated. However, further research have seemed to indicate that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity is more suited for Protestant adherents versus followers of other religions or other Christian denominations. This is because while much research has shown a robust relation between intrinsic religiosity and positive outcomes (e.g., Pössel et al., 2011), most of the research had been conducted within predominantly Christian populations. Research that have considered non-Christian or non-Protestant adherents have found a weaker link, or have found extrinsic religiosity to be predictive of well being (e.g., Cohen & Hill, 2007; Cohen et al., 2005; Park, Cohen, & Herb, 1990).

In addition, Fischer et al. (2010) provided evidence that different religious traditions vary in the types of coping strategies that provide the most comfort to their adherents. For example, Fischer and colleagues proposed that while intrapersonal coping mechanisms may be useful for Christians, interpersonal coping strategies might be more helpful to followers of Islam. Examples of interpersonal coping include turning to family members for support, or seeking other types of social support, whereas intrapersonal coping include cognitive restructuring or reframing. Considering a large international dataset, Diener et al. (2011) also found differences across religions. While religiosity predicted positive feelings for Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims even after controlling for age, gender, and individual and societal circumstances, some nuanced differences were found. For example, for Buddhists, religiosity did not negatively predict negative feelings, where as it did for the other three religions; for Muslims, religiosity did not predict life satisfaction, whereas it did for other three. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between different religious traditions while also looking for commonalities in religion's effect on well being, taking care to note that while efficacy of different types of coping might vary across different religions, this does not necessarily mean that some religions provide coping and others do not.

1.4.1 Present Volume

In light of the importance of taking into consideration differences as well as the commonalities across religions, this volume pulls together not only the research on religion's contribution to happiness, it does so keeping in mind the diversity of religions and cultures around the world. Many edited volumes exist on psychology of religion, as they do on positive psychology. This volume, however, is unique in that we examine religion's contribution across multiple religions and take care to examine ways in which intervening variables might vary across different contexts. Of course, this volume is not exhaustive. It does not include all the different religions that exist in the world. It also does not include all of the multitude of practices or variations within and across various denominations within religions. It provides an initial foray, however, for furthering the examination and discussion of the ways in which religions and religiosities enhance the lives of individuals and societies.

The first section provides an in-depth consideration of the ways in which different religions contribute to human thriving and well-being. Of course, given the finite number of chapters and pages, this section does not review all the different religions in the world. However, a wide range of different religions are reviewed here, including those stemming from different regions and encompassing monotheistic as well as polytheistic traditions. In each chapter, the author(s) discuss the ways that each religion contributes to the thriving and well being of its followers. In addition, the authors provide background information about the religion itself, so that readers who may not be familiar with the specific religion discussed therein may gather initial understanding about that religious tradition. In Chap. 2, Schnall, Schiffman and Cherniak provide a close view of the ways in which Judaism promotes each of the character strengths related to the virtue of transcendence. In doing so, Schnall and colleagues provide much evidence from Hebrew texts and other religious evidence to provide the reader with an understanding of Judaism as well as its contribution to the building of character strengths, focusing specifically on appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality/ religiousness. In Chap. 3, Worthington and colleagues review the ways in which Christianity, in theory and in practice, contribute to the well-being of its adherents. This chapter provides a discussion of the ways in which religion contributes to the well-being of individuals as well as the flourishing of societies. For example, Worthington and colleagues discuss ways in which virtues promoted by Christianity, including self-control, love, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, reconciliation and compassion, help build better relationships within a community. In addition, direct contributions to society, through promotion of education and the arts, are discussed. This broader perspective allows readers to understand the myriad of ways in which religions contribute to the thriving of not just individuals, but to communities and societies. In Chap. 4, Abdel-Khalek provides a detailed description of Islam, its major tenets, and its five pillars of belief and practice: testimony, prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, alms giving, and pilgrimage. Through detailed description of the major tenets and guiding practices, Abdel-Khalek guides the

reader through an understanding of Islam. In addition, Abel-Khalek reviews much of the research literature on religiosity and well-being in a Muslim context.

While the first set of chapters include religions that have roots in the Middle East, the next set of chapters include those that arose in the Indian subcontinent. In Chap. 5, Young and Sarin provide a review of Hinduism and its relation to positive psychology. The authors review core Hindu belief of attaining liberation from the cycle of birth and death through righteous living and karmic justice. They also review various practices theorized to be related to well-being, and include ways in which a belief in an interconnected universe discourages social comparisons that negatively influence well being, and the ways in which the practice of prayer, meditation, and communal gathering enhance well-being. In addition, authors review psychology literature that connect these practices to research evidence. Chapter 6 by Cassaniti provides present day examples of the ways in which Buddhism as it is currently practiced contributes to the well-being of its followers. Cassaniti's ethnographic case study of the daily lives, beliefs, and rituals of a small community of adherents in rural Thailand provides a historical and cultural context for the review of the research evidence in clinical psychology and neuropsychology on various Buddhist practices, including mindfulness, self-construal, and the cultivation of calm emotions. In Chap. 7, Ahluwalia, Locke and Hylton provide an in-depth explanation of Sikhism, the fifth largest organized religion in the world. The chapter begins with a history of Sikhism as well as its major tenets and practices, which, among others, include the maintenance of uncut hair, which is considered a gift from God, the keeping of a comb, and a small symbolic sword as a reminder to fight for freedom and justice. In addition to this detailed description of Sikhism, Ahluwalia and colleagues also provide examples of the ways in which Sikhism contributes to the well-being of its adherents. In addition, this chapter provides several examples that illuminate how religious beliefs and traditions translate into everyday practice during current times, including an example of thriving in the face of hardship and discrimination. Last, Chap. 8 focuses in on North America for in-depth overview of American Indian traditional ways. In this chapter, Rouse discusses indigenous traditional ways as a system of science and knowing, and also responds to the cultural appropriations of traditional ways that have resulted in two dimensional perspectives devoid of substance, and explains that these appropriations often result in misguided and sometimes harmful results. This chapter also pulls together the varieties of ways of knowing that exist within the different sovereign American Indian nations, and offers a different perspective on the virtues as conceptualized in Peterson and Seligman (2004). In discussing the virtues identified by Peterson and Seligman, Rouse provides an alternate virtue of interconnectedness that defines wellness as balance within a relational existence and self-knowledge. As noted previously, a discussion of all the different religions currently practiced today would be prohibitive, and beyond the scope of this volume. However, as can be seen from the chapters, much overlap, as well as differences, exist in the ways in which different religions foster well-being. For example, community and social support, as well as meaning-making and emotion regulation appear to be a oft-mentioned theme. These different pathways are discussed more fully in Part II.

Part II provides a closer look at some of the pathways and variations that speak to the effect of religiosity on well-being. The first chapter in this part provides a broad international perspective on the relation between religion and well being. In Chap. 9, Tay, Li, Myers and Diener review research evidence from across the world to consider whether the positive relation between religiosity and happiness is a pan-cultural phenomenon. Authors propose several mechanisms that support this relation, including mechanisms at the individual level and social level that enhance well-being, such as promotion of pro-social behaviors, and religion's role as a bulwark during difficult times. In Chap. 10, Park and Hale-Smith review religious and spiritual meaning systems and their relation to the well-being of adherents. In doing so, the authors review ways in which different meaning systems, such as karma, or belief in eternal life after death, are related to well being. In addition, Park and Hale-Smith also propose specific pathways by which the imbuing of meaning by religion may result in well being. The five pathways are self-determination, fulfillment of existential needs, self-regulation, coping through meaning making, and fostering of positive psychological states.

The next two chapters, on the other hand, focus on specific religious practices that have been linked to well-being: Chap. 11 provides a review of meditation, focusing on mindfulness, while Chap. 12 focuses on mind-body practices, focusing on yoga. In reviewing the research on mindfulness, Lykins provides an extensive review of the growing body of literature on the therapeutic effects of mindfulness training interventions. In noting that mindfulness results in the creation of an altered state of consciousness, Lykins also broadens the conversation to review additional practices from other religious traditions that induce altered states of consciousness. Chapter 12 by Gerbarg, Gootjes and Brown reviews various mind-body practices, specifically focusing on yoga. In reviewing the literature, the authors provide research evidence from physiological psychology and theorize a neuropsychological explanation for the relation between mind-body practices and enhanced well-being. In addition, the authors provide case study examples of the ways in which yoga and other mind-body exercises have been used as a therapeutic tool for recovery from mass disasters.

Next set of five chapters concern religion and emotions. As noted earlier, emotion and emotion regulation may explain a large aspect of the link between religiosity and well-being. Chapter 13 on emotion regulation by Vishkin, Bigman and Tamir provides a big picture review of the multiple possible pathways by which religion influences emotion, and provides supporting research evidence, as well as examples from different religious traditions. The authors propose that religion influences the regulation of emotions by delimiting which emotions are of importance within a specific religious tradition, influencing self-regulation, beliefs about emotions themselves, the use of emotion regulation strategies, and the creation of communities that support the usage of those strategies. Additional chapters on humility (Chap. 14, Woodruff, Van Tongeren, McElroy, Davis, & Hook), gratitude (Chap. 15, Wirtz, Gordon, & Stalls), forgiveness (Chap. 16, Rye & McCabe), and ecstasy (Chap. 17, Hood) provide extensive reviews of the literature on each emotion and ways that each might serve to mediate the relation between religion and well-being. Of course, while some emotions, such as gratitude, have been the subject

of much research, others, such as humility and forgiveness, represent emerging areas of research. As such, these latter chapters provide less review of the research literature and more theory building and making connections within the religious context. All of the chapters, however, provide broad overviews and provide examples from across various religious traditions.

Finally, the last two chapters in this volume round out the discussion by providing specific examples of the ways in which religion provides comfort and well-being to individual adherents when faced with difficult life circumstances. In Chap. 18, Feuille Bockrath, Pargament and Ostwald review the existing research on the role of religiosity in resilience and coping in the aftermath of a stroke by survivors as well as their caregivers. The experience of a stroke, because it raises existential questions about life, loss of control, and meaning, provides a interesting perspective and prism through which religion's role in psychological well being can be examined. Last, in Chap. 19, Okazaki and Abelmann examine the ways in which religion is used to forge positive meaning in the face of adversity by immigrant youth. Using grounded theory, the authors provide in-depth look at the process, using qualitative data from ethnic minority young adults living in the United States.

The chapters provide not only a broad overview of the ways in which religion contributes to well-being, they do so by considering the commonalities and differences across religions. Of course, it is important to note that because a strength is emphasized in one chapter, or is not discussed in a different chapter, this does not mean that a particular religion does not provide a pathway to well-being in similar ways. Each of the chapters speak to different strengths, virtues, and pathways; and as such, the chapters speak to the variations in religions and contributions. In sum, this volume includes perspectives from religions having roots to different regions in the world and representing different types of religions and ways of knowing. In addition, the chapters consider a wide range of possible intervening variables that may mediate and/or moderate the relation between religiosity and well-being, taking into account the diversity of religions and contexts.

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Part I
Positive Psychology within the Context of Specific Religions

Chapter 2
Virtues That Transcend: Positive Psychology in Jewish Texts and Tradition

Eliezer Schnall, Mark Schiffman, and Aaron Cherniak

2.1   Introduction

The discipline of psychology, ensconced in the disease model, had long focused almost exclusively on human weakness and frailty, absorbed with uncovering the causes and treatment of mental illness and pathology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). By contrast, positive psychology, which has flourished in recent years, focuses on human strengths, wellness, and fulfillment (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (APA, 2000), considered the clinicians' "bible," catalogues problematic thoughts and behaviors that characterize disorder and malfunction, in line with the initial disease model approach. Positive psychologists have therefore proposed their own classification system, Peterson and Seligman's (2004) *Character Strengths and Virtues* (CSV), based on the human qualities and assets believed related to the "good life."

The CSV suggests six *virtues* (core characteristics), dubbed the High Six, demonstrated by individuals of good character, including wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Each of these is defined by several *character strengths*, viewed as the mechanisms or processes that lead to display of that virtue. For example, the virtue of courage may be attained via such strengths as bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality. Peterson and Seligman's (2004) method for selecting the High Six involved examining various primary texts of large-scale ancient societies recognized for their enduring influence on human civilization. Specifically, they analyzed relevant expositions culled from the following traditions:

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Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, ancient Greece, Judeo-Christianity, and Islam. Although the researchers concede that not all virtues are "equally ubiquitous" (p. 50), they proposed the six that seemed present, at least in some common form, across cultures.

In the case of Judaism, the CSV focuses on the Ten Commandments and selections from Proverbs. Based on that relatively limited scope, Peterson and Seligman (2004) identify the presence in Judaism of some, but importantly, not all, of the 24 strengths. However, our contention is that all of the High Six virtues, as well as the character strengths that define them, are meaningfully and substantially evident in the classic texts of Judaism.[1]

"Judaism" refers to the religion of the Jews, along with the philosophy the religion espouses and the way of life it prescribes. A religion of ethical monotheism, Judaism's central characteristics include belief in one God Who revealed Himself and His Torah to His people at Mount Sinai.[2] "Torah"[3] is a Hebrew word that refers to the Pentateuch (including the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), and also more broadly to the overall corpus of Jewish biblical texts and teachings. The Pentateuch combines a narrative, spanning creation of the world to the ancient Israelites' near entrance into the Land of Israel, with sections mandating ritual laws and ethical principles. The Jewish Bible also includes later canonized works, which together comprise the Prophets and Hagiographa.

The written text of the Bible is accompanied and explained by Judaism's Oral Law. Many of these oral traditions were eventually compiled and recorded in sets of treatises now known as the Talmud and Midrash. The former is a collection of fundamental texts expounding the legal, philosophical, ethical, historical, and spiritual traditions of Judaism. Redaction of the Talmud occurred in the early centuries of the Common Era, and may have continued until at least the sixth or seventh century. The Midrash, authored by rabbis of the Talmudic and post-Talmudic periods, offers biblical commentary that further illuminates Jewish philosophy, ritual, and tradition. The current chapter draws from the Bible, Talmud, and Midrash, as well as from later seminal works of leading rabbinic scholars and philosophers such as Maimonides,[4] who further elucidated the corpus of Jewish law and thought.

An exhaustive examination of the entire CSV classification system through the lens of Jewish religious texts in a single chapter is obviously impossible. The current

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[1] Peterson and Seligman apparently accept the idea that all characteristics identified in the CSV may be recognized within a single tradition. For example, they cite research (p. 28) involving focus groups drawn from the Inuit of Greenland and the Maasai of Africa whose members readily acknowledged all 24 strengths.

[2] For more on the core articles of Jewish faith, see Sect. 2.5.

[3] Literally, "instruction".

[4] Leading twelfth century philosopher and legalist.

Maimonides is described in contemporary psychology literature as "arguably the most influential Jewish scholar ever," (p. 405) whose approach to the behavioral sciences anticipated the work of such luminaries of the discipline as B. F. Skinner (Leshtz & Stemmer, 2006). Furthermore, Maimonides is described as "[a]mong the major historical figures relevant to positive psychology" by a leading textbook in this field (Compton & Hoffman, 2013, p. 14).

Table 2.1 Character strengths associated with the virtue of transcendence

Transcendence	Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
Appreciation of beauty and excellence	Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life
Gratitude	Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen
Hope	Expecting the best and working to achieve it
Humor	Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people
Spirituality/Religiousness	Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life

Based on Seligman et al. (2005)

work therefore focuses on transcendence, a member of the High Six particularly relevant to a volume devoted to positive psychology and religious traditions. We demonstrate that each of the character strengths related to this virtue, including appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality/religiousness (see Table 2.1), are deeply valued in classic Jewish thought and practice.

Transcendence, as defined by the CSV, involves connection to something or someone larger than oneself, a theme that unites the somewhat disparate character strengths associated with it. Specifically, appreciation of beauty connects one to excellence; gratitude connects one to goodness; hope connects one to the future and its potential; humor connects one to adversity and incongruity in ways that bring amusement and diversion rather than fear or suffering; and spirituality connects one to the nonmaterial aspects of life and the universe, whether perceived as divine or otherwise. Peterson and Seligman (2004) consider transcendence a virtue, because the above forms of connection proffer meaning to life. They "remind us of how tiny we are" but simultaneously lift "us out of a sense of complete insignificance" (p. 39).

Many of the character strengths relevant to transcendence are associated with measures of well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), with recent reviews further elucidating these relationships. For example, Wood, Froh, and Geraghty (2010) examine the research relating gratitude to physical health, along with the copious research relating the character strength to emotional well-being.[5] Optimism, a key component of hope, is associated with both physical and mental health, as demonstrated by Conversano et al. (2010). Martin (2008) similarly explicates the relationships between humor and both physical and psychological health. Spirituality and religion have likewise been linked to both mental and physical health (Koenig, King, & Carson, 2012).[6]

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[5] In the context of the current volume, it is noteworthy that recent research suggests that religious gratitude, or gratitude to God, may be particularly important to psychological well-being, at least in individuals religiously committed (Rosmarin, Pirutinsky, Cohen, et al., 2011).

[6] The link between well-being and the strength of appreciation of beauty is tenuous, however (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Recent work by Rudd, Vohs, and Aaker (2012) suggests this character

    The following sections describe the character strengths associated with transcendence through the prism of traditional Jewish literature, thought, and practice.

2.2   Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence

This character strength refers to the capacity to notice and delight in the presence of goodness in both the physical world and the social domain. Individuals strongly demonstrating this attribute are said to experience frequent awe-related emotions including wonder, admiration, and moral elevation. As means toward creation of enriching, awe-filled lives, the authors of the CSV emphasize responsiveness to such elements as aesthetic beauty in one's environment and displays of ability, talent, or moral goodness by others.

    In Jewish tradition, notice and appreciation of excellence and beauty are vital and sacred duties. Jews are taught to appreciate God via His creations, given the difficulty of otherwise connecting with an invisible and incorporeal divinity.[7] Verses such as "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork"[8] (Psalms 19:2, see also Psalms 104:24), imply that one should contemplate the awe-inspiring wonders of the universe, investigating the marvels and minutiae of the physical and natural sciences, and thereby approach God. This principle is elucidated by Maimonides (excerpted from his *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of the Basic Principles of the Torah, 2:2): "When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him…"[9]

    Jewish rite formally incorporates such awe-inspiring contemplation in the daily prayers and recitations. Perhaps the most commonly recited blessing, mandated following each instance of relieving oneself, is that referred to as *asher yatzar*. This blessing acknowledges the wondrous wisdom evident in the human body and its intricate functions. Blessings are also uttered when encountering virtually every other significant natural wonder in the surrounding world. For example, brief blessings are recited upon witnessing lightning, rainbows, comets, great mountains, vast bodies of water, or fruit-trees in spring bloom; hearing thunder; or encountering other extraordinary examples of natural beauty or magnificence (*Shulhan Arukh*,[10]

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strength may be related to life satisfaction, although an earlier investigation by Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004) found only a weak association.

[7] That relating to God is obligatory is evidenced by verses that mandate recognizing God (as in the first of the Ten Commandments; Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 5:6) and loving Him (Deuteronomy 6:5).

[8] All translations of biblical verses are adapted from *The Holy Scriptures* (1955).

[9] Translation from *A Maimonides Reader* (1972), p. 45.

[10] Sixteenth century legal code by Joseph Caro based on the Talmud and other law codifications, and the sourcebook for all modern compilations of Jewish law.

Orah Hayyim 226–229). Notably, blessings are also recited when seeing especially sagacious religious or secular scholars, who engender admiration via their demonstration of excellence in developing the rational mind (224:6–7).

While the above sources reflect recognition of stunning elements of the natural world, Jewish scripture is also replete with focus on the supernatural. For example, the Exodus from Egyptian slavery, accompanied by the miraculous ten plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea, and culminating with the divine revelation at Mount Sinai were undoubtedly awe-inspiring events. Significantly, in the context of these wonders, Moses adjures the people to stand and witness God's imminent salvation (Exodus 14:13). The purpose of this seemingly extraneous command was apparently to emphasize the value of appreciating transcendent moments.[11] This lesson is carried to the present day, as Jews recite a special blessing when encountering a place where they perceived a miraculous occurrence (*Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 218).

Furthermore, numerous holidays, such as Hanukkah which commemorates divine salvation from the oppressive Greek King Antiochus, Purim which commemorates divine salvation during the reign of the Persian King Ahasuerus, and Passover which commemorates the abovementioned Exodus from Egypt, provide Jews opportunity to contemplate God's miracles – both those described in ancient sources, as well as those they are encouraged to see in their own lives. For example, the *haggadah* text of the Passover *seder* (ceremonial meal) praises those who discuss at length the miracles of the Exodus, urging each and every Jew, even millennia after the event, to view himself as though he personally was liberated from Egyptian bondage. It also reminds that numerous other enemies and oppressors throughout the ages have attempted to destroy the Jewish nation, but by God's hand His people have withstood. Passover thus emphasizes reflection upon God's awe-inspiring miracles from the dawn of Jewish history during the Exodus from Egypt until the present day.[12]

In addition to the importance of recognizing the beautiful and the inspiring in the natural and supernatural of God's creations and activities, human creation of beauty

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[11] The commands for preparatory measures prior to the Sinai Revelation (Exodus 19:10–11) and prior to the heavenly purveyance of the quail (Numbers 11:18) may carry similar intent. It is also noteworthy that the Judean King Jehoshaphat, many centuries later, uses words almost identical to those of Moses when announcing to his subjects that they were about to witness a miraculous military triumph and salvation (II Chronicles 20:17).

[12] Throughout history and until modern times, Jews have traditionally created their own holidays commemorating perceived miracles occurring for specific communities or even individuals. The German Jewish community of Frankfurt am Main, for instance, established "Purim Vintz" in 1616 commemorating deliverance from violent persecution at the hands of Vincent Fettmilch's anti-Semitic gangs (Ulmer, 2001); this holiday was still being celebrated hundreds of years later, as attested by Rabbi Moses Sofer, leader of nineteenth century Central European Jewry (*Sefer She'elot u-teshuvot Hatam Sofer*, *Orah Hayyim* 191). An example of a holiday celebrating personal miraculous salvation comes from the writings of the great religious legalist Rabbi Avraham Danzig who wrote that every year he observed, with festivities and prayers, the date in 1804 when his family was saved from the conflagration that destroyed his home (*Sefer Haye Adam* 155:41).

in service of God is also emphasized in Jewish sources. One is enjoined to utilize talents, skills, and resources across the various domains of life, including in art, music, and other forms of the aesthetic, in religious rites and rituals. For example, large portions of the book of Exodus (chapters 25–31, 35–40) are devoted to description of the magnificent Tabernacle built for God by Moses and his people, its refined precious metals, engraved sparkling gems, expertly embroidered tapestries, and exquisite sculpture. The service garments of the priests were elegantly dyed and woven, designed "for splendor and for beauty" (28:2, 40). The brilliance of the Tabernacle is emphasized alongside the wisdom and insight of the artisans who devoted their talents to construction of the exquisite structure (35:10, 25).

Multiple chapters of I Kings (6–7) and II Chronicles (3–4) similarly convey the majesty of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, including its imposing architecture, extraordinary vessels, and inspirational worship service. The overall grandeur of the surrounding city is encapsulated by the Psalmist who referred to Jerusalem as "the perfection of beauty" (50:2). In the post biblical period, Herod refurbished the Second Temple; of this structure, the Talmud states (*Sukkah* 51b),[13] "He who has not seen the Temple in its full construction has never seen a glorious building in his life."

The requirement that divine service be performed via beautiful appurtenances is not only a demonstration of respect for God, but also a reciprocal means of influencing His people. As Maimonides explains (*Guide for the Perplexed*, III, chapter 45), the assembly and decoration of the ancient Holy Temple in Jerusalem was designed to inspire worshippers with awe and thereby humility and veneration.[14] The aesthetic beauty of the Temple and its service was intended to engage multiple senses. The fabulous sight of its structure and contents was complemented by the uplifting incense aroma of the Golden Altar. The Temple ambience was further enhanced by the emotion-evoking splendor of the Levite choristers' songs, drawn from the Book of Psalms (e.g., chapters 48, 81, 92; see Talmud *Tamid* 33b), known for its rhythmically poetic and inspiring verse.[15]

Far from mere historical accounts, the biblical descriptions of the Tabernacle and Temple set an example for all subsequent houses of worship, to which they are compared (Talmud *Megillah* 29a). For instance, the Talmud (*Sukkah* 51b) describes the synagogue in Alexandria of Egypt, built long after the biblical Temple, with its

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[13] Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Talmud are adapted from the Soncino Press version of the Babylonian Talmud.

[14] This idea, Maimonides elucidates, is the intent behind the biblical injunction to "reverence My sanctuary" (Leviticus 19:30) which would naturally lead to fear of God.

[15] Josephus Flavius records a tradition that Alexander the Great once marched against Jerusalem to exact vengeance on the hapless Jews who had sworn allegiance to Darius, emperor of Persia. Upon his arrival, however, Alexander gazed upon the High Priest of Israel, whose awesome image and vestments, he declared to his troops, he had beheld in his dreams. Alexander then prostrated himself before the High Priest, offered sacrifices in the Temple, and granted the Jews special dispensations (*Josephus*, *Antiquities* (1958) 11:329, Harvard University Press version). This account may offer an outsider's perspective of the stirring impact cast upon those who witnessed the High Priest garbed in his Temple finery. (A similar narrative regarding Alexander is recorded in Talmud *Yoma* 69a.)

magnificent double colonnade and golden cathedrae. Even to contemporary times, Jewish law prescribes that the synagogue (where possible) be the tallest building in the town (Talmud *Shabbath* 11a; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 150:2), handsomely structured and attractively decorated (*Zohar*,[16] Exodus 59b), with an ornamented ark to house the Torah scroll (*Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 282:1). Modern synagogue services echo that of the breathtaking ancient Temples in other ways as well; the Psalms sung by the Levite choristers, for example, are incorporated into the daily prayer service.

However, the obligation to serve God with beautiful accoutrements is not confined to synagogue adornment. Based on Exodus 15:2, "this is my God, and I will glorify Him," the rabbis derived the principle of *hiddur mitzvah* – that one should fulfill His commandments in handsome fashion[17] (*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*,[18] Tractate Shirata, 3). As explained in the Talmud (*Shabbath* 133b), all ritual items, such as the *lulab* (palm branch), *shofar* (ram's horn), and prayer shawl, should be beautiful; similarly, the Torah scroll should be written by a skilled scribe, with a fine reed-pen and in fine ink, and wrapped with exquisite silks.

In addition to the role of beauty in divine service, classic Jewish sources emphasize the importance of the aesthetically pleasing in other ways as well. For example, the Talmud (*Berakoth* 57b) states that "Three things restore a man's good spirits: [beautiful] sounds, sights, and smells," and "Three things increase a man's self-esteem: a beautiful dwelling, a beautiful wife, and beautiful clothes." In that vein, Maimonides, who was also court physician[19] to the Egyptian vizier al-Fadil, records that "one who suffers from melancholia may rid himself of it by listening to singing and all kinds of instrumental music, by strolling through beautiful gardens and splendid buildings, by gazing upon beautiful pictures, and other things that enliven the mind, and dissipate gloomy moods" (*Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*, chapter 5, p. 70, AMS Press version).

The authors of the CSV suggest that in addition to appreciation of physical beauty and displays of talent, recognition of moral goodness constitutes a third component of the character strength we currently describe. Indeed, Jewish literature also views the concepts of beauty and excellence, along with their opposites, as descriptions of conduct and of the soul. For example, the Talmud (*Yoma* 86a) uses the word "ugly" to refer to someone unscrupulous in business and discourteous in interpersonal relationships. Similarly, although the Bible frequently emphasizes the comely appearance of the righteous women it describes (e.g., Sarah, Genesis 12:11; Rebecca, 24:16; Rachel, 29:17), Proverbs (31:30) explains that superficial beauty, is not, by itself, of value: "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that

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[16] Of uncertain authorship, the Zohar is a primary work of Jewish mysticism.

[17] The root of the relevant Hebrew word in Exodus 15:2 may be variably translated as "glorify" or "adorn."

[18] Midrashic work containing expositions of the Book of Exodus.

[19] For more on Maimonides as physician, see Rosner (1998). It is noteworthy that Maimonides is described in current academic medical literature as "a bioethical role model for contemporary clinicians" (Gesundheit, Or, Gamliel, Rosner, & Steinberg, 2008, p. 428).

fears the Lord, she shall be praised." True beauty, in other words, is defined by righteous conduct and saintly deeds.

The above point distinguishes the Jewish approach from that of the Greeks, whose tradition is highlighted in the CSV description of this character strength. The authors of the CSV cite the writings of Plotinus, the third century Greek founder of Neoplatonism, who posited that the soul delights in pondering beauty, for it senses therein "a hint of the divinity that it (the soul) shares" (p. 540). For Plotinus, beauty necessarily embodies holiness, whereas for the Jew, beauty only finds its meaning when inspiring connection to God or when applied to His service. In sum, where the Greeks "believed in the holiness of beauty," Jews believe in "*hadrat kodesh* [Psalms 29:2; 96:9], the beauty of holiness" (Sacks, 2010, p. 300).

2.3   Gratitude

Gratitude encompasses feelings of joy and thankfulness experienced upon receipt of a gift. The trigger for such responses in those expressing this character strength may be a gift of virtually any type: intentional or accidental, material or intangible, lasting or even ephemeral. A further essential component of this strength is that grateful recipients of a favor or goodness experience grace – the transcendent emotion that results from recognition that others have benefitted us.

Through the eyes of Jewish tradition, gratitude may characterize the ideal personality more than any other trait. The very appellation "Jew" has its etymological source in the name of Jacob's son Judah (see Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* 98:6), whose name stems from the Hebrew root meaning "thank" or "praise." Judah's mother Leah chose his name as a display of gratitude to God (Genesis 29:35), thereby setting precedent for her later progeny to express their own thankfulness to Him. The Midrash (*Genesis Rabbah* 71:5) elaborates that Leah's descendants, including David and Daniel, were known for their praise of God (see Psalms 107:1, attributed to David; and Daniel 2:23).

Gratitude is the underlying motif of numerous religious precepts, accentuating the significance Judaism affords being thankful. The fifth of the Ten Commandments, to honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16; see also Deuteronomy 27:16 and Proverbs 23:22), is a prime example of this theme. The medieval work *Sefer ha-Chinuch*[20] explains (*mitzvah* [commandment] 33),

> At the root of this *mitzvah* lies the thought that it is fitting for a man to acknowledge and treat with loving-kindness the person who treated him with goodness, and he should not be a scoundrel, an ingrate who turns a cold shoulder [to him] – for this is an evil quality, utterly vile before God and mankind. It is for a person to realize that his father and mother are the cause of his being in this world; hence in very truth it is proper for him to give them every honor and every benefit that he can since they brought him into the world and then, too, labored through many troubles over him in his early years.

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[20] This classic but anonymous work proposing philosophy of Jewish laws was likely written in the thirteenth century. This translated excerpt is based on the Feldheim version, pp. 181–182.

The *todah* (thanksgiving) offering (Leviticus 7:12) represents another precept whose roots are embedded in gratitude. Presented in the ancient Temple by survivors of peril, including severe illness, or an ocean or dessert voyage (Talmud *Berakoth* 54b), and by joyous celebrants, such as bride or groom on the wedding day (Bachya ben Asher[21] to Leviticus 6:2), the offering is a pure expression of gratitude to God. According to the Midrash (*Leviticus Rabbah* 9:7, 27:12), the *todah* will be the only offering brought in the eventual Messianic Age, a fact that may underscore the eternal importance of displaying gratitude. In fact, the *todah* offering is practiced in modified form even in contemporary times, in the context of a synagogue benediction (*birkhat ha-gomel*) recited by survivors of the abovementioned precarious situations (*Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 219:1–3).

Another religious ritual whose core theme is based on expression of gratitude is the obligation to offer *bikkurim* (first fruits; Deuteronomy 26:1–11). In biblical times, Jews traveled to Jerusalem and donated the initial produce of their annual harvest to the Temple's officiating priests. This contribution was accompanied by a declaration of gratitude to God. The text of the recitation is relevant to what Peterson and Seligman (2004) call *gratitude span*, which refers to the number of occurrences for which one experiences thankfulness at a single time. In addition to expressing gratitude to God for agricultural bounty, the pilgrim's declaration recalls the miraculous Exodus from Egyptian slavery that God orchestrated "with a mighty hand" and "with wonders" (verse 8), and he rejoices that God gave "this land [of Israel], a land flowing with milk and honey" (verse 9). The *bikkurim* rite thus promotes expression of gratitude for abundant divine goodness, both current and past.

A number of medieval Jewish thinkers argue that gratitude is not merely relevant to various individual precepts, such as those of the *todah* and *bikkurim* offerings, but rather is the fundamental principle underlying all of the Torah's commandments. Bachya ibn Paquda,[22] in his seminal work *Hovot ha-Levavot* (p. 176, Routledge and Kegan Paul translated version) maintains that gratitude to God for His kindnesses is precisely what necessitates adherence to all His laws. Additionally, Abraham ibn Ezra[23] (to Exodus 20:1) writes that the Torah obligates Jews to perform more commandments than gentiles because the former, saved by God from slavery in Egypt, owe a larger debt of gratitude to Him. Ibn Ezra's words may explain why there is an explicit commandment to remember the Exodus each day (Exodus 13:3, Deuteronomy 16:3), in addition to multiple daily religious practices[24] similarly intended to evoke that event (see Nachmanides[25] to Exodus 13:16).

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[21] Leading thirteenth century Jewish philosopher and biblical exegete.

[22] Leading eleventh century philosopher.

[23] Leading twelfth century biblical exegete.

[24] E.g., Exodus 13:9.

[25] Leading thirteenth century philosopher, legalist, Kabbalist and exegete.

Recalling and reflecting upon God's wondrous miracles encourages gratitude and renewed commitment to fulfilling His word (see Yonah of Gerona[26] to Talmud *Berakoth* 4b).

The CSV differentiates between personal gratitude (thankfulness toward another person) and transpersonal gratitude (thankfulness to God or a higher power). While our preceding discussion established the essentialness of gratitude in Jewish philosophy generally, it is noteworthy that gratitude is seen as a Jewish religious imperative both relevant to one's relationships with man (personal) and with God (transpersonal), not unlike the CSV's distinction. In addition to the abovementioned requirement to honor parents, another example of personal gratitude is the instruction of the Midrash (*Exodus Rabbah* 4:2) that a guest receiving shelter should consider that he owes his host his life. Furthermore, even a traveler with sufficient provisions of his own should nonetheless purchase food at the inn where he lodges in order to profit his host (Midrash *Numbers Rabbah* 19:15). Additionally, as an expression of appreciation one should provide some service to a town from which he benefited, as did Jacob who, when he sojourned in Shechem, sold low-priced goods at the gates of that city (Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* 79:6).

Religious practices that instead foster the second form, transpersonal gratitude, are also emphasized in Judaism. In fact, rituals relevant to transpersonal gratitude are mandated throughout the day, encouraging what Peterson and Seligman (2004) call *gratitude frequency*, a reference to how often one feels grateful. In fact, the very first words uttered immediately upon waking each morning (i.e., the *modeh ani* prayer), express gratitude to God for the gift of another day of life. Numerous subsequent morning blessings thank God for such basic and often overlooked endowments as the abilities to see and to stand upright. Moreover, near the end of the thrice daily *amidah* prayer wherein Jews beseech God for their needs, a special section (entitled *modim*) conveys gratitude to God for all He provides. Additionally, both before and after meals, mandatory benedictions express appreciation to God for sustenance. A brief blessing is even recited after each instance of relieving oneself, communicating gratitude for the relevant bodily functions. These collective blessings and prayers attune awareness to God's beneficence and the gratitude thus due Him.

Also consistent with Peterson and Seligman (2004), the Bible prescribes expression of gratitude regardless of the intention of the giver. For example, despising Egyptians is prohibited despite the fact that they enslaved the Israelites. The Egyptians, the Bible states, deserve some measure of gratitude for initially hosting the Israelites in their land (see Deuteronomy 23:8 with Rashi's[27] commentary), even though their hospitality may have been for ulterior motives. In related vein, the Midrash even advised gratitude toward inanimate benefactors. Its authors observe that Aaron, and not Moses, was commanded to prompt the first plagues in Egypt by symbolically striking the Nile with his staff. The Midrash explains that Moses' life was saved when, as a baby, he was placed in a basket on the Nile (Exodus 2:3), and

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[26] Leading thirteenth century moralist and legalist.

[27] Leading eleventh century Talmud and Bible exegete.

striking the same body of water that benefited him would exhibit ingratitude. Some may doubt the value of gratitude toward an inanimate object or a benefactor with questionable intentions – yet the goal may be to encourage an overall personality that exudes gratitude through exercises of thanksgiving.

Finally, the Talmud repeatedly and emphatically denounces ingratitude, for example criticizing Adam for this very shortcoming. When God questioned Adam regarding his eating from the Tree of Knowledge in disobedience of His command, Adam blamed Eve for instigating the sin (Genesis 3:12), demonstrating ingratitude to God who provided him a wife (Talmud *Abodah Zarah* 5b). Pharaoh is similarly condemned (Midrash *Sekhel Tov* Exodus 1:8) as ungrateful for persecuting and enslaving the family and descendants of Joseph, who dealt kindly with Egypt and implemented an economic plan that saved the country from famine and ruin (see Genesis 41). Additionally, the Talmud (*Abodah Zarah* 5a) faults the Israelites for complaining about their desert sustenance (Numbers 21:5), demonstrating ingratitude for the manna from heaven that God miraculously provided. Perhaps summarizing the rabbinic view on this matter, Judah of Regensburg[28] writes, "there is no worse trait than being ungrateful" (*Sefer Hasidim*, 665).

2.4 Hope

Recognizing this character strength as multi-faceted, Peterson and Seligman (2004) explain that hope, along with optimism, future orientation, and future-mindedness together represent the emotional, cognitive, and motivational components that define it. Those high in this strength expect desired outcomes to occur and act in ways thought to increase their likelihood. Such an approach toward life sustains good spirits and galvanizes goal-directed behavior.

Hope for the future and its anticipated goodness is prominently valued in Jewish literature and tradition. In fact, Seeskin (2012) argues that among Judaism's contributions to humanity was "the belief that the future will be an improvement on the past or present" (p. 3). The following discussion supports this contention through analysis of classic Jewish sources highlighting hope in both the context of national destiny as well as the life of the individual.

On a national level, hope in a better future is expressed through prophecies predicting redemption of the Jewish people, the coming of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead. With regard to redemption, Jeremiah prophesies "there is hope for your future… your [exiled] children shall return to their own border" (31:16) in the Land of Israel. The prophet Amos (9:14) makes similar declarations, as does Hosea (2:20), whose prophesy predicts peaceful restoration of the Jews from exile. Selections including these verses are read aloud in the synagogue in the context of the Sabbath and holiday *haftarah* recitations. Prophecies of eventual return to the

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[28] Leading twelfth century sage and mystic.

Land have long been part of the national consciousness, instilling hope through many dark periods during millennia of exile from the Jewish homeland.

Throughout their long history of affliction, Jews have hoped toward the Messianic Age, a time when peoples "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" and when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation" (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). Unlike the despotic regimes which oppressed Jews throughout the centuries, the Messianic king will righteously "judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land" (Isaiah 11:4). Hope for this utopian future is included in Jewish prayer books as part of a daily affirmation that paraphrases Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith, in which one declares: "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he may delay, I wait daily for his coming" (Sacks, 2009, p. 204).

The thrice daily *amidah* prayer emphasizes national hope throughout. For example, its first two blessings praise God for the redemption and salvation He brings for His people. Later blessings focus on the long anticipated ingathering of the Diaspora, rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah. Similarly, one of the four blessings that comprise the grace after meals petitions God to rebuild Jerusalem. There are also numerous references to redemption across the special holiday prayers. For instance, the liturgy for Passover, which commemorates the Exodus from Egypt, alludes to future redemption. Perhaps most famously, the end of the *haggadah* text of the *seder* expresses yearning that next year's Passover will be celebrated in Jerusalem.

Various life-cycle rituals likewise include hope-related prayers that anticipate redemption of the Jewish people from exile. At circumcision celebrations, for example, a special insert highlighting this theme is added to the grace after meals. Similarly, an officiant at wedding ceremonies prays aloud that God "bring great happiness and joy to one who was barren [Jerusalem], as her children return to her in joy" (Sacks, 2009, p. 1040).

Jews also believe in eventual resurrection, trusting there will be life even for those deceased. This principle is supported by multiple biblical verses, such as Isaiah's prophecy, "Your dead shall live" (26:19) and Daniel's statement that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (12:2). A reminder of this belief is included in each of the daily *amidah* prayers, where God is praised as the One Who will revive the dead. Isaiah (25:8) further predicts a time when God "will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces," a verse recited at Jewish burial services, when such hope may be essential in assisting those present in coping with their loss. In addition, mourners then recite a special text of the *kaddish* prayer which references a future where the dead will awaken to eternal life (Sacks, 2009, p. 1056).

While the above sources stress hope for a brighter collective future, Jewish religious literature also highlights hope of a personal type. Such sentiment is reflected in numerous verses from Psalms, including "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope" (130:5; see also 39:8). In fact, the seventh blessing of the weekday *amidah* prayer beseeches God in His capacity as Redeemer of individuals from their personal tribulations (see Rashi to Talmud *Megillah* 17b).

A fascinating Talmudic account (from *Berakoth* 10a, based on Isaiah 38) records a conversation between the prophet Isaiah and the biblical king Hezekiah, then on his deathbed. The former had just prophesied that the king would be punished[29]: "Set your house in order; for you shall die" (38:1). Hezekiah's hopeful response may illustrate the optimism, future-mindedness, and goal-directed behavior that Peterson and Seligman (2004) identify with this character strength. The Talmud records that he emphatically declaimed a tradition from his ancestor David that "Even if a sharp sword rests upon a man's neck he should not desist from prayer." Hezekiah's supplication was indeed granted, as God declares, "I will add unto your days fifteen years" (verse 5). Despite his ominous situation, Hezekiah was motivated by an expectation that he could evoke a more positive outcome, and the divine reprieve from death at the conclusion of the biblical account validates his hopeful and optimistic approach.

In fact, optimism, the cognitive component of hope, is repeatedly emphasized in the Talmud. Like the CSV, which describes prodigies of specific character strengths, the Talmud refers admiringly to the first century sage, Nahum Ish ("man of") Gamzu, a paragon of hopeful optimism. No matter what apparent evil befell him, he would respond with his mantra, "*gam zu le-tovah*" – "this too is for the good" (Talmud *Taanith* 21a).[30] The Talmud relates that Nahum was blind, impoverished, and plagued with grave illness, yet he never ceased insisting that life always be viewed through the perspective of optimism.

Nahum's disciple, Rabbi Akiba, followed in his teacher's footsteps, living by the maxim "Whatever the All-Merciful [God] does is for good," as is exemplified in the following narrative:

> Rabbi Akiba was once going along the road and he came to a certain town and looked for lodgings but was everywhere refused. He said 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good', and he went and spent the night in the open field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey, and a lamp. A gust of wind came and blew out the lamp, a weasel came and ate the rooster, a lion came and ate the donkey. He said: 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good'. The same night some brigands came and carried off the inhabitants of the town. [Realizing he was saved from captivity only because he had been refused hospitality in the town that was pillaged; and similarly, his location in the field was not detected by the brigands only because his light had been extinguished and his animals silenced, Rabbi Akiba] said… 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is all for good'. (Talmud *Berakoth* 60b-61a)

Rabbi Akiba did not limit optimism to his personal life, but extended it to his view of Jewish national destiny as well. The Talmud (*Makkoth* 24b) relates that after the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple, a group of rabbis observed a fox emerging from the rubble of the Temple's Holy of Holies. They were all devastated, recognizing that the sanctuary that once manifested God's glorious presence amongst their people had become stomping grounds for wild animals. The only exception was Rabbi Akiba, who laughed at the specter, even as his colleagues

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[29] Hezekiah had violated God's will that he marry and procreate.

[30] Nahum's cognomen "man of Gamzu" is etymologically related to his mantra, which began with the phrase "gam zu."

cried. He explained to them that Scripture already predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed and the Temple site left desolate (Micah 3:12). However, it also predicted rebuilding of the holy city and its environs (Zechariah 8:4). Now that the first prophecy was fulfilled, Rabbi Akiba continued, the second would surely come to pass as well. And with these words of hope for the future, his colleagues proclaimed: "Akiba, you have comforted us! Akiba, you have comforted us!" The Talmud's inclusion of this narrative provides a paradigm of optimism and hope for the Jewish people.

2.5   Humor

Of all the character strengths, humor, in particular, may be described in many ways, and Peterson and Seligman (2004) offer various components to their definition. Humorous individuals are skilled at laughter, gentle teasing, and bringing smiles to others' faces. They uphold good spirits even during adversity by maintaining a cheerful perspective that sees a light side to life's challenges. A further component of this strength is playful creation, recognition, and/or enjoyment of incongruities. The following discussion focuses on the positive attitude toward these elements of humor conveyed in classic Jewish sources.[31]

An outgrowth of the fact that expressing humor may elevate mood and benefit mental health (Martin, 2008) is recognition that encouraging laughter and good spirit in the downtrodden or dismayed may constitute a category of religiously valued deed that God rewards. This point is underscored in a Talmudic account involving Rabbi Berokah Hoza'ah (*Taanith* 22a). The great sage was walking through the marketplace when he met Elijah the Prophet.[32] Rabbi Berokah asked Elijah whether anyone present was destined for divine reward in the World to Come. In response, the prophet indicated that only a few of those in the market had earned such distinction. The rabbi then eagerly approached two of those Elijah identified as worthy, intent on learning the source of their great merit. They explained, "We are jesters, when we see men depressed we cheer them up; furthermore when we see two people quarrelling we strive hard [via jest] to make peace between them." This narrative casts two primary CSV definitions of humor in a positive light, praising those who bring laughter and smiles to others, specifically in the face of adversity and strife.

Maimonides, the rabbi and physician, in line with both the above Talmudic account and the CSV, prescribes laughter for those in distress, implying that it may

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[31] We primarily focus on the Talmud and its commentaries, avoiding the contentious question of whether the Bible itself may contain humor. The interested reader is referred to Friedman (2000, 2002) and Morreall (2001) for review of that issue.

[32] II Kings 2:11 records that Elijah did not die a natural death, instead ascending to heaven in miraculous fashion. According to Jewish tradition, he sometimes reappears to conduct missions of great significance. Elijah's mention in this Talmudic passage stresses the critical importance assigned to encouraging beneficial laughter.

contribute to recuperation of the ill. He even suggests that bringing mirth to the sick is a religious requirement for their caretakers:

> One should *strengthen the [body's] vital power*… by telling the patient joyful stories… and by relating news that distracts his mind and *makes him laugh*… One should select people who can cheer him up, to serve him and to care for him. All this is obligatory in every illness [italicized emphases added].[33]

In line with the final component of the CSV definition of humor mentioned above, there are multiple examples of playful creation or enjoyment of incongruity in the Talmud. The practice of the sage Rabbah "to say something humorous" (*Shabbath* 30b) before he commenced each lecture may provide such an example. He intended that the mirth associated with laughter prime the hearts and minds of his students (see Rashi there). The Talmud also relates that Rabbi Jeremiah offered a *reductio ad absurdum* argument to poke fun at a quoted legal opinion, in an effort to make a colleague laugh (*Niddah* 23a). Additionally, the sage Bar Kappara once placed a large basket over his head, a playful act presumably incongruous with normative rabbinic comportment, specifically in order to bring laughter to a leading contemporary (*Nedarim* 50b-51a). It is noteworthy that Bar Kappara was also known for his skill at using biblical verses for clever word play (*Nedarim* 51a).[34] In that vein, the following example of linguistic humor is predicated on the fact that there were different dialects of the Aramaic language spoken in Babylonia and in the Land of Israel. The Talmud relates that:

> A certain Babylonian man who moved to the Land of Israel married a woman. He said to her, "Cook me two hooves [*talfei*]." She cooked him two lentils [*telofhei*]. He became angry with her. The next day, he told her, "Cook me a neck [*geriva*]." She cooked him a *geriva-measure* of grain. He said to her, "Go bring me two gourds [*botzinai*]." She brought him two lamps [*botzinai*]. He said to her, "Go break them over the top of the gate [*reisha de-bava*]!" [The sage] Bava[35] ben Buta was sitting on the gate and judging. She went and broke them on his head. He said to her, "Why did you do that?" [She responded] "Thus my husband commanded me." He said, "[Since] you did the will of your husband, God will bring out from you two sons like Bava ben Buta" (*Nedarim* 66b).[36]

On the one hand, this excerpt highlights comedic use of incongruities and wordplay. Furthermore, it emphasizes Bava ben Buta's playfully positive response to a potentially volatile circumstance, a telling example of the use of humor to reappraise stressful situations, consistent with another of the CSV's definitions of humor.[37]

There is even a Jewish holiday associated with humor, known as Purim. An integral theme of that day's celebration is "reversal" (Esther 9:1), reflecting the Jews'

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[33] From *The Regimen of Health*, excerpted from Rosner's (1990, p. 47) translation.

[34] The second party in both the account of Rabbi Jeremiah and of Bar Kappara made a deliberate attempt to avoid laughing, which may indicate conflicting views on humor among the sages of the Talmud (see also *Nedarim* 50b).

[35] Bava's name is also the Aramaic word for "gate".

[36] Translation based on Brodsky (2011, p. 20).

[37] For other examples of humor in the Talmud, see Brodsky (2011) and Diamond (2011).

unexpected salvation from the murderous designs of the ancient Persian leader Haman, who was instead himself hanged by King Ahasuerus on the very gallows that Haman had designated for executing the Jewish leader. Pursuant to this ironic and incongruous shift, Purim has become linked with humor and jollity.

Contemporary scholars of humor (e.g., Martin, 2007) caution that not all humor is beneficial, echoing the Talmud, which promotes only certain uses of humor, while condemning others as destructive. For example, *leitzanutha* [mockery] is forbidden unless aimed at idolatry or other sins deserving derision (*Megillah* 25b). Similarly, unbridled *sekhok* [levity] is seen as an impediment to Torah study (*Aboth* 6:5) and an invitation to promiscuity (*Aboth* 3:13).

While some may argue that positive psychologists should focus on the benevolent forms of humor, Peterson and Seligman (2004) counter that cynics and satirists also play an important role. Such individuals make evildoers into a laughingstock, and repel and correct harmful deviations, thereby building group cohesion. Perhaps in this vein, some traditionally display leniency toward mockery during the Purim holiday. For example, there is a custom dating back to the sixteenth century to present a Purim *shpiel*, consisting of satiric skits or monologues. Such satire may also take a written form, like the twelfth century Tractate *Purim*, a parody composed in the style of the Talmud (see Hanegbi, 1989).

2.6   Spirituality

The character strength of spirituality is particularly manifest in those who possess clear beliefs about the ultimate meaning and purpose of the cosmos and the individual's place within it. They are confident that life has a transcendent (nonphysical) element, and their theories regarding the higher purpose of life and the universe comfort them and mold their conduct. Importantly, spirituality in this context is also connected to pursuit of moral values and goodness.

Spirituality, by the above definition, is central to Jewish thought and practice, finding strong expression, for example, in the traditional Jewish understanding of "divine providence." The notion of divine providence is based on belief that God is omniscient, guides temporal events both great and small, and punishes those who violate His commands, but rewards those who choose to observe them. Acceptance of God's providence therefore offers direction to life and suggests ways to shape one's conduct (i.e., fulfilling the Bible's mandate of goodness and moral purity toward God and fellow man). Furthermore, such acceptance provides special comfort to those who trust in Him, as David wrote, "I will fear no evil, for You are with me" (Psalms 23:4). This idea was explicated by Bachya ibn Paquda who wrote that one who trusts in God exchanges "constant grief" and "continual worry" for "a peaceful mind and a tranquil soul" (*Hovot ha-Levavot*, p. 263).

Jewish literature is replete with reference to God's omniscience and direction of worldly events, foundational and potentially comforting components of divine providence. The former notion is explicit in Scripture ("For His eyes are upon the

ways of a man, and He sees all his goings" [Job 34:21]), Midrash[38] ("Even the small talk that a man talks with his wife is written down" by God [*Leviticus Rabbah* 26:7]), and Talmud ("Know what there is above thee: an eye that sees, an ear that hears" [*Aboth* 2:1]). Regarding the latter principle, God's supervision of history, the verse states: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord…. He turns it wheresoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). Not only is the fate of nations subject to His whim (e.g., Judges 2:11–14; 10:11–13), but also trivialities of the individual life: "No man bruises his finger here on earth unless it was so decreed against him in heaven" (Talmud *Hullin* 7b). Even outwardly random events need not precipitate any special fears or increased trepidations, for their outcomes are equally under His direct control (Proverbs 16:33).

The prophets were aware that God's providence oftentimes seems hidden or incomprehensible to the mortal observer, as Jeremiah (12:1) wondered painfully, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" and as Habbakuk (1:13) was similarly confounded. Yet the believer is calmed by the notion that evil flourishes only seemingly and temporarily (Psalms 92:8), and he is reassured by the conviction that God's ways are ultimately perfect and just (Deuteronomy 32:4). Moreover, divine reward and punishment are only sometimes meted out in this world, as full recompense may only be realized in the afterlife, an idea that may offer further comfort.[39] For example, obedience to the Torah leads to earthly blessings (Deuteronomy 11:13–15), and its violation to corresponding temporal curse (verses 16–17). However, the rabbis of the Talmud stressed that true reward for fulfillment of the Law is not intended for the mortal realm, but rather for after death (*Hullin* 142a; see also *Aboth* 4:16). This concept is reinforced in daily morning prayers by recitations (adapted from Talmud *Pe'ah* 1:1 and *Shabbath* 127a) detailing numerous good deeds and ritual rites, fulfillment of which are said to yield reward retained for the World to Come. Later rabbinic works emphasized that the only pure bliss is the ecstasy of the soul experienced in its eternal life, and that God's desire to reward and pleasure the afterlife souls of adherents to His will is the central purpose of man's Creation (*Mesillat Yesharim*[40] chapter 1; *Derekh Hashem*[41] Section 2, chapter 2; see also *Sefer ha-'Ikkarim*[42] 1:7).

Nonetheless, numerous Jewish sources stress that Torah observance does not mean blind obedience to arbitrary commands intended solely to draw forth earthly and afterlife blessing via divine providence. To the contrary, the commandments are inherently purposeful, contributing to the welfare of the faithful and offering meaning and direction to their lives. The Bible characterizes the commandments as based on wisdom and understanding (Deuteronomy 4:6) and itself sometimes suggests specific reasons for individual laws (e.g., Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 17:16,17).

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[38] Translation of the Midrash Rabbah is based on the Soncino Press version.

[39] Peterson and Seligman (2004) list belief in life after death as a critical distinction between those possessing the character strength of spirituality and those lacking it.

[40] Eighteenth century ethical treatise by Moshe Chaim Luzzatto.

[41] Eighteenth century philosophical treatise by Moshe Chaim Luzzatto.

[42] Fifteenth century treatise on the fundamentals of the Jewish faith by Joseph Albo.

Although recognizing that divine rationale may be beyond human comprehension (Talmud *Pesahim* 119a, *Sanhedrin* 21b), some rabbis of the Talmud also explored reasons for particular commandments. Talmud *Niddah* (31b) explains the seemingly abstruse law obliging separation of man and wife during her menstrual period with the rational explanation that subsequent to a brief mandated abstinence the marital relationship may be reinvigorated. Many medieval Jewish philosophers followed this tradition, presenting elucidations of Torah law. Abraham ibn Ezra (to Leviticus 13:45), for example, explained the requirement that lepers wrap themselves as intended to prevent infection of others. Maimonides (*Guide for the Perplexed*, III, chapters 26–27) likewise stressed that every biblical law serves a useful purpose, aimed at wellbeing of body and soul.

The underpinnings of divine providence, as well as other core articles of Jewish faith, are clearly explicated for adherents, contributing toward coherent beliefs regarding one's place in the universe, noted above as a key element in the positive psychology definition of spirituality. From the dawn of the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai when God presented the Tablets of the Law, including the first of the Ten Commandments, requiring belief in God (Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 5:6), its religion placed significant emphasis on knowledge of basic religious principles. Indeed, the *shema* affirmation recited twice daily incorporates biblical passages asserting central concepts as the unity of God (Deuteronomy 6:4), the requirement to love Him (Deuteronomy 6:5), and the idea of reward and punishment (Deuteronomy 11:13–17). The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 90a) further delineates Jewish doctrine, such as that of the divine origin of the Torah and the eventual resurrection of the dead. Among numerous medieval rabbinic scholars who offered formal and precise codifications of the essential dogma, Maimonides most prominently composed his Thirteen Principles of Faith, delineating fundamentals as God's eternality, incorporeality, and omniscience, printed in most daily prayer books to the present day. His Principles were rewritten around the year 1400 in poetic form (entitled *yigdal*); this hymn is commonly sung even in contemporary times during Jewish religious services and is taught to children as soon as they begin to pray.

The positive psychology strength of spirituality is also powerfully reflected in the writings of the Kabbalists. These Jewish mystics understood that ritual practices influence heavenly realities. Performance of religious rites incorporates the Jew into the divine system that provides the spiritual forces that sustain the world and all it contains. Kabbalistic thought thus suggests that fulfillment of the Torah allows one to connect with the divine order and strengthen the spiritual power that maintains harmony and life in the universe (Dan, 2006). These mystical ideas seemingly dovetail with Peterson and Seligman's (2004) notion that spiritual individuals believe in a sacred force that connects all living things to one another.

Among the specific questions whose responses Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest differentiate those who exhibit spirituality is "How often do you pray?" (p. 600). For the Jew, prayer is both mandatory and frequent. In fact, some rabbis of the Talmud contend that the Jewish requirement of thrice daily prayer was instituted by the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*Berakoth* 26b). Indeed, biblical verses suggest such frequency of prayer even in ancient times (e.g., Psalms 55:18), and it

is explicitly recorded that Daniel (6:11) consistently "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." In general, the Bible abounds with examples of both men and women who entreated God in an hour of need (e.g., Eliezer, Genesis 24: 12–14; Hannah, I Samuel 2:1–10; Manasseh, II Chronicles 33:12–13). Likewise, various chapters of Psalms profess to be the texts of supplications uttered by biblical figures (e.g., chapters 17 and 86, each beginning, "A prayer of David", and chapter 90 beginning, "A prayer of Moses"). Relatedly, the Talmudic sage Rabbi Eleazar explains that prayer is among the most significant forms of divine service (*Berakoth* 32b), an idea reflected in more modern works, such as that of the Hasidic master Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi who wrote that "the idea of prayer is the foundation of the whole Torah" (as cited in Cohn-Sherbok, 2003, p. 440).

Although prayer may be viewed as a means of influencing a deity to satisfy the petitioner's desires, Jewish prayer is also about connecting to the divine, a concept directly in consonance with the CSV notion of transcendence. It is noteworthy that while many biblical prayers regard material needs or physical salvation (e.g., Genesis 28:20–22; Numbers 12:13; II Kings 19:15–19), others reflect the yearning of the soul (e.g., Psalm 51, especially verses 12–14), indicating the role of prayer in bridging the divide between man and his Creator. Similarly, the Talmud frowns on one whose sole intent in praying regards anticipated fulfillment of his petition (*Berakoth* 32b), further indicating that prayer involves more than requesting favors from God. Even Maimonides, known for his rational approach to Judaism, wrote that one who prays must "see himself as standing before the divine Presence"[43] (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Prayer, 4:16). Perhaps most powerfully, the Jewish idea of prayer as an expression of spirituality was captured by the approach, especially prominent in the thought of many Hasidic masters, that prayer "is the oxygen of the soul; it is the spiritual life force, the umbilical cord connecting the soul with its Source, between the finite and the Infinite" (Rosen, 2008).

2.7 Relevant Psychology Research

Even those subdisciplines of psychology that are specifically focused on diversity and multicultural concerns have historically been slow to focus on issues of religion (Schlosser, Foley, Poltrock, & Holmwood, 2009). Although religion and spirituality have lately gained traction as topics of inquiry for psychology researchers, investigations of Jews and Judaism still lag (Rosmarin, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2009; Schnall, 2006). However, it is heartening that in very recent years this situation is changing, as a small but growing cadre of researchers begins to fill the gap, focusing on Jews in both theoretical and empirical studies of mental health and wellness (Schnall, Pelcovitz, & Fox, 2013).

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[43] Translation from *A Maimonides Reader* (1972), p. 91.

Theoretical explorations of those aspects of Judaism relevant to both transcendence and mental health[44] or well-being have largely concentrated on the Jewish holy days, especially the Sabbath. For example, Golner (1982) and Goldberg (1986a, 1986b) argued that the spiritual practices of the Sabbath day parallel philosophies and interventions popular in contemporary mental health care. More recent expositions have expanded on these earlier treatments of the subject of the Sabbath (e.g., Smith-Gabai & Ludwig, 2011), with some theorists adding discussion of Jewish prayer in the context of its mental health benefits (Frank et al., 1997) and its focus on gratitude (Weiss & Levy, 2010). Moreover, Krichiver (2010) connects all major Jewish holidays with related positive psychology character strengths, including many strengths associated with transcendence.

In addition to theoretical analyses, various empirical studies of Jewish research participants also examined aspects of transcendence and emotional well-being. In a study of young Jewish adults, Ressler (1997) found a small positive relationship between religiosity and three measures of well-being: belonging, self-acceptance, and optimism (a key component of the character strength of hope). In a study by Rosmarin, Krumrei, and Pargament (2010) of Jews and Christians, greater spirituality and gratitude were associated with reduced depression and anxiety in both groups. Similarly, in samples of both religious and secular Israeli Jewish students, religious belief was negatively related to psychological distress and positively related to psychological well-being (Vilchinsky & Kravetz, 2005). Both of these relationships were moderated by participant report of finding meaning in life, an important element of the character strength of spirituality. Relatedly, Pirutinsky et al. (2011) report that intrinsic religiosity (defined in ways that overlap with the character strength of spirituality) moderated the association between poor physical health and depression among Jews. Although they cite multiple studies suggesting the ill or disabled generally suffer higher rates of depression, for those in their sample reporting high levels of intrinsic religiosity, poor health did not at all heighten risk of depression, a surprising and important finding. By contrast, in a study of Jewish female residents of Israeli old age homes, no relationship between religiosity (defined in ways that overlap with the character strengths of spirituality and hope) and subjective well-being was uncovered (Iecovich, 2002).

Related research focused specifically on religious coping. For example, among British Jews reporting recent major stress, those utilizing religious coping methods, associated with spiritual support and religious beliefs, were more likely to experience positive affect (Loewenthal, MacLeod, Goldblatt, Lubitsh, & Valentine, 2000). In fact, Rosmarin, Pargament, Krumrei, and Flannelly (2009) created and validated a Jewish Religious Coping Scale (JCOPE; based partly on a measure developed for early adolescents by Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, & Tarakeshwa, 2000). In a sample of Jewish adults, these researchers found that JCOPE scores were associated with

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[44] For a review of evidence that Jewish prayer and spirituality may be associated with *physical* health and well-being, see Levin (2011, 2012). For preliminary data suggesting Jewish spirituality may be related to dental and periodontal health, see Zini, Sgan-Cohen, and Marcenes (2012a, 2012b).

psychological distress; positive religious coping predicted lower levels of anxiety and worry, and negative religious coping predicted higher levels of depression and anxiety. However, Cohen (2002) reported that religious coping, religious belief, and spirituality better predicted quality of life and happiness among Catholics and Protestants than among Jews.

The above studies require the caveat that they are investigations of the behavior and beliefs of contemporary Jews, and thus involve participants who may not represent the values reflected by the time-honored primary texts of Judaism, such as the Bible or Talmud. For example, Weiss and Levy (2010) acknowledge that "Traditional Jewish practice specifies that one pray three times a day," yet they reasonably speculate (in the absence of definitive data) that "most contemporary Jews do not pray at all, and only a small percentage may set aside time for daily prayer" (p. 111). 'Studies of Jews' are critical; yet these differ significantly from 'studies of Judaism' in that the latter would assess the correlates and consequences of traditional Jewish rituals and beliefs defined specifically and explicitly by long-established Jewish source texts.[45] Research of this second type is less common, yet such work more directly explicates the relationship between well-being and Judaism per se in the context of the character strengths that define transcendence.

Rosmarin, Pargament, and Mahoney (2009) pioneered this second and more direct form of investigation of Judaism and psychological wellness by creating a "trust in God" scale expressly based on Bachya ibn Paquda's classic eleventh century philosophic and devotional text *Hovot ha-Levavot*. As described earlier (in the context of the character strength of spirituality), this medieval rabbinic work delineates trust in God together with the mental health benefits its author believed such trust proffers. Among their broad sample of Jewish respondents, Rosmarin et al. indeed found that divine trust related to personal happiness and to reduced depression and anxiety.

Rosmarin, Pargament, Pirutinsky, and Mahoney (2010; see also Rosmarin, Pirutinsky, Auerbach, et al., 2011) subsequently applied the above approach in developing a spiritually integrated treatment (SIT) for anxiety. With the help of rabbinic consultants, the researchers created an Internet-based treatment drawn in significant part from classic Jewish sources, incorporating elements related to the character strengths of spirituality and gratitude. A randomized controlled trial was then conducted, evaluating the SIT among Jewish participants with elevated levels of worry and stress. Compared with controls, those receiving the SIT demonstrated reduced worry, stress, uncertainty intolerance, and depression. This groundbreaking work demonstrates that traditional Jewish concepts of transcendence associated with positive psychology character strengths may produce interventions that promote mental health and well-being.

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[45] Although both studies of Jews and of Judaism definitely exist in the research literature, we admit that classifying a given study in one or the other category is sometimes difficult. Our approach was conservative, considering 'studies of Judaism' to be only those whose methods were expressly and significantly based on the religion's primary texts.

2.8   Conclusion

Surveying Judaism's approach on any subject is a bold and ambitious endeavor. Its literature and traditions span millennia, and, for any given primary source, there may be multiple approaches among the sages. A truly exhaustive discussion of any one of the topics covered above could comprise a chapter, if not a book, of its own. Furthermore, as this chapter focuses on only one of the six virtues described in the CSV, future research must address the other members of the High Six to demonstrate that classic Jewish texts yield meaningful and substantial sources for all 24 character strengths identified by positive psychologists.

In addition to the insights Judaism offers social scientists studying character strengths, Jewish clergy and religious educators devoted to inspiring virtues in their congregants and students may benefit from knowledge of psychological research and theory. The field of positive psychology, with its emphasis on experimentation and scientific validation has already yielded empirically supported interventions,[46] including many that could be adapted to classrooms in synagogues and religious schools. This initial treatise should prompt discussion among psychologists, academics, and Jewish scholars and educators regarding a symbiotic relationship between positive psychology and the Jewish tradition. The CSV was born out of the challenge issued to Seligman: "Can we hold hope that positive psychology will be able to help people evolve toward their highest potential?" (p. v). The product of efforts to investigate the reciprocal contributions of positive psychology and Judaism should suggest that the answer is a resounding "yes".

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[46] For example, Wood et al. (2010, p. 897) state, "Gratitude interventions have commonly been highlighted as a key success of the positive psychology movement." See there for a review of 12 empirically validated gratitude interventions.

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Chapter 3
The Contributions of Christian Perspectives and Practices to Positive Psychology

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In this chapter, we describe and hypothesize contributions of Christian perspectives and practices to positive psychology. This is a challenging task given the diversity across Christian Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions globally and given that most Western scientific research assesses religion more generally and not Christianity specifically. First, we outline caveats to the project. Second, we summarize cultural and intellectual contributions of Christianity to societies throughout history. Third, we describe contributions to positive psychology, focusing especially on character strength and virtue and secondarily on happiness, subjective well-being, and positive emotions. Fourth, we suggest future research directions.

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3.1   Caveats

Before engaging Christian contributions, we begin with four caveats. First, we recognize that the diversity of Christian views and practices across cultures and throughout history has not had universally positive effects. This is clearly seen in cases where religious views are co-opted to justify injustice. For example, the Crusades brought suffering and harm to many. Colonialism has been justified as bringing Christianity to the unchurched, but it often brought European or American cultures, which were destructive to indigenous cultures. In the United States, some Christians promoted slavery (even as others fought against it). At times, congregants have marginalized or excluded people (e.g., based on theological, behavioral, or sexual differences). In contrast to Christians who have promoted uncivil and intolerant forms of cultural interaction, Christian communities have also honed persuasive calls to pursue civility in public discourse (Mouw, 2010) and have developed ways for living non-coercively out of conviction, even in the context of a pluralistic culture (Johnson, 2007).

The Christian call to confess our sins—those actions and inactions that break covenant with God and with others—is part of undergoing change in the direction of one's life to become more like Christ, but sometimes it can become distorted in self-loathing and self-condemnation (Worthington, 2013). Even awareness that faith without works is dead (James 2:14–26) can become a perfectionistic pursuit that activates feelings of inadequacy. In coping with life stressors, some religious strategies are positive and promote maturity and engagement, and yet some religious coping is negatively characterized by feeling alienated by God or oppressed by Satan (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). Non-supportive social interactions—such as judgment and condemnation—can stir resentment and isolation, while driving away those who do not currently believe. Still others may be angry with God, struggle with faith, and have intense anxiety over their beliefs about doctrines and teachings of the church or inconsistencies between personal behavior and faith. People with more introverted personalities may not feel comfortable in a Christian congregation that emphasizes communal worship and group interaction. In short, we acknowledge that there are times and places, theologies and practices in which Christianity has not been faithful or fruitful, and potentially contributed to problems both among Christians and with others.

A second important caveat is that positive sources of well-being specifically due to Christianity are challenging to isolate. In the real world, people are not randomly assigned to Christian and non-Christian groups, and many variables are conflated with Christian belief or practice. Behavior is multiply determined. We recognize the broad scope of the present challenge and acknowledge that much of the research we review in this paper is not attributable solely to Christian beliefs and practices. Just as Christian beliefs and practices are conflated with many person-by-situation variables, numerous research studies examine the effects of religion, in which studies in the United States of America (USA) examine mostly Christian participants.

Third, culture plays a role that is difficult to separate from religion. Some research has attempted to explore this relationship: Sasaki and Kim (2011) examined Christians in the USA and Korea. They found that *secondary control* (i.e., acceptance of and adjustment to difficult situations) was more prevalent in Christians in the USA than in Korean Christians. In contrast, they found that value on social relations was more prevalent in the collectivistic society of South Korea than in the more individualistic USA. Religious and cultural characteristics are often nested, which must be acknowledged in assertions about what Christianity has contributed to positive psychology.

Fourth, in the present chapter, we are focused on the contributions of Christianity to positive psychology. However, we hasten to add the obvious—this does not suggest that Christianity is the only religion to contribute to positive psychology in the ways we note. Furthermore, we are not implying either that Christianity necessarily makes the strongest, most culturally significant, or most numerically abundant contributions among the religions. In many cases, religions share common assumptions, beliefs, values, and even practices. Thus, when we state that Christianity contributes something specific to positive psychology, other religions might equally claim participation in that same contribution.

3.2   The Variety of Christian Experiences

We recognize, as do other authors of this volume, that it is presumptuous to write about Christianity as if it were a unitary doctrine or experience. Christianity has traditionally valued the importance of contextualizing doctrine and practices, leading to a wide variety of ways in which central practices, doctrines, and ethical commitments have been expressed in over 20 centuries and in what today are over 200 countries (Walls, 2001). In the early years of Christianity, differences emerged among Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Syrian groups, among others. Today, this cultural diversity extends to several hundred ethnic and cultural groups over six continents, offering a rich mosaic of varying linguistic traditions and communal practices. These differences have further expressed through the multiple denominational traditions that grew through a series of church schisms and splits, beginning with the split of Orthodox Churches from Roman Catholic Church (1054 A.D.) and the formation of new Protestant groups in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Anabaptist, Baptist, Methodist), and the rise of global Pentecostalism and non-denominational or independent churches in the twentieth century. Today each one of these Protestant traditions includes multiple denominations, some more theologically and socially conservative, others more liberal. Both Catholicism and Orthodoxy are also marked by significant variations of practice and piety, shaped by ethnicity or formal associations within the larger umbrella of a unified church (such as the differences in Catholic piety among Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, and many other groups of clergy, monastics, or laity).

3.3   Christian Theology and Practices as Sources of Well-Being

For Christians, theology and practices contribute to well-being through many direct routes. Here we will draw upon what C.S. Lewis (1952/2001) called *mere Christianity*. Christianity provides meaning, cultivates faith-based practices that promote maturity, provides guides for living that respect and care for every aspect of who people are and for all of the creation, confirms God's covenant faithfulness despite the changing circumstances of life, strengthens attachment to God and others, motivates virtue, and deepens wisdom. It also encourages better relationships communally by emphasizing love, self-control, forgiveness, humility, self-sacrifice, justice, mercy, compassion, and reconciliation. Through these routes, Christianity promotes better physical health, mental health, relationships, and spirituality. Indirectly, Christianity provides more community peace through shared beliefs, meaning, fellowship, experiences of communal worship and practice, other religious and spiritual experiences (i.e., common Scriptures, sacraments, hymns, songs, prayer books, narrative histories, etc.), and bonds with in-group members. Christianity promotes well-being through providing norms via Scripture, church traditions, doctrines, church polity, and models (i.e., the life and work of Jesus, disciples, early church leaders, martyrs, heroes or saints).

However, the focus of Christianity is not merely to feel good. Christians are called to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (i.e., with all that they are), to love their neighbors fully, and to be stewards of the creation. The monotheistic tradition of Christianity attributes worship to one God, who is a trinity of persons in the Godhead. Trinitarian understandings of God recognize three persons in unity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sometimes the roles of the Triune God are named in ways that recognize the creation, redemption, and sustaining of humanity and all things. Moreover, God created people as finite, yet good. Humans bear God's image (i.e., the *imago dei*) with capacities such as rationality, relationality, creativity, and emotion. Yet, we also see evidence of our broken state in our tendency to break covenant with God and others (e.g., through behaviors we have done, and what we have left undone in resistance to the demands of faithful love). Redemption of all creation comes through the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in whom full justice and mercy meet. It is received by grace (i.e., unmerited favor in which a person is given a gift rather than justly deserved consequences) through faith that is both a gift of the Spirit and a response of trust and belief. That redemption is not for purely personal or individualistic beneficence. Rather, redemption is a restoration of right relationship between God, humanity, and the whole creation.

The ultimate *telos* (purpose) of Christian life is shaped by Christian eschatology and its vivid picture of life in the 'peaceable kingdom' of God, where righteousness and truth embrace, where self-giving, other-directed love becomes pervasive and all of creation is transformed to perfectly reflect God's loving glory (Wright, 2008).

Christian communities have developed constructive 'rules of life,' shaping spiritual disciplines which form character over time (Willard, 1990). Christian theologians posit that character is honed through disciplined practices in community, modeled after the life and witness of Jesus but insist that God's own Spirit is the ultimate source of transformation which is more like a gift to receive than a heroic accomplishment to achieve (e.g., Wright, 2010).

3.4   What Is Positive Psychology?

The primary goal of this chapter is to examine the contributions of Christianity to positive psychology, secondarily examining how such a belief system is related to well-being. After providing a (very) brief review of Christian perspectives and practices, we now review positive psychology. Positive psychology is a recent subfield of psychology that has focused on (a) positive emotions (Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007; Fredrickson, 1998, 2009), (b) happiness or subjective well-being (Seligman, 2004; Tay & Diener, 2011), and (c) character strengths or virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011). While different authors emphasize different one(s) the three foci (see Table 3.1 for a summary of definitions), we favor viewing it as being most akin to classical Greek virtue theory's *eudaimonia*, which we will loosely define it as virtue for self and others. We acknowledge that these three foci are the most common ways of construing the subfield; however, not everyone agrees with our emphasis. However, consistent with the theory of *eudaimonia*, we define positive psychology as primarily the scientific study of character strength or virtue for self and others.

Positive psychology also includes the scientific study of subjective well-being or happiness. However, we believe that definition can be too limiting in part because it risks localizing positive psychology to an individual, thus failing to attend to positive social relationships, organizations, and societies. Rather, positive psychology is characterized by a rich concern for others.

An even more constricting way to think of positive psychology is as the scientific study of positive emotions. Certainly, positive psychology includes the study of positive emotions, but because the locus of almost all emotions is the individual, this definition again excludes the sense of positive social relationships, organizations, and societies. One might consider subjective well-being as a subset of positive emotions, but we conceptualize subjective well-being as more than mere emotional experience (Seligman, 2011).

Happiness, subjective well-being, and positive emotions are end states that are too dependent on circumstances and the behavior of others to be controlled—even if we ignore unpredictability attributed to chance. Although we also cannot completely control the successful building of virtue, we can to some extent control our behavior (i.e., virtue) more than its consequences (i.e., subjective well-being or positive emotions). Thus, in this chapter we focus on virtue.

Table 3.1 Definitions of positive psychology

Source	Definition
Seligman and Csikszen-tmihalyi (2000, p. 5)	The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present).
Sheldon and King (2001, p. 216)	[Positive psychology] is nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues. Positive psychology revisits "the average person," with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving. It asks, "What is the nature of the effectively functioning human being, who successfully applies evolved adaptations and learned skills? And how can psychologists explain the fact that, despite all the difficulties, the majority of people manage to live lives of dignity and purpose?
Gable and Haidt (2005, p. 104)	Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing, or optional functioning of people, groups, and institutions.
Linley, Joseph, Harrington, and Wood (2006, p. 3)	[P]ositive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning. … At the pragmatic level, it is about understanding the wellsprings, processes and mechanisms that lead to desirable outcomes.
Donaldson (2011, p. 3)	[The science of] advancing knowledge about optimal human functioning and improving quality of life in modern societies.
Snyder et al. (2011, p. 3)	[P]ositive psychology… is the scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning.
Seligman (2011, p. 13, 16)	Positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing (p. 13)… Well-being theory has five elements … positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment (p. 16).
Emmons (2012, p. inside cover)	Positive Psychology is about scientifically informed perspectives on what makes life worth living. It focuses on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfillment, and flourishing. … The Journal is devoted to basic research and professional application on states of optimal human functioning and fulfillment, and the facilitation and promotion of well-being.

The positive psychology movement arose from a growing dissatisfaction with the preoccupation of solving people's problems (e.g., disease, stress, disorders) rather than promoting human flourishing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It draws from many subfields of psychology. However, because not all of these fit neatly into a psychology of *eudaimonia,* we must incorporate happiness, subjective well-being, and positive emotion into our model of classic virtue as the end product of pursuing and approaching virtue. These benefits are associated with yet another benefit—flourishing. Positive psychology seeks to study ways that lead not only to happiness, subjective well-being, and positive emotions but to facilitate wisdom and development of human potential within the community. This can involve solving problems that inhibit human potential as well as experiencing the more enriching qualities of life.

3.4.1 Christianity Benefits Society by Fostering Flourishing

Before we detail the ways in which Christianity benefits society, we acknowledge that many scholars have been quick to identify its potential drawbacks on society. Like all religions, Christianity has been targeted by negative critique. Nietzsche (1886/2002) and Freud (1930/2010), two particularly virulent critics of Christianity, found it harmful for different reasons. As described in *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche believed that the fundamental nature of humanity was the will to power, which institutes moral pluralism (i.e. master/slave morality dialectic). Needless to say, this conflicted with his view of religion, especially Christianity, as repressive and morally restrictive. He also saw Christianity's insistence on humility (another restraining virtue) as particularly troublesome. Likewise, in *The Future of an Illusion* (1928/1989), Freud sought to expose religion as wish fulfillment—a distraction from people's infantile vulnerability toward the power of nature that consequently diverted psychical energy from reality and socially beneficial sublimation (i.e., the belief in eternal life enables believers to displace death anxiety and squelches their motivation to achieve).

In more recent years, psychologists and others have been quick to recognize that "religion" is not universally good according to modern criteria. For example, religions can lead to prejudice against out-group members and favoritism toward in-group members, sometimes resulting in discrimination. It has also led to terrorism, which is usually not advocated by any religion but is typically a strategic weapon of modern wars waged by smaller guerilla forces against a monolithic enemy or a large, potentially victorious force to demoralize an almost defeated enemy (e.g., the use of atomic bombs at the end of World War II). However, terrorism can be made more likely by sanctifying it under misaligned religious interpretations (Mahoney, Pargament, Cole, Jewell, & Magyar, 2005; Mahoney, Rye, & Pargament, 2005; Pargament, Magyar, Benore & Mahoney, 2005). Furthermore, genocide can be practiced by groups for religious reasons. Religion might also promote poor interpersonal and intergroup relations, including negative judgments of other people, grudges against those who oppose the religion, harm or discrimination against fellow practitioners of the religion, and failure to intervene when a non-religious (or other-religious) person or state is perpetrating violence against others. Some might argue that Christianity disapproves of most or all of these harmful acts. Yet people do practice such acts while co-opting the name of Christianity (which some Christians see as a strong expression of blasphemy). Thus, the visible church (both the sinful sincere and those who take the Christian name without agreeing to beliefs or practices) can become associated with many harmful actions.

Such criticisms are not ignored. A recent apologetic approach by philosopher and theologian Jonathan Hill (2005) accounted for ways that Christianity has promoted flourishing in individuals and societies. Hill divides the contributions of Christians into seven categories: (1) culture and thought, (2) the arts, (3) the landscape, (4) education, (5) the individual and his or her relationships with society and the world, (6) a way of life, and (7) a motive to change the world for the better.

Below, we use Hill's categories to briefly summarize some suggestive evidence of ways Christianity might have promoted flourishing. We direct readers to his more thorough treatment for additional examples.

3.4.1.1   Culture and Thought

Before Constantine proclaimed Christianity the imperial religion of the Roman Empire, social thought had been influenced by Jesus' teachings and the writings to be canonized into the Christian New Testament, but overall, Christianity had exerted little effect on culture. After Constantine (306–337), however, Christianity was part of Roman culture, and influenced Western civilization. Writers like Augustine of Hippo (354–430), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), and Martin Luther (1483–1546) successively molded intellectual life or provided something at least to write against. Culture within the bounds of societies that embraced Christianity was also spread by several Christian ideals. First, natural theology suggested that nature tells a story about God and that people ought to treat nature with reverence and be stewards of it. Second, modern science was aimed at having religion inform science while simultaneously having science inform religion (Worthington, 2010). Third, Christianity, like Judaism and Islam (the other two Abrahamic religions), has valued intellectual achievement and creativity, which have been seen as part of the *imago dei* (image of God), which Genesis uses to describe the created capacities of humans.

3.4.1.2   The Arts

Christianity assumes people to be created in God's image, and that innate valuing of truth, beauty, and aesthetic sensitivity has led to the transmission of culture from generation to generation through art, architecture, and music. We have only to think of the importance of icons in Orthodoxy, one of the three historically major branches of Christianity (along with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism), the rebirth of interest in the visual arts during the Reformation, and the development of music forms for Christian worship, such as chants (e.g., Orthodox and Roman Catholic), cantatas (e.g., J. S. Bach), hymns (e.g., *Amazing Grace* by John Newton, thousands of hymns by Charles Wesley; Christmas carols), and performance pieces such as oratorios (e.g., Handel's *Messiah*), have become known and used in the broader culture. Even popular modern groups like U2 have incorporated Christian themes into their music. Christian-related arts have flourished in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas through works of visual art, sculpture, literature, cinema, and drama that have inspired, educated, and morally shaped the public through national cultures. The Church has left a great legacy of art to most civilizations.

3.4.1.3 The Landscape

There has been a symbolic connection between the physical world and spiritual life since the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve the work of caring for the garden (Gen 1:29–30; 2:15), but even after God expelled them, the landscape played a role in both Jewish and Christian history. The desert was symbolic of asceticism. Jesus went into the desert to face Satan (Luke 4:1–13). In early Christianity, many spiritual leaders in Egypt went into the desert to live a life of purgation from the stains of the world. Cities also became important to Christians. Notably, Rome (the place of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul) and Jerusalem (the center of Jewish life and home of an important church) were obvious cities of importance, as well as Alexandria (in Egypt), Constantinople (formerly Byzantium and now Istanbul), and Antioch (now Syria). Augustine wrote the *City of God* (410) after the fall of Rome was misattributed to replacing traditional Roman polytheism with Christianity. Augustine addressed the reality of calamities in cities of humans, and that our ultimate home is not the earthly city but rather the City of God in which we will experience fellowship with God forever. Francis of Assisi (1224; see *Canticle of the Sun*) built edifices that drew the eyes of people heavenward, triggering centuries of magnificent church architecture (e.g., St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's in London, the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris). Many of the Dutch theologians of pre-immigration to North American colonies and Jonathan Edwards of the United States have written about the sacred duty of Christians to care for the environment.

3.4.1.4 Education

A hallmark of Christianity—as one of the three religions of the Book—has been its history of education and advocacy for universal literacy. Thus, Christianity was the preserver of literacy during the Dark Ages. Furthermore, Christian rulers in Europe like Charlemagne of the Franks (who was a great patron of literacy; ca 800) and Alfred the Great of England (849–899, a patron of literacy and also a great scholar; Mapp, 1974) promoted more widespread literacy, at least among lawyers and the clergy. Throughout antiquity, literacy and education were important within Christianity, though it was largely relegated to the clergy. The first universities were often to train clergy. Bologna (1088), the University of Paris (ca 1160), Oxford (ca 1096), the Sorbonne (1271), and Cambridge (ca 1209) began the rise of higher education. Education became of great importance after the Protestant Reformation insisted that people had the right and duty to read and interpret the Scriptures directly. This necessitated that the masses learn to read, and Protestants and Jesuits (Roman Catholics, especially under the leadership of Ignatius Loyola, who opened a school for priests in 1547) alike valued education and carried it abroad in their missionary efforts. In the United States, universities that were founded as Christian educational institutions have often become secular institutions that provide quality educations for people throughout the world (e.g., Harvard, Princeton, Yale).

The Christian religion can be said to be the basis for much of the world's education, and the benefits of education have made their way from the Christian church to a flourishing, educated, and enlightened world.

3.4.1.5 The Individual and His or Her Relationships with Society and the World

Differences exist in the way people view the world. Some emphasize the individual; others, the collective. Christianity is contextualized in both individualistic and collectivistic societies, but even in the most individualist societies, a strong emphasis on collectivism runs through Christianity. The Hebrew Scriptures describe narratives of individuals but are clearly intended to address God's covenant people. In the Christian New Testament, the apostle Paul emphasizes the same theological and philosophical position using a metaphor of the church as body and individuals as parts of a body (1 Corinthians 12:12; "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ"). The fundamental doctrine of a Trinitarian Godhead suggests, as argued by theologians like Colin Gunton (1941–2003), that relationships are at the core of Christianity.

Christianity is not solely interested in the salvation and personal spiritual experience of individuals. Though important, Christianity is just as much about participation in the body of Christ and the mission of individuals and congregations to others and to society. This has led to active involvement of Christians in the life of secular society. For much of the church's history, it was possible for Christians to show their love for their neighbor by individual acts of kindness, or by benevolent, yet corporate altruistic acts, such as founding schools, hospitals, orphanages, and charities. In the twentieth century, the birth of theological liberalism gave rise to theologies such as Walter Rauschenbusch's (1861–1918) Social Gospel, which fostered a social justice approach to Christian practices and emphasized the Christian's involvement with secular society and advocacy for people dealing with poverty, bereavement, and a range of injustices. Despite the broad accent on participating in society, some movements, such as Protestant fundamentalism, emerged in the twentieth and twenty-first century as a countervailing force to active Christian societal participation, prompting the interpretations that Christians should withdraw from engagement with the broader culture because the world is tainted with sin. For example, in II Corinthians 6:17, Paul writes, "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. …" (NIV). Some sects have interpreted this literally, from the desert fathers and mothers to the Amish.

Much of this controversy spills over into the ways believers engage epistemologies. Across Christian traditions, believers seek truth in both God's general revelation (the book of nature) and God's special revelation (God's revelation in Jesus and in the Scriptures). Still, how they engage and respond to both Scripture and science as distinct ways of understanding that have resonances varies across traditions and in application to particular topics (see Johnson, 2010; Worthington, 2010). Worthington wrote *Coming to Peace with Psychology: What Christians Can Learn from Psychological Science* as a resource that could speak to these issues.

3.4.1.6   A Way of Life

Hill (2005) argues that the morality inherent to Christian views and practices has left a mark on individuals and on society. Early in Jesus' ministry, he delivered sermons such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 through 7) and a more abbreviated Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17–49). These included the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–26), the golden rule, loving one's enemies, turning the other cheek, eschewing judgmentalism, acts of compassion and mercy, forgiveness, and altruism. Christianity has argued that following Jesus' commands is not the prerequisite for earning God's love, but rather, these commands yield wisdom and living them out flows out of gratitude as the proper response to God's grace and mercy. Nonetheless, those (and other commands) suggest a clear rule and standard of morality for Christians. Philosophers and theologians, over the centuries, have drawn moral precepts from Christianity. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) argued that morality was an essential part of creation. But atheist Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) saw Jesus as essentially a moral teacher, and he used the principles to found the philosophic discipline of utilitarianism. However, most Christians have not accepted Bentham's theorizing. Theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) levied one of the best known theological offenses against the Jesus-as-moral-ethicist position, arguing on the basis of revelation that God's sovereign "mind" was accessible only if, in grace, God revealed it, not through the self-willed efforts of humans. Despite the many positions on the specifics of morality that might (or might not be derived from Christianity), Christians have seen people as making inevitable moral motions based on their creation with the *imago dei*. We argue that this general recognition of humans as moral creatures has enriched the world and allowed the entirety of humanity to rise to higher levels.

3.4.1.7   A Motive to Transform the World for the Better

One of the hallmarks of the Christian life is the drive to make the world a better place. Throughout the ages, Christians have done many things that they thought would make the world a better place, bringing Christian beliefs, morality, and culture. But others disagree and cite the destruction of indigenous Cultures. Christian missions exist that are indisputably beneficial (e.g., Mother Teresa of Calcutta [1910–1997]). In addition, many other self-sacrificial ministers, across cultures and throughout the history of the church, have served—sometimes at costs of their lives and health— bringing beneficial change and renewal to the populations. Giving money to charities and volunteering time to the needy is heavily weighted in terms of religious people. Arthur C. Brooks (2003) of Stanford University's Hoover Institution, wrote, "The differences in charity between secular and religious people are dramatic. Religious people are 25 percentage points more likely than secularists to donate money (91 percent to 66 percent) and 23 points more likely to volunteer time (67 percent to 44 percent)." In addition, Christians have often been on the forefront of battling against social oppression, in the tradition of the prophets. For example, William Wilberforce (1759–1833) battled slavery in the British Parliament and eventually led its defeat.

Overall, despite the clash of cultures that is sometimes inherent in what Christians perceive as "helping," it appears that there is substantial evidence that Christianity has done considerable good. Christopher Hitchens, an antitheist critic, argued that such giving came with strings attached and coercing beliefs, claiming that the gift was not worth the price. We believe, however, that this conclusion is likely to be shared by relatively few objective observers (e.g., Myers, 2008).

3.4.1.8 Summary of Our Historical and Cultural Look at Christianity and Flourishing

We have drawn heavily on Hill's analysis of Christianity's contributions largely to the history and culture of Western civilization, while supplementing it with some of our own observations. We suggest that despite the imperfections of Christianity as a theological system and the all-too-human followers of Jesus, the evidence is persuasive that Christianity has indeed promoted much human flourishing for individuals within communities. It has enriched people's lives through education, culture, appreciation of beauty in nature, performing arts and architecture, and focused people on morality, a way of life that elevates them to service, relationships, benevolence, and generosity. Hill did not address how Christianity might accomplish such elevation and flourishing. For that, we must address Christianity and psychology.

3.5 Christianity's Contributions to Positive Psychology

As we see from the above discussion, Christianity has contributed to human flourishing, one of the main aims of positive psychology. If these contributions are considered, we can say that throughout history, Christianity has formed a considerable basis of the flourishing of humans today. Christianity's contributions specifically to positive psychology rely intimately on how one defines Christianity and positive psychology, how one operationalizes and tests variables. As stated earlier, positive psychology is (1) chiefly the scientific study of *eudaimonia*, with considerations of both (2) happiness and subjective well-being and (3) positive emotions.

3.5.1 Virtues: Secular and Christian

One of the chief contributions of Christianity to positive psychology is in the development of virtue and wisdom. The blending of Greco-Roman (secular) and Christian notions of virtue characterizes Western culture. One can view the overlap of these virtues and character strengths as the primary essence of positive psychology. Relatedly, Christian theologians, following the lead of the Hebrew Scriptures, have developed rich extensions of wisdom literature, challenging believers to choose
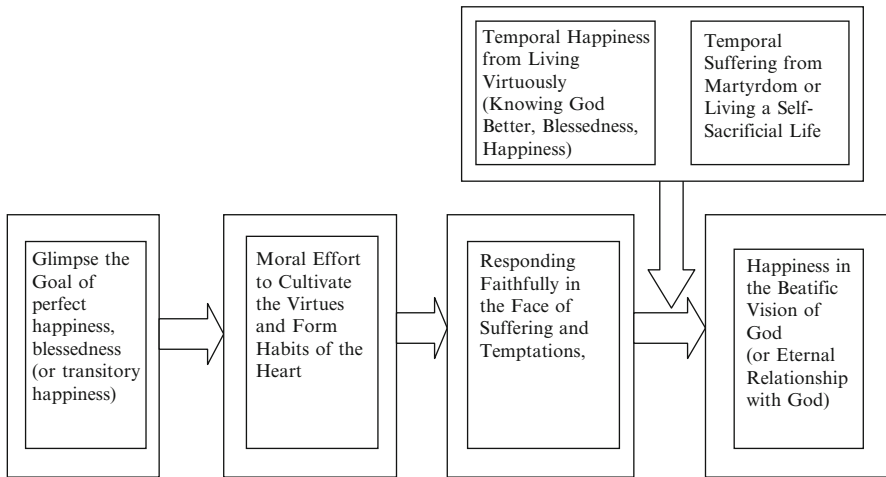
Fig. 3.1 Schematic of virtue as a pathway to happiness (Adapted from Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas, and Charry (2011) and Wright (2010a, 2010b))

wise paths of long-term sustainable flourishing over short-term, fleeting pursuits (Brown, 1996). Christian voices thus have much to contribute to psychological discussions of wisdom developed by Sternberg and others (Sternberg, 1990). Just as a focus on virtue, character strength, or wisdom will not incorporate the entirety of positive psychology, a focus on these will not incorporate the entirety of Christian theology. However, as we have shown in the preceding two sections, virtue is a central feature in each. The study of positive psychology includes virtue, but it tends not to advocate it above other experiences that lead to more temporal happiness. Christianity advocates seeking and dwelling in a close relationship with God, which promotes virtue and wisdom and might result in temporal happiness, but ought to find its end in eternal happiness.

One model of virtue presented here is adapted very loosely from classic virtue theory in both Christian and ancient Greek traditions, that examines how virtue provides temporal and eternal happiness or subjective well-being (see Fig. 3.1). In accordance with Christian scriptures and other writers who have expounded on Christian virtue theory, we posit that one key element of developing virtues that promote well-being is when virtues are put to the test. That is, virtuous actions are most important when situational pressures make a virtuous response difficult. For an example, see the letter of James. In the initial chapter, James writes

[2] Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, [3] because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. [4] Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. … [12] Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. (New International Version, NIV)

A classic model of virtue is depicted in Fig. 3.1. In it, people first glimpse a distal goal. Desmond Tutu saw a peaceful South Africa that would better encapsulate Christian values in the future if he practiced forgiveness, reconciliation, and restorative justice above retributive justice. Second, virtue is built by practice until virtue becomes second nature (Bellah et al. 1996). Tutu promoted large scale engagement with truth-telling (confession), forgiveness, and reconciliation after South Africa's apartheid. In Stanley Milgram's (1974) obedience experiments, some of Milgram's participants had built strong virtues of mercy and compassion, and others had built strong virtues of responsibility and duty.

Strong situations often sweep people along into evil acts, as Milgram (1974) and Zimbardo (2007) have demonstrated; however, we suggest that situational pressures that make virtuous responses difficult can serve as a test of salient virtues in the participants—obedience, responsibility, conscientiousness, duty, and experiencing moral anguish when inflicting physical pain on the "learner" so that science would be informed (see Worthington, 2009, 2013, for further explication). Thus, practicing virtue elevates certain virtues within a person's hierarchy of virtues and makes them more likely to be acted upon during times of testing or exposure to strong situational pressure. Nevertheless, some situations are strong enough to override virtuous responding.

3.5.2 *Secular and Christian* Telos

We contend that one must have a goal, a vision, or an endpoint for the practice of virtue. This *telos* differs between the secular and Christian approaches in three major ways. First, loving God fully is left out of secular *telos* but is central to Christian *telos*. Second, the role one has in the community is different. Third, the role the community plays in society is different.

First, the *telos* for the secular world might be the perfection, maturity, or flourishing of individuals and society. In the Christian story, the *telos* is a faithful and authentic relationship with God. Followers of Jesus Christ are transformed to become more like Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, the role of the community varies between secular and Christian conceptualizations of *eudaimonia*. The goal of Greek *eudaimonia* was to raise up great leaders of the *polis*—exemplars of goodness for oneself to inspire and lead others by developing justice, courage, self-control, and prudent wisdom. But, Christian *eudaimonia*—virtue for self and others—focuses on being great participators in a life of community. The nine cardinal Christian virtues—justice, courage, self-control, and prudent wisdom (which are the Greek virtues) plus love, faith, hope, humility, and forgiveness—are not about raising up oneself, but rather serving as part of the community of Christ (Chesterton, 1923/2002).

Third, there is a difference in the role of the community in society. The Christian community is meant to connect with larger society and therefore enact communal

Table 3.2 Individual and emergent communal virtues

Individual Christian virtues	Emergent communal Christian virtues
Love	Mutual submission and kenosis
Faith	Charisma, or shared gifts
Hope	Shared leadership and participation
Righteousness (justice)	Mission
Self-control (temperance)	Edification
Courage	Evangelism
Wise discernment (prudence)	Worship
Forgiveness	Confession, assurance of pardon, reconciliation
Humility	Recognizing human finitude and fallibility, including the need for God's saving grace
	Sharing in Christ's suffering

virtues. While the nine cardinal Christian *eudaimonic* virtues contribute to the community as individual virtues, communal virtues such as mutual submission and reconciliation emerge from joining individuals together into a whole community. Virtuous responding is necessarily dyadic (Gray & Wegner, 2009). We cannot submit until there are others to submit to or reconcile without someone with whom to reconcile. Thus, the *telos* to which Christians are called (1) is God-centered, (2) pursues cardinal virtues that promote Christian communities, and (3) manifests communal virtues in church life and beyond. We have summarized individual and emergent communal virtues in Table 3.2.

For the Christian, then, virtue is about goal-seeking, practicing the (virtuous) behaviors that move one toward the goal of close relationship with God, responding faithfully to trials (through self-regulation, self-discipline, or self-control) and rising to these tests so that the goal of close relationship with God is more closely embraced. It is thought that such a process will produce human flourishing, and subjective well-being as a byproduct, even in the face of physical discomfort, privation, doubting, seeking God, and both physical and psychological suffering.

3.6   How Does Christianity Promote Flourishing?

Because Christianity has substantively contributed to positive psychology, it is important to identify the psychological processes responsible for such flourishing. One candidate for the way that religion contributes to flourishing is this: religion activates self-regulation and self-control, and self-control is responsible for most of the benefits of Christian religion. McCullough and Willoughby (2009) have assessed the research thoroughly and made a persuasive case that religion promotes self-regulation and self-control, which in turn promote well-being and reduce risks.

One mechanism by which self-regulation and self-control occurs is through goal pursuit. Our virtue theory of positive psychology (see Fig. 3.1) suggests that goals

for virtue are selected, virtuous behavior is practiced, and virtue is rewarded through temporal (and eternal) happiness and flourishing. Below, we explore the research related to flourishing through goal pursuit and self-regulation and self-control.

3.6.1 Religion's Relationship to an Individual's Flourishing

McCullough and Willoughby (2009) defined *self-regulation* as adjusting one's behavior to meet a goal, thus experiencing different consequences than might be experienced without the adjustment. They defined *self-control* more restrictively as exerting self-regulatory effort in the face of prepotent goals or one's strong natural tendencies (e.g., delaying gratification, acting positively instead of giving into tiredness, anger, depression, etc.).

In a study of 267 participants, they show that *religion* (defined as institutional practices and adherence to a set of prescribed beliefs within a community of like believers; Worthington & Aten, 2009) is related to conscientiousness and self-control, but *spirituality* (defined as a sense of closeness or connection with the sacred— whether a deity, or humanity, nature, or transcendence; Worthington & Aten, 2009) is related to openness to experience and freedom from constraint. When McCullough and Willoughby statistically removed the variance of spirituality from religion, the connections with conscientiousness and self-control were strengthened. When they statistically removed the variance of religion from spirituality, the connections with conscientiousness and self-control were eliminated, leaving only openness to experience and freedom from restraint.

Religion has been found to be consistently but weakly related to many benefits, such as reduced mortality at any age, increased well-being and happiness, and decreased mental health symptoms. This has especially been true for positive forms of religion, such as positive religious coping (feeling like one is working with God, religious surrender, or benevolent religious reappraisals of stressors), intrinsic religious motivation, and positive God concepts. On the other hand, negative religious coping (i.e., seeing God as hostile or punitive or attributing negative events to demons) has been related to mental health symptoms.

A meta-analytic review of religion and mortality (McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, & Thoresen, 2000) was revealing. Although McCullough et al. reviewed research regarding all religions, the vast majority of the studies used samples from the United States, which (especially prior to 2000) was heavily Christian. (As we observed earlier in our list of caveats, religions tend to share many of their influences on positive psychology.) Typically, meta-analyses first remove covariates thought to cause the connections between religion and either problems, subjective well-being, or mortality. Then the unique effects of religion are measured on outcomes. Such removed causes include things like smoking, drinking alcohol, delinquency, hostility, wearing seat belts, engaging in risky sexual practices, delaying first intercourse, having less out-of-marriage sex, having higher grade point averages, and having a larger social network. This removal of variance associated with

religion to find the effects of "pure religion" has caused some observers to quip that this is like saying, "Once we removed the effects of wind, rain, and storm-surge, the hurricane doesn't amount to much." Yet, even when such aspects associated with religion are removed, the contributing-cause-free religion is still associated with less mortality (an odds ratio of about 1.29; confidence interval: 1.20–1.39), higher well-being, and lower incidence of mental health problems. That positive effect of religion on mortality is about the same as stopping smoking a pack and a half a day of cigarettes.

3.6.2 Religion Promotes Self-Control and Self-Regulation, Which Promotes Flourishing

Thus, McCullough and Willoughby (2009) noted that much research has focused on several general causes for the religion-well-being connection. These include (a) religion's prescription for positive health behavior; (b) religion's proscription of negative health-compromising behavior; (c) social support associated with religious participation; (d) positive socialization of children; and (e) religious coping for dealing with stress. McCullough and Willoughby also suggested that religion (1) promotes self-control; (2) influences self-regulation by affecting people's goal selection, sanctifying and internalizing some goals, and reducing conflict among goals; (3) encourages self-regulation by promoting self-monitoring (by attending to an observing God, being a part of a religious and moral community of observants, and engaging in religious rituals like confession or prayer); (4) builds self-regulatory strengths by participating in religious communities and religious rituals; (5) influences self-regulation by promoting mastery of positive self-change religious behaviors; and (6) affects health, well-being, and social behavior through self-control and self-regulation.

The research that McCullough and Willoughby (2009) draw upon is generally relevant to many religions, not just Christianity. However, they observe (as a limitation of their review) that most of the research on religion in general has been done in the United States, and consequently has involved a preponderance of Christians as participants (p. 87). Thus, it is not a giant leap to generalize their findings to Christianity.

One of the most relevant portions of their review, for us, involves the ways that religion affects people's goals (proposition 2). Our contention in the present chapter is that Christianity might affect benefits associated with positive psychology through promoting character strength or virtue, involving setting and pursuing a virtuous goal using tests. This is common in writers in the Christian scriptures. For example, in his letter to the Romans (v. 1–5), Paul argues, "[1] Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] And hope does not put us to shame,

because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (NIV). Also, in 1 Peter 1: 7–9, Peter writes, "[7] These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,[9] for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (NIV). Moreover, in his letter to the Galatians (5:22–23), Paul calls self-control part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit: "[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" McCullough and Willoughby draw on Carver and Scheier (1998), who suggest that self-control is a dynamic process of bringing one's behavior closer to a standard through feedback loops and other integrated functions. The functions involve input, comparing to some reference value, and output (i.e., changing behavior so that input more closely matches the standard). Effective self-regulation thus requires that a person first identify clear goals and standards that are organized in ways that permit them to be pursued and achieved. Second, the person must be able to monitor himself or herself well enough to detect differences between goals and standards and behavior. Third, the person must be motivated to change behavior. Fourth, a repertoire of behavioral change methods must be available along with the skill to employ them. Paul summarizes these within his letter to the Philippians (3:12), "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (NIV).

3.6.3   Religion and Goal Pursuit

McCullough and Willoughby (2009) applied this system to analyze the ways that religion affects goals. Drawing from Carver and Scheier (1998), McCullough and Willoughby argued that religion's most important emphasis is at the level of *principles* and *programs*. That is, particular religions differ on the principles they advocate. For example, Tsai, Miao, and Seppala (2007) found that Christians' goals were more associated with excitement and energy; Saroglou, Delpierre, and Dernelle (2004) meta-analyzed 12 studies throughout all of Eastern and Western Europe, Mexico, and Israel (but not the United States), and they found that religion (overwhelmingly Christianity) was associated with traditional values and conformity to social norms and negatively related to hedonism, seeking stimulation, and seeking freedom from external controls (such as from God, Scriptures, or religion). In fact, in a passage that mirrors the findings of Saroglou et al. (2004), Paul contrasted the "works of the flesh" to the fruit of the Spirit (see quote earlier). He wrote, "[19] The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; [20] idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions[21] and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as

I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (NIV). Finally, Saroglou et al. and Roberts and Robins (2000) also found that Christians selected goals highly associated with family, group (i.e., church), and community, including generosity and philanthropy (see Acts 20:35, NIV, penned by Luke, which says, "[35] In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'").

Religion influences goal organization through interpretations that sanctify some of them. Mahoney, Pargament and their colleagues have shown frequently that when people treat a goal as sacred, they imbue it with special significance and meaning (for a summary, see Mahoney et al., 2005). Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1977) found that viewing one's job as a calling rather than a career was related to viewing their work as more rewarding, taking their work home more often, being less eager to retire, and missing fewer days of work due to illness. Furthermore, Emmons (1999) reported that, for highly religious people (mostly Christians), goals were organized more congruently. A belief system tends to result in selecting compatible goals and thus experiencing less conflict between goals in one's goal hierarchy. Jesus taught that a clear hierarchy of values was needed as he summarized the major Hebrew teaching in the gospel by Mark (12:30–31, NIV),

> [30] "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'[a] [31] The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b] There is no commandment greater than these."

Internalized goals are those that are personally relevant, whereas introjected goals are pursued for external reasons—to avoid anxiety, guilt, or loss of face. Goals can also be internalized because one finds them compatible with one's self. Neyrinck, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Duriez, and Hutsebaut (2006) studied Roman Catholic youths and adults in Belgium. Coupled with years of research with Protestants in the United States, they suggested that identification (and also intrinsic religious motivation) produces higher personality integration, pursuit of self-actualization, and social integration and fewer mental health symptoms.

3.6.4 Religion Promotes Other Virtues

Classical virtue theory observes that in many ways, virtues are related. That is, it is impossible to be self-controlled without have numerous other virtues as well. For example, one must be conscientious, patient, humble, courageous, and so forth. However, to argue that virtues are all unitary loses valuable distinctions. Berry, Worthington, and O'Connor (2003) identified over 150 virtue-relevant words, reduced them to 18 through rational analysis, and then factor analyzed them. Within the 18 virtues, they found a single major factor that accounted for substantial variance, which they labeled *virtue*. Analyzing the residual variance, they found two second-order factors, which they labeled warmth-based virtues and conscientiousness-based virtues. *Warmth-based virtues* included empathy,

sympathy, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and love. *Conscientiousness-based virtues* included responsibility, accountability, justice, and self-control. Using an unfolding analysis, they arrayed the individual virtues within the two sets of virtues along a continuum, identifying love as the anchor of the warmth-based virtues and self-control as the anchor of the conscientiousness-based virtues. They speculated that the two types of virtues drew on different evolutionary roots—with warmth-based virtues being reinforced in groups that are bound by emotional bonds of love and loyalty and conscientiousness-based virtues being reinforced by behaviors that helped groups behave according to norms. They also speculated that different brain systems (Gray, 1982) were usually engaged in the practice of warmth-based virtues (e.g., the behavioral activation system) and conscientiousness-based virtues (e.g., the behavioral inhibition system).

Thus, Christian perspectives and practices can be seen to affect virtues, and hence positive psychology, through a variety of mechanisms. Christianity enhances many virtues individually. It promotes warmth-based, conscientiousness-based, and even epistemic (knowledge, wisdom) virtues in sets. Various types of Christianity might tend to favor one set over the others. Furthermore, Christian groups differ on the degree to which they promote virtue as a moral stance that implies adherence to moral strictures. Yet, typically Christianity promotes all of the classic virtues—Greek, Christian, community-based, warmth-based, conscientiousness-based, and epistemic virtues.

Christianity tends to add emphases to virtues studied in positive psychology just as positive psychology tends to add depth in the practical knowledge and promoting of virtues. For example, Christianity adds emphases of faith, hope, and love and particularly community-based virtues (mutual submission for the public good, self-sacrifice, relational humility) to the lists of character strengths in sources like Peterson and Seligman (2004). The centuries of practice of spiritual disciplines (e.g., fasting, meditation, alms-giving, self-sacrificial philanthropy) tend to increase devotion to secular equivalents (e.g., thoughtfulness, mindfulness, altruism) through sanctification of the virtuous practices. Most secular positive psychology seeks to avoid, not embrace, hardship, testing, and trials as spurs to character development. Some characterize willpower as a finite resource that is depleted through its exercise (though in the long run is strengthened by its repeated exercise; see Baumeister, Bauer, & Lloyd, 2010; Baumeister & Tierney, 2011; Baumeister, Vohs & Tice, 2007). But the testing of virtues is to be expected (James 1:2–4).

3.7 Summary and Future Directions

This chapter has advanced the argument that Christian perspectives and practices have had and can have positive effects on positive psychology—and by what mechanisms. We have also acknowledged that given human finitude and fallibility, negative effects are also possible. . Several of our assumptions and our citations of research supporting them are worthy of further testing.

First, positive psychology can be viewed as the scientific study of virtue for self and others (i.e., *eudaimonia*) and to a lesser extent as the outcome of happiness or subjective well-being or the experience of positive emotions. We acknowledged that all of those elements are needed, but that virtue (or character strength) should be primary.

Second, we proposed a virtue theory that related the three components of positive psychology. Virtue and its pursuit were thought to lead to temporal happiness, subjective well-being and positive emotions some of the time. But we suggested that Christianity was more concerned with eternal happiness, and while temporal happiness is desirable, Christians are more inclined to make important life decisions based on other important religious criteria. While some religious claims require theological epistemologies, empirical methods could be used to assess to what extent people perceive human decision making to be linked to their religious views and eternal perspective-taking.

Third, we suggested that both warmth-based and conscientiousness-based virtues are important to Christianity, and that its effects on positive psychology come through both. The research seems to support self-control and self-regulation as important causal mechanisms more than the warmth-based virtues, although a great deal of research addresses altruism (Post, 2005), forgiveness (Davis, Worthington, Hook, & Hill, 2013; Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010), and love (Levin, 2000). Interdisciplinary theoretical work and empirical research could be conducted to integrate philosophical, theological, and psychological perspectives on Christianity, virtues, and flourishing outcomes.

Fourth, we suggested a historical analysis of society and culture relating Christianity to beneficial societal flourishing. Since most research has been within Western culture, theoretical work is needed to separate the effects of different cultures. Substantial research has accumulated with Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures, but less with Latin American and African. Additional theoretical and empirical research efforts are needed.

This chapter focused on substantive benefits of Christian perspectives and practices in connection with positive psychology. Broad and sweeping statements about Christianity—and its relation to human flourishing and pursuit of a meaningful, virtuous life—are insufficient to capture the richness and complexity of a rich global and historical traditions, beliefs, and religious practices. Yet, in this chapter, we have aimed to elucidate some of the ways in which Christianity is a source of well-being and an important consideration for those learning about and aspiring to live the good life.

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Chapter 4
Religiosity and Well-Being in a Muslim Context

Ahmed M. Abdel-Khalek

Religion has played an essential role as one of the most powerful forces in life, death, health, and disease. The last few decades have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the study of religiosity in different disciplines including psychology, psychiatry, medicine, gerontology, epidemiology, education, and anthropology, among others (e.g., Albright & Ashbrook, 2001; Al-Issa, 2000; Argyle, 2000; Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Forsyth, 2003; Loewenthal, 2000; Paloutzian, 1996; Pargament, 1997; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). This interest in the study of religion has been driven by several factors, foremost among them in large measure by the findings of a positive relationship between religiosity and psychological well being (Seybold, 2007).

Subjective well-being (SWB) is the positive side of mental health. Synonyms for SWB include happiness, joy, satisfaction, enjoyment, fulfillment, pleasure, contentment, and other indicators of a life that is full and complete. SWB is not a condition that one achieves after reaching some type of threshold of good feelings. Rather, it exists on a continuum, ranging from states of very low SWB (including severe depression and hopelessness) to those of very high SWB (genuine happiness) that are sustained over time. Rather than simply existing to avoid pain, humans strive to experience pleasure, joy, completeness, and meaning.

Argyle, Martin, and Lu (1995) proposed three possible components of happiness: positive emotions, satisfaction, and the absence of negative emotions, such as depression or anxiety. Lucas and Diener (2008) stated that the balance of positive to negative emotions is a powerful determinant of happiness or SWB. Nevertheless, the three terms (SWB, happiness, and satisfaction with life) have been used interchangeably in the literature (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002; Lyubomirsky, 2001).

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The relation between religiosity and SWB is a subject of several studies in the last decades. However, the majority of published research papers in this domain have been carried out on Western, Christian, Anglo-Saxon, and English-speaking samples. Recently, the interest in Muslim populations has intensified significantly. This chapter sought to review the relation between religiosity and SWB in a Muslim context.

4.1 The Religion of Islam

The word Islam means "Peace" and "to submit to the will or law of God". Islam is the second largest religion in the world following Christianity. There are around 1.5 billion Muslims in the world and Islam is the majority religion in approximately 50 countries. Following Judaism and Christianity, Islam is the third Abrahamic religion believed to be revealed to humans. As such, Islam recognizes as prophets those who have been believed to be revealed to followers Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, Muslims believe that there is a continuation of divine messages, and that the last of those messengers is the Prophet Muhammad. For example, approximately one third of the Holy Qur'an is dedicated to the Prophet Moses. In the same vein, the Qur'an contains a chapter (*surah*) under the name Mariam, which consists of 98 verses to the prophet Christ (Abdel-Khalek, 2011a). Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life (Quraishi, 1984).

4.1.1 The Qur'an

The *Qur'an* is composed of 114 chapters (*Surah*) containing 6,616 verses (*Ayah*). The compilation of the Qur'an was carried out by early followers directly after the death of the Prophet (Draz, 1984). It has been preserved in original Arabic both in writing and memory for the past 1,500 years without any change. The Qur'an has been the main definitive source of Islamic law and theology, and the principles and institutions of the Muslim's public life. The Qur'an seeks to inculcate a righteous and middle-of-the-road view between materialism and spiritualism. While its warnings of punishment are very strong, so is its hope in God's compassion and forgiveness (Husain, 1998, p. 282). Muslims believe that the Qur'an is of divine origin. As such, the Qur'an is believed to be inimitable. The Arabic Qur'an is primarily an aural-oral phenomenon. For example, adherents of Islam who are not Arab speakers learn to recite the Qur'an in its Arabic original because its rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration and other poetic qualities are believed to be lost when it is translated into other languages (Robinson, 1999, p. 59). Thus, Qur'anic verses read during prayers must be in Arabic for any Muslim regardless of his or her native language. During times other than prayers, the Muslim can read the Qur'an in his or her native language. Regardless, Islam addresses itself to mankind, regardless of their area, race, tribe, color or language. The Qur'an always calls upon the "progeny" of "Adam" or

mankind to accept Islam. Thus those who accepted Islam acquired equal rights and status as believers regardless of their origin (Maududi, 1984, p. 14). The Qur'an dictates: "The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy" (the Noble Qur'an, 1996, 49:10).

4.1.2 Muhammad: The Messenger of God and Prophet

Muhammad was born in 570 A.D. in Mecca, and references to the Prophet Muhammad exist in early non-Muslim writings, including a chronicle written in 660 s by Bishop Sebeos. However, most of our information about him is drawn from the Qur'an and the works preserved or composed by the Tradition (*Hadith:* His sayings which are different from the Qur'an), and the biographies (Robinson, 1999, p. 84). The Qur'an is believed to be revealed to him through Archangel Gabriel in an episodic manner over a 23-year period between 610 and 632 A.D.

The precise task of the Prophet is to communicate the message of Allah. He has neither the right to make any change in the message revealed to him, nor the right to legislate for the people; instead, his role is to strictly conform to divine commandments. Thus Muhammad is believed to be neither superhuman nor free of human finitude. As such, Islam ensures that the believers should not turn the Prophet into a demi-god (Maududi, 1984). Thus, he has no power to make people righteous and faithful. The Prophet cannot benefit or harm others, nor can he do it to himself. The Qur'an dictates: "Say O Muhammad: I possess no power over benefit or hurt to myself except as Allah wills. If I had the knowledge of the *Ghaib* (Unseen), I should have secured for myself an abundance of wealth, and no evil should have touched me. I am but a warner and a bringer of glad tidings unto people who believe" (7:188). The mission of Prophet Muhammad, then, is to prescribe a moral code, enunciate the principles of culture, lay down the mode of worship, establish a framework of belief, define the moral imperatives which govern our life, and determine the rules to serve as the basis of social, economic, judicial, and political dealing.

4.1.3 Fundamentals of Islam

There are three major postulates of Islam: monotheism, Muhammad's prophethood, and belief in the hereafter.

Monotheism (Al-Tawheed): The most fundamental rule in Islam is belief in one God (Allah). He is the Creator, Master, Ruler, Transcendent, and Administrator of all that exists. The Qur'an says: "Allah none has the right to be worshipped but He. To Him belong the best names" (20:8). And: "He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and Who has begotten no son (children or offspring) and for Whom there is no partner in the dominion. He has created everything, and has

measured it exactly according to its due measurements" (25:2). Allah alone is the real Deity and none other than Allah has any right to be worshipped. Muslims believe in the absolute oneness of God, His power, mercy and compassion.

Muhammad's prophethood: The second most important belief is the belief in Muhammad's prophethood. Allah conveyed His message to mankind through Muhammad by revealing the Qur'an. Without this belief in the Prophet, belief in Allah would become a mere theoretical proposition. The prophet is no more than a messenger of Allah. The Prophet is but a human being and has no share in divinity (Maududi, 1984, pp. 22–23). The Qur'an dictates: "Say O Muhammad: I am only a man like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is one Allah. So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord" (18:110).

Belief in the hereafter: The third fundamental creed in Islam is belief in the hereafter (*Al-Akhira*). Denial of the hereafter is denial of Islam, even though one may have belief in Allah, in the Prophet, and in the Qur'an. A Muslim is accountable to Allah for one's own actions on doomsday. We will all be called upon to render a complete account of our acts of commission and omission to Allah. Then, following the Day of Judgment, the person will go either to Paradise or to Hell. The belief in the hereafter is related to the belief in the fate or destiny.

Those who believe in the hereafter as Islam presents it know that they alone are responsible for their actions. For them, the belief in the hereafter becomes a great moral force, and a permanent guard stationed within themselves which help them to develop a sound and stable character. It is for this reason that Islam attaches great importance to the belief in the hereafter. Therefore, it is believed that the quality and character of the true Muslim cannot be limited to the precincts of prayer halls: It must extend itself to every sphere of his work as a man of God and thus, Islam becomes a way of life (Maududi, 1984).

4.1.4 The Five Pillars of Islam

The pillars of Islam are five as follows: testimony, prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, alms giving, and pilgrimage.

Testimony or the declaration of faith (Al-shahadah): To bear witness or testify that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is His messenger. The Qur'an says in *Surat Al-Ikhlas;* The Purity Chapter: "Say O Muhammad: He is Allah, the One, Allah the Self-sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is non co-equal or comparable unto Him" (113:1–4).

Prayers (Al-salat): Prayers are prescribed five times a day as a duty toward God: the dawn (*fajr*), midday (*zohr*), the late afternoon (*asr*), the sunset (*maghrib*), and the night (*isha*) prayers. It involves Quranic recitations and various postures, including standing, sitting, bowing, and prostrating. One of the meanings of *Al-salat* in Arabic is the connection or contact between the Muslim and Allah. Prayer is believed to strengthen and enliven belief in God and inspires man to higher morality. It purifies

the heart and controls temptations, wrong-doing, and evil. The prerequisites for prayer include ablution (*Wudu*), purity of intention, body, dress, and place, and facing Mecca where *Ka'bah* is situated (Husain, 1998). Ablution symbolizes a state of purity.

Fasting (Al-sawm) during the month of Ramadan: This means abstinence from dawn to sunset from food, beverages, sex, and curbing evil intentions and desires. It teaches love, sincerity, and devotion. It develops patience, unselfishness, social conscience, and will power to bear hardships (Husain, 1998). It is pointless giving up food and drink unless the Muslim believer also abstain from speaking and practicing falsehood. The fast is annulled by lying, backbiting, gossip, ungodly oaths, and lustful glances. Hence, in Ramadan devout Muslims strive to control their passions and live better lives. Ramadan is of socio-religious significance. The fact that all Muslims fast during the same period and break the fast at the same time increases their sense of solidarity with each other, providing a sense of community and connectedness. Those who fast become more sensitive to the needs of the poor and hungry persons; and they make a conscious effort to alleviate their plight. Further, fasting is a means of curbing antisocial desires (Robinson, 1999).

Alms giving (Al-zakah): A proportionately fixed contribution is collected from the wealth and earnings of well-to-do and the rich and is spent on the poor and needy, in particular, and the welfare of the society in general. The payment of *Al-zakah* purifies one's income and wealth, and helps to establish economic balance and social justice in the society (Husain, 1998). In the Arabic language, the noun *Zakah* (almsgiving) is derived from the verb *Zakah* "to be purified". Therefore, the purpose and significance of *Al-zakah* are to purify the soul from greed and selfishness, and purify the person who received it because it saves him from the humiliation of begging and prevents him from envying the rich (Robinson, 1999, p. 115).

Pilgrimage (Al-hajj) to the Ka'bah in Mecca: It is an obligation on all free adult Muslims to perform the *hajj* at least once in a lifetime provided that it does not cause financial hardships to their families. The *hajj* comprises a series of rituals performed in and around Mecca, during the tenth day of the twelfth month of the Muslim year (Robinson, 1999). The purpose and significance of the Muslims' *hajj* is longing to see God's house in this world as a preparation for seeing Him face to face in the next life. Setting aside provisions for the journey to Mecca reminds the pilgrim that the only provisions he will take with him to the hereafter are piety and good works. Bidding farewell to his family and friends is a foretaste of being wrenched from them at death (Robinson, 1999).

4.2   Islamic Practices That Foster SWB

The relation between religiosity and SWB could be elucidated in light of specific practices, behaviors, and cognitions. In Islam, as in other religions, multiple practices are available as coping mechanisms against every day stresses and hardships to relieve anxiety and other negative mental states. Foremost among them in Islam are ablution, prayer, reciting Qur'an, remembering Allah, supplication or

invocation, asking God's forgiveness, and fasting at Ramadan. As stated in the Noble Qur'an (2:153): "O you who believe! Seek help in patience and the prayer. Truly! Allah is with *As-Sabirin* (the patient)". And: "Those who believed (in the oneness of Allah – Islamic Monotheism), and whose heart find rest in the remembrance of Allah: verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (13:28) (Abdel-Khalek, 2011a). In a similar vein, Loewenthal and Cinnirella (1999) found that most of the Muslims in their British sample consider prayer effective in treating depression.

Ablution (*Wudu*) or washing hands, arms, face, hair and feet, among others five times a day before daily prayers has a refreshing psychological effect on believers, helping them to momentarily put behind mundane worries (Abou El Azayem & Hedayat-Diba, 1994). In addition to its profound religious significance, *Alsalat* ensures that Muslims take regular exercise. While expressing his adoration of God through a series of physical acts, the worshipper builds up his stamina, strengthens the musculature of his spine, and keeps his joints supple. Husain (1998) discussed the spiritual, psychological, physical, and moral roles of Islamic ritual prayers. The concentration of mind during prayer distracts the mind from perceiving pain. The physical aspect of prayer with changing postures has a very relaxing effect on the body (for a more in-depth discussion of the mind-body relevance, see Chap. 12 on yogic practices).

There are other sacred phrases that Muslims utter daily, either during prayers or during more secular activities, which punctuate the glory of God, e.g., "*Allahu Akbar*", i.e., "God is the greatest". It is the opening phrase of the call to prayer and is repeated several times during prayer. By repeating such phrases, Muslims feel protected by God. This psychological feeling of security fosters a feeling of empowerment in the face of difficulties and enhances a degree of emotional maturity, and facilitates peaceful coexistence among the community (Abou El Azayem & Hedayat-Diba, 1994). The majority of Muslims use the term "*Al-hamdu-li-Allah*", which means thank God, frequently in their speech. This frequent thanksgiving fosters gratitude, which past research have found to be related to positive well being.

4.3   Empirical Evidence Supporting Religiosity and SWB

While ample research have documented the positive relation between religiosity or spirituality and SWB, much of this research have been conducted in European or North American contexts where the dominant religious institution is Christianity, and the majority of the participants were Christian, with the exception of a few studies that investigated the connection between well-being and religion among Jewish participants. Therefore, it is essential that the results be replicated and validated for the followers of Islam.

Indeed, several Arabic studies, using mainly Muslim participants, have found similar results showing positive association between SWB and religiosity, as well as life satisfaction and religiosity. Evidence have included those who were Algerian,

Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Lebanese. Palestinian, Saudi, and Qatari, and have included adolescents, college students, as well as middle-aged personnel. In addition, similar results showing positive relation was seen for life satisfaction and religiosity (see, e.g., Abdel-Khalek, 2008, 2011c, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b; Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2010; Baroun, 2006). As it was described earlier in this chapter, satisfaction with life has a very high status among Muslim believers because it is related to fate or destiny. The belief in the fate or destiny is a fundamental creed in Islam.

Replicating the results with Muslim participants who are non-Arab, Suhail and Chaudhry (2004) recruited 1,000 Pakistani Muslims and found that religious affiliation was among the better predictors of SWB. In addition, Tiliouine and Belgoumidi (2009) used a sample of 495 Muslim students from Algeria. The results indicate that Religious Belief and Religious Altruism significantly contribute in providing subjects with meaning in life. Nevertheless, hierarchical regression analyses show that only Religious Belief makes a significant contribution in both satisfaction with life scale and personal well-being index. But, this effect has almost totally been accounted for by Meaning in life in the second step (see also: Tiliouine, Cummins, & Davern, 2009).

In addition, research have found evidence for similar positive relationship when happiness itself is investigated as the criterion variable. For example, Abdel-Khalek (2006) found that among Kuwaiti undergraduates, religiosity accounted for around 15 % of the variance in predicting happiness. The same significant and positive correlation was also reported by Baroun (2006), using a sample of 941 Kuwaiti adolescents. The same result was reached by Abdel-Khalek (2008) with a sample of 424 Kuwaiti working adults, as well as a sample of 234 men and women (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2010), and a sample of 224 Egyptian college students (Abdel-Khalek, 2011c), six cross-sectional samples of Kuwaiti Muslim male and female adolescents, college students, and middle-aged personnel ($N=1,420$), in two Egyptian ($n=577$) and Kuwaiti ($n=674$) college students (Abdel-Khalek, 2012a), and a sample of 246 college students from Qatar (Abdel-Khalek, 2013b). In some of the aforementioned studies (Abdel-Khalek, 2007), the main predictor of happiness was religiosity.

Again using a non-Arab sample of Muslims, Jamal and Badawi (1993) studied 325 Muslim immigrants in North America and found that religiosity was significantly and positively correlated with happiness in life. These findings on the relation between religiosity and happiness extend to the Muslim population extensive past research that used mainly Christians to demonstrate this same positive relationship (Argyle, 2002; Francis, Jones, & Wilcox, 2000; French & Joseph, 1999; Koenig, McCullough & Larson, 2001; Myers & Diener, 1995).

4.3.1 Religiosity and the Good Life

In addition to the positive relation between religiosity and SWB and happiness, additional research have investigated other factors associated with the good life, such as the quality of life, and individual differences variables, such as hope and optimism. For example, much research have suggested a significant and positive

association between religiosity and personal quality of life (e.g., Ferriss, 2002; Hsu, Krägeloh, Shepherd, & Billington, 2009; Rule, 2007; Sawatzky, Ratner, & Chiu, 2005; Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006). While research validating these findings for adherents of Islam is sparse, they showed similar results. To the best of my knowledge, the only Arabic study in this domain was carried out on a convenience sample of 224 Kuwait University undergraduates. Their ages ranged from 18 to 28 years. The Arabic version of the World Health Organization QOL scale-Brief (WHOQOL-Bref), along with six self-rating scales to assess physical health, mental health, happiness, satisfaction with life, religiosity, and strength of religious belief were used. All the 66 correlations but two were significant and positive between religiosity, religious belief and QOL variables. It was concluded that religiosity may be considered as a salient component of, and a contributing factor to, quality of life among this sample of Muslim college students (Abdel-Khalek, 2010b).

The association between religiosity and both hope and optimism was a subject of a few studies using Muslim samples. In a sample of 323 Kuwaiti Muslim under-graduates, the Arabic version of the Snyder Hope Scale correlated significantly with religiosity (Abdel-Khalek & Snyder, 2007). Abdel-Khalek and Scioli (2010) have attempted to bridge positive psychology's focus on strengths and virtues with the more traditional clinical emphasis on distress and coping. The Arabic Scale of Optimism and Pessimism, the Kuwait University Anxiety Scale and the Scioli's measure of Trait Hope were given to both American and Kuwaiti young adults. They found greater reported optimism and overall hope among Kuwaiti young adults as compared to the American group. However, while the Kuwaiti sample reported greater levels of spiritual hope, the American participants reported greater levels of non-spiritual hope. For Kuwaitis but not Americans, greater spiritual hope was associated with less pessimism and anxiety. For both Kuwaiti and American young adults, a sense of hope derived from spiritual integrity was the strongest correlate of greater optimism, and lower pessimism and anxiety. On the other hand, Abdel-Khalek and Lester (2007) found that for both Kuwaiti ($N = 460$) and American ($N = 274$) college students, religiosity was significantly associated with optimism (positive) and pessimism (negative).

4.3.2   Religiosity, SWB, and Psychopathology

In the domain of psychopathology and religiosity, results again for the large part replicate those relationships found for predominantly Christian populations. For example, a sample ($N = 6{,}339$) of Muslim Kuwaiti adolescents was recruited (ages ranged from 15 to 18) to assess religiosity, happiness, mental health, and physical health, as well as the Kuwait University Anxiety Scale and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale. Boys had higher mean scores on happiness, mental health, and physical health than did girls, whereas girls had higher mean scores on religiosity, anxiety, and depression. All the correlations were significant in both sexes. They were positive between each of the self-rating scales of religiosity,

happiness, mental health, and physical health, and negative between these four rating scales and both anxiety and depression. A high-loaded and bipolar factor was disclosed and labeled "Religiosity and well-being vs. psychopathology." In the stepwise regression, the main predictor of religiosity was happiness in both sexes (Abdel-Khalek, 2007).

Abdel-Khalek and Lester (2007) explored the associations between religiosity, and both health and psychopathology. Two samples of 460 Kuwaiti and 274 American college students were recruited. Religiosity, pessimism, anxiety, obsession-compulsion, death obsession, and ego-grasping were significantly higher among Kuwaiti than their American counterparts whereas mental health and optimism were significantly higher among Americans than their Kuwaiti peers. Religiosity was significantly and positively associated with ratings of physical health, mental health, and optimism (both countries), and negatively with pessimism, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and ego-grasping (Kuwaitis), and pessimism and suicidal ideation (Americans). By and large, it was concluded that those who consider themselves as religious are more healthy and optimistic, and attain low scores on psychopathology in both countries.

In another Arab Muslim country, Algeria, a sample of 244 volunteer Muslim college students was recruited. They responded to five self rating-scales to assess religiosity, physical health, mental health, happiness, and satisfaction with life, in addition to the Arabic Scale of Optimism and Pessimism, and the Kuwait University Anxiety Scale. Religiosity and satisfaction with life were higher among women than men. Among men, religiosity was significantly correlated only with mental health. However, in women, religiosity was significantly and positively correlated with physical health, mental health, happiness, satisfaction with life, and optimism, whereas religiosity correlated negatively with both anxiety and pessimism. Principal components analysis yielded a single bipolar component labeled Positive emotions and religiosity versus neurotic tendency (anxiety and pessimism) in women. Two orthogonal factors were extracted in men: 'Positive versus negative traits of mental health', and 'Religiosity' (Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007).

To explore the associations between religiosity and both subjective well-being (SWB) and depression, a sample of 7,211 Saudi school children and adolescents was recruited (2,159 boys, 5,052 girls). Their ages ranged from 11 to 18 (M_{age} = 16.1, SD = 1.5 for boys; M_{age} = 15.6, SD = 1.9 for girls). They responded to five self-rating scales of religiosity and SWB, i.e., happiness, satisfaction with life, mental health, and physical health, as well as the Multidimensional Child and Adolescent Depression Scale. It was found that boys obtained significantly higher mean scores than did their female counterparts on the religiosity and the SWB self-rating scales, whereas girls obtained a significantly higher mean score on depression than did their male peers. All the correlations among boys and girls were significant between religiosity and both SWB rating scales (positive) and depression (negative). A principle components analysis yielded a high-loaded and bipolar component labeled 'Religiosity and well-being vs. depression.' In the stepwise multiple regression, the main predictor of religiosity in both sexes was satisfaction. In the light of the high mean score on religiosity, it was concluded that religiosity is an important element

in the lives of the present sample of Saudi Muslim children and adolescents. Based on the correlations and factor analysis, it was also concluded that religious persons are happier, healthier and less depressed (Abdel-Khalek, 2009a).

Ashkanani (2009) studied a sample of Kuwaiti people who had experienced a significant trauma in their lives from a severe car accident, families of those who have been badly injured, and families of those who were killed in car accidents. He found a positive relationship between religiosity and well-being among them.

To estimate the relation between religiosity and both SWB and neuroticism (N), a sample ($N=487$) of Muslim Kuwaiti undergraduates were selected. Their ages ranged between 18 and 31. They responded to six self-rating scales to assess religiosity, religious belief, physical health, mental health, happiness, and satisfaction with life, as well as the Factorial Arabic Neuroticism Scale (FANS) and the N subscale of the Revised NEO. It was found that all the correlations between the six self-rating scales were significant and positive, whereas these rating scales were significantly and negatively correlated with both the FANS and N (NEO) subscale. A high-loaded and bipolar factor was extracted and labeled 'Well-being and religiosity versus neuroticism'. The main predictor of religiosity in the stepwise regression was religious belief and satisfaction with life (Abdel-Khalek, 2010a).

Six self-rating scales were used to assess religiosity, religious belief, physical health, mental health, happiness, and satisfaction with life, along with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Kuwait University Anxiety Scale among a sample of 499 Muslim Kuwaiti adolescents ($M_{ages}=16.87$, S$D=1.49$). All the correlations were significant between religiosity and both SWB rating scales and self-esteem (positive) and anxiety (negative). A principal components analysis yielded a high loaded and bipolar component and labeled 'Religiosity and well-being versus anxiety'. The stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that the main predictors of religiosity were religious faith, happiness, and physical health (Abdel-Khalek, 2011b).

To investigate the association of religiosity, depression and SWB self-ratings among Kuwaiti ($N=1,937$) and Palestinian ($N=1,009$) Muslim children and adolescents ($M_{age}=14.1$, $SD=1.4$), five self-rating scales and the Multidimensional Child and Adolescent Depression Scale (MCADS) were administered. It was found that Palestinian boys were significantly less religious than the other groups, while Kuwaiti boys and girls had a significantly higher mean scores on happiness and satisfaction with life than Palestinians. Kuwaiti boys had significantly higher mental health and less depression than all other groups. Among all the four groups, the correlations between religiosity and SWB rating scales were positively significant, but negatively significant between SWB and depression. The principal components analysis yielded a single salient factor for all groups and labeled 'Religiosity and well-being vs. depression' (Abdel-Khalek & Eid, 2011).

Two college student samples recruited from two different cultures, i.e., Kuwait ($N=192$) and USA ($N=158$). They responded, in their native languages, to the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, the Love of Life Scale, the Kuwait University Anxiety Scale, and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies – Depression Scale, in addition to six self-rating scales assessing happiness, satisfaction with life, mental health, physical health, religiosity, and strength of religious belief. It was found that

the Kuwaiti students obtained higher mean scores on religiosity, religious belief and depression than did their American counterparts, whereas American students have the high mean scores on happiness and love of life questionnaires. The significant correlation clusters were found between the SWB variables, the SWB and religiosity (positive), and the SWB and psychopathology (negative). Two factors were extracted: 'SWB versus psychopathology' and 'Religiosity'. By and large, the similarity of correlations between the last-mentioned scales overshadow the mean score differences between the samples of the two countries (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2012).

4.4 Conclusion

Based on the results of the reviewed studies in this chapter, positive relation between religiosity and various facets and constructs of well-being, such as SWB, happiness, optimism, as well as ill-being, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, fully replicate for adherents of Islam. Reviewed research examined the effect among Arab Muslims, as well as non-Arab Muslims. Reviewed research have also included data from those Muslims living as a religious or ethnic minority in majority Christian nations and found similar results. Last, research findings have been replicated with adolescent samples, as well as young adults (college students) as well as working adults. Thus, it seems true that most participants view the concepts and scales of religiosity, SWB, happiness, satisfaction with life, love of life, mental health, and physical health in a specific and predictable manner as co-variants. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the participants with high scores on religiosity saw themselves as enjoying SWB, being happier, feeling more satisfied, loving life, enjoying good mental and physical health, and have high self-esteem. Moreover, religiosity may be considered as a salient component of, and a contributing factor to, QOL among samples of Muslim participants.

On the other hand, participants with low scores on religiosity tend to obtain high scores on anxiety, depression, neuroticism, pessimism, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation. These results are relevant to both sexes recruited from several Arabic countries, including participants from Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, as well as the USA. Further, the reviewed studies included participants in different age groups from 14 to 60 years old.

The present results are consistent with previous studies carried out in different countries, situations, cultures, and religions, including Western, English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon, Christian samples (e.g., Harris, 2002; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Koenig, 1997; Koenig et al., 2001; Veenhoven, 2008). Arab Muslims in Egypt and Kuwait obtained higher mean scores on a scale of intrinsic religious motivation than did their American counterparts, mainly Christians (Abdel-Khalek & Thorson, 2006; Thorson, Powell, Abdel-Khalek, & Beshai, 1997). Therefore, it seems true that the religion of Islam as a value system has a high rank and importance among its believers, so the association of religiosity with positive ratings such as SWB, happiness, and good health is predictable. On the other hand, it seems that religion

acts as a coping mechanism against anxiety and depression. As Hall (1915) said: "the promise of religion was the great answer to human kind's most compelling fear." It is interesting to note that one of the meanings of happiness in the Arabic lexicon is as follows: the help of God to the human being to do good deeds.

What is the mechanism that could mediate the effect of religiosity on SWB and health? As for health, Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) stated that there is a complex causal mechanism responsible for the relationship between religiosity and health endpoints. One particularly promising explanation might involve the experience of religiously engendered emotions such as hope, love, forgiveness, and gratitude. Because the expressions of praise and thanksgiving are key components of religious worship, the physiological effects of gratitude hold promise for understanding religion's impact on health. Following a similar pattern, Wallace and Williams (1997) enumerated several factors mediating religion and better health relationship, including health-related behaviors and practices, social support, group identity, coping skills, and guideline provisions for a coherent value system (see also Seybold, 2007).

The present results confirm that religiosity is an important element in the lives of most of the Arabic samples, mainly Muslims. Psychotherapists should attend to clients' religiosity in clinical settings. As stated by Abdel-Khalek (2009b), Islamic beliefs and practices may be helpful when integrated into the psychotherapeutic process with Muslims. Islamic traditions contain a very elaborate system of health care (Husain, 1998). Religious beliefs can provide a meaning for life, thereby promoting psychological health.

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Chapter 5
Fostering Meaning, Social Connection, and Well-Being Through Hindu Beliefs and Practices

Maia J Young and Rakesh Sarin

सर्वेपि सुखिनः सन्तु, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयः
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कस्चीद दुखं आप्नुयात !
(Let all beings be happy; let all be healthy (without diseases); Let all see good; Let nobody be unhappy.)

In a vast world that surpasses comprehension, individuals seek to know the meaning of life (Frankl, 1946). Religion provides a sense of order and a lens by which to interpret the world (Geertz, 1979). Religion is powerful in alleviating uncertainty and creating connections to others, nature, and the spiritual realm. In this chapter, we will focus on the Hindu religion and examine how Hinduism fosters positive emotions and well-being by helping practitioners make sense of the world and gain a sense of interconnectedness. Our assertions center on the positive effects that Hinduism has on practitioners' well-being, without an assumption that people might choose Hinduism to gain these benefits. That is, we focus on the effects of practicing Hinduism rather than on driving factors that affect someone's choice to practice Hinduism in particular among all religious practices.

5.1   A Brief Overview of Hindu Beliefs

The Hindu civilization is old and diverse. Hinduism is not just one set of beliefs or philosophy; it is a collection of traditions that all ascribe to the Vedas, the most ancient of Sanskrit texts and which are thought to date to 3500 B.C.E. (Klostermaier, 2006). Men and women who call themselves Hindus worship different gods and practice different rites. In spite of the fact that Hindus have no common creed, a body of shared, sacred stories and texts create core beliefs and

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cohesion among Hindus. A Hindu in a small rural village in South India or a bustling city in North India each knows that the chief sacred scriptures are the *Vedas*. They know about the Sanskrit epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, which provide moral and philosophical teachings through narrative allegory. These epic texts shape the commonly-held beliefs about individual duty and cosmic order in Hinduism.

In Hinduism, the chief goal for every human being is *Moksa*—liberation from the cycle of life and death which comes from the spiritual realization of unity of all beings that existed in the past, exist in the present, and will exist in the future. *Moksa* is freedom from the delusion of separateness from God. It is achieved through right knowledge (*Jnanamarga*), right desire (*Bhakimarga*), and right action (*Karmamarga*). A simple analogy illustrates why Hindus regard *Jnana* (wisdom), *Bhakti* (devotion), and *Karma* (right action) as essential to move towards Moksha. To reach an arduous destination, there must be a desire (devotion) and a map (wisdom), but one must exert effort (action) to attain the goal. Although this analogy illustrates why all three are necessary to attain Moksa, the *Vedas* are silent about the pre-requisite of all three paths to realize the God.

For Hindus, the path to Moksha is open to everyone (including atheists) and is unique to each. For this reason, and frankly for other logistical ones, our aim is not to compare religious practices. However, in this section, we attempt to distill the tenets of Hinduism and make a few distinctions between Hinduism and other religions in order to highlight core Hindu beliefs.

5.1.1   A Focus on Ethical Actions over Particular Beliefs

The essence of Hinduism has remained the same for thousands of years. The core of Hinduism insists on a spiritual and ethical conduct in life, not on religious conformity. In fact, Hinduism does not emphasize distinctions among religions. The oldest Sanskrit text, the *Rig Veda*, is a collection of over a thousand hymns, one of which says, "Truth is one, the wise call it by different names." Radhakrishnan, a renowned Hindu philosopher wrote, "It is clear that Hinduism is a process, not a result: a glowing tradition not a fixed revelation. It never shut off by force wisdom from anywhere, for there are no distinctions of mine and thine in the Kingdom of Spirit" (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1989).

Hindus place more emphasis on righteous living than correct belief. In common parlance a Hindu often says that Hinduism is a way of life and not a religion, meaning that conduct is more essential than belief. This emphasis on conduct over beliefs may be contrasted with Christian emphasis on faith. For example, Ephesians 2:8–9 in the Bible states "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift from God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

5.1.2 Non-judgment of Others' Beliefs

Consistent with their emphasis on right actions over specific beliefs, Hindus do not judge others for their religious beliefs. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right guaranteed by India's constitution. Hindus do not think that a particular religious belief is necessary for salvation. It is commonly said among Hindus that there are many ways to reach the mountaintop and each person can choose his or her own path.

As a product of this openness to beliefs, Hindus do not strive to convert others to any one opinion. Heresy-hunting is absent. Instead, Hinduism favors an attitude of acceptance and unity. Religious tolerance is evident in one of the rock edicts of the great third century BCE, Hindu king Asoka: "The King honors every form of religious faith. Whoever acts differently injures his own religion while he wrongs another's." Historically, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and peoples of other religions have been allowed freedom to practice their own faith in India. Religious conflicts have occurred in India, but they have been condemned by government, businesses, and legal authorities.

Not only is respect for others' faith explicitly encouraged, a famous quote from Gandhi goes one step further. He actively discouraged others from becoming Hindu: "Supposing a Christian came to me and said he was captivated by the reading of the *Bhagavat* and so wanted to declare himself a Hindu, I should say to him 'No. What Bhagavat offers, the Bible also offers. You have not made attempt to find it out. Make the attempt and be a good Christian' (Gandhi, 2011)."

5.1.3 Karma

As further testament of the Hindu belief on ethical conduct, Hindus believe in karma. The word *karma* translates to "deed" or "action," and refers to the principle of cause and effect by which each person is rewarded or punished for their actions. According to the karmic system, nothing happens by chance because it is related to the goodness of prior actions by the law of cause and effect. Attaining spiritual liberation, or *Moksha*, is more than a single lifetime's work, and thus the notion of rebirth is accepted. One's experiences today are influenced by karma from this life as well as previous lives and one's experiences in future lives will be shaped by karma in this life.

The notion that one's outcomes today are affected by prior actions is often mistaken for fatalism or pre-destination. To the contrary, believing in cause and effect necessarily means that Hindus do believe in the ability to control their own futures by right action in the present. The past can affect circumstances now, and focusing only on the past may lead to fatalistic beliefs. However, Hindu devotees also emphasize the ability of one's actions to affect the future. Sages who wrote the *Upanishads*, sacred texts that continued Vedic philosophy, described the relationship between

will and destiny in this way: "We are what our deep, driving desire is. As our deep, driving desire is, so is our will. As our will is, so is our deed. As our deed is, so is our destiny." According to the sages, then, a person may shape their destiny by first directing their wants and desires. A second century BCE set of aphorisms—or *sutras*—by Sage Patanjali states, "*Heyam dukham anagatam*," or "Troubles that are yet to come are to be avoided." The saying urges people to choose actions in the present that will avoid future problems from manifesting.

Hindus differ in the extent to which they ascribe to a theistic view of karma. That is, some Hindus believe that the fruits of one's actions depend on the discernment of a supreme god, and others believe the rewards are instead meted out by a system that is much like the law of gravity. Belief in karma and practices reflecting karmic beliefs differ from region to region (O'Flaherty, 1980), and between text and practice (Keyes & Daniel, 1983).

With this rather basic overview of the core beliefs of Hindus, we now turn to how Hinduism fosters emotional well-being. Our definition of emotional well-being is coincident with happiness, and it is the total sum, over time, of momentary emotions, feelings, and states of mind. Positive emotions increase happiness, and negative emotions decrease overall happiness. Whereas others have defined and operationalized happiness as self-reported global evaluations (for a review, see Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999), we are interested in the net balance of one's emotions over time.

Our central arguments are that Hindu beliefs contribute to well-being by fostering a cumulative view of reality, compassion, and a sense of interconnectedness. In addition to beliefs, Hindu practices and rituals also contribute to well-being. We focus on three practices in particular which contribute to a sense of security and compassion: allowing individuals to choose their own god, individual introspection practices such as meditation, mantras, and prayers, and communal practices such as frequent pujas and festivals.

5.2   Hindu Beliefs That Foster Well-Being

5.2.1   Belief in Karma Creates Meaning Through a Cumulative View of Reality

According to the law of karma, everything a person does is stored in a metaphorical bank of credits and demerits. A person's merit is thought to be cumulative from past lifetimes, into the present and even future lifetimes. Karma is a concept that "unifies time by connecting present events to the past and the future" (Pargament, Poloma, & Tarakeshwar, 2001, p. 269). Because every action—mental or physical—is considered karma, thoughts about karma can be triggered by many types of events and are a part of everyday life for Hindus. Events like an accident on the way to work, or a birth of a child are potential triggers for karmic attributions. The concept of karma introduces a cumulative, pervasive, and long-term concept by which a person measures life.

A cumulative view of goods and activities are those for which reality is perceived to be additive (Baucells & Sarin, 2012). The cumulative view entails building experiences rather than viewing each experience separately. Seeing experiences as adding to a larger goal in one's life creates meaning, which is associated with increased life satisfaction (Frankl, 1946). Completing a work task, making a charitable donation, playing an instrument, and talking with someone new are all activities that can be seen from a cumulative view as making progress in one's career, helping with causes that transcend self-interest, learning a skill, or developing a relationship respectively.

Karma encourages people to see a larger purpose in life; it is a lens by which one's work, consumption, actions, and emotional events are experienced cumulatively. For example, a person may see the work as merely being a job, which is qualitatively different from viewing the work as part of a bigger goal to advance in a career (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). A shopkeeper who focuses on daily profits will necessarily experience a fluctuating cycle of elation and misery than a shopkeeper whose mind is on building net worth.

Choosing to view emotions themselves—not just the events that spark them—in a cumulative way can also add to well-being. For example, experiencing joys and sorrows may be perceived as discrete emotional incidents. However, when one has a cumulative life narrative in mind, one may view fluctuating feelings as a part of the whole trajectory of their existence. Research has found that caring for a child is stressful but in a cumulative view of raising a family, busy parents feel love and joy (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004).

The cumulative view of reality that is spurred by karma may foster well-being in three ways. First, it links each event or activity to the meaning that it brings to one's life. Second, a cumulative view prevents someone from ruminating solely on a single negative event—a pattern that has been linked to depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). Finally, the notion of karma reminds Hindus about the ultimate goal in life—spiritual liberation (Reichenbach, 1990).

Taking a cumulative view is not the same as taking a longer lens on time, which merely entails thinking of several events simultaneously. In contrast, adopting a cumulative view means seeing the goal-related relationship among things. A cumulative view is parallel to high-level construal. Thinking about an activity in terms of the decontextualized means is representative of low-level construals, whereas keeping end states in mind is representative of high-level construals (Liberman & Trope, 1998). Trope and Liberman (2003) wrote: "High-level construals are therefore likely to represent actions in terms of features that are related to the primary goals of the actions rather than in terms of incidental, goal-irrelevant features."

5.2.2 Beliefs in Karma and an Interconnected Universe Discourage Harmful Social Comparisons

Next, we move to discuss the influence of Hindu beliefs on another psychological factor that affects well-being: social comparisons. Objective outcomes in life can surely affect happiness levels, but one's subjective interpretation of those outcomes

is also crucial in determining happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2001). One's subjective experience of life outcomes can be heavily influenced by contrasting reference points, provided by social comparisons (see Diener et al., 1999 for a review). The choice to compare oneself to other individuals in a social landscape varies between individuals (Lawrence, 2006; Wood, 1996) and affects global happiness. For example, happy people tend to compare themselves to others who are worse off than they, but unhappy people tend to use as comparison points others who are better off as well as those who are worse off (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997).

The overall propensity to compare one's own life outcomes to others varies among individuals as well, and people who chronically engage in less social comparison than others are relatively happier than those who engage in more social comparison (Fujita, 2008). People who ignore available social comparisons also report being happier (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997; Lyubomirsky, Tucker, & Kasri, 2001). For example, happy individuals who were completing a new task in the presence of a peer were relatively indifferent to the peer's positive feedback than unhappy individuals were (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997). Given these findings, we know that limiting social comparison altogether or engaging in positive social comparisons are important to well-being. The ancient epic *Mahabharata* warns Hindus against the potential unhappiness that comes from envy that often results from comparing oneself to others. Although this important text explicitly instructs Hindus to avoid envy and greed that result from social comparison, we focus on two Hindu beliefs that—in themselves—discourage harmful social comparison because of the incompatibility of the beliefs with contrasting social comparisons: belief in the karmic justice of one's outcomes and belief in an interconnected universe. These two beliefs may seem unrelated to social comparison on the surface, but we argue that they have a profound effect on the degree and nature of one's comparisons to others.

Belief in karmic justice discourages social comparison. Ascribing to a world in which positive and negative outcomes are a function of the righteousness of past acts reinforces just world beliefs and provides peace of mind in one's lot in life (Pargament, et al., 2001). Strong belief in justice—not only justice enacted by karma—protects people from ruminating about why a negative event has befallen them (Dalbert, 1998). While beliefs in justice in general have been found to buffer individuals against life stressors (Tomaka & Blascovich, 1994), karmic explanations can apply a greater set of life events because of the potential for karma from past lives to affect events in this life. Indeed, prior research shows that Hindus may attribute some negative life events to karma, whereas a Christian would attribute the same event to chance (Young, Morris, Burrus, Krishnan, & Regmi, 2011).

It is worth noting that the caste system is a part of the social, economic system in India; it is not a religious institution. Having clearly-defined social categories that are prized differently in society must certainly tempt Hindus to make social comparisons. Someone of a lower caste may be very much adversely affected in emotional well-being from comparing their own resources and social standing to those afforded to others of a higher caste. However, belief in karma may temper the urge to engage in self-destructive social comparisons because believing in

karma provides Hindus with a reminder that spiritual liberation is the goal of each person, and it is similarly available to all (Pargament et al., 2001). Each person is not in competition with others to attain liberation, so there is no need to constantly compare one's own good and bad events to those of others. Indeed, sociologists have long surmised that the Hindu adherence to karmic doctrine has prevented lower caste members from comparing themselves upwardly and striving for better outcomes—thus perpetuating the unequal status of castes (Omraprakash, 1989).

Belief in an interconnected universe fosters assimilation rather than contrast in social comparisons. Hinduism encourages belief in an interconnected universe, which discourages contrasting social comparisons and instead fosters a sense of fundamental similarity with others. A traditional aspect of Hindu beliefs is *advaita* or non-duality—the concept that all are one. The oldest texts of the Vedas proclaim that God resides everywhere. The interconnectedness of God with all of nature is captured in the very first verse of the Ishaupanishad: "All that there is in this universe, great or small, including the tiniest atom, is pervaded by God, known as creator or Lord." Because of this belief in divinity in all living creatures and even plants, mountains, and rivers, Hinduism has strong traditions of worshipping animals (e.g. cows), plants (e.g., tulsi and peepul plants), rivers (e.g. Ganga), and mountains (e.g. Himalaya). Thus the view of reality of existence in Hinduism is each thing in the universe is indistinguishable from the primordial God. It is written in the Upanishad that each person is one with the universe: *Tat tvam asi* or "Thou art that."

The belief that each person or thing is divine encourages a feeling of being connected to others rather than different. In fact, according to non-duality, contrasting concepts such as happy and sad, good and evil, beauty and ugliness are considered interconnected opposites; the perception of difference is thought to be an illusion. This belief is not just that one is similar to all others but in fact, at a fundamental level, one is cut from the same cloth as one's neighbor. Swami Vivekananda, an Indian Hindu monk and chief disciple of the nineteenth century saint Ramakrishna (Vivekenanda, 1946), states: "In injuring another, I am injuring myself; in loving another, I am loving myself."

The concept of non-duality encourages people to see similarities to all others in the world, which in turn helps them to avoid harmful, contrasting social comparisons. Social psychological findings provide evidence that: (1) There is more emphasis on distinctiveness for meaning-making in Western cultures than non-Western cultures. In Western, individualistic cultures, people value being unique and separate from others, whereas in non-Western cultures, people have a more relational orientation and emphasize knowing one's place in the social network (Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2000), and (2) Togetherness versus distinctiveness encourages perceived similarities rather than differences. If a person's working hypothesis of the world is that they are similar, they will find similarities between themselves and others; if their working hypothesis is that they are different, then they will find differences (Mussweiler, 2001). People also see similarities with others when they are primed to think about their social, interdependent self rather than their unique features and independent self (Kühnen, & Hannover, 2000).

In other studies, participants were found to be negatively affected by social comparison information only when thinking about "I" versus "we" (Stapel & Koomen, 2001). In sum, we argue that the Hindu concept of non-duality reduces the absolute level of social comparison devotees engage in. We also argue that non-duality encourages perceived similarity rather than perceived differences among individuals.

We have asserted that belief in karma encourages a cumulative and meaningful view of reality, which fosters well-being. We also posit that belief in karmic justice reduces a person's engagement in social comparisons overall and belief in an interconnected universe encourages seeing similarities as opposed to differences. We next evaluate Hindu practices that foster happiness and well-being.

5.3 Hindu Practices That Foster Well-Being

5.3.1 Practitioners May Choose Which Deity to Worship

Hindus believe in one Supreme God, which can be conceptualized either as a deity or as a diffuse cosmic force, that goes by different names: *Bhagavan*, *Parmmesvara*, *Isvara*, or *Narayana*. A foundational idea in the Hindu religion is that individuals may reach the same goal by different paths. The Rishis of Vedas reckoned with the striking fact that the men and women dwelling in India belonged to different communities, worshipped different gods and practiced different rites. They sought to uncover the truth that unites God, the universe, and humans, so they adopted a democratic approach and allowed for thousands of gods and rituals. In Hinduism, to have faith at all is a personal choice and in whom one puts their faith is another, unlimited choice. If one's goal is to become skilled in music, they may choose to worship Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of music, arts and science. If one seeks to avoid financial trouble, they may choose the goddess of wealth Lakshmi. There is a deity that embodies each life aspiration and activity. The number of deities is considered infinite because of the belief that everything is a reflection of Brahman (Foulston & Abbott, 2009). A common saying reflecting the importance of choice in worship is "*Yad Bhavam, tad Bhavati*," translated as: "What you choose to believe becomes your personal truth." Freedom to believe is always more important than the belief itself.

The ability to choose which deity or deities to worship has positive implications for well-being. Choosing a deity is akin to choosing an advocate. Devotees are familiar with the traits, cares, and strengths of each deity, and by being able to choose one or more based on their own needs and desires, their faith may be enhanced by virtue of a sense of personalization. Devotees may have a heightened sense of what God is, given the distinct characteristics of each deity, rather than having to wonder whether an amorphous Supreme Being can hear their prayers. We will expand on this argument in the section on prayer below.

5.3.2 Practitioners Cultivate Individual Introspection Through Prayer, Meditation, and Yoga

Hindus in every household, including all sects of favored god or goddess, pray and meditate daily in order to foster individual introspection and contemplation. Hindu prayers, like other religions' prayers, are aimed at helping the person commune with God. Prior researchers have distinguished among four varieties of prayer: (1) Colloquial prayer, which is an informal conversation with God, (2) Petitionary prayer, in which a person asks for material changes in life, (3) Ritualistic prayer, in which a person recites or reads already-composed prayers, and (4) Meditative prayer, in which a person quietly thinks or reflects on God (Poloma & Pendleton, 1989). Hindu prayers by and large could be categorized as ritualistic prayer, because Hindu practitioners often chant mantras—sounds, words, or phrases that are thought to catalyze spiritual transformation (Feuerstein, 2003) by helping the person focus their mind on the deity or deities. For instance, a popular mantra called the Gayatri Mantra encourages the chanter to rest his or her mind on the universal God or Brahman: "We meditate on the glory of that Being who has produced this Universe; may He enlighten our minds."

Prayer has been found to be positively associated with health and well-being. Frequency of prayer is particularly helpful (Maltby, Lewis, & Day, 2008), but people of many religious faiths pray often. We argue that two distinguishing aspects of Hindu prayer are particularly helpful in fostering well-being. First, prayers focusing on God rather than focusing on one's own plight or needs foster well-being. Whittington and Scher (2010) found that prayers of adoration and thanksgiving had consistently positive relationship with self-esteem, optimism, and life satisfaction, whereas ego-focused prayer (confession and petitionary prayer) were not related or they were negatively related to these well-being measures. As mentioned above, Hindu prayer often takes the form of mantras and chants to express adoration for God, not dwelling on worries and stress. Rather than repenting for one's wrongdoings, Hindu prayers urge the practitioner to exalt and glorify.

A second aspect of Hindu prayer that might particularly foster well-being is related to one's choice of deity. To the extent that the practitioner is in fact engaging in petitionary prayer, and not ritualistic prayer, we assert that praying to a deity that matches your needs and desires increases trust that you will receive help. Prayer serves an important function of increasing a sense of security and optimism. The act of trusting that God will deliver the knowledge or help that is best for you in the situation accounts for much of the positive effects of prayer on well-being (Krause, 2004).

We assert that the ability to choose a deity that shares your particular interests or who has a particular skill that you need bolsters one's faith in the deity's attentiveness and ability to help. In Hinduism, the deity Hanuman represents colossal courage in the face of adversity. Sita blessed Hanuman by saying, "People will worship your image to get out of trouble—in towns, gardens, cities, villages, homes, cowsheds, pathways, temples, forests, and places of pilgrimage; on hills, near rivers and

ponds; in orchards and basil clusters, under bo and banyan tree. Just by remembering your name, they would succeed in warding off evil spirits" (Ananda Ramayana, 1.12.147-9). In this case, directing prayer toward Hanuman might provide the practitioner with even more security, because of the well-known stories of his bravery. The devotional hymn *Hanuman Chalisa* is chanted in temples and millions of homes every morning and evening. Children afraid of darkness, adults anxious about the oppression of those in power, and elderly uncertain about impending health disaster, all take comfort in the visual image of Hanuman standing tall with a gada (mace) in his mighty hands.

Another daily practice among Hindus that fosters introspection is meditation. There are many schools of meditation within Hinduism, and thus many different approaches. For example, some approaches focus on being mindfully aware of thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions, but other schools of meditation encourage concentration on a symbol such as Om, a reminder of the all-encompassing divinity that makes up the universe (Goleman, 1988). However, in spite of the multitude of styles, meditation can be broadly defined as a practice that focuses the practitioner on their inner state with the goal of knowing the essential, eternal Self (with a capital S), compared to everyday consciousness, which is constrained by existential and bodily cares (Rao, 2010). Meditation can be distinguished from meditative prayer (Poloma & Pendleton, 1989) as described above, in which the focus of attention is on God's nature rather than one's own nature. An early reference in the Upanishads may refer to meditation where it is written, "becoming calm and concentrated, one perceives the self (ātman) within oneself" (Flood, 1996).

A growing body of research investigates the effects of mindful awareness and meditation on well-being. One common link among studies on mindfulness—whether associated with meditation or not—and studies on meditation is the effect on emotion awareness and regulation. Mindfulness as a lasting trait or more fleeting state is associated with being psychologically aware of emotions (Brown & Ryan, 2003). People who are mindful are more likely to be able to find solutions to cope with the negative feelings at hand, and they are less likely to ruminate about their problems.

A meta-analysis of meditation studies revealed that meditation is associated with lower levels of experienced negative emotions, less stress, and more emotion regulation compared to relaxation techniques and no-treatment controls (Sedlmeier et al., 2012). The meta-analysis revealed comparable effects for different types of meditation, including ones that promote awareness and ones that promote concentration toward a specific target, although the researchers acknowledged that more data could provide clarity in comparing the relationship between styles of meditation and specific outcomes. In sum, Hindu philosophy extols practitioners to achieve new states of consciousness via meditation, and evidence is growing that meditation is related to decreases in mood disturbance and stress.

A category of practices originating from Hinduism and related to meditation is yoga. *Yoga* is broadly defined as the physical, spiritual, and mental disciplines that promote cessation of movements of the mind (Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, 1.2). In contemporary Western parlance, *yoga* is typically associated more narrowly with

physical postures or *asanas* that are thought to have physical benefits. In this usage, the original intent of *asanas* as fostering stillness of mind is commonly unacknowledged (De Michelis, 2005). The relationship between yoga and well-being is discussed in greater detail in Chap. 12 of this volume, along with an investigation of other mind-body practices.

5.3.3 Practitioners Cultivate Interconnectedness Through Frequent Festivals and Pujas

Besides individual prayers, many Hindu families engage in frequent Pujas—communal worship of God. A puja brings family and community together in a temple or home with the goal of honoring god with songs, rituals, prayers, and offerings. Most festivals are relatively small to modest size gatherings. However, some are celebrated in processions and are huge (Kali Puja in Bengal, for example). The grandest festival is Maha Kumbh Mela, a gathering of over 100 million devotees who make the pilgrimage to bathe in the Ganges river. The Maha Kumbh Mela occurs only once every 4 years. Mark Twain visited it in 1895 and wrote: "It is wonderful, the power of faith like that, that can make multitudes upon multitudes of the old and weak and the young and the frail enter without hesitation or complaint upon such an incredible journey" (Twain, 1897).

The communal nature of the pujas promotes a sense of community along with increased spiritual connection. Research has found that time spent with friends and family is a consistent source of happiness (Layard, 2005). Of course, one can have community around Earth Day or gathering at a local parade, and these too will contribute positively to well-being. However, religion makes it easier to create a common purpose and predictable routine for people to get together. Religion creates community and social interconnectedness. Americans who say religion is an important part of their daily life and who have friends at church rate their lives more positively and experience fewer negative emotions (Lim & Putnam, 2010).

Aside from these reasons why religion as a whole may prompt well-being, Hindu puja in particular fosters well-being because it creates a sense of interconnectedness in two ways. First, the sheer number of Hindu festivals throughout the year provide a reason for even sworn enemies to come together, and doing so prompts them to set aside differences. There are many festivals, and they are temporally spaced throughout the year. Each brings family and community members together whether they are in the middle of political or interpersonal dispute. Research shows that face-to-face interactions builds rapport among people in conflict (Drolet & Morris, 1999). One festival in particular, Holi, encourages devotees to set aside social constructs that may divide one another, such as caste, age, gender, and status. Holi is a festival which marks the beginning of spring. Devotees generally celebrate Holi for 2 days at the end of winter. Rituals include singing and dancing around a bonfire and throwing colored powder and water at each other to symbolize the arrival of spring blossoms. All people adorned in multiple colors emphasizes the fact that

each person is made of the same ashes. People are known to bury their respective hatchets at Holi. The festival is a time to break down social conventions associated with status and instead see humanity in each person.

A second feature of Hindu pujas that fosters well-being through interconnectedness is the amount of time devoted to engaging in collective action (e.g. singing and chanting). Compared to other religious ceremonies in which just a few hours may be spent together in mass or service, Hindu pujas may last for days at a time. And most of a puja is spent raising voices collectively in song and chants. These collective acts foster social attachment to other group members (Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009). As Graham and Haidt (2010) put it, "If God is the maypole, then the health and happiness benefits of religion come from participating in the maypole dance, not from sitting alone at home thinking about the pole." Given this analogy, we have thus argued that the multitude of Hindu festivals provides followers with many opportunities to come to the maypole and dance together, and the dances themselves last for a long time.

5.4   Conclusion

We have outlined major components of Hinduism, and we have argued that some Hindu beliefs and practices contribute to the well-being. In particular, we propose that belief in karma fosters meaning through a cumulative view of reality and beliefs in karma as well as in an interconnected universe discourage harmful social comparisons. We have proposed that practitioners also benefit from introspective practices such as prayers that exalt and glorify god rather than focus on one's own troubles and needs. Meditation on one's inner states of being, and participation in religious gatherings encourage social harmony and interconnectedness.

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Chapter 6
Buddhism and Positive Psychology

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Buddhist practice has long been shown to contribute to human flourishing (Levine, 2009; Pearsall, 2003), and has deep roots in the Positive Psychology movement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Pearsall, 2003). This chapter addresses some of the psychological processes affected by Buddhist practice, with the aim of gathering increasingly robust evidence for the means by which Buddhist practice benefits psychological and social functioning. It focuses on the positive effects of Buddhist practice in the domains of attending to the present, decreasing attachments to the self, and cultivating calm affect. It covers each of these domains in turn, first through a summary of psychological findings and then through an ethnographic analysis of Buddhist history and practice that elaborates on some of the leads, questions and ambiguities raised by laboratory research. Neurological and clinical psychological research on Buddhism has increasingly shown combining diverse research perspectives allows for an integration of sometimes quite varied results and their relationship to some general benefits of Buddhist practice. Such an approach demonstrates that Buddhism is much more than an isolated exercise in sitting still: it is a complex and nuanced way of life.

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6.1   Buddhist Philosophy and Positive Psychology

The Buddha famously proclaimed that life is suffering (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, trans. 2012; Rahula, 1974). Rather than a pessimistic statement of despair, however, the Buddha's proclamation came with an elaborate path (*the Eightfold Path*) to escape this suffering. Buddhism has even been said to be an intrinsically 'therapeutic' project (Kelly, 2008), and as such it has much to offer for human flourishing.

Buddhism is at once a philosophy, a psychology and an ethical code: it refers to the material reality, the mind, and ethical conduct (Bodhi, 2000). It is both incredibly old and remarkably contemporary. Buddhism emerged around the fifth century BCE in Northern India, and in the 2,500 or so years since it has spread throughout Asia and the rest of the world. What is often called Theravāda (or Hinayana, or Southern) Buddhism is practiced today primarily in the South and Southeast Asian countries of Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. What is often called Mahayana (or Northern) Buddhism, in contrast, represents the wide range of traditions practiced in various forms in Tibet, China, and Japan. Cultural and religious diasporas of Buddhism, of course, exist in all corners of the planet, and Buddhist practices are increasingly common in the United States.

The Four Noble Truths are the cornerstone of Buddhist thought. They are:

- The fact of non-satisfactoriness (Pali[1]: *dukkha*, often also translated as suffering, or dissatisfaction)
- The cause of non-satisfactoriness (the cause of *dukkha* is *taṇhā*, craving)
- The cessation of non-satisfactoriness (this is also known in the Pali language as *Nibbana*, or in Sanskrit *Nirvana*, and is the soteriological Buddhist goal)
- The path leading to the cessation of non-satisfactoriness (a.k.a. leading to Nirvana). This path is known as the Eightfold Path, and involves a series of steps involving the cultivation of wisdom, ethical conduct, and concentration.

These Four Noble Truths are central to Buddhist philosophy.[2] They suggest that people in our normal unenlightened condition feel unsatisfied, and that by decreasing the craving that is the cause of this dissatisfaction it is possible to decrease suffering. Because Buddhism speaks of human suffering, or *dukkha*, a generation of early Buddhist studies scholars had labeled it a "pessimistic" or "depressing" religion (Almond, 1988; Obeyesekere, 1985). In that sense, Buddhism would appear to fit more in with a mainstream focus of psychological science that deals with suffering and abnormality, rather than this newer subfield of Positive Psychology devoted to

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[1] The Pali language is considered the most 'canonical' language of early Buddhism, used as such throughout the Theravādan world of mostly Southeast Asia, while the related language of Sanskrit is the most common canonical language of the Mahayana Buddhist schools (e.g. Tibetan and Zen) of Northern Asia. It is worth noting however that neither Pali nor Sanskrit was spoken by the Buddha himself, who probably spoke a Magadhi, Pakrit local dialect of his birth (Mizuno, 1982). Throughout this chapter, technical terms in italics refer to the Pali language unless otherwise noted.

[2] See the *Abhidhamma* for a comprehensive account of Buddhist psychology.

positivity and positive well-being. And yet, according to Buddhist theory, everyone suffers as the normal condition of (unenlightened) living; this is a starting point, and it is the central focus of the Buddhist project to positively improve one's condition. Buddhism offers much for not just those who are unwell, but also for those who are "well." In this sense of enhancing well-being Buddhism is a positive project. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Thailand's most famous scholar-monk, makes this point in a talk given at his monastery in Southern Thailand called "Is Your Hair On Fire?":

> Imagine a person who feels completely healthy, completely free of all illness, sickness and physical disability. Wouldn't it be ridiculous for that person to get medicine? …If you are new to this thing called 'dhamma',[3] and new to meditation, then you are not expected to immediately agree that you have all sorts of problems and are suffering from many burdens in life. However, if you are not completely sure that your health is perfect, you could examine yourself, you could get to know yourself and find out what kind of shape you are in… If someone threw you into the ocean and held your head under the water for a couple of minutes, what kind of desire would there be in you to get out of the water? The Buddha spoke of the feeling one would have if one's hair were on fire. If your hair were burning, if the flames were shooting up from your head, would you sit around twiddling your thumbs? Or would there be a desire to do something about it?

Buddhadāsa's point, one of the main Characteristics (or "Facts of Existence"), is that everyone suffers, and can decrease this suffering. It is in recognizing this that Buddhism offers the first step in a path out of suffering. When unsatisfactoriness is recognized as existing in each of our lives, the Buddhist project can be better understood as markedly positive in its aim to decrease suffering and increase positive well-being. The ideals expressed by the Four Noble Truths have been linked to positivity in fact so directly that they have been called the "precursors for the new positive psychology…Buddha could be considered the father of this evolving new science" (Pearsall, 2003, p. 58). The Four Noble Truths, it could be interpreted, tell us that there are ways to live life optimally, whatever the particular circumstances encountered along the way.

Buddhism has also been tied directly to Positive Psychology through one of the field's founding concepts: the concept of *flow*. The psychological theory of flow was developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) of the University of Chicago's Committee on Human Development. Csikszentmihalyi is regarded as one of the founders of positive psychology, and his emphasis on flow draws from Buddhism. Flow is defined as the state of being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. Research on flow demonstrates that happiness comes from deep attention and engagement in activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, c.c. Wallace and Shapiro 2006, p. 696).[4]

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[3] *Dhamma* (or *dharma* in Sanskrit) is a difficult concept to translate into English: it generally refers to the all-pervasive order of reality and morality. According to Buddhadāsa *dhamma* means (a) the state of nature as it is (b) the laws of nature, (c) the duties that must be performed in accordance with the laws of nature, and (d) the results that are derived from the fulfillment of such duties.

[4] Flow has a particular meaning in a Buddhist context. Rather than feeling "mindless" in the moment, people training in Buddhist practices report instead feeling especially "mindful." While the practice of mindless "flow" and the mindfulness of being in the moment may relate, these different constructions about the mind may suggest differences in ideal experience. They may also suggest cultural variation in Theory of Mind (Luhrmann, 2012, Robbins, Cassaniti & Luhrmann, 2011).

Like Buddhism, it confirms the importance of sustained attention, and has been linked directly to Buddhist ideas of mindfulness.

At the same time that Buddhism has been tied generally to Positive Psychology it also suggests some marked differences in ideal positive functioning. For example, Buddhism does not advocate for "happiness" in the colloquial sense of the term. Instead, the Buddha suggested what is known as the Middle Way between pain and pleasure. After his enlightenment and just before teaching his first sermon the Buddha is said to have explained:

> When the body is in pain, the mind is confused. When the body is happy, then the condition of happiness spreads. Therefore neither pain nor pleasure are the way. It is as if [something were] on fire, if you douse the burning fire with water, inevitably there will no longer be any light to break the darkness. Intelligence bores like fire, and the water is pain and pleasure, [preventing] the rays of wisdom (from being) produced. If these rays [of wisdom] are not produced then one cannot lift the black veil of life and death. But if you can reject pain and pleasure, practice the middle path, and maintain the mind in solitary meditation, the result of such practices is entering the true path of the sage. […] If you seek to not have pain, then you [must] cast off pain as well as happiness and glory. (Mahāvagga, trans. 1962, p. 19)

Rather than the robust positive emotions characterized by "happiness" Buddhism promotes the calming of emotion (Cassaniti, 2009; Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007). And it promotes not self-enhancement but instead a kind of self-erasure, or what has been called self-lessness (*Alagaddūpama sutta*, trans. 2012; Collins, 1982). Buddhism suggests that it is in part because of these different orientations to emotion and self that we gain well-being.

6.2   Neurobiological and Clinical Research

The field of neurobiological research on Buddhism is still very much in its infancy, but technological advances and growing interest offer increasingly compelling evidence that Buddhist practice affects the brain in specific and tractable ways. Such research lends support to claims that Buddhist practices influence not just reflexive self-report measures but also neural patterns.

What does it mean to "practice Buddhism"? Buddhist practice can be conceptualized as encompassing a wide range of ritual behaviors, but Buddhism is most commonly operationalized by neuroscientists in the context of meditative practice. Meditation is often taken as the (or a) key component of Buddhist practice. Such research investigates differences between meditators and control groups, or before and after differences on the effects of a meditation intervention. Participants in the former range in meditation training from years of experience meditating to weeks or merely days in the case of the latter. Researchers often combine the two techniques, asking participants who have already had extensive experience with meditation to undergo additional training in a particular tradition (such as mindfulness training). Participants then undergo readings of the brain, commonly using the technologies of electroencephalograph recordings (EEG), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI),

and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans. Finally, the tests are read and interpreted for their relation to possible psychological processes.

In such studies a range of different meditation techniques are employed. Many are derived from Zen and Tibetan traditions, though others like *vipassanā* (insight), *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breath) and, increasingly, Western interpretations of mindfulness-based practices are employed as well. Each of these approaches is different, and the technique used has much to do with the outcome, but often the particular tradition of the practice itself is hardly attended to or is ignored altogether. While differences in practice matter for outcomes and some of these differences are addressed in this chapter, here most are grouped together, following the tendency to do so by researchers. Each of the approaches contain certain components in common, including an emphasis on mindful concentration and awareness. As we learn more about the brain and begin to incorporate findings from other fields of study, however, specific techniques will indoubtedly increasingly become part of neurobiological research.

While neurobiological studies have shown evidence that Buddhist meditation has a range of effects on the brain, interpreting these neural changes is difficult. Materialist neuroscientists may suggest that this difficulty is simply a gap in our present ability to connect demonstrated changes in the brain with specific psychological processes; others instead may suggest that such a gap will always exist because psychological processes are immaterial and not directly connected to material regions in the brain. Overall, however, there seems to be sufficient evidence from neurological studies to confidently suggest that meditation results in neural changes related to a wide range of processes (e.g. Farb et al., 2007; Ives-Deliperi, Solms, & Meintjes, 2011; Moore, Gruber, Derose, & Malinowski, 2012; van Leeuwen, Singer, & Melloni, 2012).

Most generally, it appears that Buddhist practice in effect serves to "quiet" the mind. Meditation has been linked to an overall slowing of brain wave frequency (Cahn & Polich, 2006) and decreased activation in a number of brain regions. These regions are most often associated with memory and emotion (e.g. in the prefrontal cortex surrounding the amygdala (Farb et al., 2007)), baseline brain functioning (e.g. in the ventral posteromedial cortex (Newberg et al., 2001; Pagnoni, 2012)) and cognitive control (e.g. in the anterior cingulate cortex (Ives-Deliperi et al., 2011)). It also appears that the lining of some of these same brain regions become thicker over time (Lazar et al., 2005).

Newberg et al. (2001), for example, found that meditators display less activity in the ventral posteromedial cortex (vPMC), an area that has been linked to thoughts that arise in the absence of external demands (Pagnoni, 2012). In effect this means that meditators show a decrease in active, un-directed cognitive processing when compared to those who have not meditated.

It is not suggested that meditation means that one thinks less; rather, these studies suggest that the kind of thinking one does while (or after) meditating may be of a different kind than traditional understandings of cognition suggest. Farb et al. (2007), for example, demonstrated that meditators tend to separate activation in the area of the brain associated with cognition (in the prefrontal cortex) and the area of

the brain associated with emotionality (the limbic area); such decoupling may mean that meditators are relatively more able than non-meditators to feel without attaching cognitively to the feeling, or think about something without the thought becoming tied up in emotion.

The "quiet" observed through neuroimaging studies may reflect components of a number of changes to the organization of mind relative to non-practitioners. Although more research must be done before a thorough mapping of the relationship between Buddhist practice and brain functioning is complete there appear three areas of psychological processing that neurobiological research strongly suggests may be especially affected by Buddhist meditation: self processing, emotion and attention.

6.2.1 Self

Buddhist practice appears to affect processes of self-construct and self-reference. Meditation may affect not only how people pay attention to their bodies and minds but also how they relate these attentions to the self. Research suggests that compared to control groups people who meditate exhibit more "self-detached" processing (Farb et al., 2007, p. 319), with more objective analyses of sensory events not strongly correlated to self constructs. Farb and colleagues (2010) found less activity along the cortical midline among meditators, which has been linked to autobiographical memory retrieval and self-referential processing. Meditation may relate to a diminished involvement in the habitual mode of self-reference (Ott, Walter, Gebhardt, Stark, & Vaitl, 2010). This is to say that meditation may cause one to be less likely to attach sensations to a cognizing story of past and present, and less likely to integrate sensations into a coherent, cognizing narrative connected with the self. These findings remain preliminary in part because there is not a clear sense of particular regions of the brain being associated with self construct. Even so, however, there seems to be growing evidence from neurobiological research that suggests a relationship between Buddhist practice and a less robust or cohesive sense of self.

6.2.2 Emotion

Buddhist practice appears to affect the construction and regulation of emotion. Brain regions associated with emotion are consistently shown to change as a result of meditation. This is true especially for the amygdala and other areas of the limbic system. Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman (2007) demonstrated that participants who ranked high in scales of meditative mindfulness showed a strong negative association between activation in areas of prefrontal cortex and right amygdala activation. Individual differences in mindfulness similarly suggested dorsomedial

prefrontal activation to be inversely correlated with amygdala response to negative stimuli (Modinos, Ormel, & Aleman, 2010). The role of the prefrontal cortex areas of the brain may depend on one's degree of mindfulness.

There are a number of ongoing debates within the study of Buddhism and emotion processing. One ongoing debate for emotion research concerns the issue of emotion regulation vs. construction: Is the construction of emotion essentially unchanged by meditation, with demonstrated differences occurring at the level of regulation, or does meditation alter the actual development and construction of emotions? On the one hand, as Quaglia (2010) argues (Nāropa U), "individuals high in mindfulness can help neuroscientists better understand neural mechanisms underlying positively deviant emotional regulation." At the same time research suggests that emotions are changed, and not just regulated, as an effect of meditation. For example, enhanced neural responding in areas of the brain previously associated with empathy was found to be enhanced during compassion meditation relative to rest in advanced and novice meditators during the presentation of emotional sounds such as a baby crying (Lutz, Brefczynski-Lewis, Johnstone & Davidson, 2008). It may not just be at the level of regulation that we see meditation's effects for emotion: there seems to be less emotion "work" done in meditating participants compared with controls. In fact, the more experience one has in meditation the less likely one may be to use parts of the brain that deal with emotion regulation.

Meditation may also have positive effects in pain control as well as emotion. Grant, Courtemanche, Duerden, Duncan, & Rainville (2010) conducted MRI scans on Zen meditators and non-meditators in increasingly warm conditions (between 42 and 53 °C), and found that meditators had higher pain thresholds and thicker regions in the brain associated with pain sensitivity (the dorsal anterior cingulate and the primary somatosensory cortex). What remains to be understood is whether these changes create new kinds of emotions, regulate the expression of emotion, or decrease emotion construction overall.

6.2.3   Attention

Buddhist practice appears to affect attentional processing. Neurological studies suggest that people in general seem to become better at paying attention as a result of meditation. Hasenkamp and Barsalou (2012) asked long-term meditators to undertake a Focused Attention (FA) on the breath meditation intervention. Using fMRI scans, they found that those with more meditation experience demonstrated increased activity in attentional networks of the brain.

Meditation may change the way people attend to stimuli (as represented by neural firing). Practitioners may become less sensitive to the stimuli that they attend to, and this decreased sensitivity may express itself as decreased activity in certain parts of the brain. Attention, however, is a broad category, and the full range of links between the types of attentional training and neural activities have yet to be demonstrated. It is also not well understood yet why, or how, such changes occur.

Effects of meditation, brain plasticity, and psychological processes are all necessarily interrelated. Ives-Deliperi and colleagues (2011) examined participants with at least 4 years of experience with mindfulness meditation and had taken a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. They found that those with the meditation experience showed decreased activity in the anterior cingulate cortex, an area associated with conditioned emotional processing and responding and with "executive evaluative" cognitive functions (in the anterior, posterior and dorsal areas of the brain). The authors also link these findings to decreased self-referential thought, suggesting an intriguing connection between increased attention (mindfulness), changes in emotion processing, and self-construct.

Such research suggests that the three domains of psychological processing of attention, emotion, and self-construal may be intricately connected with one another, and they may involve additional areas of the brain and associated brain functions to the ones highlighted here. At present however we do not have the technology nor conceptual understanding of links between material changes in the brain and psychological mechanisms to fully appreciate these connections. More materially oriented researchers may argue that we will never be able to connect immaterial constructs like attention, emotion and self to behaviors in the brain. Even so, neurobiological research complements clinical and ethnographic studies of Buddhist practice, and suggests a number of intriguing areas for further research.

6.2.4   Clinical Research

Neurobiological and clinical research are united in their aim of creating not just knowledge but also knowledge that has positive applications. Clinical research often draws from neurobiological findings as it crafts interventions to help people improve well-being. Neurobiologists Cahn and Polich (2006) make this point directly at the end of an extensive article on EEG, ERG and neuroimaging research: "The likelihood for clinical utility of meditation practice in conjunction with psychological and neuropharmacological therapies is a strong impetus for future studies" (p. 203). In this sense the implicit goals of clinical applications of Buddhist practice are very much in line with the Positive Psychology movement.

It is not surprising that Buddhist practice has positive clinical implications. The teachings of the Buddha are often likened to those of a "doctor" doling out "medicine." In the sense that both clinical psychology and Buddhist psychology aim to decrease suffering, the two traditions are quite similar. Traditionally the field of clinical psychology has gone about such a project through its own historical methods, but it is increasingly interested in incorporating Buddhist thought and practice into its repertoire.

Buddhist practices, especially those that involve meditation, are understood to do something *for* people. While neurobiological research shows patterns of changes occurring as a result of Buddhist practice, clinical psychology shows that these changes have markedly positive effects. Clinical psychological research focuses on

Table 6.1 Mental and physical domains that Buddhist practices have been shown to positively affect

Psychiatric disorders	
Anxiety disorders	Tapanya, Nicki, and Jarusawad (1997), Emmanuel (2001), Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, and Oh (2010), Roemer, Orsillo, and Salters-Pedneault (2008)
	Miller, Fletcher, and Kabat-Zinn (1995), Hofmann et al. (2010)
Substance abuse/misuse	Barrett (1997), Marlatt (2002), Bowen et al. (2006)
Obsessive-compulsive disorder	Olson (2003)
Depression	Kabat-Zinn et al. (1992), Segal et al. (2001)
Stress	Boonpitak (2003)
Anger	Segal et al. (2001)
	DiGiuseppe (1999)
Eating disorders	Leifer (1999), Tapper et al. (2009)
	Albers (2006)
Disorders of attention	Passarotti, Sweeney, and Pavuluri (2010), Krisanaprakornkit, Ngamjarus, Witoonchart, and Piyavhatkul (2010)
Medical illness	
Chronic pain	Grossman, Tiefenthaler-Gilmer, Raysz, and Kesper (2007)
Immune functioning	Carlson, Speca, Faris, and Patel (2007), Davidson et al. (2003)
Reduced blood pressure and cortisol levels	Carlson et al. (2007)
Promoting holistic health in HIV/AIDS	Logsdon-Conradsen (2002)
Adjunctive care in chronic medical illness	Bonadonna (2003)
Psychological care during cancer treatment	Lundberg and Trichorb (2001), McGrath (1998)
Psychological care in the terminal care setting	Barham (2003)
Healthy subject functioning	
Enhanced psychological well-being (in healthy participants)	Carmody and Baer (2008), Chiesa and Serretti (2009)
Enhanced cognitive functioning	Jha, Krompinger, and Baime (2007), Ortner, Kilner, and Zelazo (2007), Pagnoni and Cekic (2007), Slagter et al. (2007)

the effects of meditation as related to human flourishing both for those suffering from psychiatric and physical ailments and to improve the well-being of those considered to be quite healthy. They have demonstrated strong support for positive effects of Buddhist practice in a wide variety of psychological domains. Some of these domains, along with some of the clinical studies that have demonstrated such effects, are listed above in Table 6.1.

As we can see from the table, there are many benefits to Buddhist practice: it has been shown to aid in decreasing problems with anxiety, substance abuse, OCD, depression, stress, and anger, along with many other problems including a range of problems often considered to be physical rather than mental. As more and more

research has been done on a wider range of mental and physical disorders, it has become apparent that the scope of Buddhism's therapeutic value is far-reaching. Although the specifics of why and how still remain unclear, the positive results speak to the value of Buddhist-influenced interventions. While the specific kinds of interventions vary, the most common Buddhist practices by far involve meditation (Hanh, 1998), especially meditation based on increasing mindfulness. Mindfulness-based meditation practices, especially Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MB-CT, Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2001), have been promising, and are increasingly used in clinical studies. Mindfulness as a technique may be thought to represent just a small part of Buddhist practice, but at the same time it may reflect the entirety of Buddhism. While differences in the specifics of practice are real, and these differences have effects, in a sense all Buddhist practice involves meditation, and all meditation has some component of mindfulness practice. As the popular Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh has said, mindfulness is the 'heart' of Buddhist teachings (Hanh, 1998, cc in Grossman & Van Dam, 2011).

Most clinical researchers define mindfulness as having two central components: (1) awareness to present-moment experience and (2) an attitude of non-judgmentality or acceptance of these experiences (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999).[5] To study the effects of mindfulness-based practices, researchers create interventions aimed at increasing patients' mindfulness: they train patients in mindfulness, measure their progress using mindfulness scales, and examine whether the intervention has a positive effect in the targeted area of health. Overwhelmingly, they find that it does.

Much like the neurobiological research, clinical studies point to a few general domains in which meditation creates its effects, including stress-reduction, emotion processing and self-construction. It may be that meditation helps to decrease the negative effects of stress. Because stress is a leading cause of a number of psychiatric and physical disorders, decreasing the negative effects of stress means increasing health across the board. It is unclear, however, how meditation works exactly, and how it specifically relates to stress, although folk theories within the clinical field abound. Buddhist clinical interventions also suggest changes in emotion processing, a finding also demonstrated in neurobiological research.[6] These changes occur

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[5] While some scholars point to a natural similarity between CBT and Buddhist meditative techniques of mindfulness, others point to inconsistencies in findings, fundamental differences in philosophies, or a lack to date of sufficient systematic evidence to warrant confident conclusions about the use and benefits of such a project (Krisanaprakornkit, Krisanaprakornkit, Piyavhatkul, & Laopaiboon, 2006). There is clearly more research to be done on the relationship between CBT and Buddhist meditation. I return to this issue at the end of this chapter.

[6] As Hölzel et al. tell us (2011), meditation has been shown to cause physiological as well as psychological relaxation. It relates to high levels of relaxation, and relaxation is connected to decreased heart rate (Zeidan, Johnson, Gordon, & Goolkasian, 2010), decreased blood pressure (de la Fuente, Franco, & Salvator, 2010), decreased cortisol levels (Carlson et al., 2007), decreased breathing rate (Lazar et al., 2005), lowered oxygen and carbon dioxide consumption (Young & Taylor, 1998), decreased skin conductance response (Austin, 2006), decreased muscle tension (Benson, 2000).

both at the level of specific, discrete emotions (e.g. Lutz et al., 2008 showing an increase in compassion, Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008 for loving-kindness, and Nielson & Kaszniak, 2006 for equanimity) and also at the level of emotion construction (Hölzel et al., 2011) and regulation (Garland, Gaylord, & Fredrickson, 2011). Clinical research also shows that meditation affects processes of self-reference. Specifically, it may result in decreased attachments to the self (Epstein, 1988; Hölzel et al., 2011; Kumar, 2002). However, why decreased attachment to the self helps people to feel better is poorly understood. Decreasing emphases on one's self may result in feeling less lonely, more connected, and more compassionate (Hutcherson et al., 2008). Cacioppo and Hawkley (2009) suggest that people who feel socially disconnected (lonely) interpret social information more ego-centrically than those who feel connected to others. As a cognitive frame, the development of self-lessness becomes enmeshed in constructs of self-development, in what Harvey (1990) calls "greater awareness, wider sympathies, and an openness of being" (p. 80).

In all of these ways, clinical studies and neurobiological studies have consistently shown that Buddhist practices make a difference in our minds and brains, and that these differences are overwhelmingly positive. As Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu stated, it is not just for those with clinical disorders to whom Buddhism offers positive benefits; research suggests that individuals considered clinically healthy as well as those with clinical disorders may show marked improvements in well-being through Buddhist practice. In other words, Buddhism has something to offer the human condition overall, and it is in this sense that it is a cornerstone of a positive psychology dedicated to the study of 'normal' as well as 'abnormal' health.

6.3   Ethnographic Research on Buddhism in Thailand

At the same time that the research described above offers robust findings on positive effects of Buddhism, it also suggests a number of intriguing puzzles about the mechanisms and meanings inscribed within such practice. It leads us to ask why, and how, Buddhism creates the changes it does, and how it works to decrease suffering. Neurobiological, clinical, and other psychological scientific investigations into Buddhism have very little to say about these issues. It is in this sense of the mechanisms pointed to, but not sufficiently answered, that Buddhist practice can be considered a "black box": Buddhism works, but we do not know what is in it. To address these questions, we can turn to ethnographic research and Buddhist philosophy in practice. Such an endeavor is 'messy,' as the stereotype of the anthropological approach is so often labeled, full of ambiguities that do not neatly fit into clear categories. But such an approach is necessary in order to understand how the findings related above connect to each other and to other Buddhist ideas that may influence our well-being. We can begin to answer some of these complex questions by focusing on Buddhism as it is integrated into the lives of people for whom it is an everyday part of life. Through investigating the nuanced meanings of Buddhist practice

as people live it every day, the domains of self, emotion, and attention highlighted in neurobiological and clinical research can be more fully exposed.

My long-term anthropological research on Buddhist psychology in practice draws from the lives and practices of Buddhist people in a small community I call Mae Jaeng in Northern Thailand (Cassaniti, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2014; Cassaniti & Luhrmann, 2011). Thailand serves as an ideal site for such an investigation of Buddhist practice: it is an overwhelmingly Buddhist country.[7] In Mae Jaeng few people talk regularly about mindfulness (*sati*), self-lessness (*anattā*), or even meditation (*nang samadthi*), and few incorporate formal practices of meditation into their everyday routines. It would be easy to skip such a community in an investigation about the positive effects of Buddhism because much of what has become prominent in Buddhist psychology is not clearly at the surface of these minds and practices, but doing so would be a mistake. In a sense, people in Mae Jaeng do meditate regularly: the Buddha taught that all action when done correctly becomes a kind of meditation, including walking, sitting, working, eating, even sleeping. Meditation is encompassed in the commonly followed Thai phrase *patibhat tham*: literally "to practice the dhamma."

Studying the ways that Buddhism is engaged in Mae Jaeng offers a method for thinking about the positive effects of Buddhism outside of laboratory settings. It shows what it is like to live with Buddhism as part of everyday life.

Psychological processing is affected by Buddhist practices in Mae Jaeng in ways that are indexed by clinical and neurobiological research. These include philosophical and personal interpretations of teachings that involve the self, emotion, and mindful attention.

6.3.1 Self

Research in the field of psychological anthropology and cross-cultural psychology has shown that concepts of the self vary across cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, Mageo, 2002, Shweder & Bourne, 1984). Unlike in other religious or cultural contexts that emphasize the fulfillment of the self as a key to human flourishing, Buddhist perspectives on the self suggest that detachment from a sense of self creates positive outcomes. This can be seen not only in textual accounts, but also in the virtual absence of the concept of 'low self-esteem' in Buddhist contexts (Kelly, 2008, p. 12). According to Buddhist thought, there is no such thing, even, as the self at all (Collins, 1982).[8] Because everything changes (an idea that refers to the

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[7] One study showed that 94 % of Thais report that Buddhism, mostly of the Theravādan (or Southern) tradition, has at least a 'moderate influence' in their daily lives (Christopher et al., 2009; Komin, 1988).

[8] Instead of a stable self or soul the person according to Buddhist accounts suggests that the feeling of having a self is made up of different and always changing parts. These parts are referred to as the five aggregates (*upādāna-khandhas*) or objects of grasping: *rūpa* (material form), *vedanā* (feeling);

Buddhist teaching of impermanence, or in Pali, *anicca*), there is nothing that could be called permanent, including the self. An important root of ignorance leading to *dukkha* is to see the world from the perspective of a self. Instead of developing greater and greater layers of 'self-hood' so as to feel enhanced from within them, Buddhism suggests the opposite: detachment and letting go of that which changes, including attachments to an idea of the self. The fact that the Buddhist doctrine of non-self is difficult to appreciate in traditional Western psychological discourses that emphasize self-enhancement means that this point is often ignored, down-played, or reinterpreted in contemporary theories of mindfulness and meditation therapies. And yet self-lessness is central to Buddhist thought in practice, and it contributes much to positive functioning.

The most common understanding of non-self in Mae Jaeng is when people use the Thai phrase *mai chai tua ton*: literally, "it is not my own." In interviews with over 100 people about causation and emotion during the course of field research, I regularly came across this phrase to describe an awareness of not having a permanent self. It is constructed in part through an emotional practice *tham jai*, literally translated as "to make the heart." A person "makes the heart" when they let go of a wish or a feeling or an attachment. People in Mae Jaeng will tell me, "I really wanted [a new car, a baby, an "A" on an exam…], but then I *tham jai*-d, and I felt better." (Cassaniti, 2009).[9] It relates to selflessness through a decreased tendency to create an identity through wishes and attachments. The feeling of an "I" is under-stood to be based on desire and craving, on attachments to and identification with things that will necessarily pass. When I want or desire something I attach to these feelings; I want the thing (or depending on the desire, I may desire it to go away). These desires are not free-floating: it is central to the desire that it is *I* who want the object of the desire – it is significantly *me* (or rather the illusion of myself) that desires them. A sense of self is understood to be based on one's desires and attach-ments. But it is an illusion: because nothing is stable, the "I" itself is illusory. Attempts to fulfill desire are bound to failure, because of the fact of change, and this is the central cause of suffering in Buddhist thought. Acceptance thus helps people in Mae Jaeng to not get upset when things did not turn out the way that they wanted them to. Put plainly, they try not to be "self-centered." Decreasing a sense of self

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sañña (cognitive and interpretive sensation); *sankhāras* (moods, emotion and motivation); and *viññaṇa* (consciousness of discrimination, or awareness) (Abidhamma 3BCE). *Anattā* or self-lessness is known as one of the three marks of existence, along with *aniccā* (impermanence) and *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness). The suggestion of self-lessness (in Pali, *anattā*) is radical in two senses: it is radical from a Western psychological point of view that emphasizes the enhancement of self-hood, and it is radical from the socio-historical view in which Buddhism emerged from a Hinduism that took for granted a unifying, cosmic Self (or *Attā*, as opposed to the Buddhist opposite that adds the negative Pali prefix *na* to create non-self, or (na) *an-attā*).

[9] Few people living within a Buddhist culture report that they live as if they fully do not have a self (Cassaniti, 2006; Spiro, 1970) – this supposed incongruity between theory and practice led an early generation of Buddhist studies scholars to proclaim many Buddhists living in Buddhist countries somehow not 'truly' Buddhist (Almond, 1988). More recent anthropological investigations of non-self attend instead to the ways that people understand the Buddhist teaching and apply it to their lives as an ideal (Cassaniti, 2009).

does not mean having low self-esteem, nor feeling powerless, as Western theories of self-enhancement might suggest. Instead, selflessness is considered to be positive and beneficial to health and well-being.

Roccasalvo (1981) presents more clinically-based evidence of this connection in Thailand in an article entitled "The Thai Practice of Psychiatry and the Doctrine of Anattā.":

> When you get down to a functioning, feeling person who is trying to deal with problems… it is a process, just as the five [aggregates that make up the individual] express it…what you do is to try to understand the dynamics and proceed on that basis for an increased diminution of dukkha…when I tell this to patients [about anattā] it seems to help them. Some of them have said: 'I am glad you told me that. I have always had this notion that if you peel away the layers, then I will discover the 'real' me and that will solve everything.' They say that my telling it like it is shows them that such a notion is an illusion. (p. 161)

Although people in Mae Jaeng do not talk explicitly about the illusion of the self, virtually everyone knows about the teaching. Its influence resides less in the realm of abstraction and more within a particular kind of psychological practice. The positive effects of letting go of attachments are clear: giving up, or letting go of things that are attached to the self. This is the basis for the ever-popular acts of *tham bun*, best translated as "merit-making" activities. "Letting go" relates not just to detaching from cognitive ideas about the self but also, centrally, to the importance of letting go of emotional attachments. While talking to a Muslim Thai friend I once overheard a Thai friend say, in response to a point the Muslim had made about Allah, "Well, we don't have Gods like that. What we have is a way to practice emotion."

6.3.2   Emotion

I was engaging in a meditation retreat at the scholar-monk Buddhadāsa Bhikku's forest monastery several years ago when a monk told the following famous teaching: When a bee stings it will feel unpleasant but what we do with that sensation is up to us; we can harp and cling to the discomfort and turn it into a negative emotion, or we can acknowledge the unpleasant sensation, and let it go.[10] In a sense the Buddhist project, he was saying, is to train away from turning a sensation from a feeling to an emotion.[11] It is at a point of emotion construction and not just regulation that

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[10] This teaching is related in the Pali Buddhist canon at Alagaddūpama *Sutta* (MN22).

[11] It may make more sense to think of 'feelings' in Buddhism instead of 'emotion' per se. When I asked my bilingual expert Buddhist studies professor Somwang Kaewsufong at Chiang Mai University to translate "emotion" for me into a formal Buddhist Pali or colloquial Thai he scoffed at me. "Emotion?" he said, "that's just a fancy Western psychological term. They study 'emotion' down the hall (pointing to the psychology wing of the building). It has nothing to do with Thai life or with Buddhism." In general there are three kinds of feelings in Buddhism: pleasant feelings (or joy, *sukha*), unpleasant feelings (or pain, *dukkha*), or neutral feelings (neither pleasant nor unpleasant, *adukkham-asukham*).

Buddhism is involved in psychological processes: Buddhism aids positive functioning by helping to decrease the tendency to turn feelings into full-blown emotions.

Some Buddhist views of emotion suggest that there are four "positive emotions" (or "immeasurable states" (*appamaññā*) or "divine dwellings" (*bhramavihāra*)): loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*)*,* and equanimity (*upekkhā*)*.* Each of these, and especially that of equanimity, suggests an overall calming of emotion oriented around non-robust, low-arousal affect. I discovered calmness to be highly valued and practiced in Mae Jaeng. Buddhism helps people in Mae Jaeng train themselves to be calm, and this construction of calmness may be a central factor in explaining why clinical interventions involving Buddhist practice work so well at improving well-being. In interviews, surveys and everyday conversations I found that after making merit, the number one reason that people go to their neighborhood Buddhist monastery is to become calm. They go, I was told, to calm the mind.

Anyone who has been to Thailand has heard the ubiquitous expression "*Chai yen yen!*" – "Cool it," or more literally, "Calm down your heart" – being pronounced to someone waiting impatiently in line, or talking with too much emotional charge, or becoming even slightly flustered at some issue. When people describe themselves or others, they often invoke this positive emotional characteristic. It is very much related to the Buddhist notion of equanimity.[12]

It is also related to feelings of acceptance, or *tham jai*, of the kind of "making the heart" described above. By "letting go" (*plong* or *ploy wang*) of emotional burdens and constructing a calm affect people in Mae Jaeng construct what is referred to as a 'cool heart.' For example, a woman named Lah tells a related narrative about losing money at the market: "It happened last year, it was money I'd made from selling goods at the market, I don't remember how much exactly, maybe 3,000 or 4,000 baht. The money was rolled in a bundle, I must have put it down somewhere and forgot it lying around, and when I looked back it was gone. I wanted to know who took it, I went to see, I figured out who took it, and then I let it go. I didn't say anything about it to the person. Someday someone will take money from them, even more than they took from me. It's their karma. Now, I feel *chuy chuy* (calm, not emotionally perturbed) about it." A man named Ari tells me a similar story about emotional calm: "My parents died about three years ago, from old age. I felt very sad, but I accepted it, because they were old. I felt ok, I let it go." In Mae Jaeng, a calm emotional orientation helps one to let go of attachments to both objects and self, and to increase psychological well-being.

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[12] For example, "My sister has always been quiet. She doesn't speak much, she has a good personality, she's cool and calm-hearted. (Inson)". Swang, a local police chief, highlights this when he says, "I like helping people, doing my duty. In terms of emotions, my emotions are cooler. I've learned more, I see more of what's around me." For example, I asked a friend one night if he would help me with something the following day. He said in response, "I don't know. If I'm able to *tam jai* by tomorrow I'll come out of my room to cook and I'll help you, but if not don't think anything of it if I don't appear." (Jan) Duangta offers another example of this when he talks about his feelings on getting ripped off by a supply company he had gone into business with. He says, "I'm settling my heart." (Duangta)

6.3.3   Mindfulness and Impermanence

Issues of self-construction and emotion relate to practices of mindful attention. In Thailand, mindfulness, like its English counterpart, relates to an awareness of, and attention to, the present moment. But unlike its English counterpart, where a straight-forward definition is often operationalized without understanding the process itself, the definition and meaning of *sati* (the Pali language origin of the English word "mindfulness") is complex and nuanced, and thought through in a philosophical tradition developed by oral discourses and written texts spanning more than 2,000 years.[13] The term refers to a highly focused examination of the present contents of experience, or attention to the bare object of perception (Shulman, 2010, p. 395). *Sati*-, or mindfulness-, based practices in early Buddhist texts emphasize this paying attention to bare objects. Because of the idea of constant change (Pali: *anicca*) these moments of attention (or consciousness) are very brief, consisting of arising, presence and dissolution (Nyānaponika, 1998).

While mindfulness meditation can be isolated conceptually in textual accounts and laboratory-based interventions, it is, of course, in practice enmeshed within a complex web of meanings in the everyday practices of Buddhist people. In Thailand, mindfulness is connected with an awareness of change (Pali: anicca), and with power. Mindfulness means that one is aware of the moment as a fleeting occurrence within a world of constant change. As my housemate Tong put it, "*tham jai* is a little word for *anicca*. It's the first step in *anicca*."

Awareness of impermanence thus becomes part of one's emotional processing in this Buddhist community.[14] While a philosophical awareness of change may seem to be a peripheral aspect to mindfulness meditation in Western psychology, it is in Thailand a central part of healthy life. It has important implications in the ways that people deal with emotional attachments, and helps them to create positive effects.

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[13] The Buddha instructs on mindfulness training most directly in a teaching known as the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* (Soma Thera 1941). Here in the Pali language of early Buddhism "*sati*" refers to mindfulness, "*patthāna*" means establishing (also variously translated also as foundations or applications), and "*sutta*" refers to a collection of Buddhist teachings (Sanskrit: *sutra*). The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* literally translated means "The Establishing of Mindfulness." (*Majjhima Nikāya*, Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha). Pali language scholars, interestingly, most exactly translate *sati* not as "mindfulness" but as "memory" (Kelly, 2008) (it has also been translated variously as "consciousness", "awareness" or "knowledge" (Shulman, 2010)). The work of memory and the work of mindfulness seem to be in contradiction; if one is paying attention to the present moment, how is memory implicated? It has been argued by various scholars that the translation of *sati* as memory may relate to an outdated meaning taken from the Upanishads, and is not worth thinking about further, but others suggest that *sati* as memory necessarily incorporates personal cultural, conceptual processing in to mindful practice.

[14] For example, my host sister P'Goy (Cassaniti, 2014) had to deal with the death of her father two years before I got to know her in 2003. She remembers, "When my father died I started learning more and more about anicca, and it helped me to remain calm." (P'Goy). Suwit, for example, says, "I think of *anicca* often. When something happens and there's a feeling of stress rising inside me I think '*anicca*…'" Ampon says, "Rich people can't lay down their burdens. They're attached to themselves. They don't have happiness."

When I ask people to tell me specifically about mindfulness in Thailand, I often hear about these positive effects in relation to change. They look similar to Western discourses of human flourishing, but take on a different tone. *Sati* has become a discourse of modernity: an ideal modern self, as someone who remains calm in the face of uncertainty. It refers to a kind of ideal subjectivity. People are very aware of this ideal, in a way that Americans are very aware of a cultural ideal to be happy.

The ideal of mindfully letting go of attachments in the face of impermanence is very practically connected to positive well-being. "Let's say a teenage boy likes a girl and for some reason he can't have her," one person in Mae Jaeng told me. "If he is mindless, his mind wanders and he suffers. If he has mindfulness he can analyze *why* he feels this way, *why* the situation is the way it is through the process of cause and effect and he doesn't suffer."[15] When a series of devastating floods hit Thailand in the fall of 2011, TV commercials in Bangkok promoted the idea that the proper reaction to the situation was to have *sati*. Having *sati* means that one can think, and act, with clarity.

Mindfulness in Thailand can also take on a second, related meaning. Mindfulness is so significant, so important, that it is connected with feelings of power (Cassaniti & Luhrmann, forthcoming). With mindfulness (and the clarity that mindfulness brings), one is powerful, in thought and action. This power, or *palang* in Thai, is associated with energy. The energy of mindfulness can become so pronounced that it has magical connotations. Those who are known to be strong in mindfulness, mostly monks, are often called on in Thailand to perform exorcisms of ghosts. It is because of their strong minds, because of their *sati*, that they hold the power to send the energy of spirits away. Spirits can be thought of as dangerous ghosts, like in the ubiquitous Thai ghost movie, but they can also be interpreted as, in more ways than just metaphorically, the mindless energy and intentions of others. Being mindful means having power to ward off the distractions that surround one.

It is in part for this reason that many people in Thailand wear what is called *sai sin*, a kind of "mindfulness bracelet," to help focus the mind, become strong, and keep one's "spirits" (*khwan*) from drifting off. A local spirit doctor spoke to me at length once of this connection. While interviewing him about his encounters with supernatural energy, he told me that "When your *khwan, khwan* is also the same meaning as *sati* (mindfulness), when your *khwan* is weak, the spirit will come to you. If your *khwan* is strong… your mind is strong. *Khwan* is our mind. If our mind is strong nothing will come to us. If *khwan* is weak, we are always sick or ill." Here the spirit doctor is pointing out a positive connection between mindfulness (*sati, khwan*), strength, and health.

Put in less "magical" terms, a Thai graduate student of economics at Washington State University also discussed the sometimes incredible power of mindfulness. She told me, "The human mind is the most powerful machine. We can make computers and satellites like the ones that make Google Earth in outer space, but they're not as powerful as the mind. When we have really strong mindfulness it creates energy, and this energy allows one to see things, see things much like the satellite can see things, everywhere."

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[15] This person in discussing cause and effect is indirectly referencing the Buddhist theory of dependent origination, or *pattisamaputta*, or the idea that everything has a cause and that by recognizing causes and effects one gains insight and escapes from suffering.

In the previous few paragraphs, mindfulness discourses have been discussed in ways that look very different from Western psychological constructions. The differences raise the question as to whether these cultural constructions of mindfulness are the same as those understood and used in Western clinical interventions involving Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy. Even within the vocabulary of ghosts and magic in Thailand, there is an understanding of the importance of mindfulness. This is a very different cultural context, but it does not preclude people thinking about things in discourse akin to cognitive therapy. In both cases the emphasis is on thinking about one's beliefs by breaking them down into component parts, in order to think about them in new ways. At present there is little research available on specific connections between mindfulness, identification with globalized (Western) representations of mindfulness, and magic in Buddhist culture, but this is changing as calls for more inductive, bottom-up, bi-directional approaches to Buddhist mindfulness, and Buddhist practice more generally, are becoming more pronounced (Cassaniti & Luhrmann, 2011; Grossman & Van Dan, 2011; Hayes & Plumb, 2007; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). The ways in which people relate to Buddhist teachings both in Thailand and in the scientific psychological disciplines in the West are intricately tied in with changing, socially and intellectually contingent associations to particular intellectual traditions (Cassaniti, 2012). Such findings described here provide compelling reasons to critically examine cultural meanings of mindfulness as part of Buddhist influences embedded within intervention strategies, so that we can better understand what mindfulness is, and how it works with regard to human flourishing.

At present there is a small contingency of researchers pushing for such a ground-up investigation. In an article entitled "Mindfulness in Thailand and the United States: A Case of Apples Versus Oranges?" Christopher, Charoensuk, Gilbert, Neary, and Pearce (2009) found consistency in standard measures of mindfulness (using the MAAS inventory), but pointed out that such a measure might be neglecting essential parts of Buddhist psychology. In undergoing exportation from a Buddhist context to the field of psychology, mindfulness has been adapted to fit Western ideals and increase palpability to Western patients (Christopher et al., 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). While these necessary critical interventions are occurring, even more research is engaged in expanding already-present methods of clinical interventions into Buddhist countries. Critical calls for contextual research and for additional research that makes use of present articulations of Buddhist practice suggest a promising future for the use of Buddhism as an important contributor to Positive Psychology.

6.4   Conclusion

This chapter has argued that by combining neurobiological, clinical, ethnographic and philosophical research on Buddhist practice, we can come to fully appreciate some of the complex, interconnected ways that Buddhism contributes to health and well-being. I have argued that these influences, and others like them, must be understood within social, historical traditions that connect meditation and mindfulness

with teachings about impermanence and non-attachment, along with other related contextual cultural influences. In their lived complexity, such as in the context described above in Buddhist Northern Thailand, these influences contribute to the depth of our scientific psychological understanding of Buddhism and positive human functioning, and address some of the questions raised by Western-based psychological research. Calmness is a central part of Buddhist teaching, and it in part helps to explain why Buddhism "works" to improve health and well-being. But being calm alone does not explain this: part of calmness is acceptance. It relates to a feeling born from accepting things as they are. When one accepts things as they are rather than attaching to ideas about the way things should be, one changes the way of relating to objects, people, and ideas, and even to their very sense of self. The local Thai emphasis on non-attachment may aid in understanding the benefits of neurological data showing a decoupling of activity in brain regions associated with thought and with those associated with emotion: both perspectives suggest the importance of not letting the self get caught up in experience. Here, as elsewhere, we can see clearly that the combination of research perspectives helps us to paint a nuanced picture of Buddhist influence in Positive Psychology.

To conclude, I want to offer a short case study of a man struggling with illness in Buddhist Thailand. The ways in which this man's struggles and his eventual recovery are articulated within Buddhist idioms richly illustrates some of the interconnected benefits of Buddhist practice raised in this chapter. While conducting ethnographic fieldwork I became friends with a man I call Sen, who suffered from a debilitating addiction to alcohol. In the course of my fieldwork, his condition worsened. When I asked his friends and family why he had this problem they told me essentially that he was not engaging in local Buddhist psychological practices: "he can't let go of the past (Thai: *mai dai plong adit*)" they told me, "he can't accept change (Thai: *mai yom plian plaeng*)." They offered explanations and understandings of illness that described Sen having a problem with attachment and of lacking a strong, calm mind. With yellow skin and eyes and swollen feet, Sen was eventually taken to a hospital in the nearby city of Chiang Mai, where doctors pronounced his condition to be too late to cure; his cirrhosis of the liver was too pronounced, and he didn't have long to live. After a month of decreasing health at the hospital following his diagnosis, Sen was returned to his home town of Mae Jaeng. The medical infrastructure had failed to help him. Back home, unable to walk and barely conscious, his family went about performing a series of Buddhist rituals to work on both his and their own problems with attachment. "We have to let him go," they told each other, and me. A spirit doctor was brought in to literally detach the "spirits" of alcohol from his body. Small palm-leaf boats and lanterns were "floated" (loy) off into rivers and the night sky. Everyone went to make merit (tam boon) at the neighborhood monastery, giving away goods and money as the surest Buddhist way in the community to practice letting go of their attachments. For over a year Sen was unable to walk, but very, very slowly he started crawling and, eventually, managed to gain back a semblance of his previous life. When I asked people why he got better they said that they had let go of their feelings. As his sister told me, "I let go, and he got better." When I asked Sen why his health improved he told me,

"Everyone else says they're the reason I got better. It's that, but it's more. It's because I *ploy wang*, I let go. I accept things the way they are now." And he did. Sen's health today is still poor, and he makes regular visits to the physical and psychiatric hospitals in Chiang Mai for medicine and therapy, but he has more fully integrated into the ritual and psychological Buddhist life of his community, and his life has taken on a markedly more positive outlook.

One reading of this case suggests that the processes by which Sen suffered and improved are very different from those of people typically engaged in psychological studies of Buddhist practice. Neither before nor after getting sick did Sen 'meditate' in the sense of sitting in silence (though his avoidance of meditation in its broader sense was offered by others as a reason for his illness); or did he talk explicitly about things like mindfulness, selflessness, or even emotion. However, in another reading, Sen and his family became more attentive to the present moment and gauged with the positive power of letting go of emotional attachments in a world of constant change. Thais would certainly attribute Sen's recovery to Buddhist principles, and such attributions suggest rich clinical applications.

The match between ethnographic data and findings emerging in the psychological sciences are not an exact fit: there is slippage in meanings and connections, in contexts and even in ideals. These slippages point more to the always contextual nature of religious practice, and to the importance of paying attention to it. If more attention is paid to these always-shifting, culturally articulated types of connections between self-construction, emotion, and attention, and to their relationship to other Buddhist ideas like impermanence and non-attachment, we can better understand the kinds of effects that neurobiological and clinical research is increasingly demonstrating. In these ways, disciplines as diverse as religious studies, anthropology, neurobiology and clinical psychology together help us to understand Buddhist contributions to the psychology of human flourishing.

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Chapter 7
Sikhism and Positive Psychology

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Religion is a faith system and can be seen as a guidebook to help people live their lives. Positive psychology addresses societal problems in a way that helps people capitalize on their strengths and lead more satisfying and meaningful lives (Gable & Haidt, 2005). For positive psychologists, it is beneficial to better understand how religion and religious values, beliefs, and practices can be important sources of strength to individuals, families, and communities.

In this chapter, we first outline Sikh history and its beliefs and symbols. Next, we discuss Sikhism's contributions to positive functioning and well-being using the positive psychology framework as described by Dahlsgaard, Peterson, and Seligman (2005). In addition, we reference other key elements of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). We focus on three areas that are key to promoting well-being in Sikhism: interdependence with family, community, and religion; community service; and social justice. We use community and religious experiences and events to demonstrate how the values, beliefs, and practices of Sikhism promote the psychological well-being of its members; and how positive psychology is a helpful lens through which to gauge human potentials, motives, and capacities, as well as to witness human thriving, adaptation and resilience. Finally, we reflect on next steps and how we can further investigate Sikhism's contribution to positive psychology.

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7.1 Sikh History

Sikhism is the fifth largest organized religion in the world (Leifker, 2006) with approximately 25 million Sikhs worldwide (United Sikhs, n.d.). Sikhism is a monotheistic religion and Sikhs believe that there is one God, who is timeless and formless, and whose existence is power and love (Singh, 2004). Sikh is a term that means "disciple," "learner" (Chilana, 2005, p. 108), or seeker of truth. The religion emerged in the fifteenth century in the northern Indian state of Punjab (Singh, 1998).

The founder of the religion and the first guru, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469 A.D. into a Hindu family during a time of Islamic rule, a time of perilous conflict between the Muslim rulers and Hindus. At the same time, within the Hindu community, there was a strong division between the upper- and lower-caste Hindus and oppression of women by men. Guru Nanak preached the unity of humankind and fought against oppression (i.e., of Hindus under Muslim rule, of lower-caste Hindus by upper-caste Hindus, and of women by men). "Nanak rejected rituals, asceticism, monasticism and formalism in favor of egalitarianism (including complete equality of the sexes), social order, communal harmony and charity" (Singh, 2004, p. 94). The gurus that followed continued to fight for social justice while maintaining the accessibility of the religion for all. The 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh, pronounced the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh holy book) as his successor, and Sikhs give it the same respect and authority as they would a human guru (Gatrad, Jhutti-Johal, Gill, & Sheikh, 2005).

7.2 Sikh Beliefs and Symbols

Sandhu (2004) describes a Sikh model for suffering and healing based in large part on the scriptures. "A Sikh receives guidance from the Guru scripture by performing a prayer or *ardas* in front of the scripture, and then randomly opening the scripture to read a sacred passage or *vaak*" (Sandhu, 2004, p. 36). Chilana (2005) states, "The teachings in the Guru Granth Sahib direct Sikhs to believe in universal brotherhood and the oneness of humanity, and to work for the welfare of everyone regardless of race, religion, nationality, or social position" (p. 109).

Sikhs adopt the "five Ks," or symbols that include the *kes* (uncut hair), considered a gift from God, *kanga* (small comb), to keep the hair neat and clean, *kachhehara* (underwear), a symbol of commitment to purity, *kara* (steel bangle worn on the right wrist), a reminder of both the bond between the Sikh and the Guru and for the need for restraint, and the *kirpan* (small symbolic sword), a reminder to fight for freedom and justice (Singh, 2004). Although both Sikh men and women have uncut hair, Sikh men tie their hair up in a *joora* (topknot) and cover it with a turban; Sikh boys cover their joora with a *patka* (snug-fitting cloth that covers the hair) or hankie. Although some women do wear turbans, most either do not cover their head or use a *chuni* or headscarf in secular spaces. The turban is considered private and to be removed only by the wearer. Throughout history, turbans were worn by Indian princes and kings, and for Sikhs, turbans are a "crown of spirituality" (Chilana, 2005, p. 109).

7.3   Sikhism's Contributions to Positive Functioning and Well Being

Positive psychology traits help people capitalize on their strengths and lead more satisfying and meaningful lives (Lopez & Magyar-Moe, 2006). Though there are many frames we could use in viewing Sikhism through a positive psychology lens, we will use Dahlsgaard et al.'s (2005) six core virtues that they found to recur across philosophical and religious traditions, including those in China (Confucianism and Taoism), South Asia (Buddhism and Hinduism), and the West (Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity and Islam). These core virtues include transcendence, wisdom, humanity, justice, courage, and temperance. We use the experiences of collectivism, *path* (prayer), Sikh youth camps, *langar* (community kitchen), and the fight for social justice (including the Sikh community's response to the Oak Creek hate crime) to demonstrate how Sikhism aligns with these six core virtues and positive traits and how they contribute to the positive functioning and well-being of its followers.

In addition, we discuss other positive traits as described by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) that Sikhs exemplify. These traits include: (a) capacity for love and vocation, (b) courage, (c) interpersonal skill, (d) perseverance, (e) future mindedness, (f) spirituality, (g) wisdom; as well as group traits, like: (a) civic virtues, (b) responsibility, (c) nurturance, and (d) altruism. These traits serve as buffers to mental illness and encourages resiliency (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Additionally, these traits help people capitalize on their strengths and lead more satisfying and meaningful lives (Lopez & Magyar-Moe, 2006).

7.3.1   Collectivism and Interdependence on Family, Community and Religion

Within Sikhism, the community, the family, and the religion are the primary sources of support. The maintenance of these community and family relationships is crucial and requires constant attention and exchange of favors, gifts, and other resources (Triandis, 1995). It requires love and interpersonal skills, both positive traits as described by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). Sikhism's sense of interdependence promotes a sense of belonging and harmony with the community and family, and is a feature of collectivism and contributes to positive functioning and psychological well-being (Baer & Lykins, 2011; Leary & Guadagno, 2011).

The Sikh community supports one another as if they are all a part of the same family or ingroup. The ingroup shares a "common fate" defined by their environment, sociopolitical and ancestral history, and religion, amongst other factors. The ingroup also experiences discrimination and oppression as attacks, not only on the individual, but also to the collective group (Triandis, 1995), and thus during times of distress Sikhs rely on their community to cope (Ahluwalia & Pellettiere, 2010).

Being part of a community contributes to survival and makes life harmonious (Triandis, 1995). In addition, close relationships and social support have been found to be strongly linked to health and well-being (Gable & Gosnell, 2011).

Collectivism is defined as a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who view themselves as part of a larger group (i.e., family, faith community, nation), and are motivated by the norms, duties, and obligations promoted by the group. Members enjoy doing what is "right" and their duty, even if it requires sacrifices (Triandis, 1995). Members think of themselves as parts of their community and in most situations subordinate their personal goals for those of the community. These actions demonstrate the positive traits of responsibility, civic virtues, and interpersonal skills.

The religious and cultural practices of Sikhism are examples of horizontal collectivism as opposed to vertical collectivism. Vertical collectivism focuses on hierarchal structures of power, while horizontal collectivism emphasizes equality, people sharing, cooperating, and serving one another (Triandis, 2001). This concept promotes equal opportunity, which is one of the core values in the foundations of Sikhism, and is a feature of humanity (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005).

7.3.1.1   Path

Path (prayer) is important in Sikhism and represents Dahlsgaard and colleagues (2005) concept of transcendence. According to Sikhism, everything evolves from and revolves around *Ek Onkar,* the essence that unifies all diversity. The individual is multilayered, with *atma* (the spiritual core), *surti* (consciousness), *chitr guptor* (the hidden record or the unconscious), *antahkaran* (the mind), and *sareer* (the physical body) (Sandhu, 2004). *Dukh* (suffering) is related to the cycle of transmigration and so Sikhs may believe that the suffering they experience in the current life is a consequence of actions they performed in previous lives (Sandhu, 2004).

Temperance can be seen as a core virtue in Sikhism as it protects against excess. Internal sources of suffering that cause distress include the five vices or passions, including lust, anger, undue attachment to possessions or people, greed, and false pride, and so Sikhs should seek to resist these. The ability to truly resist these vices, however, is seen as something aspirational, rather than compulsory. Elements of temperance, therefore, include forgiveness, humility, and prudence in addition to self-control (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005).

According to the Guru Granth Sahib, when experiencing external sources of suffering, such as inequality, oppression, and discrimination, Sikhs must overcome the feeling of being a victim, take personal responsibility, and transform his or her own circumstances (Sandhu, 2004). The process of healing from these sources of suffering involves a realization of the spiritual self and consciousness spiraling through *panj khand* (five spheres): *dharma* (righteousness), *guian* (knowledge), *saram* (effort), *karam* (grace), and *sach* (truth). This process takes place within the religious community and is guided by the principles of the Guru Granth Sahib. It also develops wisdom in the individual, which is another positive psychology value listed by Dahlsgaard and colleagues (2005).

7.3.2 Community Service and Langar

Seva is a major aspect of Sikhism and is an important component of langar. During langar, people gather to eat a sacred meal or divine dinner that is open to anyone (Sikh or non-Sikh; those who attended the service or not) prepared for the community by the community. The community members volunteer to prepare, serve and clean up donated food to members of the congregation. The *sangat* (community congregation) prepares and serves the meal, while other members of the sangat partake in the meal. Langar performs the service of feeding the body of members of the Gurdwara and nurtures the soul of the ones performing the service. During langar, community members sit on the floor, side by side, without attention to power differentials in society (e.g., rank, gender, class) to demonstrate or engage in the act of humility and equality.

Humanity is a virtue that can be seen as illustrated through langar. It involves interpersonal strengths of "tending and befriending" (Taylor et al., 2000, as cited in Dahlsgaard et al., 2005) and includes love and kindness (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). During langar, members eat, converse, pray and serve one another. This allows families to familiarize themselves with each other, and fosters growth within the community as a whole. The idea of constant support and nurturance from members, other than your family, who are within the community, is an added value to Sikhism. The involvement of Sikhs in each others' lives demonstrates a sign of support or interdependence within the community. For example, a member who does not have their head covered during langar, is reminded to do so by another member in the community. Since Sikhs have a sense of belonging to the faith community, members may feel that they have the right to get involved in the affairs of others (Triandis, 1995). These types of activities promote an understanding of the collective identity of Sikhism.

Seva (community service) is an important concept in Sikhism and demonstrates the positive traits of altruism, responsibility, and vocation, as well as humanity. Members of the congregation all engage in seva. It is a way for a member of Sikhism to become closer to God or the spiritual self and to serve the community. By performing seva, community role models demonstrate a humbling message to the youth of the Sikh community. There is a powerful message when community role models serve food to the congregation. For both the person engaging in the seva and the recipient, it frees the mind from ego and humbles the spirit.

Humility fosters a prosocial perspective, positive interpersonal relationships, and a greater sense of connection to the community. Being task-focused, as one is during langar, promotes positive affect and mental health (Robinson & Tamir, 2011). People having responsibility for others, compassion, and demonstrating altruism reported greater feelings of connection and closeness with others; and were less judgmental of themselves (Leary & Guadagno, 2011). Looking through a positive psychology lens, these outcomes lead to an overall sense of psychological well-being, more adaptive coping mechanisms and less dysphoria, anxiety, and

unpleasant emotions (Leary & Guadagno, 2011). Sikh camps and langar are two examples of community service endeavors and through these we can see the core virtues of wisdom and humanity.

7.3.2.1 Sikh Youth Camps

Sikh youth camps are important immersion experiences that allow youth to be socialized to the Sikh identity and to have their experiences validated by peers and leaders of the community. Though these camps also exist in India, they are particularly prevalent and important in the diaspora, where there is more limited exposure to Sikhism. Sikh camps, which provide support and education around religious and cultural identity, are an important piece to the growth and development of the Sikh community. These camps contain educational, religious, academic, physical and extracurricular activities in addition to cultural activities. Playing musical instruments, singing hymns and *bhangra* (Punjabi folk dance) are also religious or cultural aspects of Sikhism that are promoted in these camps. In addition, a sense of courage and capacity for vocation, perseverance, and future mindedness are promoted in the individual participant and the camp leaders through participation in these camps.

Wisdom is a virtue that resides in the individual as well as the community and is transmitted in the Sikh youth camps. This includes cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge, including creativity, curiosity, judgment and perspective (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). These camps provide a much-needed source of support for families and youth who may be the only Sikh within their school community and neighborhood. This allows for Sikh youth to gain knowledge and develop a strong sense of religious, personal and cultural identity (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013), which assists in their development, resilience, and positive functioning. It has been found that mastering one's environment, having autonomy, a purpose in life, and positive relationships, as well as self-acceptance contribute to psychological well-being (Baer & Lykins, 2011). Sikh youth accomplish these outcomes through the camp.

7.3.3 Discrimination

As a religious minority, Sikhs only comprise 2 % of Indians. There are approximately 250,000 Sikhs living in the U.S., making them a very small religious minority. Immediately after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (hereafter referred to as 9/11) on New York City and Washington D.C., there was a drastic increase in anti-Islamic sentiment. Most Americans misidentified Sikhs as Muslims, which resulted in increased hate crimes, racial and religious profiling, and discrimination (Ahluwalia, & Pellettiere, 2010). As of 2006, 800 hate crimes against Sikhs in the United States were reported after 9/11 (Leifker, 2006). Eighty-three percent of Sikhs said that they or someone they knew personally had experienced a hate crime

or incident (Rajghatta, 2006). Hate crimes against Sikhs began immediately after 9/11. For example, 4 days after 9/11, a Sikh man was shot and killed in Arizona. Since then, there have been numerous hate crimes, including verbal and physical attacks. In 2012, there was a mass shooting in a gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) in Wisconsin. The number of individual acts of oppression may actually be much higher given the underreporting of such data. It is important to note that the FBI did not historically track hate crimes against Sikhs separately. This was changed in 2013 after much advocacy efforts by Sikh organizations.

Sikhs also experience institutionalized oppression from government, criminal justice, legal, educational systems, and employment settings (Sikh Coalition, n.d.b). Discriminatory acts have been perpetuated by sports associations, the media, and airport personnel in the U.S. and abroad. For example, Sikhs are routinely and repeatedly mistaken for "terrorists" and stopped at airport security for "flying while Sikh" (Ahluwalia & Zaman, 2009). Sikh men have been stopped from boarding planes, forced to take off their turbans so they can be checked for weapons (Leifker, 2006), and Sikh boys' hands are swiped to test for explosives (Ahluwalia, 2011). In schools and workplaces, there have been cases where kirpans have been banned and "no turban" policies were instated (The Wing Luke Asian Museum, n.d.). Sikhs with kirpans or turbans have been put on probation, demoted, fired, and faced criminal charges (Sikh Coalition, n.d.a; The Wing Luke Asian Museum, n.d.). One in ten Sikhs report that they have been refused employment because of their religious identity and over half of the Sikh students in New York report being harassed at school because of their religion or national origin (Indeck, 2008).

In addition to occurrences in the U.S., international discriminatory laws and policies impact the Sikh experience. France's ban on religious identifiers in public institutions has had devastating consequences for Sikhs as well as other religious minorities (e.g., Jewish and Muslim individuals). In official documents, including passports and driver's licenses, Sikhs were required to remove their turbans (Neiyyar, 2012). Even more concerning, head coverings have been banned from public schools, most greatly impacting Sikh and Jewish boys, and Muslim girls. No Sikh child wearing a patka or turban, no Muslim child wearing a hijab, and no Jewish child wearing a yarmulke can attend public school in France. When Sikh boys were told that they could no longer attend public school in France, their parents were left with three options: private school (if they had the funds), give up their religion and the visible markers of their religion, or move out of the country (if they were able to move) (Ahluwalia, 2013, p. 54). These options were not really options at all, but rather a violation of a basic right to education. Thus, children and their families are forced to make a choice between their education and their faith.

In addition to 9/11, there have been other incidents in which Sikhs have experienced oppression, discrimination and trauma. Most recently, in 2012, there was a terrorist attack on the *Gurdwara* (Sikh place of worship) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, whereby a white supremacist entered the Gurdwara and killed six members of the congregation. In 1984, the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple, the most sacred site for Sikhs, and killed innocent Sikhs (Weisman, 1987). In retaliation, two Sikh bodyguards killed the prime minister. During the Delhi riots that followed, 3 days

and nights of unchecked violence resulted in the genocide of approximately 4,000 Sikhs. The disappearances, violence and killings continued for years and there has been no justice for the families and Sikh community (Ensaaf, n.d.). Additionally, there is a history of trauma and displacement for Sikhs during the partition and independence of India in 1947, where one million people (Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus) were killed during the mass migrations that took place across the newly created borders of India and Pakistan. Yet despite such discriminatory and traumatic experiences, Sikh individuals have thrived, adapted, and persevered.

7.3.3.1   The Fight for Social Justice

Though there has been a history of discrimination and trauma for Sikhs because of their identity or mistaken identity, Sikhism itself is a protective factor for Sikhs. Guru Nanak preached about the unity of mankind and fought for social justice and against oppression (Ahluwalia, 2011). Social justice is a major aspect in the Sikh religion and requires courage, wisdom, and perseverance. Historically, Sikhism has embedded the concepts of bravery and heroism into their collective story. Through storytelling, from one generation to the next, of discrimination and the fight for social justice, these concepts have become core cultural and religious values in the Sikhism (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013).

All Sikhs are encouraged to incorporate justice throughout their lives. Justice is a core virtue in Sikhism and its' civic strengths underlie healthy community life (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). The strengths that Dahlsgaard and colleagues emphasize when discussing justice include fairness, leadership, citizenship, and teamwork. The ability to stand in the face of oppression and fight for people's rights in a non-violent manner (with violence as a last resort) is a core value in the Sikh community. Other core values include: bravery, courage and valor in the face of social injustice (Ahluwalia & Pellettiere, 2010).

Sikhs have faced discrimination and experienced hate crimes in the U.S. and globally. Community organizations promote civic responsibility to the community and are one vehicle for Sikhs to get organized in their fight against oppression of Sikhs and other groups experiencing discrimination. United Sikhs, Sikh Coalition, and Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) are three major community organizations geared towards providing both Sikh and other communities, with education and advocacy efforts.

7.3.3.2   Oak Creek Hate Crime

On August 5, 2012, a mass shooting occurred at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. A single gunman killed six members of the Sikh community and wounded four others. Of the six dead community members, five were men and one was a woman, their ages ranged from 39 to 84 years. One police officer was injured during the incident. The assailant was killed by police. The *Joint Terrorism Task*

Force investigated the incident, and police treated the event as an act of domestic terrorism (Wikipedia, 2012).

After the Oak Creek incident, Sikhs went to worship, prayed, talked to one another, attended candlelight vigils, supported community organizations that fight against social injustices, and turned to their religious community for support. Many Sikhs felt sad, and a keen sense of loss and betrayal. They reached out to provide support to the police force who responded to the incident and to the broader community in Oak Creek. By engaging in these actions, the Sikh community engaged in their healing process and relied on their values, beliefs, and practices to overcome this grief. These values, beliefs, and practices included: (a) following God's will, forgiving, and having mercy, (b) promoting social justice, heroism and martyrdom, (c) affiliating with their religious identity, (d) living with dignity and gratitude, and (e) having optimism, hope, and purpose.

7.3.4   God's Will

Sikhs believe in one God, whose existence is power and love. His will or *hukam* is that all people have free will, yet everything occurs because of God's will (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013). There is a mantra, a meditation that Sikhs recite again and again in times of trouble, *Waheguru* (Almighty God), which can be understood to communicate one's awe and wonder about God. It's a recognition that all things, even the unthinkable murder of innocent people in the Oak Creek Gurdwara, are the will of God (Johnson & Qidwae, 2012).

Like many Indians, Sikhs believe in reincarnation, that everything occurs in God's will, and that their karma is a result of both good and bad deeds done in previous lives (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013). Therefore, negative events, like the Oak Creek incident can be understood alternately as God's will or as a natural result of what one has done in a previous life, like a spiritual "justice system" of sorts (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013). In Sikhism, instead of reacting to the event as if it were a personal attack, Sikhs are encouraged to respond gracefully with an understanding that this is just God's will, and not their fault. This sense of spirituality helps Sikh individuals to accept that what happened to them was out of their control and denies a fixation on trying to understand the purpose behind why this event happened, and demonstrates resilience. This suggests that transcendence, including the strengths that "forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning" (Dahlsgaard, et al., 2005, p. 205) is a core virtue in Sikhism. This includes the spirituality that they turned to, the gratitude they felt towards the police force and the community (i.e., the first police officer on the scene, Brian Murphy, took nine bullets as he intervened (Cloud, 2012)), and the hope that the community felt when looking to the future.

Sikhs have been asked why the Sikh community did not respond with anger to the tragic event and the response is often that the Sikh community does not believe in responding to anger with anger (Ahluwalia & Pellettiere, 2010; Johnson & Qidwae, 2012). Sikh individuals rely on their positive individual traits of courage, having a

capacity to love, and spirituality to use their God-given free will to resist one of the five vices or anger and to forgive and have mercy. (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013).

During external sources of suffering, like oppression, inequality and discrimination, Sikhs must overcome and take personal responsibility and transform his or her circumstances into something fruitful (Sandhu, 2004). These beliefs may prevent some Sikhs from pursuing legal or other measures following instances of discrimination and help them progress into community action (Ahluwalia, 2011). By leveraging the positive traits of responsibility, future mindedness, and civic virtues, Sikh individuals use their free will to accept God's will and move forward towards the pursuit of social justice.

7.3.5 *Heroism and Martyrdom*

Heroism and martyrdom are core values in Sikh historiography (Brass, 2006) with Sikhs fighting against injustice, including injustices experienced by individuals of different faiths. This courage and civic responsibility stems from a historical community narrative of Sikh bravery in the face of discrimination which, through a tradition of telling and retelling, has been concretized as a core Sikh cultural and religious value (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013).

Courage, the "emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal" (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005, p. 205), is a core virtue in Sikhism. Bravery, perseverance, and authenticity are all elements of courage (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005) and examples of it can be seen during and after the Oak Creek incident. In the Oak Creek example, a young child acted as a hero by warning his community members inside the temple that an armed man was approaching. Another Sikh individual, who was killed, intervened during the attack to disarm the shooter (Cloud, 2012). Additionally, in the aftermath of the Oak Creek event, many individuals fought the injustice of this hate crime by joining with other communities to fight against hate crimes and promote peace.

An adaptive coping mechanism in the face of discrimination, these same aforementioned values may influence how many Sikhs feel they should react to traumatic stress, injury, and oppression. For example, Sikh men who are ridiculed for wearing a turban may silence their pain or other unacceptable reactions in an effort to maintain their socially constructed roles as brave martyrs. These themes echo the recent reality of Sikhs, where they are victims of individual and systemic oppression (Ahluwalia & Alimchandani, 2013).

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we outlined Sikh history, beliefs and symbols, and discrimination experiences, and used examples to demonstrate how Sikhism promotes the psychological well-being of its members. The religious values, beliefs, and practices of Sikhism

emphasize Dahlsgaard and colleagues' (2005) six core virtues of transcendence, wisdom, humanity, justice, courage, and temperance promote psychological functioning and well-being. By praying, engaging in seva during langar, and fighting for social justice, Sikhs demonstrate Seligman and Csikszentimihalyi's (2000) positive traits of (a) capacity for love and vocation, (b) courage, (c) interpersonal skill, (d) perseverance, (e) future mindedness, (f) spirituality, (g) wisdom; as well as group traits, such as: (a) civic virtues, (b) responsibility, (c) nurturance, and (d) altruism.

It is also important for psychologists to understand the history of groups. In this case, Sikhism is a relatively young religion but one that has a history of experiencing oppression. Sikh values, beliefs, and practices have helped Sikhs capitalize on their strengths and lead more satisfying and meaningful lives, while overcoming the negative impact of discrimination and hate crimes from the time of the origin of the religion. For psychologists, this information is helpful in understanding how religion can be an important source of strength for individuals, families, and communities in the face of current challenges.

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Chapter 8
American Indian Traditional Ways: Convergence and Divergence with Positive Psychology

Leah Rouse

Foreword

My writing is an interpretation. I endeavor only to summarize the interpretations of those before me whose communities have recognized their heart, leadership, and/ or academic work. Oral teachings are not written, and once they are, they become something 'other.'

8.1 Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Positive Psychology

American Indian (AI)[1] worldviews and spiritual ways have garnered increasing attention over the past several decades. Indeed, many of psychology's current theoretical and practice orientations have some resonance with AI traditional ways. Group therapy, mindfulness interventions, and positive psychology all have points of congruence with ancient AI understandings of wellness. However, recent publications have cautioned mental health professionals about integrating mainstream and traditional AI spiritual and healing practices. Given the extreme diversity of AI communities culturally and spiritually, this chapter presents an overview of what Indigenous scholars have identified as points of convergence and divergence with

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[1]The term American Indian is used herein to denote the groups of distinct original inhabitants of North and South America and the Caribbean. These groups have been referred to variously as Native Americans, Alaska Natives, First Nations, and Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples. The diversity of peoples represented by this term is immense. In the United States there are presently more than 560 federally recognized Sovereign Nations, and scores of communities navigating the U.S. federal system seeking that government to government relationship status.

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mainstream psychology and the positive psychology perspective. Throughout this chapter, two primary truths are observed:

> You cannot learn Indian ways of healing from reading a book. (personal communication, Mr. Michael Day, Ho-Chungra, Recognized Lakota Spiritual Leader and Healer, Speaker for the Gray Eagle Society)

> Education in a traditional [AI] setting occurs by [lived] example and not as a process of indoctrination. (Deloria, 1999, p. 140)

8.2   This Is a Way of Life, Not a Religion

Arriving at agreed upon definitions of the terms *religion* and *spirituality* has been illusive in psychology at best. Hill et al. (2000) advanced definitions for each term to facilitate theory development and research. They argued that both terms include "the subjective feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred" (p. 68). They conceptualized religion as also potentially including "a search for non-sacred goals (such as social identity, affiliation, health, wellness) in a context that has as its primary goal the facilitation of the search for the sacred" (p. 68), as well as "the means and methods (e.g., rituals or prescribed behaviors) of the search for the sacred that receive validation and support from within an identifiable group" (p. 69). Historically, the terms religion and spirituality have been nearly indiscernible in their common and academic use. Their divergence is recent in academic use, particularly since the 1960s and a societal shift by many in the U.S. toward more individual pursuits of *the sacred* outside of organized institutions—the "New Age" movement[2] (Hill et al., 2000; Roof, 1993). New Age perspectives have been highly involved in ad hoc attempts at integrating traditional AI practices.

AI persons raised traditionally are enculturated into to their peoples' teachings throughout the life course and thus develop fully articulated worldviews delineating the workings of the universe, and the place, space, and role of all other beings. This does not lend itself to the selection of specific practices without the entire cosmology of lived knowledge. Learning in a traditional AI way, occurs through repetition and experience in a cyclical manner over one's lifetime. Some roles and responsibilities, particularly those of healers, also involve apprenticing with a 'master'—one who has been asked to take on a particular responsibility for the community (not self-selected) and dedicates a lifetime to doing so. This apprenticeship often spans decades with no promise or expectation of independence of the master-practitioner ever. Such roles are most often designated at the beckoning of spirit beings, not other humans. The divergence between mainstream educational perspectives and traditional AI ways is great in this orientation. The mental health professions train Master's and doctoral level

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[2]The New Age movement emerged in the 1960s and meshes Western, Eastern, and Indigenous spiritual ways with popular psychology, holistic wellness perspectives, and metaphysics. The inclusion of AI spiritual practices has led to significant backlash from AI communities, particularly regarding AIs who would sell traditional spiritual services and non-AI persons who purport to practice such and have no legitimate training or sanctioning to do so.

clinicians for independent practice, and the majority of the fields shy away from *any* mention or involvement with spirits. In fact in mental health, we have many ways of labeling those who see, hear, and interact with spirits—diagnoses and pathologies.

Conversely, a core outcome of a traditional AI education is a deep knowledge of the living nature and interconnectivity of all creation—including spirit beings—and one's role, place, and responsibility within it. Traditional AI knowledge is holistic in its integration of what in a mainstream perspective are separate disciplines. This orientation toward worldview and spirituality presents a significant challenge to the mainstream mind. Extreme differences in perspective regarding time and process exist between the two as well. The imbalance of power within mainstream academia and systems has created an environment wherein a selective appropriation of traditional spiritual ways has been allowed and fostered without proper oversight or input by sanctioned traditional spiritual leaders and AI healers. This has included many alarming publications presented as empirical, but lacking the identification of a sanctioned healer's perspective (e.g., the 'anonymous' case study of the sage healer). The historical dehumanization of AI peoples and their stereotyping (both positive and negative) has also created fertile ground for continued cultural distortion and subjugation. A positive psychology movement toward embracing a worldview of true holistic interconnectivity would be a timely and welcome development in Indian Country, and perhaps much of the world. Such a development would require academics and clinicians not raised in the traditional AI fashion, to submit to retraining that would progress over a lifetime and have no "graduation" date in sight. In this, one enters as a child at ground level, regardless of his/her chronological age, and endeavors to experience growing pains.

8.3 Trouble in Paradise

The New Age phenomenon has been nearly devastating to traditional AI life ways (Deloria, 1999) and has contributed to the fostering of the positive stereotyping of AIs (e.g., the mystical child of nature), their worldview, and spiritual practices. Fortunately, a good amount of psychological literature has emerged to warn of the dangers of integrating traditional AI healing practices without the constant guidance of *sanctioned* and qualified leaders (e.g., Duran & Ivey, 2006; Gone, 2010). There has also been a call for a movement in the helping fields toward AI population-specific orientations, rather than pan-cultural efforts that cannot impart the essence of any element of a traditional worldview/spirituality. This is an important point, given the extreme diversity of AI cultures and spiritual worldviews of the presently 565 federally-recognized tribes in the U.S.

It has been necessary for AI academics to clarify such diversity, given the continual cultural appropriation and distortion of federally protected traditional AI ways.[3] Any traditional AI practice separated from its holistic worldview and

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[3] For details on the law see the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Public Law No. 95-341, 92 Stat. 469.

rightful gatekeepers creates extreme imbalance in the world. One highly visible example is the *fake sweat lodge* incident run by non-AI New Age mogul, James Arthur Ray, in Sedona, AZ in 2009 that killed 2 and saw 19 people hospitalized. However, there is also a litany of less visible effects from these misguided works. The impact of positive stereotyping that has distorted traditional AI ways is extreme and emerges in subtle ways, marginalizing the professionalism of sanctioned AI healers, and their many years of training. It is an interesting quandary fostered by the historical tendency from a Western perspective to imagine degreed professionals at the top of the hierarchy of mastery. This has then relegated traditional AI healers and practitioners to a status of primitive, proto-scientific, and therefore *not* possessing knowledge and skills still unrecognized by the mainstream. This orientation then expects only a meaningful cultural experience in attending a *sweat lodge*, and not to obtain the professional services of a healer in his or her own right. These are dangerous practices and are replicated across North and South America in the form of non-sanctioned *Sundance ceremonies*, *vision quests*,[4] and a litany of other hollow events held by those not trained to do so.

In the often chaotic mainstream consciousness, the worldviews and spirituality of traditional AI populations have also been rendered to two dimensional perspectives, devoid of true substance and ascribed a status of mythology, quaint *beliefs* rather than solid truths. This is an interesting and convenient stance to take toward populations whose advanced and ancient knowledge bases have been acknowledged by many of the *hard* sciences as far more developed in many areas than those of their European subjugators. In this vein, an area of psychology exploring the impact of colonization, Historical Trauma (HT), subjugation, and posttraumatic growth has emerged.

HT has been characterized as an injury to the psyche and spirit of AI persons individually and collectively (Duran & Duran, 1995). Given the orientation of AI worldview, HT transcends the time and space constraints of mainstream conceptualizations of trauma impact. The healing of HT is viewed to occur through ritual or ceremony and incorporates communal recognition of the injury. This latter element is akin to mainstream clinical treatments for healing trauma effects, but is actively extended beyond the constraints of group therapy to the entire community and cosmology at large. Historically-bound eras of events identified within this literature as central to the etiology of HT include eras of cultural and psychological shock, warfare and genocide, systemic oppression and subjugation, forced relocation to reservations, boarding schools for Americanization and Christianization, and urban areas during termination, systematic racism and prejudice, and persistent stereotyping (Rouse & Davis, 2011). Due to the nature of AI worldview in that all is of *energy*, these injuries (and their healing) are innately spiritual. Positive and other mainstream theories of psychology will need to incorporate such understandings more wholly in order to begin to partner with sanctioned traditional AI practitioners. Gone (2010) has laid the groundwork for acknowledging that

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[4] Interestingly, it seems the Lakota currently bear the brunt of spiritual appropriation in the academic arena, perhaps due to their higher profile since the events of Wounded Knee II detailed further in the chapter.

mainstream constructs may not be ideal for traditional AI persons coping through colonization impact. The present orientation of publications largely replicates the 'wounded race' stereotype, perpetuating subjugation and fostering internalization of oppression. A move toward indigenizing these orientations is warranted.

8.4   Language

Approaching an understanding of AI traditional worldviews requires recognition of the non-accidental, non-coincidental nature of the universe and all of its beings and energy (physics), and their role in balance (wellness). This includes focusing on understanding the consequences of one's own actions. Such knowledge is embedded in AI languages, which are largely verb-focused, descriptive of relationships and reciprocity, and often do not have the individual frame of reference or gender labels as do the Germanic and Romance languages, for example. AI languages are constructed with a knowledge base of the energy of the spoken word, and even the *cognition unspoken.* These factors of language and worldview also affect the training and mission of mental health clinicians and researchers, regardless of race or ethnicity. For example, historically many AI communities either did not develop words to describe diseases (e.g., cancer), or if they did, such language often went unspoken outside of ceremonial settings, as to not forward the disorder and produce more energy or power for its endeavor.

This reality creates some difficulties for those working within a mainstream theoretical perspective. One significant example is the English word (and concept) of *forgiveness*. A primary focus within positive psychology is on the healing release for the forgiver (the person injured or offended) in this process. In a traditional AI perspective, this is indeed an important element of healing; however it represents merely a tiny granule of healing in an AI way. Generally speaking, AI languages have no way of literally stating many of the mainstream phrases correlated with forgiveness—"I am sorry" or "I forgive you/him/her"—nor many other common phrases of the English language such as "thank you." Rather, expression details and is focused on the action and relationship of mind, body, and/or spirit embodied in the relational exchange (e.g., Navajo/Dine—"doo ayóo shił áhót'ée da" [*I feel differently*].

Since all is connected, *all* receives the impact of action—whether fostering balance or imbalance—so an Oneida person for example, may become *of one mind* with another being—rather than to *forgive* them. Thus, in the case of a harmful action (one of imbalance) there is a systemic impact that runs through the space and time constraints of a mainstream perspective. These actions and reactions have the ability to heal or harm in all directions affecting ancestors who have passed on, those with whom we are living presently, and future generations yet to be born. Furthermore, this includes all creation and cosmology, not simply human beings. Without the ability to conceptualize these critical linguistic and worldview differences, psychology struggles to find common ground with traditional AI ways.

8.5 The World Hangs in Balance

AI worldviews are nothing if not the embodiment of balance with nature in grand scale. What is referred to as *nature* involves all the professions of the mainstream world and many more, and correlates considerably in its conceptualization with the subfields of physics. Perhaps the field of metaphysics brings mainstream thinking closer to the ancient Indigenous worldview. An understanding of the true *nature* of nature is essential in gaining an appreciation for the benefit of order (balance/ wellness) in the traditional AI perspective. Within the present reading one may only whet the appetite of understanding.

8.6 Land, Place, Time and Space

Traditional AI education (living) exposes an individual to the story (science) of the cosmology. When presented with Origin and Instructions teachings over the course of a lifetime, the individual develops a sense of self-in-relationship—the balance that is wellness and health. As Gone (2008) has articulated, "…robust 'mental health' [is] seen to result from participation in indigenous ritual spaces enacted or performed in designated sacred places…" (p. 392). These spaces include both physical locations and locations that occupy space within the less tangible spaces that modern-day physicists have only begun to articulate. Such spaces are *opened* and *closed* by trained and sanctioned traditional AI healers in order to access particular energies (or spirits) depending upon the needs of the patient with whom they are working (individual or collective group). Further, it is the intimacy of understanding of such that produces the well-individual, which in turn influences a well collective of human kind, which in turn impacts a well collective of other Earth beings, which in turn promotes the wellbeing of the Earth, the Earth influences the system within which it is placed, and so on throughout all cosmology. Deloria (2001) asserted power and place produce personality. Power constitutes "…the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe" and "place being the relationship of things to each other" (pp. 22–23). A traditional AI education facilitates the individual in finding (and earning) his or her place in the entire cosmology, not just on his or her land or within his or her community. Psychology's conceptualizations of terms such as *locus* (e.g., of control), *role*, *context*, and *ecology* are woefully limited and compartmentalized in comparison to traditional AI psychology's and its understanding of balance, wellness, and healing in this regard.

8.7 Relationships/Naming

Some in Positive Psychology have made a movement toward a more Indigenous perspective, one that is relational. To a large degree though, this effort has been framed as juxtaposing individual and relational (Cottone (2011) refers to these as

akin to mutually exclusive worldviews). This perspective again misses the holistic cosmology of traditional AI worldview. Individuality, role, and purpose are intensely relevant and important to traditional AI ways. The often misunderstood and mischaracterized concept labeled by the mainstream as non-interference, for example emerges from this.

Traditional AI worldview and spiritual ways fully articulate one's responsibility within every relationship, as well as the reciprocity aspect of each. Reciprocity includes even what mainstream perspectives would label as *bad* or the opposite of positive and good in English. Many relationships challenge humans to grow, creating "little deaths" that allow one to gain mastery, or wisdom. AI languages are much more relational and action-oriented than Western languages, and focus considerably less (if at all) on polarized categorizations such as male/female, good/bad, or alive/dead. Thus, naming or labeling is practiced with a very different perspective for traditionally-oriented AI persons. When a person is named, the label is descriptive of the individual's purpose or role in the world. This takes many forms across different Sovereign Nations. What is consistent is the living nature of the individual's name and the mandate to grow into or with it. For some populations, this may entail multiple namings over the lifetime to redirect or promote the growth of the individual, and thus the collective cosmology.

8.8   Earth World: Plants, Animals, Minerals, Water, and Other Earth People

> Neoshamanism today pretends that one only need to go into a sweat lodge or trance and find a "power animal." Many people…are consequently wandering around [misguided] today with images of power panthers in the backs of their minds. (Deloria, 1969, p. 44)

One of the areas most visibly impacted by the positive stereotyping of traditional AI ways is that of the perceived role the Earth and other beings assume with mankind. When humankind is immersed in the traditional lifeway, a natural relationship exists with all living things, including the Earth herself. This is an intimate knowledge of interconnectivity and the mandate of those relationships. These relationships entail much more than simple affinities for particular plants, animals, or land formations. They involve communication and interactive learning processes. These deep and meaningful relationships are forged from covenants established long ago and for which each being is responsible. When humans conduct themselves with such respect, the other Earth beings willingly fulfill their covenants and provide for human persons. It is said that many humans have entered a time of great forgetting, and tree, rock, water, and animal people have suffered for this. Only through great respect and a willingness to submit to simplicity will such return. Simplicity does not seem to be easily achieved in the modern world. Though we have many gadgets to supposedly make our lives simpler, for many life still seems to be getting more and more complicated.

8.9   Sky World: Stars and Other Sky People

Sky relationships teach humankind about correlational science, a central focus in traditional AI spirituality. Rather than the cause and effect orientation of mainstream psyche, traditional AI spirituality focuses on the centrality of connectivity, correlation and relationship. There is little semblance of the idea that humankind would or should control other beings and energies, but rather the aim is to be in balanced relationship with all. For many Nations the Sky Beings are a source of Origin and make frequent appearances in teaching stories (science). Traditional people have a close connectivity to the evolutions of the Sky Peoples and their relationship is one of reflection; the order that is above also presents below (on Earth). Sanctioned healers and leaders oversee ceremonies that bring the Earth and Sky energies together, and Earth beings benefit from this relationship energetically. For a traditional AI person, awareness of such relationships fosters ethical behavior in such covenants, reciprocity of the spirit.

8.10   Wellness and the Traditional Upbringing

8.10.1   The Relationship Between Positive Psychology and Traditional AI Worldview

The relationship between all psychology and traditional AI ways has been strained since large scale contact. Some psychologists have tried to delineate commonalities between mainstream psychological theories and traditional ways. For example, Duran (1990; Duran & Duran 1995; Duran & Ivey 2006) found relevance in utilizing Jungian theory to write about the dream interpretation system that many traditional AI peoples have had for millennia. Also, some of the mainstream interventions currently in fashion reflect elements of traditional AI perspectives. Group and systems therapies utilize the relational aspect of healing and those who specialize in systems and family therapies further approach a traditional AI relational perspective. Mindfulness practices are resonant of the self-restraint and discipline that many traditional AI persons learn from the earliest of ages. This discipline fosters the ability to submit to what many mainstream persons would consider rigorous and demanding lifestyle and ceremonial practices.

Unfortunately, the post-colonization impact of a Western (particularly Christian) worldview has had on the ability of traditional AI persons to enculturate their generations has been dramatic and disruptive (Deloria, 1999, p. 43). This is not to say that traditional AI life ways are lost. They certainly are not. However, many of their practitioners and leaders have receded from the mainstream eye and psyche, a psyche that usually finds a need to impose meaning rather than broach the possibility of a worldview and science more comprehensive than that of Western understandings. Language differences are critical in creating this chasm of misunderstanding, a confusion that results in oppression and cultural appropriation and distortion.

In their work on character and personality, Peterson and Seligman (2004) have identified and classified 6 virtues and 24 character strengths. The virtues and their related strengths consist of:

- wisdom and knowledge—creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective;
- courage—authenticity, bravery, persistence, zest;
- humanity—kindness, love, social intelligence;
- justice—fairness, leadership, teamwork;
- temperance—forgiveness, modesty, prudence, self-regulation;
- transcendence—appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, religiousness (in Seigleman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p. 412).

These strengths were identified utilizing a frame work of the following criteria: ubiquity, fulfilling, morally valued, does not diminish others, nonfelicitous opposite, traitlike, measurable, distinctiveness, paragons, prodigies, selective absence, institutions (Seigleman et al., 2005). This categorization of virtue, strengths, and criteria is characterized by a heavy Judeo-Christian-Islamic orientation in their classification and labels that does not integrate well with a traditional AI worldview in many cases.

The use of the label *virtue* for example, reflects a status achieved as perceived by others and the term has a long history in Christian religious theory. Traditional AI aims for conduct tend to be languaged in English as values and are articulated to reflect the individual commitment of one working to fulfill purpose, which includes his/her relational aspect in the system. Given the extreme diversity of AI peoples, it is impossible to render a list of common cultural and/or spiritual values in one chapter. Those that have been most discussed in the literature would likely include: respect, honesty, fortitude, generosity, courage, responsibility, wisdom, and humility. At first glance these virtues and values may seem to be quite synonymous with those aforementioned. However, when the relational vs. categorization orientations of traditional AI languages and English are considered, critical divergences arise that must be observed by the field.

Further complicating a mutual understanding between these two divergent worldviews, is the fact that much of what has been written in regard to traditional AI values has emerged from the Red Power era and the perspective of some of the most visible peoples (to the mainstream media) in that movement, particularly the Lakota on the heels of the Wounded Knee II[5] events. This makes it exceedingly

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[5] On December 29, 1890 the U.S. 7th Calvary massacred more than 300 unarmed Sioux women and children in what is now SD at the Wounded Knee Creek. This was a decisive event in the U.S. Indian Wars, and is viewed by AIs of many Nations as a common point of grief and anger. In 1973 the American Indian Movement (AIM) occupied the town of Wounded Knee, SD, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, calling attention to the plight of AI people there and throughout North America, as well as their neglected treaty rights. They were engaged by federal law enforcement officials on behalf of the Nixon administration. The standoff ended after 73 days of conflict and bloodshed between AIM and law enforcement. During the first three months of conflict, 69 AIM members and a number of other supporters were killed. By the end of the 1970s, scores more AIs would meet a violent death on Pine Ridge in the aftermath of Wounded Knee II, as well as encounters with several federal law enforcement agencies.

difficult to characterize how existing literature applies to the hundreds of other Sovereign Nations and their ways of cosmology, not to mention their respective hundreds of distinct languages. The directionality of such a process is problematic at any rate, and in order to begin to comprehend a traditional AI worldview, the professions must break free from the tendency to force traditional AI ways into mainstream rubrics. The approach in this chapter aims to discuss some critical shortcomings of the *virtues* as presently conceptualized in an effort to identify areas of future learning from traditional AI communities and individuals. It should be noted that for this to occur in a genuine and meaningful manner, academics and practitioners will need to relinquish control and submit to being taught by the professionals who should take the lead in this endeavor—sanctioned traditional AI leaders—and this learning will often not mean an outcome of publication. Rather, the outcome will be the further development of the earnest academician or practitioners' individual personality, which should also have impact in their work product. It should also be noted that Peterson and Seligman's work is to be applauded; such is a difficult endeavor even for mainstream consumption.

8.10.2   Wisdom and Knowledge

To be sure, wisdom is valued among traditional AI peoples. It is viewed to be *correlated* rather than caused by knowledge-gathering, however; and traditional knowledge acquisition happens in a drastically divergent way from that of mainstream learning. The criterion of creativity (thinking of novel and productive ways to do things) is not relevant in regard to spiritual aspects in this worldview. The ways of ceremony and spiritual life for traditional peoples have origins and instructions that are meant to be adhered to as formulas of sorts. When those are diverted from, whether subtly or drastically, different outcomes occur than those intended.[6] This is one reason why non-sanctioned leaders and their ceremonies are terribly disruptive to cosmology, with concrete negative effects beyond cultural distortion and appropriation or subjugation. Sacred geometry literally holds the patterns of what is the whole of the universe. This is quite difficult for the mainstream mind to comprehend; therefore it is most often discarded as an untruth, mythology, or belief, and not a reality. If one can accept this truth however, then he/she can begin to fathom how the constructs of curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective are also innately entrenched in a mainstream, and often Christian-centric worldview that has little application for traditional AI persons.

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[6] Deloria's (2006) *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*, does an excellent job of presenting examples of such.

8.10.3   Courage

As presented in positive psychology presently, what is categorized as courage is framed differently within traditional AI worldview. Authenticity, bravery, persistence, and zest seem ill fitted for the kinship orientation that is traditional relational conduct. What is valued is respect for relationships, personal *heart*,[7] and humility. The courage *virtue* seems to tread dangerously in the realm of individuality—though perhaps one that also recognizes altruism. Authenticity in a traditional way has to do with fulfilling one's purpose, and few are recognized as holders of *truth*, though one is expected to be honest. Bravery is possibly one of the most misunderstood of traditional AI values. It does include not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain as framed currently in positive psychology, but has a weighty and rigorous focus inward for the individual, before it can ever be realized in connectivity/community. The strength of persistence as framed currently lacks the process focus of traditional worldview, with the *finish* of what one has started in living begins transformation to the next *place* (death). Further, persistence in completing obligations is a core element of kinship and traditional AI relational living, not a *strength*. Zest too, is a precarious fit for the traditional mind. As currently described, it is ill suited for ceremonial conduct and seems more appropriate for social interactions amongst kin. Regardless, all is energy no matter with what tone individuals behave. Again, it seems the closest traditional value would be that of *heart*.

8.10.4   Humanity

For the traditional AI worldview, having a value-set category of humanity is so strange that it approaches the absurd. The strengths of kindness, love, and social intelligence are the very fabric of relational living and worldview. Anything other than this creates imbalance. Further, the fact that this *virtue* category is languaged as oriented toward *human* is problematic, and speaks to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious focus and cultural encapsulation of the present state of positive psychology. Traditional AI worldview and cosmology recognize relationships to exponentially expansive degrees from the human-other/human-human orientation.

8.10.5   Justice

From a traditional perspective, justice *is* balance and reciprocity. The recent move toward restorative justice is a move (back) toward traditional Indigenous ways. The strength of fairness is innate in a traditional relational lifeway based upon kinship,

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[7] Cajete (2000) describes finding heart as "…the impassioned purpose and spirit essential in sustaining the effort needed to transform our lives" and argues that a critical task in this for modern humans involves mustering the "…fervor for evolving a true eco-cosmology…" (p. 288).

but its current focus in positive psychology on human experience is lacking to the traditional mind. It serves to fragment and imbalance accordingly. Leadership is a particular aspect of the traditional worldview that warrants its own entire text. Leaders among traditional persons are asked to serve based upon their recognition as such by the community. One's feeling of readiness or willingness to assume such a role often can have little consequence in whether it is expected of them or not. What is framed as teamwork is innate in relational living. Again, the focus on human relationships is dramatically lacking in its approach toward the Indigenous. Further, the time/space constraints of this idea of justice miss the dimensional seven-generation thinking of a traditional AI worldview.

8.10.6 Temperance

The *virtue* of temperance and its related *strengths* are heavily influenced by a Christian value set. This makes them very difficult to consider in relationship to the traditional AI worldview. Forgiveness as a construct has been previously addressed to some degree. The directionality of the *thing* is problematic at the outset, further all energy of thought or action influences all other energy/beings. This is a given in the traditional worldview. One cannot forgive for one's self without affecting all cosmology. Modesty as a construct is profoundly Christian in its orientation, when considered within a traditional framework—or even considered cross-culturally. Humility is a core value for most AI persons and the construct of modesty hardly begins to address this value. A lifetime of experiencing living, instructional stories is the route to humility. Prudence falls victim to the same troubles as its partner modesty. Careful choices and regulation of emotion are core outcomes of a lived traditional life. These are also frequently outcomes or behaviors by AIs that are mistakenly ascribed meaning by mainstream psychology as aloofness, low intelligence, stoicism, alexithymia, reticence to engage, distrust, and worse. For mainstream persons these behaviors are perhaps most often recognized (and misunderstood) in group communications and interactions, such as the classroom.

8.10.7 Transcendence

It may be that the *virtue* of transcendence and its related *strengths* miss the mark most entirely in relation to a traditional AI worldview. Traditional AI worldview places the mainstream construct of transcendence as a beginning point, rather than the end point. Given the non-compartmentalizing nature of AI languages, there can be no "beauty" or "non-beauty." All creation (therefore all) is beautiful in its living energy. Some energies merely exert power in differing roles. Thus there is also no "good" or "bad," there is just "being in purpose." Excellence is recognized in practice and plays a role in modeling, or lived observational learning. Gratitude is a lived

process of expression of one's role in the cosmos and an innate factor of relational worldview and kinship orientation that extends well beyond human beings. Daily living is an expression of the prayer of gratitude in a traditional AI lifeway. Hope as conceptualized in a mainstream orientation is limiting in a traditional worldview perspective. What is relevant however, is the idea that the energy of cognitions, emotions, and actions drive outcomes. What one must keep in mind is that all energy beings have roles and purposes and human hopes are often misguided and not oriented toward the seventh-generation perspective; a decision-making practice that requires consideration of the impact of a decision for seven generations forward and backward. Humor as delineated in positive psychology represents again only a fraction of its meaning and role in traditional AI worldview.

Deloria (1969) has written extensively on the role of humor for AI people, and it also acts as a social regulatory system. Social order is maintained through teasing and self-deprecation is practiced on an individual level as a sign of humility. Both processes avoid the need to publically sanction or embarrass the individual (which can also be collective). Whole Nations can practice inter-ethnic regulation amongst them through humor. Furthermore, the energy of joy is often used to counterbalance more dark or heavy energies (such as after a healing has taken place, and sometimes during). This practice is understood to also be undertaken by all creation.

It is apropos that this section end with the concept of religiousness. Oft times in the traditional community, a sanctioned AI spiritual leader can be heard clarifying that traditional persons do not practice religion, but a way of life. Certainly, having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life are congruent with this assertion, what is troubling is the influence of the New Age orientation toward religion and spirituality. Perhaps as a symptom of HT or generations of oppression, the mention of religion to many AI persons evokes an almost knee-jerk defensive reaction. There is expansive ground to be covered here between the cultures and in many ways psychology is not meeting the needs of many peoples. Non-AI academics have also made calls to move away from the medical model and disease oriented stance of the profession at large (e.g., Wampold, 2001). This will not take place until, as many suggest, psychology is able to engage in crucial self-reflection and temper its affinity for objectivism and relativism. Positive psychology has made an initial movement to more Indigenous ways of being in the world for mental health fields. Should we be able to set aside our personal and vocational cultural encapsulation and practice cultural humility, we may be able to submit to the learning of other professionals, sanctioned leaders who possess the knowledge of millennia of quality healthcare.

8.11 The Psychology of Interconnectedness: Balance Is Wellness

Tribal life is woven with the weft and warp of relational existence and self-knowledge. This traditional AI experience is one beyond what is accounted for by the recent well-being literature of present-day psychology, which focuses heavily on spiritual wellness

and self-awareness and mindfulness, and misses the whole of interconnectedness. When Abraham Maslow studied among the Blackfoot/Blood (Siksika) in the late 1930s examining dominance and emotional security, he learned that his Western constructs often had no meaning in that context. He found many of the ideas believed to be universal by psychology (e.g., the drive for position [power/dominance] and wealth, and a primary locus of control—internal or external), were irrelevant at best in the Blackfoot traditional cosmos. His most stark realizations came in respect to the psychological construct of emotional security. It was this work that would have the most significant impact on modern psychology, though it would remain largely hidden from the mainstream profession's psyche for many decades.

In endeavoring to understand emotional security among the Blackfoot, Maslow examined their traditional childrearing practices and was stunned to learn "that about eighty to ninety percent of the population must be rated about as high in ego security as the most secure individuals in our [own Western] society, who compromise perhaps five to ten percent at most" (p. 123). In fact, Maslow had intended to pilot a measure of secure persons among the Blackfoot and found it to be completely useless within the community in that the people were a model of emotional security—so much so that many of the participants found the questions on the measure strange, nonsensical, and humorously and bizarrely orientation toward imbalance—they laughed at him (Hoffman, 1988). What began to crystalize for Maslow during that time was the *humanity* of psychology, rather than the cultural-relativity in constructs he had expected to find. His work with the Blackfoot was a watershed moment in his professional journey regarding human development and personality—the journey of self-actualization.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model (1954) is now a staple element in psychological training; however, it remains encapsulated in a mainstream orientation in its unidirectionality. A psychology of interconnectedness is also much more than a belief that everything is connected, more than mind-body-spirit. It is more than human-animal-plant-mineral, or terrestrial-astral. And it is more than each of these connections to the others. A psychology of interconnectedness realizes the whole, and what is *actualized* in that infinite space which transcends time in our human perspective. This is an area in which most of psychology has not yet tread, and which some working in positive psychology have just begun to explore. Such concepts are also exceedingly difficult to render in a written forum, and further, this traditional AI knowledge was never meant to be written as it loses its effectiveness and meaning—it becomes something other. To illustrate this point, consider an example shared with the author by a friend, a sanctioned Navajo healer, Dr. Larry Emerson. In an effort to manage the impact of colonization on many AI peoples, the numbers of traditional AI language speakers has been declining steadily since Columbus' arrival. There are ceremonies, however, wherein the 'patient' can receive teachings from the spirits over the course of hours or days and obtain a full speaking and listening knowledge base of the Navajo language. These ceremonies take place in sacred *places*, wherein sanctioned and skilled healers open sacred *spaces* to create the learning process. Such realities are a hard-sell to the modern world, particularly the realm of psychological science.

The openness to accept this reality is essential though, to approach a full understanding of the psychology of interconnectedness. This process in a traditional AI perspective begins well before a child is born, with 'birth' being one transformation, and 'death' another, and the mainstream concept of time does not impose boundaries here. This worldview acknowledges and accepts the innate duality in all creation and living, and duality is a central theme of enculturation throughout the lived experience on Earth. Duality is not framed as positive/negative or good/bad, however, but as innate. It *is*, and with this all beings of all sorts endeavor to *be*. It is the struggle against this reality that often causes humans such misery. A lifetime of learning in relationship (interconnection) teaches the traditionally oriented AI person to come to know the duality and nature of interconnection. Enculturation in this way sets a stage for the human child to come to know *heart*, *purpose*, and *role* in one's life on Earth. There is a sense of license in one's life, and a direction or path. Should this path become unclear, the individual has a ready network from which to seek guidance—a human relative, a journey into the Earth to hear from other beings on one's own, or the consultation with a healer, for example.

A deeper rendering of the psychology of interconnectivity is outside the scope of this chapter. However, it is critical to note that the present format (a written one) is not the proper manner for the teaching of such things regardless, nor is the present author the properly sanctioned person to do such teaching in that way. Further, each Tribal Nation has its own articulated and comprehensive cosmology of inter-connectedness particular to the *place* and *role* each occupy. What is most relevant here is the acceptance that a lived psychology of interconnectedness struck one of the field's founding fathers as being so eloquently fine in its ability to develop emotionally secure, resilient human beings.

8.12 Positive Psychology in Indian Country

If one of the forefathers of the Humanistic and positive psychology movements is Abraham Maslow, then one can easily argue that those movements have origins in *Indian Country*. Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavy Head from Red Crow Community College—the first Tribal College in Canada—have documented the time Abraham Maslow spent with the Blackfoot peoples prior to publishing many of his seminal works. His Hierarchy of Needs model presents an inescapable resemblance to teepee designs, and his conceptualization of paradigms such as synergy and self-actualization, seem to clearly derive from his epiphanies while among the Blackfoot communities. Of course Maslow admittedly misinterpreted many of the Blackfoot ways. For example, he took sacred bundle transfer ceremonies to be lavish displays of wealth and/or generosity, according to Blood and Heavy Head. However, the two traditional academics (both bundle transfer rights holders themselves), reorient the directionality of this influence and point out the tremendous influence traditional AI peoples and their worldviews have had on the mainstream. This of course extends well beyond psychology. The U.S. Constitution and our organizational

structure of governance is likely the most familiar example of this for the general public, having been heavily modeled on Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) ways.

Interestingly, now psychologists and other helpers armed with these mainstream theories reenter Indian Country with an *interpretation* of the *original* traditional ways of wellness—ways that return to their places of origin, but are essentially transmuted. It is even more ironic that many even in Indian Country will receive these mainstream ways as gold-standard perspectives over Indigenous ways. This is the height of colonization, subjugation, and internalized oppression. At issue here, however, is the fact that after generations of forced assimilation policies within the Americas, many AI persons have become acculturated or assimilated in their worldviews. Such a perspective with its Christian framework may thus resonate as quite congruent for many AI people. For the traditionally-oriented though, this distortion will be received back as a sort of Frankenstein's monster. The balance of energy to this will come in the recognition of the influence traditional peoples have had on the mainstream consciousness, as well as the possibility for finding common ground in the days to come.

Currently, much of the work of positive psychology with AI peoples is focused on forgiveness research, despite the many challenges delineated earlier. A review of the literature on psychology and AIs seems to reflect two predominant AI populations contributing to this area of the field: AI survivors of Indian Boarding Schools and AI adolescents. It is likely that the best and most effective of these efforts in the future will integrate original (traditional) perspectives of the imbalances (disorders and 'negative' symptoms) experienced by these populations, as well as the means of recovery (healing) from such. It is also likely that these two distinct worldviews will never merge (nor should they in this writer's opinion), but perhaps the mainstream professions will continue their movement to a more Indigenous perspective of psychology. Given the forced Christianization that accompanied removal to boarding schools for AIs, it is ironic that a Christian forgiveness push moves to heal that trauma. McNutty and Fincham (2012) have made a case for moving past a theory of positive psychology, to simply a theory of *psychology*, one that fully integrates balancing elements apart from the medical model and disease orientation we currently espouse. According to Christopher and Hickenbottom (2008), this will require "vigilance to ensure that positive psychology does not become yet another form of disguised ideology that perpetuates the socio-political status quo and fails to do justice to the moral visions of those outside the reigning outlook" (p. 581). It is critical that the field continue to Indigenize and move toward a critical self-reflection, lest it also *die for Custer's sins*.[8] If we listen to the call of multicultural psychology,

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[8] Deloria (1969): "Some years ago we put out a bumper sticker which read "Custer Died for your Sins." It was originally meant as a dig at the National Council of Churches. But as it spread around the nation it took on additional meaning until everyone claimed to understand it and each interpretation was different. Originally, the Custer bumper sticker referred to the Sioux Treaty of 1868 signed at Fort Laramie in which the United States pledged to give free and undisturbed use of the lands claimed by Red Cloud in return for peace. Under the covenants of the Old Testament, breaking a covenant called for a blood sacrifice for atonement. Custer was the blood sacrifice for the United States breaking the Sioux treaty. That, at least originally, was the meaning of the slogan" (p. 147).

we realize that enough people have already suffered as a result of mainstream psychological orientations. Until the field moves toward a more humble understanding of its work with traditional AI persons, the populations will likely continue to shy away from engaging the profession—whether in practice, training, or research.

8.13   Training for a Psychology of Interconnectedness: A Call to the Field

It would be remiss to address so many disparate truths between traditional AI perspectives and mainstream psychology without affording some framework for beginning the work of indigenizing the profession—the work of interconnection. An Indigenously-oriented model has been proposed by Larry Emerson, Ph.D. (2006 unpublished), traditional healer (Diné Hataał łii), Doctor of Educational Philosophy, and Master's trained counselor. Emerson's Indigenous Model of Healing orients the unit of exploration (Bronfenbrenner's microsystem) in a more relational perspective. Like the Ecological Model, the Indigenous Model of Healing contains four concentric circles and places at its center the *Instructions Story* (Creation or other teachings) of the unit of exploration, which can be any 'unit' upon which one seeks to focus for healing (e.g., individual, family, Tribal Nation). From this origin, the process moves outward through three additional circles sequentially: *Colonial Effects, Decolonization, and the Imagined Future/Seventh Generation Thinking*. The C*olonial Effects* ring represents the impact of all outside pressures on a psychology of interconnectedness. The *Decolonization* ring represents the reorienting all of the issues being considered at hand (healing or desired change), toward a wholly relational, Indigenous perspective. The *Imagined Future/Seventh Generation Thinking* ring represents the consideration of all possible resolutions to the problem addressed through a relational, Indigenous framework grounded in the constructs of the center ring. This process minimally includes the consideration of each decision's impact for seven future generations.

The model includes two axes that transverse the concentric circles and also intersect one another. One axis addresses healing and mobilization, and the other transformation and self-determination. Emerson advocates fluidity of the axes, such that one can change the variables to meet the needs of the particular issues at hand. His model addresses Gone's (2010) call for a shift away from mainstream understandings to an Indigenous framework. The model also addresses the culture-centric needs of each distinct AI/AN person/community or unit of analysis/change. Emerson has utilized his model extensively to train AI/AN and non-Native educators and health professionals with excellent feedback; however, to date the model has not been afforded the rigor of mainstream scientific testing as an intervention. Still, it offers great promise. An adaptation of the Indigenous Model of Healing is presented here wherein an individual psychologist or trainee, or a larger group of professionals (e.g., department, professional organization, agency, etc.) can work through with a series of exercises to discern readiness to address work with traditional AI persons and communities.
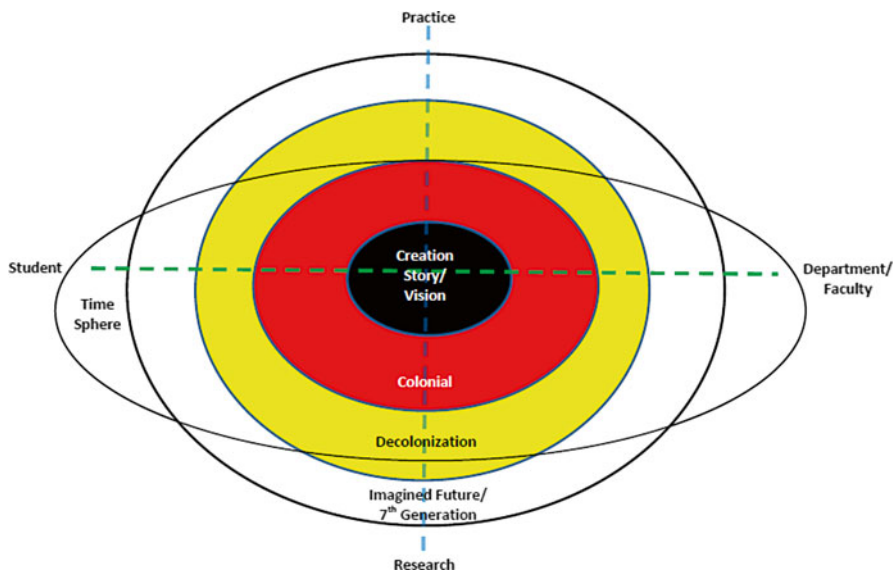
Fig. 8.1 Indigenous healing model—adaptation for counseling psychology

8.13.1   Healer, Heal Thy Self—And the Profession Will Follow

Figure 8.1 represents a proposed adaptation of Emerson's Indigenous Healing Model utilizing one axis labeled as *student and faculty/department*, and the other as *practice and research*, to capture the relational convergence and divergence in addressing psychology's response to wellness disparities. The practitioner or academic begins the process by orienting toward one's *own* core beliefs and worldview. For Indigenously-oriented professionals, this may mean re-grounding in, or learning for the first time, their Original Instructions stories. Imperative in the process is to work through the colonization effects on these core instructions (meanings) in consultation with persons who can challenge the mainstream lens through which one may see. A doctorate, for example, is a large investment in the mainstream worldview. For non-Indigenous professionals, this will mean digging deep into one's ethno-cultural values and history. One will need to also deconstruct the mainstream mission and vision statement of his/her vocation and particular educational and career settings.

This task is not to be underestimated and can represent a shift in worldview that some may experience as disorienting and troubling. Much akin to the therapy process, one can achieve best benefits when immersed in the process in a humble and open manner, and in this case, when guided by a tribally sanctioned expert. Finally, one can then proceed to weigh the issues at the level of considering the impact of his/her purpose in career and its congruence with the life path (Imagined Future/7th Generation), a process grounded in a social justice orientation.

Next, one may step to the level of the group as the 'unit' of healing (e.g., a department, an APA Division, etc.). When a group such as an academic department is placed at the center of the model, and only after individual faculty have endeavored in such process, one can examine directly the incongruence between mainstream education and ways of knowing with those Indigenous. This challenges our understandings of usual boundaries and roles in the profession, and offers a move to a more relational context—a psychology of interconnectedness. At this point academic advisors and clinical supervisors can perceive the skills and knowledge that trainees may have, which advisors or faculty may not. Students and trainees can then be seen in a reciprocal relationship of mutual learning that is active and transformative—a rotation of direction toward the Indigenous.

In this relational academic orientation, one begins to see the importance of building other relationships. Utility and meaning are found in taking the time (years) to build meaningful, trust-based relationships, and to reach out to sanctioned and traditional AI/AN groups, agencies, and academic organizations to move beyond the tendency to settle for those who interact with us in the more familiar *shadow* approaches to wellness—the ones that make us feel comfortable, safe, and unchallenged. In the truly challenging relationships and settings we find those who can help guide and contribute to such processes at the grassroots level, making possible change from the ground up. Rather than viewing truly sanctioned traditional experts as proto-professional in their practice of a proto-science, we can begin to recognize their extensive knowledge base and view them as cherished partners in the recruitment and retention of traditionally-minded AI/AN students, trainees, and professionals. In partnership then, we can work together toward justice for their populations regarding cancer care and research, and beyond.

Of equal importance is the fact that working through this process, individually or collectively, immerses the unit in the knowledge of colonization and its effects. An intimate knowledge begins to be developed of the history and structures that are causal and correlated with the serious disparities we find for AI/AN populations. Researchers and educators can thus begin to see the steady progression from research/education *on*, to research/education *for*, to research/education *with*, to research/education *by* AI/AN professionals. One can also begin to recognize what *sovereignty* means in the context of working in partnership with AI/AN populations.

A natural progression with the model then is to examine the 'unit' within the full context of the healing process (practice, research, social justice) within the fullest ecological perspective. Clarity can be realized regarding limitations to the mainstream lenses regarding healing within such populations—perhaps within all populations. The relational impact regarding historical and modern struggles becomes more concrete, less mysterious, less conceptual, and more preventable from a social justice and prevention orientation grounded in a deep understanding of the psychology of interconnectedness. In this insight it is clear that helping to prepare psychologists with Indigenous worldviews moves individuals and the profession to a point of AI/AN populations solving their own issues using their own knowledge bases and science. They conduct their own research using their ethno-cultural constructs (science) of wellness and healing, are owners of their data, and publish their own results as they please. They are afforded and take opportunities to exercise influence

over the training of their peoples, and also to work in partnership with the field at the government-to-government level to begin to repair the tangled web of health care in Indian Country. Since the orientation of such a process is relational, it becomes natural to work within an interdisciplinary framework to advocate around issues of national health policy from an inter-Tribal or international perspective. Finally, psychology can begin to prepare clinicians for the future who are capable of flexing cross-nationally and inter-governmentally in their worldview and perspectives and recognize humbly, their limitations around doing such in a more conscious manner than is the present state in the health care professions. Psychology ceases to be 'positive' or 'negative,' and becomes *human*. Rather than focusing on affecting our clients and/or trainees, it starts with us as academics and practitioners.

8.14   Afterword

Even for AI persons the prospect of working professionally from a mainstream perspective with sanctioned traditional AI leaders can pose challenges. We are required to face our own encapsulated worldviews, as well as navigate a tangle of systems to discern with whom to partner, under what circumstances, and upon whose authority. The endeavor presents many challenges yet to be addressed by the field in an articulated manner. Some reasonable advice is found in a variety of publications by professionals often outside of psychology itself. The following is a summary, along with some other "advice" that seems to have been useful for those working both in Tribal and urban AI communities. As with all the issues addressed in the chapter, there are no single solutions to any of the issues raised. Life is a journey of experiences and learning!

8.15   Partnering with Sanctioned Healers
and Spiritual Leaders

8.15.1   Investing Time

We must approach partnering with AI communities as worth relatives with a care for developing long-lasting, family-style relationships, and not be driven by grant time lines and academic calendars. This will challenge our vocational time perspectives about how long service, practice, and research should take. Trust is earned and deepens over time with genuine investment in relationship…forever.

8.15.2   Willingness to Submit

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of partnering with any traditional community for most practitioners within mainstream systems is that of humbling one's self. It can take much time to allow ourselves to deprogram, let our egos recede, and engage in

a humble listening and learning process. We must return to childhood again and surrender to being re-taught and accept that what we may think we know has actually no meaning in such endeavors (remember Maslow). We will have difficulty with relational reciprocity if we do not earnestly stretch the boundaries of our professional identities and engage in this process, and we also run the risk of over involvement from out professional guilt related to privilege. Gifting is a common coping strategy to which mainstream-minded professionals run for a sense of safety (back to Maslow's dominance constructs). Gifting is often appropriate in traditional AI settings, but must be managed through a cultural liaison for those working with unfamiliar communities. Mainstream generosity can easily manifest as extravagance for a traditional society focused on process and not product.

8.15.3 Sanctioning

Traditional AI ways of recognizing leadership, competency, and responsibility are very different than those of the mainstream. Self-promotion is not a core value of traditional and spiritual leadership. In our times when all sorts of services are advertised on Facebook pages and web sites, this may be a difficult concept to grasp. While reciprocity is an important concept in healing and all relationships, material profit is not. Charging for ceremonies is a significant warning sign of a lack of sanctioning in that certain practice. This is not to say that healers are (or should be) expected to travel great distances on their own funds, or provide all the resources for such ceremonies. In their original system, healers and leaders were provided for by their communities, or the communities of the people who sought their help. In many areas this is no longer possible in the same manner, and providing financially for these practitioners is relevant and appropriate (as we would pay our doctor's bill). But the central issue here is one of reciprocity—balance. This can be a conundrum for AI and non-AI persons alike. Deloria (1994) also points out another issue prevalent in sanctioning:

> Today an alleged shaman can explain his or her absence from the reservation or absence of Indian blood with the excuse that after being trained by elders, the individual has then been authorized and commanded to go among all peoples and preach the Indian gospel. It seems that this surplus of shamans could severely tax the credibility of these practitioners. How can there be so many medicine people who have been commissioned to hold ceremonies for non-Indians while their own people suffer without religious ministrations?…[A] clever answer to this question…are "pipe carriers," an office that has rather hazy historical and cultural antecedents. No definition is ever given of the exact duties of the pipe carrier except that he or she can perform all the ceremonies that a shaman can perform without being called to account when nothing happens. "This status is just what non-Indians needed to avoid the accusation that they are practicing traditional ceremonies without any real knowledge or understanding of Indian ways". (p. 43)

Working with AI communities to identify sanctioned and qualified healers and spiritual leaders is a time-intensive process. Such persons have different areas of focus or specialty, and different communities have different healing traditions. There are no clear processes to go about this, but working through Tribal language

and/or cultural committees or departments can often provide a good start. In off-reservation areas, urban AI centers may be able to provide similar resources. In some areas, societies of healers have organized in order to facilitate access to sanctioned and qualified persons. Tribes and urban centers can often help guide seekers to such resources. It is also appropriate to humbly discuss, learn, and verify the practitioner's lineage and parameters of practice. This is akin to a psychology's demonstration of doctoral credentials and areas of focus and training and is not an affront to any legitimate practitioner.

8.15.4   Integration of Techniques

The integration of AI techniques of healing should not be practiced by psychologists or other helpers, unless that individual is traditionally trained and sanctioned by those in authority to do so. Representing techniques as such is ethically troubling at best, and may infringe on the federally protected rights of such populations addressed in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act No. 95-341, 92 Stat. 469 (Aug. 11, 1978). It is encouraged that clinicians focus on their profession of training and licensure, and endeavor to partner with traditional AI doctors in a team treatment model, rather than attempt to ad hoc the skill set of other professionals. There are many good resources for guidance in these partnership, with the Diné Hataał łii Association (Navajo medicine persons society), the Gray Eagle Society of the Lakota, and the Alaska Native Medical Center's Department of Traditional Healing in Anchorage, AK as just a few examples.

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Part II
Variations in the Paths to Positivity and Religiosity

Chapter 9
Religiosity and Subjective Well-Being: An International Perspective

Louis Tay, Miao Li, David Myers, and Ed Diener

Psychologists hotly debate whether religion enhances the subjective well-being (SWB) of individuals and societies. This issue becomes particularly salient considering that a substantial majority (68 % of people worldwide) of people say that religion is important in their daily lives (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011). Among skeptics and atheists, religion has been viewed as being irrelevant, or even pathological and socially detrimental (e.g., Dawkins, 2006; Hitchens, 2007). George Bernard Shaw, for instance, mocked that "a believer may be happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact that a drunk is happier than a sober man." Countering this, some evolutionists have argued that religion is adaptive, nurturing morality and social cohesion, both of which are found to promote well-being (Wade, 2010; Wright, 2009). Nevertheless, even such prominent religious leaders as Martin Luther have argued that religion can bring suffering. Luther stated that "a religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing." (cited in Rodrigues & Harding, 2009, p. 133)

Clearly, it is difficult to draw conclusions based on rhetoric alone. As such, we turn to growing scientific evidence for the religiosity-SWB link across societies and cultures. We review studies on religiosity and SWB published in the last

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decade in order to determine whether religiosity and SWB are related across different social contexts.

In this chapter, we first define the constructs of interest: religiosity and subjective well-being.

Second, we discuss current findings on religiosity and SWB from Western industrialized nations. These studies show a positive relation between religiosity and SWB.

Third, we report on international studies of the relation between religiosity and SWB. The findings point to a pan-cultural positive relation.

Fourth, we present contextual issues in the religiosity-SWB link. Recent findings show that difficult societal circumstances may drive religiosity and lower societal SWB. However, religiosity appears to buffer the negative effects of difficulties. Further, there is evidence of social norm effects: religious individuals benefit more from religiosity in religious contexts but less so in less religious contexts.

In the final section, we identify gaps in the current literature that future research can address.

9.1 Defining the Constructs: Religiosity and Subjective Well-Being

Pargament (1999) defined religion as a broadband construct encompassing several dimensions, including:

- external-internal: institutionalized religion (e.g., Catholic church) or interiorized religion;
- substantive-functional: substantive meaning of religious practices and beliefs or the pragmatic functional derivatives of such practices; and
- positive-negative: evaluations of religion.

In this chapter, we use the term religion in its totality in discussing religiosity. For our purposes, religiosity is adherence to or participation in religion as broadly defined by Pargament (1999). This includes attending religious services, or viewing religion as important to one's life.

Subjective well-being refers to cognitive and affective components of human wellness (Diener, 1984, 2000). The cognitive component of SWB is generally regarded as life evaluations; that is, thinking about whether one's life is doing well. The affective component consists of positive and negative feelings where more positive and less negative feelings are indicative of higher SWB.

9.2 Evidence from the United States and Other Western Industrialized Societies

Substantial evidence on the religiosity-SWB link stems from the United States and Western industrialized nations. Within this context, there exists strong evidence that greater religiosity is associated with greater physical and mental wellness.

In a review, Myers (2000) presented data showing that religiosity was related to lower levels of suicide and alcohol abuse. Further, among 49,941 Americans sampled by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), self-reported happiness varied from 26 % "very happy" among those never attending religious services up to 48 % among those attending more than weekly. Since this review, other large scale studies and quantitative reviews have confirmed the positive relation between religiosity and well-being.

Research shows that religiosity predicts better physical health. A longitudinal study based on data from the Terman Life Cycle Study of Children with High Ability found that religiousness was related to women's longevity (McCullough, Friedman, Enders, & Martin, 2009). This was attributable in part to greater mental and physical well-being. A quantitative synthesis of 42 longitudinal studies found that greater religiosity lowered all-cause mortality (McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, & Thoresen, 2000). Religious individuals were more likely to be alive at a later point than non-religious people.

Other new evidence confirms an association between religious engagement and positive emotions. In a United States Gallup poll of about 350,000 individuals, religiosity correlated with positive life evaluations ($r=.06$, $p<.001$) and positive feelings such as experiencing enjoyment, smiling, and laughing ($r=.06$, $p<.001$) (Diener et al., 2011). A meta-analysis of 147 empirical studies – comprising European American and European participants as a majority – showed that greater religiosity was related to lower depression (effect size $=-.10$; uncorrected for unreliability) (Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003). This effect was not moderated by gender, age, or ethnicity.

Despite these robust findings, many of these studies are based on samples that are Western industrialized societies (see Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Moreover, sociologists of religion have suggested that different religious cultures may have different consequences for individual well-being. Consider, for example, Durkheim's classic thesis on the different implications for well-being attributable to Protestant or Catholic culture. In this early work, SWB was objectively operationalized as suicide. Catholic societies had lower suicide rate than Protestant societies. This begs the question of whether religiosity across cultures uniformly enhances SWB. In the next section, we look at the evidence for pan-cultural positivity in international samples.

9.3 Pan-Cultural Positivity?

In this section, we consider the relation between religiosity and SWB at the individual and nation level. This is in line with a multilevel perspective of SWB, which emphasizes that observed relations may not have equal strength of association across levels of analysis (e.g., Tay & Kuykendall, 2013). This is because the mechanisms underlying the relation between religiosity and SWB are primarily psychological at the individual level, but structural and collective effects of religiosity may exert different effects on SWB. To illustrate, high religiosity of an individual may be

tied to inner peace that brings about SWB, whereas collective religiosity of a nation may lead to greater intolerance, which lowers aggregate SWB. There is growing evidence of a "religious engagement paradox": religious engagement seems to correlate *negatively* with SWB across countries and states (before adjusting for economic contexts), but *positively* across *individuals* within many countries (Myers, 2012). We present possible mechanisms linking religiosity and SWB and summarize empirical research findings at the different levels.

9.3.1   Individual-Level

There are strong conceptual reasons why religiosity would promote SWB across cultures. There is increasing evidence that there exists inherent universal human needs (such as the need to belong) that, when fulfilled, enhance SWB (Maslow, 1943; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tay & Diener, 2011). This psychological perspective may be traced back to evolutionary roots (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010). Such a view is also shared by sociologists who recognize essential qualities for societal flourishing (e.g., Veenhoven, 2008; Veenhoven & Ehrhardt, 1995).

Religiosity serves functions that fulfill inherent human needs. These functions include greater purpose and meaning in life (e.g., Chamberlain & Zika, 1992), higher levels of social support and social capital (e.g., Park, 2007), and positive coping strategies when facing loss or difficulties (e.g., gratitude, prayer, forgiveness) (e.g., Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Sedikides and Gebauer (2013) provided a more expansive claim stating that "religiosity entails remarkable compensatory potential. It allows the faithful to fulfill fundamental self-needs: self-esteem, control, uncertainty reduction, and meaning (connected with the individual self), attachment (connected with the collective self), and social belonging (connected with the collective self). Need fulfillment is associated with improved psychological adjustment in cultures that particularly value religion".

A literature search based on the PsycINFO database was performed in order to locate the relevant empirical studies that had used international samples published in the last decade (2000–2013). To locate pertinent research, we used key words such as "religion" or "religiosity" and "well-being", "happiness", or "health" (for mental health). We screened research using three criteria: (1) the study should explicitly focus on one or more subjective aspects of well-being as dependent variable; (2) the study should include one or more aspects of individual/contextual religiosity as independent variable; and (3) the work should be a peer-reviewed quantitative empirical analysis or general review. Out of an initial sample of 181 articles, 12 articles used international samples.

Table 9.1 shows 12 studies from a variety of countries such as Algeria, Brazil, China, Iran, Israel, Kenya, Kuwait, Mexico, and South Africa. Sampling of the participants were primarily convenience-based but a few studies had broader samples (e.g., multistage random samples of geographic areas or national random samples). Different measures of religiosity were used in the studies, including support from

religious leaders and community, religious affiliation, level of religiosity, strength of religious belief, religious coping, and prayer. Across these diverse measures, we find that there are more studies that show a positive relation (10 studies) between religiosity and SWB than not (1 study with negative effects; 1 study with null effects). Overall, this strongly suggests that there exists a positive relation between religiosity and SWB in different nations.

9.3.2 Nation-Level

While the primary mechanism for religiosity and SWB is need fulfillment at the individual level, there are other mechanisms which may enhance or attenuate religiosity effects. One possibility is that comparatively happy religious individuals may raise national SWB by benefitting the SWB of others around them. This is because many religions are also concerned with social action – to help and promote the welfare of others. For example, the Salvation Army focuses on serving and providing relief to the needy (Gariepy, 2009).

Religiosity and spirituality fosters morality and virtues such as gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, and compassion (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These strengths clearly serve intrapsychic purposes for enhancing personal SWB. For instance, practicing gratitude has been shown to improve long-term SWB (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005); forgiving others is linked to higher levels of life evaluations and optimism (Allemand, Hill, Ghaemmaghami, & Martin, 2009). Yet, these virtues also serve interpersonal purposes; they are fundamentally prosocial and serve to benefit others. One prime example is forgiveness, which helps restore relationships (McCullough, 2000).

Religiosity increases altruistic behaviors, such as volunteerism and donations. This has the potential of enhancing the SWB of the collective as observed on a national scale. We studied 450,000 individuals from the Gallup World Poll (Diener et al., 2011) and found that religiosity (indexed by importance of religion and religious attendance) was positively related to reported behaviors of volunteerism ($r=.07$), donations ($r=.08$), and helping a stranger ($r=.10$). These effects were even stronger (partial $rs=.10-.11$) when controlling for household income, suggesting that when resources to help were equalized, religiosity plays a substantial role (combined partial $r=.15$); this effect was even larger at the societal level (partial $r=.30$).

On the other hand, high religiosity in a nation may also be associated with losses in freedoms that are necessary ingredients for SWB. In such nations, there may be socio-political structures that restrict specific freedoms. Freedom is a proximal factor for national SWB (Inglehart, 2000; Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, & Welzel, 2008). Indeed, there is partial evidence for this line of thinking. Analyses of the GWP showed that higher levels of religiosity in a nation was associated with lower satisfaction with perceived freedom ($r=-.22$, $p<.01$) though these effects were no longer significant (partial $r=-.02$) when controlling for the difficulty of circumstances.

Table 9.1 Studies on religion and subjective well-being in non-Western contexts

Study	Design	Sample	Country	SWB outcomes measured	Religiosity measures	Association between religiosity and SWB	Evidence
Abdel-Khalek, A. M.	Cross sectional	A convenience sample of Kuwait university undergraduates; sample size: 224	Kuwait	The Arabic version of the World Health Organization QOL scale-Bref (WHOQOL-Bref); self-rating scales of physical health, mental health, happiness, and life satisfaction	Self-rated level of religiosity; self-rated strength of religious belief	Both measures of religiosity are positively correlated with all measures of well-being except for self-rated health	Positive
Abdel-Khalek, A. M.	Cross sectional	A convenience sample of Kuwaiti university undergraduates; sample size: 2,210	Kuwait	Global happiness	Self-rated level of religiosity	Religiosity accounted for around 15 % of the variance in predicting happiness	Positive
Abdel-Khalek, A. M.	Cross sectional	A probability sample of Muslim Kuwaiti adolescents; sample size: 6,339	Kuwait	Global happiness; self-rated mental health and physical health; Kuwait University Anxiety Scale; CES-D Scale	Self-rated level of religiosity	Religiosity is positively correlated with happiness, mental and physical health, while negatively correlated with anxiety and depression	Positive
Abdel-Khalek, A. M. and Naceur, F.	Cross sectional	A convenience sample of Muslim college students; sample size: 244	Algeria	Global happiness; self-rated mental health and physical health; Arabic Scale of Optimism and Pessimism; Kuwait University Anxiety Scale	Self-rated level of religiosity	For men, religiosity is positively correlated with mental health. For women, religiosity is positively correlated with physical health, mental health, happiness, satisfaction with life, and optimism, while negatively correlated with anxiety and pessimism	Positive

Aflakseira, A. and Coleman, P.G.	Cross sectional	A sample of disabled war veterans of the Iran–Iraq; sample size: 78	Iran	General mental health; PTSD	Religious coping scale	Religious coping positively affects general mental health and PTSD	Positive
Blay et al.	Cross sectional	A multistage, random sample in nine homogeneous areas covering the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; sample size: 7,920	Brazil	Tobacco use; alcohol use; depression	Religious affiliation, religious change, religious importance, and religious participation	Religious participation reduced the risk of depression	Positive
Brown and Tierney	Cross sectional	Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey; sample size: 9,619	China	Life quality evaluation	Religious participation	Religious participation is negatively associated with SWB, and such association is stronger for men than for women	Negative
Francis, L.J., Katz, Y., Yablon, Y., and Robbins, M.	Cross sectional	A sample of male Hebrew speaking undergraduate students; sample size: 203	Israel	Happiness	Katz–Francis Scale of Attitude toward Judaism	Religiosity is positively related to happiness	Positive
Kodzi et al.	Cross sectional	Longitudinal Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System; sample size: 2,524	Kenya	Composite index for quality of life	Religious affiliation	Religious participation is positively associated with SWB	Positive

(continued)

Table 9.1 (continued)

Study	Design	Sample	Country	SWB outcomes measured	Religiosity measures	Association between religiosity and SWB	Evidence
Lazar, A. and Bjorck, J.P.	Cross sectional	A convenience sample of religious Jewish persons residing in Israel; sample size: 277	Israel	Anxiety; life satisfaction; perceived health	Perceived support from religious community, religious leaders, and God	Support from religious leaders and God support are related to lower anxiety; support from religious leader and religious community relate to a higher level of life satisfaction; support from religious community and God are related to better perceived health	Positive
Copeland-Linder, N.	Cross sectional	A random sample of Black women in a South African township; sample size: 172	South Africa	Depressive symptomatology	Formal religious affiliation; prayer	Formal religious affiliation buffers negative effects of stress on physical health; Prayer buffers the effects of stress on depressive symptomatology	Positive
Mazidi, M. and Ostovar, S.	Cross sectional	A random sample of high school students from four high schools in Shiraz, Iran; sample size: 119	Iran	Somatic symptoms; anxiety; social dysfunction; and depression	Religious affiliation	Religious affiliation is significantly associated only with lower somatic symptoms	None

This suggests that while national religiosity is related to lower satisfaction with perceived freedoms, it may not be the prime driver of loss of freedoms.

As found by Diener et al. (2011), after controlling for societal contexts such as economic factors and longevity, multilevel nation-level results showed that religiosity was related to positive feelings ($\omega = .22$, $p < .01$) but also predicted higher negative feelings ($\omega = .24$, $p < .01$), although it was not associated with life satisfaction ($\omega = .02$, *ns*). This suggests that religiosity may exert positive and negative main effects on SWB at the societal level. Above and beyond psychological mechanisms, this may be a result of positive prosocial behaviors associated with religiosity but also negative socio-political structures that inhibit freedoms. Nevertheless, democratization and freedoms appear to flow from increased wealth and prosperity (Inglehart et al., 2008), but religious nations are generally poorer and thus enjoy less freedoms so there is a substantial confound.

9.3.3   Summary

Overall, there is good evidence at both the individual and national level showing that religiosity is related to higher SWB, *ceteris paribus*. One interesting finding is that greater national religiosity is also associated with higher negative feelings. This also conforms to the religious engagement paradox where there is a robust association between individual religiosity and SWB but a negative association at the nation level. We have proposed that higher national religiosity may stifle freedoms but more research will be required to further examine this issue.

9.4   Contextual Moderators

There is now evidence showing that religiosity enhances SWB in the backdrop of difficult circumstances (Diener et al., 2011). We found that difficult circumstances predicted greater religiosity. Further, in societies with relative great difficulties, religious individuals enjoyed greater SWB levels on all fronts.

There may be a dual process leading to interweaving of difficulties, religiosity, and SWB. First, difficult circumstances may encourage religiosity. William James (1902) argued that psychological difficulties such as stress, despair, and guilt precede religious conversion. Contemporary research reveals a similar trend. Across the world, the relation between difficulties (e.g., low income and education, widespread hunger, etc.,) and religiosity is positive and significant at both the individual level ($r = .29$) and the country level ($r = .65$) (Diener et al., 2011).

Second, because difficulties and religiosity co-occur, the observed positive effects of religiosity on SWB may be manifestations of buffering effects – religious individuals have higher SWB because difficulties less often overwhelm them and lower their SWB. Therefore when we statistically control for context, we find

that the inverse relation between religiosity and SWB (a large part caused by negative situations) becomes modestly positive (Diener et al., 2011).

Across societies, we also find evidence of social norm effects. Social norm effects occur when religious individuals enjoy higher levels of SWB as compared to non-religious people in more religious nations than less religious nations (e.g., Fulmer et al., 2010). One mechanism for social norm effects is that as more individuals enter religion, there is greater climate for religiosity which enhances religious capital. As such, religious individuals gain more in a religious context than in a non-religious context. Religious contexts did moderate the relation between religiosity and SWB. In religious societies, there was strong evidence that religious individuals had higher levels of both cognitive and affective SWB; but in less religious nations, these gains were not evident or even reversed (Diener et al., 2011).

Finally, religious regulation could also modify the expected positive association between individual religiosity and SWB. Based on a cross-sectional analysis of 65 countries, Elliot and Hayward (2009) found that "the association between participation in organized religion and life satisfaction is positive under conditions of low government regulation, is attenuated as government regulation increases, and becomes negative when government regulation is high" (p. 285). Drawing on self-categorization theory, they theorize that self-identification with a religious group promotes individual SWB by fostering a shared sense of self and a positive self-stereotyping. The governmental (or societal) restriction on religious freedom would render religious involvement less voluntary and less reflecting individual's true self, and therefore attenuate the positive association between religious identity and SWB.

9.5   Future Research Directions

Across different measures and diversity of samples, we found good evidence for the pan-cultural positivity of religiosity and SWB. Nevertheless, from our review, we find that evidence for pan-cultural positivity is primarily limited in several ways. First, most studies examine religiosity as an aggregate-variable (i.e., use the average level of religiosity within a region or nation). Yet, aggregated levels of religiosity only furnish one type of contextual information. It remains to be seen how religious heterogeneity, defined either as differences in religious views or variability in religiosity, may be associated with SWB. It is possible to hypothesize two contradicting SWB consequences of religious heterogeneity. First, it may strengthen the association between individual religiosity and SWB. Higher religious heterogeneity, according to the social capital literature, poses a threat to social cohesion. In societies with less social cohesion, religion may be particularly beneficial for providing bonds based on common beliefs and shared activities. Or, alternatively, religious heterogeneity may attenuate the religiosity-SWB association by (1) cognitively challenging the "plausibility structure" of one's faith and (2) creating intergroup tension/conflict/mistrust.

Second, many of the studies use cross-sectional type designs. This occurred in both Western and international context. As such, it is difficult to know the casual direction. Preliminary evidence appears to point to the effect of religiosity on SWB. Recent studies based on longitudinal data have shown that "individuals who become more religious over time record long term gains in life satisfaction, while those who become less religious record long term losses" (Headey, Schupp, Tucci, & Wagner, 2010). Apart from the issue of causality, longitudinal designs are important because both religiosity and SWB are constantly changing over the life course, and SWB is influenced by religious experiences in earlier stages of life (Elder, 1995), including religious conversion, religious switching, religious apostasy, and various trajectories of religious growth.

Further, the impact of individual religious experiences on subsequent SWB may depend on a large extent on their timing in one's life course. For instance, religious involvement in one's childhood may have a life-long impact on one's perception of life meaning, life style, social network, and therefore factor into SWB of later life. Religious apostasy in middle or later life could be particularly stressful in that it may incur extensive sanctions from one's religious network built up over the years.

9.6 Conclusion

To what extent does religiosity associate with SWB? Evidence from Western nations and across the world suggests that there is a small albeit consistent positive relation. Yet, the extent to which it is positive appears to be moderated by the level-of-analysis, as reflected in the religious engagement paradox. Further, there are potential contextual moderators such as life circumstances, difficulty of societal circumstances, social norm effects, and religious regulation that can impact this relationship. We hope that future research can examine these moderators and use longitudinal designs to determine the directionality of the religiosity-SWB relationship.

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Chapter 10
Religious/Spiritual Meaning Systems: Multiple Pathways to Well-Being

Crystal L. Park and Amy Hale

Meaning systems are the cognitive frameworks of beliefs and goals through which people view the world. They are one important way by which broader cultures are transmitted to individuals within those cultures. Religiousness and spirituality are often thoroughly integrated into individuals' meaning systems, and through this integration, specific cultural beliefs and motivations regarding the broadest elements of existence are conveyed. This chapter focuses on religious and spiritual meaning systems and their links with well-being. Importantly, although different aspects of religious and spiritual meaning systems have been shown to relate to many aspects of well-being, the specific pathways linking religious and spiritual beliefs and goals have not been thoroughly explored. In this chapter, we describe meaning systems, specifically religious and spiritual meaning systems. We then propose five pathways through which these meaning systems may affect well-being, evaluate relevant evidence for these pathways, and suggest directions for future research.

10.1 Meaning Systems

Meaning systems are overarching frameworks of beliefs and goals through which people structure their lives and assign meanings to specific situations. Global meaning comprises two basic aspects, beliefs and goals (Park & Folkman, 1997). Global beliefs are the broad assumptions that people make regarding their human nature and their identity as well as their understanding of other people and the universe, including fairness, justice, control, and benevolence (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Koltko-Rivera, 2004). Global goals refer to people's motivations, purposes

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for living, choices of aims, standards for judging behavior, and basis for self-esteem. Global goals are ideals, states, or objects towards which people work or seek to maintain or even to avoid (Karoly, 1999; Klinger, 1998).

10.2 Religious Meaning Systems

In the United States, the vast majority of Americans attend religious services at least monthly, pray at least daily, state that religion is a very important part of their lives, and believe in heaven, hell, angels, demons, and miracles (e.g., Pew Forum, 2008; see Slattery & Park, 2012). Studies conducted in other countries report lower levels of religion and spirituality than those found in the US, but these figures are still fairly high (e.g., Hank & Schaan, 2008; Williams & Sternthal, 2007). Zuckerman (2005) reported that worldwide, about 85 % of people report having some form of religious belief, with only 15 % describing themselves as atheist, agnostic, or nonreligious. Clearly not all individuals are religious or spiritual, but religion and spirituality appear to form a central part of the meaning systems of many individuals (Park, 2013). Although most of the research has been conducted with Christian samples in the U.S., researchers are now expanding this scope (Park & Paloutzian, 2013), and religion/spirituality has been shown to be central to the meaning systems of people affiliated with many other religions (e.g., Rosmarin, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2009).

Research in the psychology of religion and spirituality has proceeded apace in recent years (Paloutzian & Park, 2013), yet many researchers persist in overlooking, minimizing, or altogether ignoring this important influence on human behavior (Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones, & Shafranske, 2013). Psychologists' and other social scientists' lack of attention to the high levels of religious interest and behavior in the lives of many people renders an incomplete and impoverished understanding of human nature.

Religious meaning systems are well-suited to provide global meaning. For example, Hood and colleagues (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009) identified four criteria by which religion is uniquely capable of providing global meaning: comprehensiveness, accessibility, transcendence, and direct claims. Comprehensiveness refers to the vast scope of issues that religion can subsume, including beliefs about the world (e.g., human nature, social and natural environment, the afterlife), contingencies and expectations (rewards for righteousness and punishment for doing evil), goals (e.g., benevolence, altruism, supremacy), actions (e.g., compassion, charity, violence) and emotions (e.g., love, joy, peace) (Hood et al., 2009; Silberman, 2005). Religion is accessible in that it is widely disseminated and available to all, and it comes in many forms, so that people can find ways of being religious or spiritual that best suits them (Hood et al., 2009). Religions provide opportunities for people to transcend their own concerns or experience and connect with something greater. Finally, religions make bold and authoritative claims regarding their ability to provide a sense of significance. Collectively, these characteristics lend religion the unmatched ability to serve as the source of global meaning systems (Hood et al., 2009).

For many people, religion is at the core of their meaning systems, informing their beliefs about the self, the world, and their interaction (McIntosh, 1995; Ozorak, 2005). Religion provides a framework through which knowledge and experience can be interpreted (Hefner, 1997; Silberman, 2005), and brings meaning to a variety of mundane secular activities (Mahoney et al., 2005; Schweiker, 1969). It also serves as a central goal or motive for many individuals (Allport, 1950), infusing other goals with purpose (Baumeister, 1991; Pargament, 1997), and can provide motivation for living (Krause, 2003) as well as prescriptions and guidelines for achieving goals (Park & Slattery, 2009).

10.2.1   Religion and Global Beliefs

When religion is incorporated into people's global meaning systems, their understanding of God or of the divine (e.g., as loving and benevolent, punishing, or uninvolved) will inform their beliefs about the nature of people (e.g., inherent goodness, made in God's image, Original Sin), this world (e.g., the coming apocalypse, the illusory nature of reality) as well as, perhaps, the next (e.g., Heaven, reincarnation) (McIntosh, 1995; Silberman, 2005).

Religion is the core of many individuals' identities in terms of how they understand themselves as a religious or spiritual being (e.g., as unworthy of God, as chosen; Pargament, 1997; Slattery & Park, 2012) as well as their social identification with a religious group (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Religious identity can also provide a source of self-esteem and even moral superiority (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010).

In addition to explicitly religious beliefs, religion can inform and influence other global beliefs, such as in fairness, control, coherence, benevolence of the world and other people, and vulnerability (Koltko-Rivera, 2006–2007). For example, Janoff-Bulman and Frantz (1997) noted, "Theories of deservingness generally encompass many religious perspectives, which enable believers to perceive meaning through the expectations of rewards and punishments that may be considerably delayed, such as one's fate after death" (p. 93). One set of global beliefs shaped by religious meaning systems are those related to human suffering.

A plethora of religious systems inform individuals' global beliefs about why suffering occurs, what can be done about it, and what peoples' roles are in the midst of suffering. For example, Hall and Johnson (2001) note that one influential Christian viewpoint holds that goodness can occur only where evil also exists, particularly those aspects of goodness that an individual develops through suffering because of evil, such as patience, mercy, forgiveness, endurance, faith, courage, and compassion (Hall & Johnson, 2001). Within this meaning system, a traumatic experience can be framed as an opportunity to grow through one's suffering (e.g., to build one's soul, to become more Christ-like, to grow in agape love; Hall & Johnson, 2001). Another solution may be to view suffering as necessary for reaching future goals, such as the ultimate one of salvation (Baumeister, 1991).

10.2.2   Religion and Global Goals

Religion is central to the life purposes of many people, providing ultimate motivation and primary goals for living as well as prescriptions and guidelines for achieving those goals (e.g., Baumeister, 1991; Pargament, 1997). All major religions provide adherents with a detailed set of guidelines for how to live their lives, including major and minor goals and methods for accomplishing them (Geertz, 1966/1973; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). Ultimate goals can include connecting to God or the sacred; living an altruistic life serving others; achieving enlightenment; finding salvation; or experiencing the transcendent (Emmons, 1999; Pargament, Magyar-Russell, & Murray-Swank, 2005). Additional goals can be derived from these superordinate ones, such as having peace of mind, working for peace and justice in the world, devoting oneself to one's family, or creating a strong sense of community with other believers. It should be noted that people sometimes embrace negative religion-related goals, such as supremacy and destruction (see Moghaddam, Warren, & Love, 2013).

Some goals are explicitly religious or spiritual, but any goal may become connected to the sacred through the process of sanctification, linking that goal to one's concep-tualization of the sacred (Pargament et al., 2005). Examples of sanctification range from the dramatic to the mundane: acts of war or violent meting out of justice have been presented as sanctified activities by many religions, as have playing sports and parenting (Froese & Mencken, 2009; Lynn, 2008; Mencken, Bader, & Embry, 2009; Volling, Mahoney, & Rauer, 2009).

Related to goals are values, broad preferences about the worth of ultimate goals and the appropriate courses of action to achieve those goals. Values are the guidelines that individuals use to determine worth, importance, or correctness (Roccas, 2005) and reflect a person's sense of right and wrong. Values guide decision-making regarding one's behavior in the course of achieving goals. Religion is an extremely potent source of values for individuals as well as for entire cultures, supplying a framework for determining what is right and good and to be pursued, and what is wrong and bad and to be avoided (Baumeister, 1991). Religions are in an unusually esteemed position to determine or establish these criteria of right and wrong and good and bad; they may, in fact, be the most powerful source of values in many cultures (Baumeister, 1991; see Saroglou & Cohen, 2013).

Cross-cultural research on values has found that those countries in which people reported highly valuing certainty, self-restraint, and submission over superior external truths also demonstrated higher reports of religiousness, while citizens in countries valuing openness to change and free self-expression reported less religiousness (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995). Extending this line of inquiry to focus specifically on measures of religiousness, researchers have found that religion/spirituality was associated with greater emphasis on values of benevolence and lower emphasis on self-direction, self-development, and hedonism (Saroglou & Munoz-Garcia, 2008).

Religious motivations can be quite revealing regarding global meaning—what religious ends do people pursue, and by what means? Are people drawn to engage in

religion as a rewarding endeavor or driven to engage in it out of fear (Jackson & Francis, 2004)? Much research on this topic has used the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction (Allport & Ross, 1967), in which intrinsic religiousness refers to motivation to be religious for its own sake, while extrinsic religiousness refers to being religious as a way to gain other ends such as comfort or social standing. This distinction has been useful in understanding religious motivation (Francis, Lewis, & Robbins, 2010) but has also proven to be too simplistic (Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990). For example, people often have both intrinsic and extrinsic motives for their religious behaviors, and can be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated for many different religious ends.

Global goals are pursued through a variety of lower level, more concrete strivings. Strivings refer to the recurrent or ongoing goals that a person characteristically tries to attain or maintain. According to Emmons and Schnitker (2013), spiritual strivings refer to goals involving self-transcendence and ultimate questions of meaning and existence. Prototypic of these types of strivings are those that reflect knowing and serving God. However, in addition to these explicitly religious motives, people can imbue virtually any personal striving as having spiritual significance and character (Mahoney et al., 2005).

A recent theoretical model described two distinct ways in which religion influences goal content (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). First, specific religions encourage specific goals and prescribed states by which adherents are supposed to organize their behavior. The unique goals prescribed by each religion probably arise from the unique emphases in the written scriptures of each religion, the social and physical ecology in which the religion emerged (e.g., the surrounding cultural alternatives from which supporters of various religions sought to distinguish themselves, along with the available resources), and the changing physical and social circumstances to which specific religions must continually adapt (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Second, religion may promote "being" or state goals related to how one *is*: for example, being respectful, morally upstanding, and concerned for the welfare of others. Conversely, religion may promote rejection of goals related to independence, individuality, and personal gratification. In addition to the prescriptive nature of religion, there is also a long history of using goal language metaphorically to depict spiritual growth. In devotional writings and in sacred scriptures, spiritual growth and spiritual maturity are viewed as a process of goal attainment, with the ultimate goal being intimacy with the divine.

10.3 R/S Meaning Systems and Well-Being

10.3.1 Research on Global Religious Beliefs and Well-Being

Perhaps the most fundamental belief in an individual's meaning system concerns the existence of God (or deity, or transcendent being), given that other specific religious beliefs typically follow from this belief. Recent polls indicate that, in

Table 10.1 Believing in a personal God (i.e., a God "who concerns himself with every human being personally")

Country	% Agreeing
(East) Germany	8.2
Czech Republic	16.1
France	18.7
Sweden	19.1
Japan	24.0
The Netherlands	24.4
Norway	25.7
Great Britain	26.9
Slovenia	26.9
Austria	27.4
Denmark	28.2
Australia	28.5
Hungary	30.9
(West) Germany	32.0
New Zealand	34.2
Latvia	38.1
Spain	39.1
Russia	40.8
Switzerland	45.0
Slovakia	51.0
Italy	54.0
Cyprus	55.8
Portugal	58.1
Northern Ireland	59.5
Poland	59.6
Ireland	64.1
Israel	66.5
United States	67.5
Chile	71.8
The Philippines	91.9

From World Values Survey (2008)

the United States, the vast majority of adults report having a belief in God (Harris Interactive, 2008; Pew Forum, 2008). As can be seen from Table 10.1, such beliefs are common around the world.

Given the prevalence of belief in God, surprisingly few studies that have specifically focused on relations between this belief and well-being, and those studies have examined this relationship generally failed to find strong links between belief in God and well-being. For example, a study of women who had recently experienced the death of their infant did not find a belief in God comforting; belief was unrelated to grief (Cowchock, Lasker, Toedter, Skumanich, & Koenig, 2009). Similarly, a study of undergraduates dealing with the transition to college found that extent of belief in God was unrelated to a range of well-being measures including stress, anxiety, depression, happiness or life satisfaction (Park & Gutierrez, 2013). However, some specific beliefs regarding God may be linked to well-being.
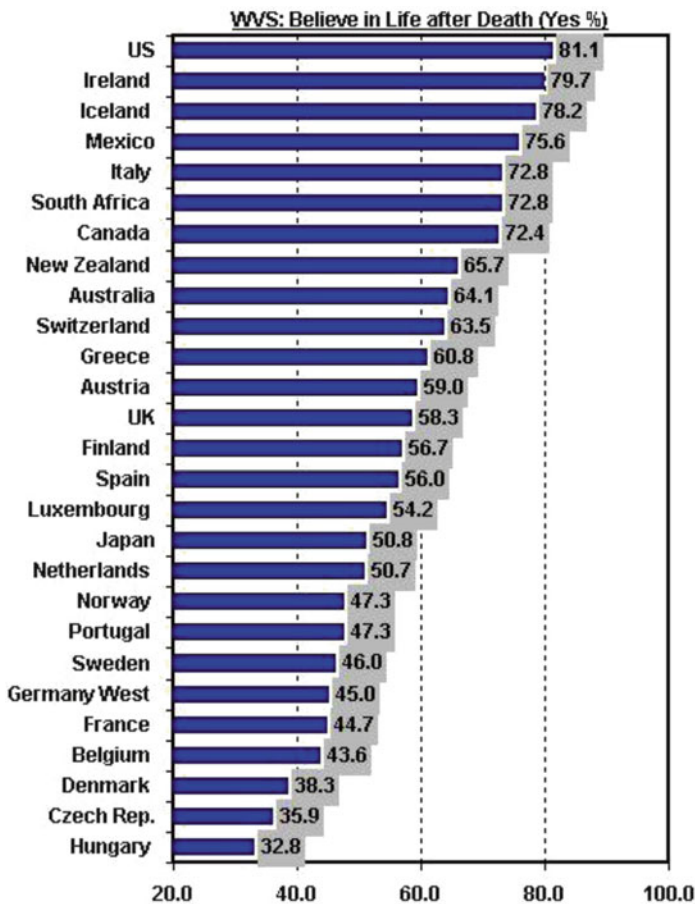
Fig. 10.1 Results of World Values Survey: "Do you believe in life after death?". The number depicted in the graph above is the percentage of people that say yes. World: Religiosity (III) – Belief in Life after Death. World Values Survey: http://micpohling.wordpress.com/2007/05/26/world-religiosity-iii-belief-in-life-after-death/

For example, a recent study found that beliefs in a *benevolent* God were related to less depression among Protestant and Jewish college students (Rosmarin, Pirutinsky, Pargament, & Krumrei, 2009).

10.3.1.1   Belief in Life After Death

A significant majority of U.S. adults report believing in heaven, hell, and survival of the soul after death (see Slattery & Park, 2012, for a review). Although less information about other beliefs around the world is available, recent polls also suggest that beliefs in life after death are common around the world, although with substantial variation across regions (see Fig. 10.1). Beliefs in life after death appear

to be related to well-being. In one large nationally representative survey in the U.S., an inverse relationship between belief in life after death and a variety of psychopathology symptoms (i.e., anxiety, depression, obsession-compulsion, paranoia, phobia, and somatization) was identified; it persisted even after controlling for demographic and other variables known to influence mental health (Flannelly, Koenig, Ellison, Galek, & Krause, 2006). A follow-up article reported on the relationships among a number of specific positive and negative views of the afterlife and found that, as expected, beliefs in a pleasant afterlife were associated with better mental health, while beliefs in an unpleasant afterlife were associated with poorer mental health (Flannelly, Ellison, Galek, & Koenig, 2008).

Afterlife beliefs have also been related to better psychological well-being in the context of bereavement (e.g., Smith, Range, & Ulmer, 1991–1992) and may influence physical health as well. For example, in a study of bereaved Japanese elders, holding beliefs in a good afterlife predicted lower risk of developing hypertension, as assessed 2 years later (Krause et al., 2002). However, one study found that beliefs in the afterlife were linked with higher PTSD avoidance symptoms in a sample of elderly German survivors of the Dresden bombing (Maercker & Herrle, 2003). It may be that the context of particular cultures influences the meaning and impact of specific religious beliefs.

10.3.1.2 Karma

The notion that one's deeds in a previous life might influence one's current experiences has been associated with lower levels of well-being in several studies. In a community survey of Americans, those who believed in karma had worse self-rated physical and mental health than did those who did not believe in karma (Connor, Davidson, & Lee, 2003; Lee, Connor, & Davidson, 2008). Among those who had a personal history of exposure to violent trauma, beliefs in karma were associated with higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms (Davidson, Connor, & Lee, 2005). In a study of Indonesian survivors of the 2004 tsunami, belief in karma was associated with poorer health, but not with a diagnosis of PTSD (Levy, Slade, & Ranasinghe, 2009).

10.3.1.3 Other Religious Beliefs

Many other religious beliefs have been documented as having fairly high levels of adherents in the U.S., including the existence of angels, the devil, miracles and ghosts (see Slattery & Park, 2012, for a review). In addition, researchers have examined a number of other religious beliefs that people hold, such as: (a) suffering can bring one closer to God, (b) the devil causes temptation and suffering, (c) one's own behavior in this life determines one's afterlife, (d) people deserve what happens

to them (e) Scripture is literal truth, and (f) there is one true religion or way to God (e.g., Exline, 2008). However, minimal literature exists regarding the extent to which these beliefs relate to well-being.

Although the influence of religiousness and spirituality on global beliefs has generally been shown to be favorable, religious beliefs can be negative in their content or influence on the believer as well. For example, negative religious cognitions, such as religious extremism have been implicated in terrorism (see Kruglanski, Gelfand, & Gunaratna, 2012) and beliefs about an angry, uncaring or punitive God can have powerfully destructive implications for personal and social functioning (see Exline & Rose, 2013).

10.3.2 Research on Global Religious Goals and Well-Being

The goals that people pursue are associated with their general levels of wellbeing (see Emmons, 1999, for a review). Those pursuing religious and sacred goals have been found to have higher levels of well-being and psychological adjustment. One study found that people whose strivings made explicit reference to God or a higher power had higher levels of life satisfaction and marital satisfaction and lower levels of depression (Emmons, Cheung, & Tehrani, 1998). A study of spiritual strivings in a community sample found that the more that participants rated their personal strivings as reflecting the spiritual realm (i.e., sanctified), the more they reported deriving happiness and a sense of meaning in their pursuit (Mahoney et al., 2005). However, greater sanctification of strivings was not consistently related to mental or physical wellbeing or life satisfaction. They interpreted these results as indicating that pursuing transcendent and sacred goals involves considerable effort and sacrifice such that individuals may find a high sense of fulfilment in sacred strivings but may encounter many challenges and difficulties in their pursuit (Mahoney et al., 2005). One study asked college students to rate the extent to which each of their personal strivings was pursued "because of religious or spiritual reasons," finding that striving sanctification was related to less anxiety, depression, and hostility (Tix & Frazier, 2005). In another study, college students who pursued spiritual avoidance goals had lower well-being (Fiorito & Ryan, 2007).

10.4 Pathways Through Which RS Meaning Systems May Affect Well-Being

Given the growing body of literature demonstrating that religious/spiritual meaning systems are related to myriad aspects of well-being, answering the question of *how* global religious/spiritual beliefs and goals are linked to well-being becomes increasingly compelling: what are the pathways through which these effects may occur? Many theoretical rationales may at least partly explain these linkages, but investigation

of these pathways is at present quite limited. To encourage attention to potential pathways through which religious meaning systems are related to well-being, we consider five theoretical perspectives in that regard: self-determination, existential needs, self-regulation, coping, and positive psychological states. Evidence for these pathways is variable and not yet strong for many of them, but all are intriguing possibilities.

10.4.1 Religious Meaning and Self-Determination

Self-determination theory (SDT) concerns motivation and the ways in which social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine people's sense of volition and initiative, which in turn can affect their well-being. According to SDT, the basic and universal human needs for competence (feeling effective and efficacious in one's behavior), relatedness (feeling close and connected to important others), and autonomy (feeling ownership and internal causation of one's behavior) underlie human behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT focuses on the extent to which these needs are satisfied or thwarted and the specific ways in which they are met and proposes that the degree to which any of these three psychological needs is not met has a robust detrimental impact on well-being. SDT also focuses on the "why" of behavior, the reasons for doing something, classifying these motives on a continuum from intrinsic motivation ("because it is enjoyable"), through identified motivation ("because I believe in it" and introjected motivation ("because I should do it") to external motivation ("because I have to do it"). The further up the continuum towards purely intrinsic motivation individuals operate, the better will be their performance and well-being (Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). SDT has been used to explain motivation and well-being in many different cultures (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

Although few studies have directly taken on the question of how SDT may account for effects of religious meaning systems on well-being, some early SDT-focused research examined two religious motives, introjection and identification. Identification religious motivation refers to engaging in religiousness because it is pleasurable (e.g., "I turn to God because I enjoy spending time with Him") while introjection religious motivation refers to engaging in religiousness because of fear, guilt, or social pressure ("I pray because God will disapprove if I don't") (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993). This early study found that religious identification was robustly favorably correlated with myriad aspects of well-being, while religious introjection was negatively correlated with these same aspects of well-being. This work is similar to the large body of research on intrinsic and extrinsic religious motivation, which has fairly consistently demonstrated that intrinsic religiousness is closely related to well-being while extrinsic religiousness is inversely but less consistently related to well-being (see Francis, 2007, for a review).

Religious meaning systems may also be closely linked with individuals' needs for autonomy, belongingness, and competence and the extent and specific ways in which these needs are met. Religious/spiritual beliefs can help people to meet the universal needs for autonomy (freedom/self-control), achievement (virtue), belongingness (affiliation, identity), and all of these needs may be serve as goals

related to their religious meaning systems. However, few studies have examined these links within an explicit SDT framework, so most of the evidence of these linkages is drawn from other theoretical frames.

A need for autonomy is well-documented (e.g., Pudrovska, Schieman, Pearlin, & Nguyen, 2005); maintaining a sense of control over one's current and future life situations is a core motivation (see Thompson & Schlehofer, 2007, for a review). Some research has focused on relationships between religiousness and the concept of autonomy. For example, religion can provide a sense of agency and control regardless of the objective controllability of any particular situation (Newton & McIntosh, 2009; Rothbaum, Weisz & Snyder, 1982). Religiousness is related to autonomy in complex ways: sometimes individuals perceive a collaborative working relationship with God, (Krause, 2005; Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway & Grevengoed, 1988) and at other times, feel relief and comfort in putting their fate in "the hands of God" (Abraído-Lanza, Vásquez & Echeverría, 2004). Some research has suggested that although a sense of secondary control is often helpful, it also poses the risk of religious fatalism, by which people may abdicate responsibility to take direct actions to alleviate problems (e.g., Franklin, Schlundt, & Wallston, 2008; Norenzayan, & Lee, 2010). For example, in one study of people with HIV, those who believed God/Higher Power controlled their health were nearly five times more likely to refuse antiretroviral medication than were those without those beliefs (Kremer, Ironson, & Porr, 2009). Experimental work has demonstrated when perceptions of personal control are threatened, participants' belief in God are increased, presumably bolstering their sense of secondary control (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan & Laurin, 2008).

Although the specific pathways from religious meaning systems to well-being have not been explored in most of this research, religions typically espouse global beliefs that directly address autonomy. For example, the common phrase "Insha′Allah" ("As Allah wills") highlights the limits to autonomy and competence that a devout Muslim endorses, in addition to bolstering the secondary control discussed in Kay et al. (2008) above. The myriad Christian theologies provide a wide range of autonomy-related beliefs as well, with variations regarding God's level of control and involvement in the world depending on denomination or sect. Other religious systems (e.g. voodoo, animism) provide different methods for gaining control.

A sense of belongingness is also a strong basic need that can be well-met by a meaning system in which being in a relationship with God is an important goal; such relationships can be profound and unassailably solid (Granqvist, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010). Experimental research has demonstrated that manipulating people's sense of connections and belonging affected their endorsed belief in God. For example, participants who were primed with reminders of close friends and relatives endorsed lower beliefs in God than those who did not receive the prime (Gebauer & Maio, 2012). In addition to a relationship with God, religious meaning systems may meet belongingness needs through prioritizing relations with fellow congregants with whom they have a community of shared core beliefs and values. Virtually every religion includes explicit beliefs about how to relate to and/or value other people, providing a framework for how people are to achieve the relatedness that SDT maintains is central. For example, the Christian New Testament's teaching

on calling emphasizes that each person has God-given gifts that make him or her an essential part of the community.

The third need described by SDT, competence, refers to the basic human need to feel self-efficacious. Although little research has directly linked religious meaning systems and competence, religiousness may meet the need for competence in many different ways. For example, religiousness may provide additional avenues in which people can demonstrate efficaciousness, such as in their ability to model spiritual exemplars (Oman & Thoresen, 2003).

Space does not allow a thorough exploration of every religious meaning system here, so we will limit our discussion to how Christianity's religious meaning system addresses the issue of competence. First, Christianity's meaning system provides the expectation that not everyone will be competent at everything; God has made people different so it is no surprise that different people are relatively more competent at some things than are others. Second, Christianity provides a way for people to become more competent; through divine help from Holy Spirit, people can do even impossible things. Third, Christianity provides a framework for how to reframe incompetence. It incorporates a global belief that there can be spiritual success in the midst of struggle. (e.g. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3) and "But he [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Cor. 12:9).

10.4.2   Religious Meaning as Fulfilling Existential Needs

Although SDT includes a focus on the ways that people meet their prosaic needs (specifically those for autonomy, competence and belongingness), other theories have proposed a variety of more existential needs that religious meaning systems may also meet well (see Park, Edmondson, & Hale-Smith, 2013, for a review). According to these theorists, religious meaning systems can meet critical existential needs such as those for coherence, certainty, mattering, and meaning.

10.4.2.1   Coherence

The need for coherent meaning systems is apparent from the very earliest stages of development (Koltko-Rivera, 2004; Park, 2013). Social constructivist models argue that subject and object collaborate in creating mental representations of the world (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985) and suggest that perception without a meaning system as a mediating influence would be chaotic (e.g., Bruner, 1990). Religious meaning systems seem to be particularly well-suited to provide a sense of coherence (Korotkov, 1998) in that they provide adherents with a comprehensive system for synthesizing their understanding of the world and their place within it. Religion helps individuals to create narratives that weave together "the

tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their worldview—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order" (Geertz, 1966/1973, p. 89). Most religious belief systems can also account for many seemingly disparate aspects of belief and experience, such as a loving, all-powerful God and the suffering that exists in the world (Hall & Johnson, 2001).

10.4.2.2   Uncertainty

Adaptive functioning in the face of the many uncertainties of living requires a functional meaning system. Beliefs about fairness and justice appear to be particularly strong determinants of emotional reactions when people face uncertainty (van den Bos, 2001). The uncertainty management model (Lind & van den Bos, 2002; van den Bos & Lind, 2002) elaborates on this notion, positing that people have a fundamental need to feel certain about their world, that uncertainty is threatening, and that people rely on their meaning systems to eliminate or manage these distressing feelings. Religious meaning systems appear to be particularly well-suited to reduce uncertainty. One example of religious meaning reducing uncertainty is the belief that God controls every minor fact and detail in the world, as in a mechanical view of Providence (Klooster, 2001). An alternative religious belief that reduces uncertainty is belief in karma, where there is a clear relationship between an individual's past deeds and future reality. While reduced uncertainty can benefit the believer, group-level certainty about how the world works may also inhibit societal advances, as in the case of religious suppression of education on the theory of evolution (e.g., Paterson & Rossow, 1999).

10.4.2.3   Mortality

Predominant theories of the origin of human meaning systems have pointed to the uniquely human ability to recognize and project the self in temporal-spatial terms, forcing a confrontation with certain mortality (e.g., Becker, 1973; see Soenke, Landau, & Greenberg, 2013). Many religious meaning systems have an answer to this profound human concern by providing adherents with the concept of an afterlife as well as proscriptions regarding how to gain access to this afterlife (Flannelly et al., 2006).

10.4.2.4   Sense of Meaning/Purpose

The sense of meaning derived from having a comprehensive belief system and feeling that one is on track in the pursuit of one's goals has been termed "meaning in life" (e.g., Wong, 1998), although it is clear from its operationalization that it more accurately reflects a subjective *sense* of meaning (Park, 2013). While searching

for meaning is a vague and uncomfortable experience (Steger, 2009), possessing it is related to greater well-being, including less anxiety, better mental and physical health, and even lower mortality (e.g., Edmondson, Park, Blank, Fenster, & Mills, 2008; Skrabski, Kopp, Rózsa, Réthelyi, & Rahe, 2005).

10.4.3 Self-Regulation

The salutary effects that religious and spiritual meaning systems exert on well-being may also be understood through a consideration of their functions on self-regulation (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Self-regulation is a "diverse set of processes through which the self alters its own responses or inner states in a goal-directed manner" (Laurin, Kay & Fitzsimons, 2012, p. 4). In their review, McCullough and Willoughby discussed a varied body of research exploring relationships between religion and self-regulation, noting that the majority of religious research to date has been conducted in North America on Christians, so caution is warranted regarding assertions of "religion" versus more specifically "North American Christianity," although some initial research indicates that the findings may be true in many religious and cultural contexts.

Self-regulation is an emerging area of psychological focus that has only recently begun to incorporate a focus on religious meaning systems and the specific ways in which religion and spirituality promote self-control is yet to be explicated (Zell & Baumeister, 2013). Zell and Baumeister described four main elements of self-regulation: standards, monitoring, willpower, and motivation. In other words, self-regulation involves having preferred guidelines, an ability to observe one's behaviors vis-à-vis those guidelines, and the ability and desire to implement instrumental responses towards those guidelines and to override incipient responses.

In examining potential relationships between religious meaning systems and self-regulation, we must recognize that religious meaning systems may influence self-regulation both implicitly and explicitly. Implicit self-regulation is mediated "by integrated feelings or intuitions about appropriate courses of action" (Koole, McCullough, Kuhl, & Roelofsma, 2010, p. 96). Explicit self-regulation is characterized by a more conscious, effortful process (Koole et al., 2010).

Many research studies examining religion and self-regulation today assume that religion provides structure and guidelines that people must follow effortfully (e.g., obeying rules and avoiding temptations) (e.g., Janoff-Bulman & Sheikh, 2006; see Koole et al., 2010 for a review of religion and self-regulation), suggesting that religion inspires explicit self-regulation. Some types of explicit, effortful self-regulation will no doubt always be present, but implicit self-regulation may also be an essential part of how religious meaning systems affect well-being. As someone becomes acculturated to a specific religious meaning system, that person internalizes the meaning system's values and beliefs. As part of that internalization, self-regulation efforts may shift from being conscious and effortful to automatic (Koole et al., 2010).

One of the most obvious areas in which religious meaning systems can interact with self-regulation is that of standards. Religious meanings may be central in providing the specific moral guidelines (standards and goals) to which people compare their behavior. Although there are significant differences in definitions of morality among religions, the *presence* of moral codes themselves is universal. People who are new to a certain religious meaning system (e.g., converts) who are not yet fully acculturated into the religion may have to practice explicit self-regulation in their efforts to engage in or limit specific value-laden behaviors, but as they internalize the standards and values of their religious meaning systems, there is likely a shift to implicit self-regulation.

One example of this shift is the Buddhist practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a core tenet of Buddhism, something for which individuals strive at all times, and it involves a significant amount of self-regulation as people either focus attention on specific states or practice a more general awareness. Whereas novices must expend significant effort at being mindful, experienced monks appear to engage in mindful meditation easily and automatically (Manna et al., 2010).

Religious meaning systems may also affect self-regulatory monitoring by fostering self-examination and by making people feel that their good and bad deeds are being observed and recorded (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Self-examination is an important element in many religions (e.g. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism). The monotheistic religions also encourage self-examination indirectly by teaching that the divine being observes and judges each individual's behavior. These beliefs directly inform explicit self regulation practices, too: the Buddhist tradition values mindfulness as one form of self-monitoring, and within Christianity, Catholic confession provides a structured opportunity for individuals to reflect on their behavior.

Religious meaning systems also reinforce the importance of willpower, promoting character strength through regular exercise of the "moral muscle" (Baumeister & Exline, 2001). McCullough and Willoughby (2009) noted that religion is positively related both to self-control itself and to personality traits (i.e., agreeableness and conscientiousness) known to underlie self-control. This should come as no surprise, since Christianity explicitly identifies self-control (a form of willpower) as a sign of the divine presence (i.e. a "fruit of the Spirit") in a person's life (Gal. 5:23). Similarly, Islam presents self-control as an important precursor to purification (Qu'ran 79:40 & 41; Youssef, 1983). Willpower is presented in many religions as an integral part of spiritual health, a goal for which believers should strive (Rachlin, 2004).

Priming people with a reminder of God can influence individuals' efforts at attaining goals tied to self-regulation (Laurin, Kay, & Fitzsimons, 2012), and when considered from the perspective of religious meaning systems, the connections are obvious. Most religious meaning systems incorporate beliefs that both motivate people to *want* to be good and exploit the prosocial power of guilt, linking the religious individual into a stable network of relationships with other believers and the divine. Motivation may be rooted in fear of consequences (e.g., judgment, punishment) or a desire for positive gifts (e.g., blessing, grace), or may be relationally-based (e.g. Judaism's narrative of the relationship between YHWH and the Jews, multi-religious teaching about not associating with individuals who disregard religious standards of behavior).

10.4.4   *Religious Meaning as Adaptive Coping with Stress*

Individuals have many options for coping with stressful encounters, ranging from avoidance to active coping. Many of these coping efforts can take on a religious flavor, and religious beliefs and goals will strongly inform both the extent to which individuals find a particular event distressing and the ways that they respond to it. The beliefs underlying religious meaning systems can be an important influence on a person's experience of stress, from their appraisal of the situation to decisions regarding coping. An in-depth treatment of religious coping and well-being is offered by Feuille Bockrath, Pargament and Ostwald in Chap. 18, so here we will only briefly discuss coping and religious meaning systems.

Current research tends to classify religious coping as either positive or negative: positive religious coping reflects "a secure relationship with God, a belief in life's larger meaning, and a sense of spiritual connectedness with others," while negative religious coping exhibits less secure relationships, less meaning, and a sense of spiritual disconnect (Trevino et al., 2010, p. 379). Although the definitions of positive and negative religious coping do not necessarily imply that one has positive outcomes and the other negative, it should come as no surprise that positive religious coping is often associated with greater well-being while negative religious coping is associated with greater strain (Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2004; Trevino et al., 2010).

One of the most important ways that that religious meaning systems influence coping is through appraisals. Religious reappraisals of stressful events or reconfiguring of one's global meaning system is common in dealing with highly stressful circumstances (Harrison, Koenig, Hays, Eme-Akwari, & Pargament, 2001; Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998) and may facilitate changes in meaning as well as adjustment to stressful events. For example, appraising a stressful situation as benevolent or potentially beneficial (e.g. a way to learn something from God) can help people find meaning in many stressful situations and has been associated with greater well-being (e.g. Pargament et al., 2004).

Similarly, religious meaning systems may inform individuals' assessments of the resources available to them. For example, does a person believe that God is active and present in the midst of distress, or that the stressor is a sign of God's displeasure and/or distance? Schieman and colleagues (2006) found that belief in God's active involvement was related to less distress, while others found that belief in a supportive God was associated with lower levels of distress (Pargament et al., 1988; Phillips, Pargament, Lynn, & Crossley, 2004). In contrast, other researchers discovered that beliefs related to God punishing the person or the devil being in control were related to more distress (McConnell, Pargament, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2006; Pargament et al., 1998).

The reality is that any time religion is involved in coping, a person's religious meaning system, with its attendant beliefs and goals, become salient. The questions might be obviously related to religious meaning (e.g., appraisal of the stressor, as assessed by the RCOPE's "Benevolent Religious Appraisal" subscale; Pargament,

Koenig, & Perez, 2000) or they may be part of a more global framework of beliefs and goals. Should individuals take an active problem-solving role, or should they step back and wait for divine intervention? Should they call on others in their religious community for support, or is vulnerability and weakness a sign of personal and religious failure? Is it possible to interpret a stressor as an invitation either for greater intimacy with the divine or as an opportunity to improve one's karma? Individuals' responses to each of these questions are rooted in their religious meaning system.

10.4.5 Promotion of Positive Psychological States

The positive links between religious meaning systems and well-being may also be due to the extensive connections between global religious beliefs and goals and positive psychological states that are increasingly being shown to lead to higher levels of well-being. These include mindfulness, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, and hope. In a thoughtful consideration of links between religion and positive psychology, Watts, Dutton, and Gulliford (2006) made the case that knowledge about religious traditions can fruitfully inform theory and research in positive psychology, noting that Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions have long fostered characteristics such as forgiveness, love, hope, humility, gratitude, self-control, and wisdom (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). We posit that religious beliefs and goals, in particular, may promote these positive qualities.

10.4.5.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to the cultivation of a stable, nonreactive awareness by intentionally attending to present-moment experience in a nonjudgmental way. In recent years, mindfulness has received a great deal of attention as a clinical technique for alleviating a range of mental and physical suffering. Mindfulness in clinical practice has been described as "self-regulation by self-observation" (Levenson & Aldwin, 2013). However, this utilitarian approach to mindfulness (as a means to an end) is only one aspect of mindfulness. More broadly, mindfulness is central to and definitive of contemplative practice in many major world religions, including Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Levenson & Aldwin, 2013).

10.4.5.2 Compassion

Compassion involves feeling empathic towards the suffering of others and being moved to alleviate that suffering. Compassion is a principle that cuts across the world's major religions (Steffen & Masters, 2005). Steffen and Masters noted that the four largest world religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) all include a focus on compassion. For example, they note that a basic teaching in

Christianity is to love others as much as one loves oneself and to take care of the hungry and the sick, and that Islam promotes the sharing of wealth (*Zakat*) as one of its five pillars. Thus, religious meaning systems often involve a strong belief system regarding the role of compassion in one's life as well as the goals of enacting kindness and alleviating suffering.

10.4.5.3 Gratitude

Gratitude involves recognizing an undeserved gain in value, typically through the beneficence of another, and feeling appreciation for that gain. Some of the most profound reported experiences of gratitude can be religiously based or associated with reverent wonder toward an acknowledgment of the universe (Emmons & Shelton, 2002), including the perception that life itself is a gift. In many world religions, the concept of gratitude is consistently emphasized in scriptures and teachings, and prayers of worship are often full of gratitude for God's many gifts and mercies (Emmons & Shelton, 2002).

10.4.5.4 Forgiveness

Forgiveness involves responding to interpersonal conflict by regulating negative emotions and turning to a prosocial or neutral alternative to seeking revenge (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010) and is closely related to many aspects of well-being (Lawler-Row, 2010). Forgiveness plays a central role in Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and many other religious traditions (Emmons & Shelton, 2002), and has indeed has been closely linked with myriad aspects of religiousness. Like mindfulness, forgiveness is a part of the religious meaning system connected to many specific practices. Research suggests that forgiveness mediates much of the effect of religiousness on health and well-being (e.g., Lawler-Row, 2010).

10.4.5.5 Hope

According to Snyder and his colleagues, hope is a goal-directed state that involves perceptions of pathways (the ability to generate routes to desired goals) and agency (the sense that one has the capacity and to use those pathways to reach one's goals) (Snyder, Sigmon, & Feldman, 2002). Hope has been linked to many different aspects of well-being (e.g., Bailey, Eng, Frisch, & Snyder, 2007). Snyder and colleagues also contended that "every religion offers a prepackaged matrix of goals, pathways for accomplishing those goals, and agency thoughts for applying those pathways." (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 237). Therefore, examining religiousness through a religious meaning system framework provides insight into the ways that religion may affect well-being by providing hope.

Religious meaning systems may give rise to hope by helping individuals to identify not only their ultimate goals but also the more concrete subgoals that must be reached in the service of reaching those larger goals. As examples of subgoals provided by religion, Snyder and colleagues (2002) offered not only those that are explicitly religious in nature such as reading holy writings and performing rites or rituals, but also apparently secular subgoals such as living a morally exemplary life and pursuing a healthy lifestyle.

Further, religious beliefs can provide the perceptions of agency necessary for pursuing one's goals. For example, in addition to secular sources of agency beliefs, religion can provide other routes such as obtaining divine assistance and relying on one's fellow congregants, which can boost perceptions of one's ability to persist in the pursuit of cherished goals.

10.5 Conclusions

Meaning systems are central in understanding and navigating through the world, and religiousness/spirituality informs the meaning systems of many. This influence is strongly culturally determined and meaning systems are a core way in which larger cultural values are manifested at the level of the individual (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013). Although a great deal of research has demonstrated that religious and spiritual meaning systems are favorably associated with many aspects of well-being, the specific pathways linking religious and spiritual beliefs and goals and well-being remain to be delineated. In this chapter, we put forward five pathways through which religious and spiritual meaning systems may affect well-being: Self-determination, existential needs, self-regulation, meaning as an aspect of coping, and positive psychological states. The evidence linking all of these theories and well-being is fairly minimal but consistent and growing. The roles that religious meaning systems play in these linkages have not been adequately examined, providing tremendous opportunities for future research. By examining in detail the components of religious meaning systems in terms of specific beliefs and goals, researchers can explore how these meaning systems mediate effects on well-being from these different theoretical vantages, illuminating a critical cultural influence on well-being.

Myriad specific questions remain to be addressed in future research based on these hypothesized pathways. For example, how do specific religious goals and strivings fulfil the basic needs of belongingness, autonomy and competence spelled out by SDT? Which types of religious beliefs (e.g., certain types of God image or afterlife beliefs) best meet existential needs for purpose or certainty? Do specific religious beliefs help individuals resist temptations or persist at unpleasant or difficult tasks? Which types of religious meanings are most helpful for individuals in coping with life crises? How do specific religious teachings lead to beliefs and goals that generate and maintain positive psychological states?

Once such issues are better understood, additional questions regarding how we might approach interventions to improve individuals' adjustment, coping and

physical and mental well-being can be broached. Some types of religious beliefs and goals may be particularly helpful, while others are linked with poorer well-being. Because meaning systems are so basic to the psyche, making changes in meaning systems is no small feat and these issues require tremendous sensitivity and thought (see Slattery & Park, 2012). In summary, we feel optimistic that a closer examination of religious/spiritual meaning systems, particularly through strong theoretical frameworks such as those we have included here, will advance our understanding of these critical cultural influences on well-being.

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Chapter 11
Mindfulness, Consciousness, Spirituality, and Well-Being

Emily L.B. Lykins

Religious and spiritual beliefs have long been asserted to be fundamental to human well-being (see Hodges, 2002 for a helpful overview). Empirical work generally supports the notion that religiosity and spirituality are psychologically beneficial, with nearly 500 of the 700 relevant studies published at the time of a recent review demonstrating a positive relationship between religion and mental health (Reeves, Beazley, & Adams, 2011). While it cannot be denied that religiously-oriented beliefs and practices can contribute to or hold the potential for harm at the individual or group level (e.g., CHILD-Inc., 2007; Exline, 2002; Fox, 1997; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Knapp, Lemoncelli, & VandeCreek, 2010; McGregor et al., 1998; Pargament, 2002), both religious and spiritual variables have generally been shown to be positively related with a variety of indices of mental health among members of diverse cultural and religious/spiritual backgrounds (e.g., Joshanloo, 2011; Lee, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2006; Unterrainer, Ladenhauf, Wallner-Liebmann, & Fink, 2011). These benefits extend beyond intrapersonal psychological functioning and are also evident in the domains of physical health (e.g., effective health behaviors, ability to cope with medical problems, and physical health outcomes; see Thoresen & Harris, 2004 for a helpful review) and interpersonal health (e.g., prosocial behaviors; see Preston, Ritter, & Hernandez, 2010 for discussion).

Of course, it is probable that many religious/spiritual beliefs and experiences have the potential to be either beneficial or harmful, depending on the context in which they are experienced by an individual and reacted to by the broader society. For example, an individual who has the subjective experience of direct access to the supernatural or ability to exert influence over others may be considered a shaman in one culture, possessed in another, and schizophrenic in our own (e.g., Church, 2004;

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Krippner, 2002). Thus, it is important to ascertain exactly when and how religiosity and spirituality are beneficial. Studies have provided at least preliminary empirical support for a number of mechanisms by which religious and spiritual beliefs and behaviors manifest advantageous outcomes, including increased social support, opportunities for spiritual experience, forgiveness and compassion, perceived control, corrective or confirming attachment experiences, and inherent benefits of the beliefs or cognitive framework (e.g., Granqvist, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010; Jackson & Bergeman, 2011; Steffen & Masters, 2005; Steger & Frazier, 2005). These findings generally support theory, evident even in the infancy of Psychology, that religious or spiritual involvement promotes well-being through promoting factors inherent to it, such as meaning in life, intrinsic values/goals, transcendence, and spiritual community (Hodges, 2002). Recent research suggests another interesting avenue by which beliefs about the supernatural or divine world may be beneficial, through fostering the belief that one will transcend death and live on, literally or physically, and thus reducing the profound, though often subconscious, anxiety associated with foreknowledge of one's own inevitable physical death (symbolic immortality; Castano, Yzerbyt, & Paladino, 2004). When considering ways in which spiritual or religious beliefs and practices can exert a beneficial effect, access to spiritual experiences has been identified as an important mechanism. One particular practice that has been received a great deal of clinical and empirical attention recently is that of mindfulness meditation.

11.1   What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is typically described as a form of nonjudgmental, nonreactive attention to present moment experiences, both internal and external (Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Linehan, 1993a). Mindfulness developed out of Eastern spiritual and meditative traditions and lies at the heart of Buddhist teachings about what causes human suffering and how to relieve it (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Given the central role of mindfulness in Buddhism and Eastern spiritual traditions, it is important to address how mindfulness relates to religiosity and spirituality. Some authors essentially equate mindfulness with spirituality. For example, a meta-analysis looking at the effects of MBSR used a measure of mindfulness, the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003), as a spirituality dependent variable (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). Others, if not equating the two, at least suggest mindfulness is an important religious or spiritual practice for many. "Spirituality" was listed as a "defining characteristic" of respondents in a recent study based on the fact that "nearly four out of five (79.5 %)" practiced meditation at least once a week (Jacob, Jovic, & Brinkerhoff, 2009). A sample of American Buddhists reported that meditation and mindfulness, along with other core constructs such as "not self" and moral action, are important parts of their coping efforts (Phillips et al., 2009). Other work suggests mindfulness may be an inherent part of not just Eastern but many of the world's spiritual traditions and religions. For example, multiple core concepts of

mindfulness, including a focus on the present moment, openness to experience, and transcendence or de-emphasis of verbal control, appear in Christian theology (Vandenberghe & Costa Prado, 2009), while mindfulness meditation overlaps significantly with Christian contemplative prayer (Centering Prayer), Sufi mystical traditions, and Jewish Hasidic prayer (Blanton, 2011; Goleman, 1988; Shafii, 1988).

While some findings seem to suggest that mindfulness is an inherent part of spirituality and religion for most individuals, other studies bring this conceptualization into question. For example, mindfulness has been found to be associated with spiritual mindedness but not with church attendance, among a sample of back-to-the-landers, despite the fact that spirituality and church attendance were significantly correlated with one another (Brinkerhoff & Jacob, 1999). Another study demonstrated that mindfulness, as measured by the Frieburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI; Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2002), was positively correlated with one measure of spirituality, the Spirituality Assessment Scale (SAS; Howden, 1992), but not with another, the Spiritual Transcendence Index (STI; Seidlitz et al., 2002), while other work found that mindfulness (as measured by the MAAS) was not related with religious comfort ($r = .05$), religious strain ($r = .03$), or spiritual involvement ($r = .07$) among a group of social work students (Ying, 2008). In addition, many individuals seek out mindfulness meditation for reasons other than spiritual or religious ones. While "exploring or deepening my spirituality" was cited as a motivation for completing an MBSR course by almost half (49.6 %) of the enrollees, multiple other non-religious/non-spiritual motivations (such as "improving mental health" and "improving physical health") were endorsed by an even larger percentage of the participants (Greeson et al., 2011). The overall pattern of results seems to suggest that mindfulness is composed of elements not fully captured by, and thus diverges from, religion or spirituality, making these distinct but overlapping constructs.

The increasing attention toward mindfulness outside of a religious or spiritual context started primarily in the 1980s and 1990s, in large part due to the development and implementation of secular psychological interventions that utilize traditional meditative practices to teach mindfulness concepts as skills to reduce suffering and increase well-being. The first developed of these treatments, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990), established the viability and effectiveness of teaching mindfulness in this manner and strongly influenced the development of many future mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) that drew on its base concepts and procedures, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002) or mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP; Bowen, Chawla, & Marlatt, 2011).

Both within and outside of MBIs, mindfulness is typically developed through the practice of meditation, which can induce an altered state of consciousness corresponding to altered neurological states (see Haupt & Fell, 2006). These altered states appear to vary based on type of meditation engaged in (mindfulness versus concentrative), do not appear to simply reflect differing degrees of relaxation (Dunn, Hartigan, & Mikula, 1999), and often take the form of euphoric "peak" experiences (e.g., Cahn & Polich, 2006; Fischer, 1971). There are other MBIs, such as

dialectical behavior therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1993a, 1993b) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), that emphasize mindfulness and related constructs (i.e., radical acceptance or cognitive defusion) within a broader treatment package, though they rely less on formal meditation practice and often focus more on developing mindfulness through the practice of it in daily life.

Interventions incorporating mindfulness have been shown to be efficacious across a wide variety of patient populations and disorders, including both psychological and medical disorders (see Baer, 2003; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Khoury et al., 2013 for helpful reviews). Interestingly, the adaptive outcomes of MBIs are sometimes described as paradoxical (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), as mindfulness practices encourage nonjudgmental acceptance of current reality. However, it is important to note that adoption of a mindful stance while experiencing negative thoughts or emotions, whether in response to challenging situations or not, is not equivalent to passive resignation, disengagement, or hopelessness. Rather, mindfulness is believed to facilitate adoption of effective responses/behaviors, based on the situation at hand. For example, an individual may simply allow thoughts and feelings to run their natural course with the recognition that such experiences are not inherently harmful, choose not to take any action if the situation is not controllable, and/or take action to address a problematic situation, the last of which is the approach more commonly used in cognitive-behavioral treatments (Baer & Lykins, 2011).

Despite its integral role in Buddhism for thousands of years and its increasing regard and empirical study within psychology and medicine over the past few decades, a consensus over exactly what mindfulness is has still not been reached, though generally accepted definitions of mindfulness do include common elements, including the intentional direction of attention to the present moment and the adoption of an accepting, nonjudgmental, and/or nonreactive orientation, intent, or attitude toward the subsumed experiences (see Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness has alternately been described as a transient state, an enduring trait-like quality, and a set of skills that can be taught and learned. While these differing conceptualizations may seem contradictory at first glance, they are each supported by empirical evidence and actually can fit together quite nicely to capture a complex construct.

An individual – with or without meditation experience – can be in a more or a less mindful state at any given time. In support of a state conceptualization of mindfulness, recent research has demonstrated that both experienced and beginning meditators evidence different patterns of brain activation when in a mindful as compared with a non-mindful state and when presented with emotionally-laden pictures. Interestingly, this research also demonstrated that the specific brain mechanisms involved in processing emotional images were different for the experienced versus beginning meditators (Taylor et al., 2011). In support of trait mindfulness, research has demonstrated that, in the absence of meditation experience, individuals report varying levels of the trait-like tendency to be mindful in daily life (Baer et al., 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Scores on measures assessing dispositional

mindfulness have good test-retest stability (e.g., Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004) and tend to relate to or predict other constructs and behavior in predicted and meaningful ways (Baer et al., 2006). For example, when participants were presented with the Trier Social Stress Test (TSST; Kirschbaum, Pirke, & Hellhammer, 1993), which consists of an anticipation period and the delivery of a free speech and performance of mental arithmetic in front of an audience in a test period, those with higher trait mindfulness experienced a smaller cortisol response, an indicator of stress and immune function, as well as lower levels of distress (Brown, Weinstein, & Creswell, 2012). Finally, MBIs often describe mindfulness as a set of skills (i.e., observation, nonjudgment, acceptance; DBT, Linehan, 1993a) that can be learned and practiced. In support of this view is the evidence that MBIs do indeed increase mindfulness, as well as well-being (e.g., Baer, 2003). In addition, extent of home practice in the course of an MBSR program was found to be significantly related to extent of improvement in several measures of well-being, and mindfulness appears to be the mechanism by which an MBI promotes adaptive outcomes leads with this relationship mediated by mindfulness (Baer, Carmody, & Hunsinger, 2012; Carmody & Baer, 2008).

Thus, in the absence of meditation training, individuals vary in how mindful they are, with some being very low, some very high, and most in the middle. All of these individuals are likely capable of entering a mindful state, but those who are very high in trait mindfulness appear to enter them more often than those lower in mindfulness. Mindfulness can be learned and practiced to allow an individual to enter a mindful state more often which should, over time, lead to higher levels of dispositional mindfulness or greater tendency to be mindful in daily life. While mindfulness can be conceptualized simultaneously as a state, trait, and skill, the evidence regarding its salutogenic nature is relatively clear cut.

11.2   Benefits of Mindfulness

As stated previously, mindfulness-based interventions have been demonstrated to be effective in treating diverse individuals with psychological and medical disorders. MBIs have also been shown to be psychologically beneficial for non-clinical samples dealing with everyday life experiences and stresses (e.g., Cohen-Katz et al., 2005; Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner, 1998). Various studies examining undergraduate students, graduate students, community participants, and medical patients have shown that participation in an MBSR program or in other MBIs or experiences modeled on and including multiple core elements of MBSR leads to decreased psychological symptoms (e.g., symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety, anger, or mood disturbance; Astin, 1997; Birnie, Speca, & Carlson, 2010; Carmody, Reed, Kristeller & Merriam, 2008; Garland, Carlson, Cook, Lansdell, & Speca, 2007), decreased medical symptoms and overall stress (e.g., decreased medical symptoms, improved physical functioning, decreased overall stress; Carmody et al., 2008; Garland et al., 2007; Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008) and improved

psychological functioning (e.g., quality of life, emotional functioning, empathy, optimism, dyad satisfaction and closeness; Birnie et al., 2010; Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2004; Greeson et al., 2011; Schure et al., 2008; Shapiro et al., 1998).

The fact that mindfulness appears to be best conceptualized as overlapping but distinct from religiosity and spirituality is advantageous pragmatically, as mindfulness is often disassociated from any religious or spiritual content in MBIs, as stated earlier. Interestingly, mindfulness has been found to be the only measured variable predictive of mental health outcomes for both religious and nonreligious individuals in one study (Ying, 2008) and a much better predictor of quality of life than church attendance or spiritual mindedness in another (Brinkerhoff & Jacob, 1999). While there are inherent issues with generalizability in each of these studies, when considered along with the evidence that individuals who are naturally high in trait mindfulness generally function better psychologically than those who are lower, and that individuals who participate in MBIs experience significant mental health benefits, there is compelling evidence that meditation and mindfulness do not have to be part of a religious or spiritual approach to be beneficial. However, the complexity of the mindfulness-spirituality relationship in particular is deepened when considering the fact that individuals who participate in MBIs often report spiritual benefits; that is, teaching mindfulness as a skillset in a secular setting and without formal contextualization in a spiritual or religious system often leads to increased spiritual experiences or feelings.

An early examination of this issue revealed that participation in a slightly modified version of MBSR led to significant increases in spirituality (as measured by the Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy – Spiritual Well-Being Scale; FACIT-Sp, Peterman, Fitchett, Brady, Hernandez, & Cella, 2002) among 12 student volunteers when compared with nonintervention controls (Astin, 1997). However, the increase in spirituality in this study was described as "relatively small" (p. 104) and, contrary to expectations, was not associated with improved psychological symptoms. More recent research has tended to demonstrate at least moderate increases in spirituality associated with participation in an MBI, among diverse participant populations and using various assessment instruments. For example, Shapiro and colleagues (1998) found that participation in an MBSR program led to significant increases in spirituality (FACIT-Sp) among the premedical and medical student participants when comparing the intervention to a waitlist condition. Among a sample of outpatients diagnosed with cancer who self-selected into either an MBSR (N=60) or healing arts program (N=44), those who participated in the MBSR group reported greater improvement in spirituality (FACIT-Sp; Garland et al., 2007). Counseling graduate students who participated in a semester long graduate course loosely based on MBSR and including the teaching of hatha yoga, meditation, and qigong, commonly reported that participation in the class had led to increased spiritual awareness (Schure et al., 2008), while participation in Mindfulness-Based Relationship Enhancement (MBRE), an intervention modeled on MBSR with modifications to address romantic relationships, resulted in significant increases, of small to moderate effect, in spirituality (as assessed by the Index of Core Spiritual Experiences; INSPIRIT, Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991) among the individual members of the 22 nondistressed heterosexual

couples who participated (Carson et al., 2004). Other approaches broadly using related meditation- or mindfulness-based techniques have shown effects on faith and other spiritual variables in individuals with chronic health conditions (e.g., Bormann et al., 2006; Margolin et al., 2007).

In contrast to the original Astin (1997) work, most work demonstrate that the increases in both mindfulness and spirituality are associated with improved psychological functioning when examined concurrently. For example, Carmody and colleagues (2008) found that, among 44 community participants, completion of a MBSR program led to medium to large increases in spirituality (FACIT-Sp). In this study, increases in both state and trait mindfulness were associated with increased spirituality, while changes in trait mindfulness and spirituality were both associated with reduced psychological distress and self-reported medical symptoms. Birnie and colleagues (2010) found a similar pattern of results demonstrating that completion of an MBSR program led to significant increases, of medium effect size, in spirituality (FACIT-Sp) for the 51 community participants for whom pre-post data was available. Here, both mindfulness and spirituality were associated with indicators of more beneficial psychological functioning. Spirituality (as measured by the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale; DSES, Underwood & Teresi, 2002) was also found to increase to a moderate extent among 180 individuals who completed an MBSR program and the post assessment (Greeson et al., 2011), and changes in both mindfulness and spirituality were significantly related to improved mental health.

While much less research has focused on the potential impact of MBIs on religiosity or religious variables (as compared with the research examining spirituality), one study demonstrated that participation in an MBSR or passage meditation intervention (which has many similarities with but some important differences from MBSR) led to decreased negative religious coping and decreased images of God as mainly controlling among student participants, though no effects on positive religious coping or view of God as loving were found (Oman et al., 2007). This is an important finding, as viewing God as harsh and controlling is less psychologically advantageous than those views promoting a secure relationship (Pargament, 2002; Pargament et al., 1990). Interestingly, in this study, passage meditation was actually found to be superior to MBSR in increasing spiritual modeling (i.e., perceived influence of and self-efficacy for learning from spiritual exemplars; perhaps because of its inherent practice of meditating on selected scriptures and spiritual writings) and also appeared to be operating, in large part, through the mechanism of mindfulness (Flinders, Oman, Flinder & Dreher, 2010). While one study can hardly be used as a basis for confident generalization, the Oman et al. (2007) study does suggest that increasing mindfulness through a spiritual or a secular intervention can lead to healthy and beneficial religious outcomes.

While the relevant literature presents a fairly clear and consistent pattern regarding mindfulness and spirituality, there have been contradictory findings. For example, Jain et al. (2007) failed to find any significant effects on spirituality in students when examining the impact of participation in a shortened (4 weekly meetings of 1.5 h) version of MBSR (compared with relaxation training), despite the fact that participation led to improvements in psychological variables. Another study found

that participation in a modified, 2-week MBSR program did not lead to significant changes in spirituality, again despite significant improvements in psychological variables, among 28 patients receiving anticancer treatments (Ando et al., 2009). It is worth noting that these two studies included modified interventions that were of shorter duration and/or session length than a typical MBI. It is possible that these studies failed to demonstrate a real effect of mindfulness on spirituality due to their inherent intervention design, as spirituality may be an outcome of increased mindfulness or meditation training that takes longer to develop than the potentially more primary outcomes of decreased distress or improved well-being. In fact, some research suggests that decreased anxiety is the mechanism through which mindfulness training leads to increased spirituality (Shapiro et al., 1998).

These studies, taken as a whole, suggest that mindfulness training – of sufficient duration and frequency – often leads to an increased perception of spirituality and that both mindfulness and spirituality are important mechanisms through which MBIs exert beneficial effects. However, this is a complex issue not easily reduced to simplistic terms. Mindfulness is an important aspect of religious and/or spiritual traditions, beliefs, and practices for some but is a secular value and practice for others. In addition, no published work examining the relationship between trait mindfulness and spirituality was located, meaning the apparent conceptual overlap of mindfulness and spirituality may be found only among those who have undergone meditation training and may not replicate among individuals with varying degrees of trait mindfulness who have not participated in such an intervention.

In addition, the limited research base concurrently examining mindfulness and spirituality may artificially simplify their relationship by tending to examine only a unidirectional relationship in which mindfulness training leads to increased spirituality. Recent work demonstrating that mindfulness partially mediates the relationship between increased daily spiritual experiences and improved quality of life suggests that meditation promotes spirituality, which in turn promotes mindfulness (Greeson et al., 2011). Additional research suggests that mindfulness (at least the observing and nonreactivity components) may be increased through emotional responses to everyday pleasant events including spiritual activities (along with helping, interacting, playing, and learning; Catalino & Fredrickson, 2011). These findings suggest that while mindfulness training may certainly enhance spirituality, spiritual experiences may enhance mindfulness, and/or these constructs may contribute to one another's development in a reciprocal manner. Further work is needed to more fully investigate contributions to the development of mindfulness and spirituality in the course of normal lifespan development and interrelationships among these and related constructs.

11.3   Mechanisms of Mindfulness

If we assume, as most published research suggests, that mindfulness training generally increases the related but distinct construct of spirituality, it is important to consider how and why these effects occur, especially within secular settings and

interventions that do not focus directly on spirituality or spiritual teachings. One mechanism that has been posited by many theorists for the psychological benefits of mindfulness, at times under slightly different names, is that of reperceiving (or defusion, Hayes et al., 1999; or decentering, Safran & Segal, 1990), wherein one experiences a fundamental shift in perspective that involves a disidentification, but not dissociation from, the moment-to-moment, ever-changing contents of consciousness and greater contact with the transcendent "self-as-context," or the aspect of self that is the constant witness of these changing experiences. This mindfulness-related reperceiving is suggested to promote greater clarity and objectivity and facilitate additional mechanisms of exposure, self-regulation, values clarification, and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral flexibility (Baer, 2003; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). Recent research has supported some of these theoretical assertions. For example, Carmody, Baer, Lykins, and Olendzki (2009) found that the relationship of the highly overlapping mindfulness and reperceiving constructs (which were combined into a composite variable) with psychological symptoms was partially mediated by changes in indicators of values clarification and flexibility (but not exposure or self-regulation) among a sample of adults completing an MBSR group. Recently collected self-report data in my lab (N=632 undergraduate students) suggest that decentering, self-compassion, and decreased role conflict (but not goal type, self-discrepancies, contingent self-esteem, or experience of pleasure) are important mechanisms through which trait mindfulness exerts beneficial effects (Lykins & Barnes, 2013).

While no research has specifically examined this issue, it is not difficult to imagine how reperception in an individual who is naturally very mindful or who becomes more mindful through meditation practice or mindfulness exercises could influence spirituality. An example may be helpful in illustrating how potential mechanisms of mindfulness may work, though they would certainly be operating in a simultaneous and interacting fashion that would be difficult to disentangle in real life. Imagine an individual who has suffered a major personal loss such as the death of a loved one. Reperception may allow such an individual to accept that the loss occurred and to sit with, watch, and be fully in contact with the thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and urges that the loss triggers rather than avoiding or suppressing these experiences, which is often accomplished through means that are ineffective or counterproductive or that have the potential to be harmful in the long-term (e.g., substance abuse). While the despair may feel overwhelming at first, this emotion would come and go, getting larger and smaller like a wave, as the individual would not be perpetuating or maintaining the sadness through emotion-fueled rumination about the past, pessimism about the future, or other emotion-consistent thoughts (as commonly occurs in mood-consistent memory and judgment; e.g., Mayer, McCormick, & Strong, 1995). The individual may be able to fully experience his/her anguish, which some may view as an inherent manifestation of their love or connection, while still experiencing periods of happiness, gratitude, connection, or meaning in the present moment. Specifically related to spirituality and/or religion, reperception may allow the individual to simply watch and then let go of domain-specific distressing thoughts that may arise, such as blaming or questioning God or

feeling that he/she has no further purpose in life, and to instead remain connected with personal values and self-regulate in a manner than fosters connection rather than isolation. This could cultivate increased unity with others, as pain and loss are universal experiences, and/or post-traumatic growth, wherein meaning, value clarification, or other positive psychological changes are experienced as a result of this struggle (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). A mindful individual experiencing such a loss may even feel more deeply connected with spiritual or religious beliefs, for example about fate/destiny, one's own spiritual journey, and/or the loved ones' ability to live on through existence on a spiritual plane or through those left behind, through adoption or experience of compassion, no-self, transcendence, and peak/mystical experiences (Kristeller, 2010).

The findings regarding another proposed mechanism of mindfulness, self-regulation, are also thought-provoking. In one study, improved self-regulation (in this case, the ability to manage negative emotions and avoid rumination) increased clarity, and non-attachment was found to be the mechanism of the mindfulness-mental health relationship (Coffey, Hartman, & Fredrickson, 2010). Another study demonstrated that, among a large group of college students, the nonjudging and non-reactivity factors of dispositional mindfulness predicted persistence on a difficult laboratory task, while self-consciousness did not (Evans, Baer, & Segerstrom, 2009). This is a particularly interesting finding, as it is commonly suggested that self-consciousness, which is a relatively more self-scrutinizing and critical form of attention than mindfulness, is required to detect and engage in behavior to diminish discrepancies between one's actual and desired states (Carver & Scheier, 1998). While these studies suggest mindfulness promotes hyper-egoic self-regulation (intentional awareness and effortful control of self-relevant behaviors), other work theorizes that mindfulness/present-focused attention and meditation are primary means through which individuals can intentionally increase the frequency of hypo-egoic self-regulation, in which they relinquish deliberate control over their own behavior and respond more naturally, spontaneously, or automatically and thus avoid the disadvantages that sometimes accompany deliberate attempts at self-control, such as choking under pressure, rebound from thought suppression, and/or ego depletion (Baer & Lykins, 2011; Leary, Adams, & Tate, 2006).

The basic premise of hypo-egoic self-regulation and its benefits are echoed in other recent research and theory. For example, mindfulness has been identified as being one type of "flow" experience, wherein a person reaches the highest level of well-being, as well as overlapping significantly with another flow experience, that of challenge-skill balance which occurs when a balance exists between a challenging activity and one's perceived skill level for approaching the challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; Wright, Sadlo, & Stew, 2006). Both of these types of flow experiences appear to involve a decreased preoccupation with time, a full involvement in the present moment, and engagement in activities due to their intrinsically rewarding nature, though they may differ in regard to goal pursuit, perception of time, and emotional outcomes (Wright et al., 2006). Other research demonstrates that individuals high in mindfulness report greater challenge-skill balance and loss of self-consciousness (along with greater merging of action and awareness and

concentration and clearer goals) than individuals lower in mindfulness (Kee & Wang, 2008). This study, while based on a slightly different conceptualization of mindfulness (Bodner & Langer, 2001), supports the notion that mindfulness involves or can promote hypo-egoic self-regulation, given that mindfulness is related to decreased self-consciousness. Further, ACT (Hayes et al., 1999) discusses how problems can develop when individuals become attached to their self-descriptions and engage in stereotyped behavior to promote or experience distress when they deviate in behavior from these inflexible self-concepts. This fusion with the conceptualized self would certainly limit the ability to behave naturally or spontaneously. The importance of entering 'being' mode rather than remaining perpetually in 'doing' mode is also reflected throughout third wave behavior therapies and elsewhere (e.g., Segal et al., 2002).

Potential pathways from mindfulness to spirituality/religiosity based on self-regulation can easily be theorized. For example, deliberate self-management is required to be able to attend a church service or remember to engage in prayer or practice meditation. On the other hand, hypo-egoic self-regulation appears to play a part in transcendent experiences in which individuals have a sense of being unified with God, nature, or the universe (Leary et al., 2006). Mindfulness may allow individuals to engage in or be more receptive to spiritual experiences, then, through increasing one's ability to voluntarily enter hyper-egoic and hypo-egoic states at differing times or under differing circumstances (e.g., varying spiritual goals).

Other research, while not specifically examining correlates/outcomes of mindfulness as mechanisms (i.e., not examining mediation or, potentially, moderation), does suggest the potential for additional pathways of mindfulness to spirituality and psychological health. For example, Goodall, Trejnowska, and Darling (2012) provided evidence that dispositional mindfulness is related to attachment security, a construct well-documented to be related to adult well-being (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Given that religion has been suggested to provide experiences that compensate for insecure attachment or confirm secure attachment (Granqvist et al., 2010), the relationship between mindfulness and attachment may promote engagement in religious or spiritual experiences that reflect or promote this secure pattern (e.g., seeking a secure relationship with God; Pargament, 2002; Pargament et al., 1990). It has also been theorized that mindfulness may increase one's development or utilization of character virtues, such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence, and their component strengths (Baer & Lykins, 2011; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). If mindfulness allows individuals – regardless of personal circumstances – to be more aware of and better able to take advantage of opportunities to cultivate and/or demonstrate strengths such as spirituality, gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, humility, and perspective, it would not be surprising that their spirituality and/or religiosity would be more developed than that of a less mindful individual. Mindfulness has also been demonstrated to have a positive effect on physical health, for example through improved immune functioning (Jacobs et al., 2011). Better physical health related to mindfulness/meditation may allow individuals to better develop spirituality and/or religiosity as they may,

for example, have fewer health problems that may trigger religious/spiritual doubts or challenges or may physically be able to engage in more spiritual or religious experiences.

As mentioned earlier, religious or spiritual beliefs appear to offer psychological benefits due to their common incorporation of symbolic immortality, which helps humans manage their profound existential anxiety (Castano et al., 2004). A recent program of research suggests that individuals with higher levels of trait mindfulness evidence lower levels of worldview defense and engage in less suppression of death-related thoughts and self-esteem striving, two other common defenses against existential anxiety, than individuals lower in mindfulness (Niemiec et al., 2010). This seems to suggest that higher mindfulness results in the experience of less existential anxiety, perhaps due to its focus on acceptance and the present moment, and/or allows individuals to experience such anxiety without managing it in a defensive manner. Death reflection, or processing death more deeply and personally, has also been shown to reduce defensiveness (Cozzolino, Staples, Meyers, & Samboceti, 2004; Lykins, Segerstrom, Averill, Evans, & Kemeny, 2007), so mindfulness may allow individuals to more fully acknowledge and reflect upon death and to engage in religious and/or spiritual experiences for (potentially) healthier reasons than a defensive reaction to existential anxiety. Perhaps this is why research more clearly supports a link between mindfulness and spirituality, as opposed to religion, as more mindful individuals may prefer the more individual, experiential approach offered by spirituality and not have as much need for the concrete conceptualizations of the afterlife often provided in specific religions (e.g., Dalai Lama, 1999; Zinnbauer et al., 1997) relative to individuals lower in mindfulness. Interestingly, some research seems to suggest that increased spirituality may be the primary means through which meditation exerts its beneficial effects, as individuals who were taught and practiced a spiritual meditation technique experienced greater improvements in spiritual health, spiritual experiences, anxiety, mood, and pain tolerance relative to individuals who learned secular meditation or relaxation (Wachholtz & Pargament, 2005).

The patterns that have emerged in research examining the neurological impact of mindfulness tend to support the results of self-report and behavioral research, though there are many conceptual and methodological difficulties to contend with and contradictory findings to try to explain (please see Treadway & Lazar, 2010 for an excellent overview of current neurobiological investigations of mindfulness). For example, long-term meditators appear to have greater left-sided anterior activation (indicative of positive affect), dorsolateral prefrontal cortex activation and thickness (indicative of executive control), anterior cingulate cortex activation (indicative of improved integration of attention, motivation, and motor control), insula activation and thickness (indicative of improved processing of transient bodily sensations and sense of self), alpha and theta brain waves (indicative of relaxation), and high-amplitude gamma-band oscillations and phase-synchrony (indicative of attention, working-memory, learning, and/or conscious perception) than do nonmeditators (see Treadway & Lazar, 2010). It has also been demonstrated that greater levels of meditation practice are associated with higher levels of prefrontal cortex activation

when regulating pleasant emotions, which is associated in turn with higher levels of positive affect in daily life (Urry, Roeser, Lazar, & Poey, 2012), and that trait mindfulness among nonmeditators is related to increased medial prefrontal cortex activation and decreased amygdala activation during an affect-labeling task, which suggests improved regulation of emotional (limbic) responses (Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2007). All-in-all, these results do suggest that mindfulness is related to measurable differences/changes in brain structure and functioning that are considered beneficial and adaptive. Thus, neuronal changes may be another mechanism through which mindfulness may promote spirituality and/or religiosity, through increased structural size or changes in neuronal activation or connectivity that increase access to spiritual or religious experiences or feelings.

11.4 Mindfulness as an Altered State of Consciousness

Altered states of consciousness have been intentionally self-adopted and/or induced in others to promote healing in diverse communities worldwide for at least 5,000 years (Ospina et al., 2007), and meditation is commonly viewed as one means of altering one's own consciousness (Haupt & Fell, 2006). Despite the long tradition of intentionally inducing altered states for therapeutic purposes, meditation has been viewed as fringe psychology within the Western world until relatively recently. It is likely this is due less to its inherent alternation of neurological states than to factors such as the commodification of Transcendental Meditation and some early work that failed to support its effectiveness (Jaffe, 2010). Paralleling the growing but already sizeable body of literature demonstrating its beneficial effects, improvements in public perception and organizational endorsement (e.g., Lebovits, 2007) reflect the transition of meditation from alternative to conventional medicine. Yoga and acupuncture appear to be undergoing a similar process, given the increasing evidence of their respective efficacy in the treatment of certain disease states or conditions (e.g., Bussing, Ostermann, Ludtke, & Michalsen, 2012; Manheimer, White, Berman, Forys, & Ernst, 2005). It is thus interesting to consider whether other means of inducing altered states of consciousness may also offer significant spiritual, religious, and/or psychological benefits, despite the fact that many of them are currently considered "fringe" (sometimes at best) when used as an intervention. This question is especially appropriate for the current examination, as other means of inducing altered states (e.g., music or dance) are common elements of religious and spiritual traditions.

Music is one method for the provocation of different states of consciousness (Goldman, 1988), with some music being produced with binaural beats specifically for the purpose of inducing specific brain states (Brain Wave States, 2012). Music has been an important part of religious rituals for individuals from many different religious traditions and parts of the world, and appears to have served a number of important functions (Lynch, 2006). The way in which music embodies meaning and meets emotional and spiritual needs has been suggested as the primary mechanism

through which it promotes physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Lipe, 2002). Music has been identified as a means through which individuals can experience and express spirituality, even when not identified as a religious exercise (e.g., Goldman, 1988; Hayes & Minichiello, 2005). It has even been suggested that a musical subculture may serve all of the important functions (community, meaning, and experience of the numinous through ritual and communal ceremony) that religion used to serve for those who have rejected or never adopted religion and that music can contribute to the transmission of alternative spiritual ideologies and experiences through its lyrics, symbols, visual images, sounds, and artist narratives (Lynch, 2006; Sylvan, 2002, 2005). Another form of musical engagement that is commonly involved in religious or spiritual ritual and that can induce altered states, usually accompanied by increased alpha waves in the brain, is drumming (Friedman, 2000), which has been found to reduce stress, boost the immune system, synchronize brain activity, and promote endorphins and endogenous opiates (Bittman et al., 2001; Bittman, Bruhn, Stevens, Westengard, & Umbach, 2003).

Dance, which often accompanies music for ritualistic purposes in some religions, has been suggested to be one of the oldest forms of spiritual expression and communion (Stewart, 2000). Participation in dance can also result in altered states of consciousness, with or without the use of an entheogen or hallucinogenic drug (e.g., Sufi whirling, During & Sellheim, 2009). Participation in certain forms of dance has been identified as a spiritual experience for many individuals in the modern day (Kraus, 2009; Takahashi & Olaveson, 2003), while engagement in ritualistic dance has been demonstrated to lead to spiritual benefits, such as spiritual connectedness, awe, ego loss, community, compassion, growth, joy, and gratitude, and therapeutic healing in certain contexts (e.g., Francis, 2004; Jilek, 2004). While the surrounding people and physical environment, as well as other setting events, can influence whether individuals have a spiritual experience while engaging in activities that involve music (DeNora, 2000), music, drumming, and dance may affect spirituality and well-being through the induction of the altered state of consciousness of mindful flow or through mechanisms similar to those of mindfulness, such as perceived connection with a higher power or other people or reduced self-consciousness. While the empirical basis for firm conclusions has not yet been established, the historical similarities and conceptual and outcome-based overlap of music, dance, and mindfulness suggests the need for (likely very intriguing) future inquiries into the effects of these, as well as similar "flow arts" practices such as chanting, hooping, or poi, on spirituality and well-being.

Another means of altering consciousness is the use of entheogens, such as psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca/DMT, peyote, iboga, or cannabis, or other drugs with some similar effects, such as LSD or MDMA (see additional chapter of the current edition for a more thorough review). Entheogens, which are psychoactive substances used in religious, shamanic, or spiritual contexts, have long been used within multiple religions and are still legally used for such purposes by certain religious groups, even within the United States (Greenhouse, 2006; Shanon, 2002). Even outside the religious context, many individuals appear to seek out these entheogens for spiritual purposes (Moro, Simon, Bard, & Racz, 2011; Winkelman, 2005). Use of

entheogens and other drugs commonly used for spiritual or therapeutic purposes, such as MDMA, typically results in significant changes in perception, thought, and mood, with some divergent effects by drug. Use of entheogens or other potentially therapeutic drugs has been shown to result in improved well-being (e.g., Carhart-Harris & Nutt, 2010; Greer & Tolbert, 1986) and enhanced spirituality (e.g., mystical beliefs such as oneness with God or the universe; e.g., Carhart-Harris & Nutt, 2010; Griffiths, Richards, Johnson, McCann, & Jesse, 2008; Trichter, Klimo, & Krippner, 2009) in a number of studies, with greater benefits evident when individuals pursue psychedelic drug use for enhanced self-knowledge rather than mood regulation or sensation seeking (Moro et al., 2011). In one study, where 36 (hallucinogen-naïve) adults who regularly participated in religious or spiritual activities were given psilocybin for the first time, 67 % of the participants reported the experiences to be among the top five most spiritually significant experiences of their lives (Griffiths et al., 2008), clearly revealing the potential for powerful spiritual experiences and outcomes. While research about potential effects of hallucinogen or entheogen use on spirituality and well-being is still limited, based in large part on current drug laws that make such work difficult to conduct and the realistic potential for adverse reactions or outcomes, the body of literature thus far suggests that intentionally altering one's consciousness through the ingestion of such substances usually results in improved spiritual and psychological outcomes.

11.5   Conclusions and Implications

Given the current state of the literature examining these topics, the long-posited notion that mystical conscious experiences can be induced by a variety of means, including meditation, ecstatic ritual (e.g., music, dance), or hallucinogenic drug use (Fischer, 1971), appears to be supported, though it is an empirical question whether they are operating through the same mechanisms (such as promotion of mindfulness). The overall pattern of results also suggests that it is (fairly) safe to conclude that mindfulness promotes spirituality and that mindfulness and spirituality/religiosity are important factors in well-being and are possibly both mechanisms through which MBIs exert positive influence. Apart from the purely academic motivation to increase knowledge, why is this information important? While most individuals consider happiness and well-being to be a worthy pursuit for their own sake, there are those that disagree, with some even equating positivity to a selfish, delusion state (e.g., Ehrenreich, 2010). Even Albert Einstein is credited as saying, "*Well-being and happiness never appeared to me as an absolute aim. I am even inclined to compare such moral aims to the ambitions of a pig.*" Certainly there are downsides to the pursuit of happiness, as doing something with the expectation it will make you happy can lead to disappointment and decreased happiness, while being exposed to something that celebrates happiness can leave one feeling worse than being exposed to a more neutral topic (Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011; Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino, 2011). Perhaps due to a tendency to be overly (and

potentially unrealistically) optimistic, the very happy in life actually contribute less to social capital (i.e., volunteer work, political, social, and cultural involvement) than those who are moderately happy (Guven, 2011). However, mindfulness and spirituality may be two intentional activities that can assist individuals in overcoming the hedonic treadmill, or their genetically-predisposed level of happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005), without some of the typical drawbacks of general happiness or the pursuit thereof.

It appears that mindfulness allows one to be more satisfied with what one has, rather than associating happiness with a delayed outcome from the pursuit of something not yet achieved. Evidence supporting this notion comes from research demonstrating that dispositional and developed mindfulness relate to smaller discrepancies between current and desired financial state regardless of actual financial status (Brown, Kasser, Ryan, Linley, & Orzech, 2009). Mindfulness also appears to relate to a variety of positive relational outcomes, such as empathy, compassion, relatedness, closeness, and acceptance of others (e.g., Birnie et al., 2010; Carson et al., 2004; Kemeny et al., 2012), and may also lead to increases in prosocial behaviors through increases in spirituality and religiosity (again, see Preston et al., 2010). If mindfulness leads to increases in spirituality more so than in religiosity, it is also possible that mindfulness is promoting a means of healthier interaction with a greater power that involves less authoritarianism, potential for religious conflict or war, or environmental harm. In fact, mindfulness has been found to relate to nature connectedness (Howell, Dopko, Passmore, & Buro, 2011) and values supportive of and engagement in behaviors that are environmentally protective (Brinkerhoff & Jacob, 1999; Jacob et al., 2009). Perhaps mindfulness encourages a metapersonal self-construal, in which one views him/herself as profoundly and universally interconnected with all humanity and nature (Stroink & DeCicco, 2011). Thus, mindfulness may be of importance in how individuals answer questions about the nature and meaning of personal existence, which have been of central concern to humans since at least the beginning of recorded history (e.g., Assmann, 2001; Clottes, 2002).

Of course, this knowledge can and should be used clinically, to help those who are struggling or who want to function optimally. Mental health professionals, members of the clergy, community members, and individuals alike can take advantage of MBIs or their inherent practices to reap the host of already documented benefits of MBIs. It is also possible that new applications of mindfulness training can be developed, such as harnessing the neurological effects of meditation training to help individuals exert more voluntary control over seemingly involuntary processes or fostering more adaptive individual behaviors, such as being a better leader or more environmentally conscious. Cutting edge research is currently delineating the benefits offered by other altered states of consciousness. For example, MDMA is being investigated as a treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a disorder that can – at times – be difficult to treat successfully using current psychotherapeutic strategies (http://www.maps.org/research/).

Certainly, as seems to always and understandably be said in the sciences, further work is needed to confirm (or dispute) the conclusions of this chapter, investigate the means by which altered states of consciousness may lead to increased spirituality

(and potentially religiosity) and well-being, establish when and for whom these benefits emerge, and determine how clinically significant they are. There may be an inherent limit, or a temporary limit based on technology, to how well we are able to answer these questions, especially as science can help determine how we live but may be fundamentally unable to address the spiritual and religious questions of why we live. Given the overall convergent status of the literature suggesting meditation and other altered states can promote spirituality and well-being and the innately experiential nature of mindfulness and spirituality, I invite you to investigate these relationships – for the first time or more deeply – for yourself.

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Chapter 12
Mind-Body Practices and the Neuro-psychology of Wellbeing

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Traditional Western cultures tend to subdivide wellbeing into three realms: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Consequently, people often seek physical wellbeing through exercise, emotional wellbeing through psychotherapy, and spiritual wellbeing through religion. In contrast, Eastern cultures envision more of a mind-body continuum. Classical yoga and other meditative traditions use highly developed physical and mental practices to increase positive states of mind and body. As Eastern practices adapted to Western cultures, physical practices, asanas (movements and postures), became predominant to enhance physical fitness. More recently, however, breathing and contemplative practices are regaining lost ground due to increased recognition of their potential benefits for dealing with stress and reducing distress. At the same time, modern research is showing that neuro-immuno-endocrine changes associated with stress and aging contribute to inflammation, dysregulation of energy utilization (for example, insulin resistance), oxidative damage by free radicals, and neuronal degeneration (Brown & Gerbarg, 2009; Desteno, Gross, & Kubzansky, 2013; Poitras & Pyke, 2013; Shalev et al., 2013; Stuart & Baune, 2012). Consequently, interest in aspects of yoga as a mind-body and psycho-spiritual practice is growing in tandem with the evidence that emotional states affect physical wellbeing and disease progression (Benson, 1996; Jacobs, 2001). Of course, prior to yoga and in many places outside of Asia, mind-body practices such as

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shaking, movement, breathing, dancing, and chanting have been used for health and spiritual wellbeing for millennia; thus, while this chapter focuses mainly on breath practices, examples from diverse religious mind-body traditions are included where relevant.

12.1 Breath Practices, the Foundation of Yoga and Other Mind-Body Techniques

Yoga began developing about 8,000 years ago as a method for emotional, physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Breath awareness and breath practices form the foundation of yoga and other healing traditions. Yoga philosophy considers the greatest stress to come from fluctuations of the mind as it moves toward the things it wants in the future or away from things it dislikes, such as future threats or past mistakes. When we focus our attention on present experiences, instead of focusing attention on past or future experiences, we tend to feel calmer and experience greater stress tolerance. According to yoga teachings, mental and physical illnesses are caused by fluctuations of the mind as it shifts between worries about the future and regrets or negative feelings about the past. Thus, yoga breathing heals by quieting the fluctuations of the mind and directing our attention to the present moment (Feuerstein, 1998).

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit word 'yuj', which means 'unity'. It is said that the purpose of yoga is to unite with the highest, our 'true nature', which is thought to go beyond the limits of human mind, personality and our limited sense of self.

According to the Yoga Sutras written by Patanjali, who systematized yoga philosophy around 200 BCE, breathing exercises, called pranayamas, are crucial yoga practices intended to help cleanse the body and mind of the effects of daily and long-term stresses. With yogic breathing, the 'life force' (prana) is brought 'under control' (yama). Stress can cause rapid shallow breathing. In contrast, relaxation promotes deeper, slower respiration. Yogic scriptures teach that pranayamas also improve concentration, mental focus, and self-control.

Within yoga traditions, many breathing exercises are described: for example, breathing at different rates and depths, breathing against airway resistance, altering how the nose, mouth, and throat are used, and coordinating breathing with body movements and postures.

Breath practices are used in most spiritual traditions to enhance positive mental, emotional, and physical states. Classical Hindu and Buddhist texts focus on the breath as the *conditio sine qua non* of spiritual practice. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, *Qi*, the life force energy, is strengthened, collected and stored using breath techniques. The calming breath, called *Xi*, is gentle, smooth, "thread-like, continuous, similar to the silk-worm emitting silk," according to T. K. Shih (1999). He quotes an ancient song: "*The heart rules over the movement of the Qi. The Qi brings long life. When long and thread-like, smooth and continuous breath flows in its circle, disease can be removed and life prolonged.*" (Shih, 1999). Breath practices are central in meditative

and martial arts traditions. Chanting, a form of paced breathing in which vocal cord contraction increases airway resistance to create sound, is prominent in Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and in tribal practices worldwide. For example, in Nigeria, the ancient Ibo word for lungs "ngugu" is derived from the word "gugu" meaning to console or heal. Thus the lungs or "ngugu" constitute the healer (Dr. Uzoma Nwosu, personal written communication, June 21, 2012).

12.2 Effects on Stress Response, Emotion Regulation, Bonding, Compassion, and Spirituality

We will explore the impact of mind-body practices on the following aspects of wellbeing:

1. The sense of calmness and safety depends upon the health, flexibility, balance, and resiliency of the stress response systems.
2. The ability to manage stress well and to experience positive emotions emerges from early bonding experiences and adequate functioning of emotion regulatory systems.
3. The experience of positive emotions, particularly love of oneself and others, depends on the capacity for bonding, connectedness, compassion, and caregiving.
4. The experience of spirituality requires the ability to feel a meaningful connection to someone or something.

As described in the previous section, breath practices form the foundation of yoga and many mind-body practices. In the following discussion we will focus mainly on the effects of breath practices on wellbeing.

12.2.1 Stress Response Systems

People vary in their reaction to stressful experiences. Resiliency of the stress response systems affects how we deal with stress and how it impacts our health and wellbeing (Selye, 1979). In brief, the autonomic nervous system, which regulates the automatic body functions, is a major component of the stress response system. It consists of two counterbalancing divisions, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic systems, each with its own intricate network of neural pathways. In acute stress situations, the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) is activated to prepare the body for action. The parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) facilitates vegetative, and nonemergency activities and allows the body to relax, repair itself, and restore energy reserves after a stressful period. Balance between the SNS and PNS is essential for healthy functioning during and after stress (Brown & Gerbarg, 2009; Porges, 2009; Thayer & Brosschot, 2005).

Another part of the stress response system involved in long-term, prolonged stress involves the hypothalamus and the pituitary that regulate the secretion of cortisol by the adrenal glands. The functions of the autonomic and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal systems as well as the interactions between them can be influenced by breathing and other mind-body practices. Until the last 15 years, western science focused on the top-down effects of the PNS on body organs; for example, the cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, and glandular systems. More recent research reveals profound effects of the PNS on perception, emotion, cognition, and social behavior. Clinical studies find that imbalances in the PNS and SNS stress response system are associated with psychological disorders, particularly anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, attention deficit disorder, and autism (Beauchaine, 2001). Maintaining the balance between the SNS and PNS is critical to preventing over reactions and emotion dysregulation, as seen, for example, in anxiety disorders. SNS and PNS balance is also essential to prevent or repair cellular damage from prolonged excess levels of cortisol, adrenaline, and excitatory neurotransmitters, such as glutamate. Most anxiolytic, anti-depressant, and anti-psychotic medications dampen down the activity of the SNS. However, to date, there are no medications that have been shown to elevate the activity of the PNS. Research evidence has shown that mind-body practices and positive emotional experiences can activate and strengthen the PNS (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Telles & Desiraju, 1992).

The main pathways of the PNS are the right and left vagus nerves (10th cranial nerves) which exit from the brainstem and travel through the chest and abdomen. The vagus nerves send branches to all of the internal organs, glands, blood vessels, and other internal tissues. The vagus nerves are bidirectional. Approximately 30 % of vagal fibers carry messages from the brain down to the body, regulating the autonomic functions such as heart rate, respiratory rate, the dilation and contraction of blood vessels, and digestion, as well as inflammation, and insulin release. The remaining 70 % of vagal fibers convey information from the body up through the brainstem to critical structures inside the brain. From the brainstem, pathways ascend to the limbic system (emotion processing structures), hypothalamus, thalamus, and broad areas of the cerebral cortex (including the prefrontal cortex and the insular cortex), influencing how we experience our bodies, emotions, perceptions, and states of consciousness. The PNS also has a significant impact on how we express our feelings and on our capacities for social interactions, bonding, and love (Brown, Gerbarg, & Muench, 2013; Porges, 2009; Streeter, Gerbarg, Saper, Ciraulo, & Brown, 2012).

Breathing, the only autonomic function easily controlled through voluntary effort, can be used as a portal through which imbalances in the stress-response system can be corrected. In the last section of this chapter, we will elaborate on the potential effects of breathing on the PNS and SNS. To examine activity of the PNS, researchers studied the naturally occurring variations in heart rate. During inhalation the heart speeds up and during exhalation the heart slow down. Input from the SNS and from one of the vagal nerves regulates heart rate. Variations in heart rate can be used to calculate the level of activity in the PNS and SNS (Porges, 2001). Low heart rate variability (HRV) and respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA) are associated with depression, timidity or fear in infants and with anxiety, panic disorder,

depression, inflammatory bowel disease, cardiovascular disease, and obesity (Beauchaine, 2001; Carney et al., 1995; Friedman & Thayer, 1998; Jacob et al., 2013). Improvements in HRV can be used to assess positive effects of interventions on PNS activity and the balance between SNS and PNS.

12.2.2   Emotion Regulation

Western research confirms the Indo-Tibetan teaching that breathing and emotion have a reciprocal relationship (Ley, 1999). Emotional states affect respiratory rate, depth and pattern. Conversely, voluntarily changing the pattern of breath can account for at least 40 % of the variance in feelings of anger, fear, joy and sadness (Philippot, Chapelle, & Blairy, 2002). Breathing is controlled by both voluntary and involuntary mechanisms with complex feedback involving networks of the autonomic nervous system, brain stem nuclei, limbic system, cerebral cortex, and the neuroendocrine system. The voluntary control of breath can modulate autonomic nervous system functions, including vagal activity (as measured by HRV), vigilance and attention, chemoreceptor and baroreflex sensitivity, and the level of central nervous system excitation (Bernardi, Gabutti, Porta, & Spicuzza, 2001; Brown & Gerberg, 2005b; Fokkema, 1999; Lehrer, Sasaki, & Saito, 1999; Sovik, 2000; Spicuzza, Gabutti, Porta, Montano, & Bernardi, 2000).

Polyvagal theory asserts that "physiological states characterized by increased vagal influence on HRV support social engagement and bonding." Moreover, "any stimulus that increases feelings of safety can recruit neural circuits that support social engagement and inhibit defensive limbic activity." (Porges, 2009). Simply slowing the respiratory rate increases parasympathetic activity. Furthermore, Resistance Breathing (eg. *Ujjayi*, also known as Ocean Breath, Noisy Breath, or Victorious Breathing) augments these effects through vagal inputs to the brain, further improving HRV (Brown & Gerberg, 2005b, 2012; Telles & Desiraju, 1992). Many yoga practices stimulate vagal pathways. For example, chanting, another aspect of yoga and other religious traditions, induces internal vibrations in the body, which stimulate the vagal nerves. Similarly, *Bramhari* (Bubble Bee Breath, a calming yoga breathing practice, involves inserting the index fingers into the ear canals and vibrating the fingers while humming or buzzing like a bee). Stimulation of a small branch of the vagus nerve inside the ear canal probably accounts for the calming effect.

12.2.3   Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid (GABA)

Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) is the brain's main inhibitory neurotransmitter. GABA interneurons and receptors are present in the main anatomic structures involved in emotion regulation. GABA-ergic transmission is postulated to be a

means by which mind-body practices may enhance the functioning of emotion regulatory systems. A small pilot study demonstrated that an Iyengar yoga intervention was associated with increased GABA levels in the thalamus and amygdala and that the change in GABA levels correlated with improvements in mood and reduction in back pain (Streeter et al., 2012). This promising line of research is being pursued in a larger study of the effects of a mind-body intervention on brain GABA levels, HRV, and depression.

12.2.4   Self-Regulation

Self-regulation or the ability to successfully handle our thoughts and emotions contributes greatly to wellbeing. Difficulties regulating emotional responses not only play an essential role in mood, anxiety and personality disorders, but also in non-clinical complaints in healthy individuals. In a nonrandomized comparison controlled pilot study, an intensive 6-day yogic breathing program (including Sudarshan Kriya, a cyclic breathing technique), was found to reduce non-clinical symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress, and to increase the degree of optimism in the participants ($n = 55$) when compared to a group instructed to relax in an arm chair ($n = 48$) (Kjellgren, Bood, Axelsson, Norlander, & Saatcioglu, 2007). Although this study has methodological limitations, it suggests that by learning and applying a yogic breathing program, wellness may be improved.

To deal with unpleasant thoughts and emotions, individuals may use different coping strategies. Such individual differences in the use and efficiency of emotion and attention regulation strategies may play a role in healthy psychological functioning and in vulnerability to anxiety, neuroticism, depressive feelings and worry. Several studies indicate that the practice of yogic techniques and breathing is beneficial for emotion regulation. By examining brain activity with electroencephalography (EEG), the emotional value of a stimulus to an individual can be investigated. EEG measures the electrical activity of the brain using electrodes placed on the scalp. The electrical activity of the brain is maintained by millions of brain cells. By examining the electrical brain response to the repeated presentation of emotional or cognitive stimuli, it is possible to investigate covert processing of these stimuli in the brain. Stimuli with a strong negative emotional value induce stronger responses in the brain than neutral stimuli.

In a pilot study using EEG, one of the authors found that yoga practitioners showed sustained attenuation of emotional responses on their EEGs in an emotion regulation task (Gootjes, Franken, & Strien, 2011). This indicates that the practitioners were more successful in regulating their emotions over a longer time. Yogic practice, and more specifically the meditative component of yoga, was found to be associated with diverse aspects of attention control (Slagter et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2007). Other EEG studies also found evidence that yogic breathing has positive effects on emotion and attention. During Sudarshan Kriya (a cyclic breathing exercise), increased brain activity was found in the theta frequency range, which was interpreted as an indication of increased focused attention (Baijal & Srinivasan, 2010).

Interestingly, long-term advanced yogic meditation practitioners have also been found to show increased levels of perceived thought regulation (Gootjes & Rassin, 2014). In a study in 104 practitioners, the amount of meditation experience was found to correlate with scores on the thought control ability questionnaire (TCAQ), a questionnaire that was developed specifically to examine individual differences in the perceived (subjective) ability to regulate thoughts. Rather than aiming for thought control, most yogic and meditative practices cultivate an accepting and open stance to any experience or thought. However, this does not mean that practitioners let their minds wander. On the contrary, in most body-mind practices, as soon as the practitioner becomes aware that the mind is wandering, the attention is directed back to, for example, the breath (in breath-based meditation), a mantra (in mantra meditation), a loving and kind thought (in loving-kindness meditation), or a 'meta-awareness' of ongoing mental or physical processes (in open-focus meditation). In other words, yoga and meditative practices are not about controlling which thoughts *arise*, but about whether thoughts are *attended to* or not. The latter may actually lead to an increased sense of control over cognitive processes, usually in the form of an overall quieting of mental activity or reducing of repetitive anxious thoughts. Experienced practitioners may find it easier not to attend to unwanted intrusive thoughts and may be less distressed when such thoughts arise. This would be consistent with recent studies on mindfulness meditation indicating that mindful breathing reduces reactivity to repetitive thoughts (Feldman, Greeson, & Senville, 2010) and that higher mindfulness scores are associated with less intense negative responses to unwanted thoughts (Berry, May, Andrade, & Kavanagh, 2010). (For an extended discussion on the effects of mindfulness on wellbeing see Chap. 11).

Self regulation includes the capacities to modulate emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral responses within an appropriate range. The importance of self regulation was highlighted in a study of 5,716 middle aged people. Those who had the best self regulatory abilities were 50 times more likely to be alive and without chronic disease 15 years later than those with low scores on measures of self regulation (Frentzel-Beyme & Grossarth-Maticek, 2001). Clinical studies demonstrating the benefit of using yoga to reduce symptoms of anxiety, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), insomnia, depression and fatigue have been reviewed (Brown & Gerbarg, 2009, 2012; Gerbarg, Wallace, & Brown, 2011). For example, a controlled study of 45 hospitalized patients with severe depression found that Sudarshan Kriya Yoga (SKY) was equivalent to treatment with 150 mg/day of imipramine (a tricyclic antidepressant). Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) was only slightly more effective than SKY or imipramine (Janakiramaiah et al., 2000).

12.2.5 *Attachment, Bonding, Love, Empathy and Compassion*

Humans are born with the innate capacities to develop attachment, bonding, love, and ultimately empathy and compassion. A consistent, nurturing, loving environment fosters these positive emotions (Bowlby, 1969; Gilbert, 2010; Winnicott, 1965).

Neglect, trauma, abuse, and betrayal of trust can disrupt or, in extreme cases, irreparably damage these abilities (Lee et al., 2001; Lee and Robbins, 1998; Mcpherson et al., 2006; Rahn and Transue, 1998). The neurophysiological capacity for bonding, the formation of deeply meaningful connections, is the foundation of love, empathy, and compassion. A well-balance autonomic nervous system is conducive to social interactions and bonding. In addition, pro-social/anti-anxiety hormones such as oxytocin, prolactin, and vasopressin can facilitate bonding. On the other hand, states of emotion dysregulation, fear or rage impede social approach and affiliative behaviors and can disrupt bonding.

Disconnectedness and loss of meaning are symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is proposed that interventions that improve the balance between the SNS and the PNS (as indicated by increased HRV), emotion regulation, and release of oxytocin and other pro-social hormones may facilitate restoration of the sense of connectedness, bonding, and meaning in life. The authors (PG and RPB) have observed many cases in which mind-body practices have restored the capacity for feeling meaningfully connected to the self, to other people, or to the universe. Whether the sense of connectedness is experienced as spirituality depends upon one's belief system. Disconnectedness, as a symptom of PTSD, is difficult to treat with verbal therapies alone. Several studies (e.g. Brown et al., 2013; Streeter et al., 2012) provide evidence that mind-body practices may help reverse disconnection and restore bonding through the convergence of several mechanisms:

- improving the balance between the PNS and the SNS
- reducing over activity within the limbic system, thus reducing anxiety
- enhancing feelings of safety
- and increasing release of pro-social/anti-anxiety hormones

Gilbert and colleagues point out that the attachment system evolved as a threat regulator and soothing system for the child (Liotti and Gilbert, 2011). The release of neurohormones, endorphin and oxytocin induce feelings of calmness and safety within the affiliative system. When infants are close to their parents they tend to be calmer and quieter. When children grow older and feel safe enough to leave their parents to engage in play, the moment a threat arises they return to the parent to restore their sense of safety and calmness. Increasing evidence suggests that affiliative systems may also be involved in social intelligence, empathy and mentalizing (Fonagy & Target, 2006). Mentalization is the imaginative mental activity that enables one to understand the mental state of oneself and others. It makes possible the perception and interpretation of behavior based upon needs, desires, feelings, beliefs, and goals. The PNS may be the link between breathing and the affiliative system (Porges, 2009; Thayer & Sternberg, 2006). A one-month randomized study of schizophrenic patients found significant elevations in endogenous plasma oxytocin levels among those who participated in a yoga program with breathing practices compared with controls (Jayaram et al., 2013). Stimulation of the vagal nerves (PNS) through breath practices may enable the sense of connectedness (bonding, affiliation, and love) by increasing the release of oxytocin and other pro-social hormones as well as by activating pathways involved in social affiliation. Some people are

uncomfortable with feeling compassion for themselves or receiving compassion from others (Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, & Rivis, 2011). A pilot study of 22 adults given a relaxation, compassion-focused imagery task found that those who were less self-critical with a secure attachment style responded with increased HRV and significantly decreased salivary cortisol (an indicator of reduced stress), while those who were more self-critical with an insecure attachment style did not. This suggests a relationship between HRV, sympatho-vagal balance, attachment and compassion response (Rockliff et al., 2011). In a pilot study, 17 women were instructed to imagine either being self-critical or self-reassuring. This study used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), a neuroimaging technique that visualizes brain activity. Self-criticism was associated with increased activity in the lateral prefrontal cortex and dorsal anterior cingulate, which are brain areas related to error processing and behavioral inhibition. In contrast, self-reassurance was associated with increased activity in the left temporal pole and insula, areas involved in expressing compassion and empathy toward others (Longe et al., 2010).

Neural structures involved in attachment, self-criticism, compassion and empathy can be influenced by increased parasympathetic activity. This would be consistent with the authors' clinical observations that mind-body practices that include breathing techniques can help to reduce self-criticism, enhance attachment, and enable feelings of compassion and empathy.

When faced with threat or danger, the affiliative system has to be shut down. One does not want to feel empathy, compassion or love while fighting to the death with an enemy. Similarly, the anger, fear, fight, flight circuits must be turned down to experience love, bonding, empathy, compassion. However, for this to occur, one has to feel safe enough to become vulnerable. By activating the PNS, mind-body practices may provide methods that enable "bottom-up" interoceptive information to persuade 'the mind' that conditions are safe enough. When this succeeds, pro-social affiliative systems are enabled or recruited (Brown & Gerbarg, 2009, 2012; Gerbarg, 2008; Porges, 2009). Multiple mechanisms and pathways are involved in the effects of mind-body practices the authors have observed in patients with PTSD, including the stress response system, sympatho-vagal balance, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, neurotransmitters, GABA, and pro-social/anti-anxiety neuro-hormones (Streeter et al., 2012).

12.3   Yoga Therapy in Relation to Wellbeing

Every aspect of wellbeing is impacted by mass disasters because they entail physical and emotional traumas followed by an aftermath of losses of loved ones, homes, jobs, economic opportunity, and health. Current treatment approaches fall far short of restoring wellbeing. Mind-body practices can play an important role in the recovery of individuals and communities following mass disasters, including war, floods, earthquakes, oil or chemical spills, or radioactive contamination.

Many studies have shown that mind-body practices can reduce anxiety, depression, and symptoms of PTSD (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005a, 2009; Brown et al., 2013;

Brown, Gerbarg, & Muskin, 2009; Gerbarg, 2008; Hutcherson et al., 2008; Janakiramaiah et al., 2000; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992; Katzman, Vermani, Gerbarg, Brown, Iorio, et al., 2012; Katzman, Vermani, Gerbarg, Brown, Tsirgielis, et al., 2012; Shapiro et al., 2007; van der Kolk, 2006). Only a few have been conducted in disaster zones. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to review studies of mind-body treatments as they offer a practical, safe, inexpensive modality to alleviate suffering and support the recovery of wellbeing. Further research is needed to identify effective post-disaster interventions that can be administered quickly and inexpensively to large numbers of survivors by small mobile groups of providers.

Traumatic experiences often lead to emotion dysregulation. Core features of PTSD, persistent re-experiencing, avoidance, and increased arousal associated with intense psychological distress, physiological over reactivity, feeling detachment or estrangement from others, difficulty falling asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle response as described by the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). PTSD is characterized by significant dysfunction in stress response systems and emotion dysregulation. Therefore, by studying PTSD, we can learn a great deal about how mind-body practices affect autonomic and emotion regulatory systems, enabling us to identify mind-body practices that can effectively treat PTSD and many other less severe psychological conditions. Studies of the effects of mind-body approaches on symptoms of PTSD illustrate the power of these practices, particularly breathing techniques, on the stress response system.

In a wait-list controlled study of 183 survivors of the 2004 Asian Tsunami who had been living for nine months in refugee camps in India, an 8-h program of yogic breath techniques (Ujjayi, Bhastrika, and Sudarshan Kriya) reduced symptoms of PTSD by about 60 % and depression by about 90 % on standardized measures within one week. Scores for the control group showed no significant change. Furthermore, these benefits were maintained over a long period of time as became clear at 6-week, 3-month, and 6-month follow-ups (Descilo et al., 2010).

A randomized wait-list controlled study evaluated a 22-h Sudarshan Kriya Yoga (SKY) course adapted for veterans. Among 30 Australian Vietnam veterans who were disabled due to PTSD, those given the modified SKY intervention had significantly reduced symptoms of PTSD on standardized measures (Carter et al., 2013).

A randomized wait-list controlled study of the effects of a 6-week multi-component mind-body skills training program on 82 adolescents with PTSD in post-war Kosovo included meditation, biofeedback, drawings, autogenic training, guided imagery, genograms, movement, and breathing techniques. Classroom school teachers were trained to teach the 12-session mind-body skills program. Psychiatrists and psychologists provided supervision. Compared with those in the wait-list control group, students given this mind-body skills training showed significantly lower PTSD symptom scores following the intervention and scores were maintained at 3-month follow-up (Gordon, Staples, Blyta, Bytyqi, & Wilson, 2008).

An open study of the effects of a one-week Vivekananda Yoga program in 47 survivors of the 2004 tsunami in the Andaman Islands showed that self-rated fear, anxiety, sadness and disturbed sleep were significantly less after the yoga program

compared to before (Telles, Naveen, & Dash, 2007). Vivekananda Yoga, based on Ashtanga Yoga, includes loosening exercises (*sithilikarana vyayama*), specific postures (*asanas*), cleansing practices (*kriyas*), regulated breathing (*pranayamas*), guided relaxation and meditation (*dhyana*). In a randomized study of 22 survivors one month after a flood in Bihar, India, a similar yoga program (Telles, Singh, Joshi, & Balkrishna, 2010) that placed more emphasis on breath practices showed that those given yoga practice one hour a day for one week had significant decrease in sadness. Subjects in the control group had an increase in anxiety but those in the yoga group did not. These findings suggest that the yoga intervention may have reduced sadness while preventing an increase in anxiety, implying a possible role for mind-body practices in preventing the development of anxiety disorders following disasters.

Case reports and the authors' (PG and RPB) clinical experience suggest that patients with PTSD benefit when Coherent and Resistance Breathing are combined with traditional psychiatric and psychological therapies (Gerbarg, 2008; Sageman, 2004). Authors Brown and Gerbarg developed Breath~Body~Mind (BBM), a 2-day program of breath practices, Qigong movements and Open Focus meditation (Fehmi & Robbins, 2007). BBM includes slow gentle breathing at 4–6 breaths per minute with equal lengths of inspiration and expiration (Coherent or resonant breathing). Coherent Breathing has been shown to maximize HRV and is therefore thought to optimally balance the sympatho-vagal and stress response systems (Bernardi et al., 2001; Brown & Gerbarg, 2005b, 2009; Karavidas et al., 2007). The BBM program augments Coherent Breathing with Resistance Breathing (*Ujjayi* or Ocean Breath) to further stimulate the PNS (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005b, 2009; Gerbarg, 2008), and Breath Moving, a meditative process whereby one imagines moving the breath in circuits between various parts of the body. Breath Moving, found in Qigong and other ancient practices, was developed to a high degree by Russian Orthodox Christian monks in the eleventh century (Vasiliev, 2006). Twenty adults with treatment resistant generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) with or without comorbidities were enrolled in a 2-day (16 h), open-label trial of the BBM Workshop as an adjunct to standard treatment of GAD. Statistically significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and worry were found after the BBM workshop (Katzman, Vermani, Gerbarg, Brown, Iorio, et al., 2012; Katzman, Vermani, Gerbarg, Brown, Tsirgielis, et al., 2012).

The authors, Brown and Gerbarg, completed several pilot studies on the effects of Breath~Body~Mind (BBM) in disaster survivors. Working with Serving Those Who Serve (www.stws.org), a non-profit that offers holistic treatments for people affected by the September 11th World Trade Center Attacks, Brown and Gerbarg found that the BBM program helped relieve symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression after two days, based on standardized measures (Brown, Gerbarg, Vermani, & Katzman, 2010). The BBM program has been further simplified such that the basic practices can be taught effectively in a few hours in disaster areas.

Survivors of genocide or war in countries like Sudan and Rwanda have been victims or witnesses of murder, rape, torture, starvation, HIV infection, and severe deprivation. People with prolonged exposure to extreme trauma may develop

Complex PTSD with somatization (physical expression of PTSD) as well as dysfunctions in the regulation of affect (emotion), impulses, attention, consciousness, self-perception, relationships with others, and systems of meanings (Grodin, Piwowarczyk, Fulker, Bazazi, & Saper, 2008). Such individuals often rely on suppression of feelings and memories. If these are triggered, they may lose control of their minds and reactions. For these survivors, gentle mind-body practices that are less likely to trigger re-experiencing are recommended. The risk of re-traumatization can be minimized by creating a secure environment or "container" for the mind-body practice, ensuring survivor safety during sessions, training practitioners to assist a survivor who may re-experience a traumatic memory, minimizing silent, unguided meditation and avoiding practices, such as rapid breathing, which can alter states of consciousness or exacerbate anxiety (by over activating the SNS). For example, Brown and Gerberg developed a program of 3 simple Qigong movements, 20 min of Coherent Breathing, and a few minutes of rest that proved to be easy to teach and highly effective in relieving trauma-related symptoms in survivors of war and slavery in South Sudan (Gerberg et al., 2011). In the textbox below, a report of how the BBM program was performed in Sudan, can be read. The next textbox (see page 239) describes a program given to graduate students who are survivors of the Rwanda genocide. Suzanne Levy, LMT, CPT, Somatic Movement therapist, found that incorporating Breath~Body~Mind techniques into her work helped the students relieve stress, tension, anger, and physical pain.

Sudan Program Evaluation

During the many invasions by North Sudan, hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese have been captured and thousands are estimated to still be held in slavery, some for decades. Christian Solidarity International has been freeing these slaves by purchasing their freedom. Once liberated, the Sudanese, mostly women and children, walk for seven days through desert and jungle to cross the border into South Sudan. There they are met by a team headed by Dr. Luka Deng from the Pamela Lipkin, MD clinic in South Sudan, about 30 miles from the border with Darfur. They are also met by tribal leaders who facilitate return to their home villages. Ellen Ratner, EdM, who supports Dr. Deng's work, began teaching some of the women a 20-min set of Breath-Body-Mind practices to relieve their stress and trauma from years of war, abuse, and deprivation (www.goatsfortheoldgoat.com). In order to evaluate the effects of the program, Dr. Luka's clinic tested a group of 19 South Sudanese women who had been living in their home villages for about 6 months after being liberated from slavery. The participants came to the clinic 5 days a week for 18 weeks. Visual analogue scales (VAS) based on the Post-traumatic Stress Disorders Checklist-17 (PCL-17) and a 6-item mood scale were administered. Compared to baseline, scores on the PTSD VAS

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improved 65 % by week 6 and 71 % by week 18. Scores on the VAS for mood improved 48 % at week 6 and 66 % at week 18 (Gerbarg et al., 2011).

Subsequently, Dr. Brown travelled to Sudan to work with large groups of former slaves who were to cross the border in August 2011, the week before South Sudan declared independence. Six hundred former slaves crossed the border and sat down beneath a large tree, exhausted, their faces blank. Dr. Brown had 30 min to work with them. With the aid of a Dinka translator, he encouraged the refugees to stand up and begin the first movement, "shaking off the bonds of slavery." Frozen faces came alive with smiles as their movements became freer. They quickly learned "Ha" breath and Coherent Breath, which both energized and calmed them. The children joined in smiling and laughing. It was as though the movements and the breathing had broken the spell of slavery such that they could finally feel their freedom.

The experience in Sudan demonstrated that large groups of severely traumatized survivors of war and slavery could benefit immediately from Breath~Body~Mind practices. Nineteen Sudanese women who had been doing BBM practices for 2 years received additional training that included healing with sounds. They described profound benefits and they are sustaining the program by teaching the practices in surrounding villages. In addition, they are relieving symptoms of trauma and depression in children liberated from slavery who are living in a nearby orphanage.

Letters from Rwanda

Suzanne Levy, LMT, CPT, a Somatic Movement therapist who works with a non-profit, Jewish Helping Hands, teaches mind-body practices to survivors of the 1994 mass genocide in Rwanda (www.createequilibrium.com). She began incorporating Breath~Body~Mind techniques into her work with students at the University of Rwanda. A group of 28 graduate students wanted to learn how to teach BBM to help others recover from the trauma of genocide. Brown and Gerbarg provided a 3-day Breath~Body~Mind teacher training program for her to teach the students. All of the students had been traumatized, many having witnessed the murder of their neighbors and members of their family when they were children. At the beginning of the training, some were so tense that they could not take a single breath with ease. Ms. Levy started her program with mindfulness followed by movement and breathing practices. She integrated some somatic experiencing techniques into the program (Levine, 2008). On the last day, the students practiced teaching one another to prepare to help other Rwandans. They gave permission for the authors to quote excerpts from their course evaluations.

(continued)

Student 1: *In this exercise I feel very well in my head and very happy for it. I am happy for the exercise of breathe in and breathe out because when I did it I feel well in the parts of my body where I felt bad.*

Student 2: *I now know how I can breathe in order to teach others how they can breathe. I learned about mind: how I can control my mind to think about good things in order to get my life beautiful. And for the body I learned how to stimulate all my organs…using simple gestures; how to create energy in our body in order to connect all systems in our body. I learned the relationship between parasympathetic nervous system and sympathetic nervous system. Now I know how to use yoga to relieve stress, trauma, and pain in our body. I really appreciate your work because I add to my knowledge the true connections between Body, Breath, and Mind in order to have good life.*

Student 3: *This program came when I really needed it because I have been too stressed by certain activities and felt headache…In the last 4 days my friend died abruptly. I felt pissed with everything on planet earth. But due to this program, it's like my mind has been washed and now I can joke and engage in conversations with others. This is important today and in our future life, and even the entire population that we are going to teach.*

Student 4: *As I am a social worker, to have knowledge about all things which can help people to enhance their wellbeing is my purpose. So this was very helpful for me and society in general. Also talking about things that help people prevent, reduce stress like meditation, breathing, etc. helps me to accomplish my research and obtain bachelor's degree.*

12.4   Neurophysiologic Model for the Effects of Yoga Breathing

In the previous sections, we reviewed research and provided program examples that demonstrate the effects of mind-body practices on aspects of wellbeing. Drawing upon studies of neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and brain imaging, a set of hypotheses will be offered that may explain these observed effects. The neurophysiologic model for the effects of yoga breathing described by authors Brown and Gerbarg is based on Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2001, 2009), Neurovisceral Integration (Thayer & Lane, 2000), and Bud Craig's (Craig, 2008) mapping of interoceptive pathways from the body to the insular (interoceptive) cortex in the Sylvian fissure. Brown and Gerbarg (2005b, 2009; Brown et al., 2013) postulate that stretch receptors in alveoli, baroreceptors, chemoreceptors, and other interoceptive sensors throughout the respiratory structures send information about the respiratory system primarily via vagal afferents to brainstem nuclei (the nucleus tractus solitarius and parabrachial nucleus). Messages ascending from there to the

brain influence perception, cognition, emotion regulation, somatic expression, and behavior. In part this is possible because breathing is the only autonomic function that can be voluntarily controlled; therefore, specific breathing patterns can be utilized to send messages through PNS and interoceptive systems that swiftly affect how the brain perceives and responds to stress or threat. Because it is vital to survival, information about the respiratory system commands an immediate response and has widespread rapid effects on critical brain functions. If a problem occurs in breathing, the brain must put aside all other concerns and direct all resources towards correcting the problem and maintaining oxygenation or the organism will die within minutes (Brown et al., 2013). This may explain in part why changing the pattern of breathing can change the way a person thinks and feels so quickly. Brown and Gerbarg reviewed the evidence that yoga-breathing, particularly at 5–6 breaths per minute (bpm), increases heart rate variability (HRV) and parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) activity, improves sympatho-vagal balance, and promotes stress resilience (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005b, 2009).

Ocean Breath (*ujjayi*), a form of Resistance Breathing, employs laryngeal contracture and partial closure of the glottis to impede the flow of air. Resistance Breathing techniques also increase intrathoracic pressure, baroreceptor stimulation, respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), and HRV (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005b). Chanting and singing can be considered forms of Resistance Breathing because the sounds are created by the partial obstruction to air flow caused by contractions of the vocal cords. The pattern of slow Resistance Breathing with longer periods of exhalation compared to inhalation occurs during chanting, singing, and other breathing practices in many traditions. Bernardi suggests that a respiratory rate of 6 bpm augments 10-s (6/min) Mayer waves and increases RSA, a corollary of HRV. He showed that recitation of the rosary prayer in Latin at 6 bpm increased HRV and baroreflex sensitivity (Bernardi et al., 2001). The vibrational effects of chanting and singing also stimulate vagal activity. The ancient 'Om' chant involves slow breathing, airway resistance (contracting the vocal cords to generate sound), and vibrational effects which increase vagal tone and physiologic relaxation. Using fMRI, Kalyani, Gangadhar, and colleagues showed significant limbic system deactivation with 'OM' chanting (Kalyani et al., 2011). Overactivity in the limbic system which processes intense emotions such as fear and rage underlies PTSD symptoms. This study demonstrated that chanting 'OM' can reduce activity in the limbic system, meaning that the emotion processing centers, such as the amygdala, became quieter, less reactive.

Slow yoga breathing tends to normalize SNS activity and increase PNS tone. The Central Autonomic Network includes higher centers such as the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) that inhibit lower centers such as the amygdala (Thayer & Brosschot, 2005). When the mPFC is hypoactive and the amygdala is hyperactive, as occurs in depression and PTSD, the inhibitory mechanisms fail to modulate emotions such as fear and anger, leading to dysregulation of emotional responses and behaviors. Dysfunction in the circuits between the prefrontal cortex (PFC), amygdala and thalamus may contribute to symptoms in PTSD (LeDoux, 2000). Poor processing of affective (emotion) information, working memory deficits and executive function impairment have been associated with reduced activity of the

PNS (low HRV) and underactivity in the prefrontal cortex. In addition to the mPFC, the insular (interoceptive) cortex also sends inhibitory projections to the amygdala, suggesting that information about the moment-to-moment state of the body received by the insular cortex plays a role in emotion regulation (Brown et al., 2013; Streeter et al., 2012).

12.5   Conclusions

Growing evidence from scientific studies is indicating positive effects of yoga and related mind-body techniques on various aspects of wellbeing. Research shows that breath practices can exert powerful restorative effects following emotionally traumatic experiences. Mind-body practices that improve emotion regulation can enhance wellbeing by reducing the impact of disturbing thoughts, negative emotions, and recurring stressors. In addition, the inborn capacity for prosocial, affiliative behavior may be enhanced by mind-body practices, contributing to better self-regulation, connectedness, and compassion. In conclusion, mind-body practices such as breathing can offer a practical, safe, inexpensive modality to alleviate suffering and support the recovery of wellbeing for individuals and communities experiencing everyday stressors as well as following mass disasters.

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Chapter 13
Religion, Emotion Regulation, and Well-Being

Allon Vishkin, Yochanan Bigman, and Maya Tamir

Emotions play a central role in religious experience (Emmons, 2005). This point was highlighted by William James (1902), who suggested that what differentiates religious experience from other experiences is "[an] added dimension of emotion, [an] enthusiastic temper of espousal" (p. 48). James contrasted the calm and collected philosophical stoicism with passionate religious experience. Such emotional experiences, James argued, are a defining feature of religion. Research on religion and emotional experience has since confirmed that greater religiosity is linked to more intense experiences of emotions (Burris & Petrican, 2011). In this chapter we propose that one of the ways in which religion is linked to emotion experiences is through processes of emotion regulation. We suggest that religion regulates emotions and highlight several processes by which it might do so.

Emotions are responses to external or internal events that are significant to the individual (e.g., Frijda, 1986). Emotional experiences are typically reactions to changing events. However, in addition to responding to events as they occur, individuals can also shape their emotional experiences by actively engaging in emotion regulation (Gross & Thompson, 2007). As depicted in Fig. 13.1, emotion regulation involves the set of processes by which individuals change their current emotional state to bring it closer to their desired emotional state (Mauss & Tamir, 2014). These changes can occur as a result of intrinsic emotion regulation, which are processes that originate from within the individual (e.g., as when an anxious baby diverts her gaze from a threatening stranger and looks at her mother instead). These changes

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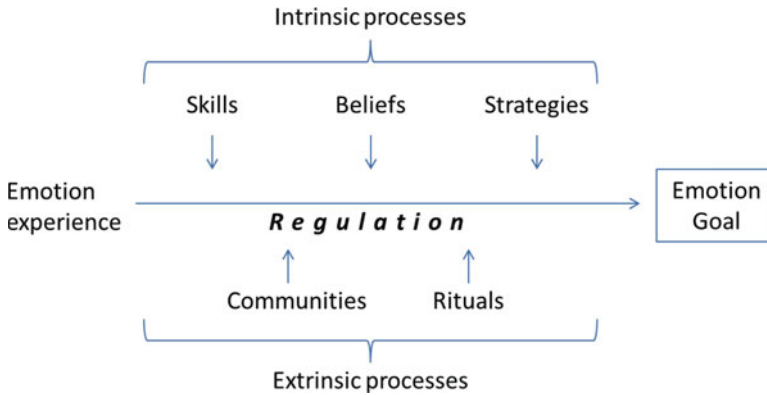e-mail: allon.vishkin@mail.huji.ac.il

Fig. 13.1 Processes in emotion regulation that may be affected by religion

can also occur as a result of extrinsic emotion regulation, which are processes that originate outside the individual (e.g., as when an anxious baby is soothed by her mother).

We propose that religion can influence multiple points in the process of emotion regulation. Although religion likely influences emotion generation as well as emotion regulation, the present chapter focuses on the potential impact of religion on emotion regulation, in particular. We begin by discussing how religion might shape desired emotional states. We discuss the potential impact of religion on intrinsic emotion regulation, and continue with a discussion of the impact of religion on extrinsic emotion regulation. Finally, given that emotion regulation influences emotional experience and psychological health, we discuss the role of religion as a regulator of emotions and its possible implications for adaptive functioning and well-being.

13.1   Culture and Emotion

Emotional experiences are constituted within a cultural context. As highlighted by Mesquita and Albert (2007), cultures shape both the experience and the regulation of emotion. First, with respect to emotion generation, by setting values and shaping models of the self and the world, cultures can determine the significance of events to the individual, and in doing so, shape emotional experiences (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, cultures of honor highlight the importance of personal honor and respect, leading people to react more negatively to behaviors that could be interpreted as insults (Cohen, 2009).

Second, in addition to changing how people actually feel, cultures can change how people want to feel. For example, Tsai and her colleagues have shown that Americans value high-arousal positive affect and Chinese value low-arousal positive affect (Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung, & Yeung, 2007). These differences were

mediated by culturally-prescribed goals. Influencing others is a goal that is consistent with American culture. Pursuing this goal may benefit from positive affect and higher physiological arousal (Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993). Correspondingly, adjusting to others is a goal that is consistent with Chinese culture. Pursuing this goal may benefit from relatively lower physiological arousal (Tomaka et al., 1993). Whereas the valuation of high arousal positive affect was mediated by the goal of influencing others, the valuation of low-arousal positive affect was mediated by the goal of adjusting to others.

Third, cultures actively help individuals to move from current states toward culturally-desired states. One way in which they do so is by facilitating forms of intrinsic emotion regulation that are culturally congruent. For example, cultures that value hierarchy and collectivism encourage the suppression of emotional expression to help maintain group cohesion and harmony (Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008).

Another way in which cultures contribute to successful emotion regulation is through extrinsic emotion regulation. Such regulation processes operate, in part, through cultural rituals or institutions that facilitate the experience of culturally-desired emotions (Mesquita & Albert, 2007). For example, institutionalized award ceremonies, which are common in American culture, create opportunities to experience pride and further reaffirm the value of personal achievement. To summarize, culture can influence emotion regulation in multiple ways.

13.2   Religion as a Unique Cultural System

We define religion as a cultural system that is characterized by unique features that include rites, belief systems and worldviews, which relate humanity to presumed super-natural entities (Cohen, 2009). We argue that because religion is a cultural system, religion can influence the experience and the regulation of emotion. Indeed, like other cultural systems, religion may influence emotional reactivity, desired emotional states, and the process of emotion regulation, via both intrinsic and extrinsic processes. However, we also suggest that religion is a unique cultural system. Because it emphasizes faith and the relationship with the divine (Cohen, 2009), religion has substantial power over its adherents and a unique ability to guide behavior and self-regulation (James, 1902). Perhaps more so than with cultures, therefore, people tend to follow religion with exceptional faith and conviction (Sheikh, Ginges, Coman, & Atran, 2012). This, we argue, makes religion a particularly powerful regulator of emotion.

In what follows, we describe how religion shapes some of the key aspects of emotion regulation. First and foremost, religion defines which emotions are desirable and which are undesirable. Second, it influences the process of emotion regulation by shaping both intrinsic and extrinsic processes of emotion regulation. At the intrinsic level, religion cultivates skills in self-regulation, influences implicit beliefs about emotion, and trains and encourages the use of particular regulation strategies. At the extrinsic level, religion offers a social support network that propels

changes in emotional experience, and fosters rituals that can regulate emotions. With respect to each stage, we discuss the potential impact of religion and provide specific examples.

13.3   Religion Sets Emotion Goals

Emotion goals are cognitive representations of emotional states that serve as desired endpoints (Mauss & Tamir, 2014). Although people often seek to experience pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant ones, emotion goals can vary dramatically across situations and across people (e.g., Tamir, 2005; Tamir, Mitchell, & Gross, 2008). This is, in part, because people can be motivated to experience emotions that maximize pleasure as well as utility (e.g., Tamir, 2009). To the extent that an emotion helps individuals attain goals that are important to them, they may be motivated to experience that emotion, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant to experience.

For example, Tamir and Ford (2012a) found that participants who needed to be confrontational in a negotiation preferred to engage in anger-inducing activities as they prepared to negotiate. Such preferences were fully mediated by the expected utility of anger. Participants who expected anger to result in better performance showed stronger preferences for anger. When participants engaged in anger-inducing activities, in turn, they became angrier and performed in a more confrontational manner, as a result. These and similar studies demonstrate that emotion goals can be determined, in part, by instrumental considerations, even when such considerations involve hedonic costs.

Utility can be determined by the situational context, as shown in the example above. Utility, however, can also be determined by one's cultural environment. By setting values and norms, cultures can shape emotion goals. In particular, cultures can increase the desirability of specific emotional experiences that promote the attainment of culturally-valued goals (e.g., Tsai et al., 2007).

Here, we argue that religion shapes emotion goals by prescribing which emotions are desirable and which are undesirable, both in particular contexts and in general. We propose that religions define an emotional experience as desirable to the extent that it helps reaffirm religious values. We suggest that certain religions prescribe these emotional experiences and that such experiences, in turn, might assist in the fostering and preservation of relevant religious values. Below, we offer several examples that demonstrate how religions can prescribe emotional experiences, focusing on awe, gratitude, joy, guilt, and hatred.

13.3.1   Awe

Awe is an emotional experience that typically occurs in reaction to a natural wonder, a powerful or prestigious person, beauty, or a moral exemplar. It is experienced when one encounters something that is much larger that one's self, in size, power,

or prestige and it typically requires adjusting mental structures to accommodate such new experiences (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). As a result, awe typically leads to less focus on the self and to greater respect and admiration toward an external source (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007). In addition, people who are prone to experiencing awe are more open-minded and willing to revise their mental representations of the world (Shiota et al., 2007). In a religious context, awe can be elicited by thinking about one's relations with the supernatural (James, 1902).

Given the implications of awe, one might expect awe experiences to strengthen belief in and commitment to religion. Indeed, there is some evidence that awe plays a role in religious experiences. For example, participants who were led to experience awe, by watching videos about childbirth and natural wonders, rated themselves as more religious relative to those who saw a neutral or a funny video (Saroglou, Buxant, & Tilquin, 2008). If awe promotes religious commitment, one might expect religions to set awe as an emotion goal. Indeed, awe appears to be central in Christianity and Buddhism (Haidt, 2003), as well as Judaism (Wettstein, 1997).

The most basic requirement of many religions is knowing of or believing in a divine being. In Judaism this was articulated by Maimonides, the twelfth century Jewish legal scholar, in the opening sentence of his legal work, the *Mishneh Torah:* "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence" (Laws of the Foundation of the Torah 1:1, Moznaim Trans.). This requirement is also articulated in the New Testament (John 6:29) and in the first of the five pillars of Islam. To the extent that awe fosters awareness of something greater than oneself, then in a religious context awe fosters awareness of the divine. By deeming awe a desirable emotional experience, religions can facilitate awareness of the divine, strengthening religious belief.

13.3.2 Gratitude

Gratitude is an emotional response that accompanies the recognition of other people's contribution to one's positive experiences and outcomes (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002). Gratitude involves acknowledgement of the source of these contributions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001) and motivates reciprocation (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Clark, 1975; Goldman, Seever, & Seever, 1982; McCullough et al., 2001; Moss & Page, 1972). Moreover, the motivation to reciprocate that is elicited by gratitude can extend beyond the benefactor and include other people (Bartlett & Desteno, 2006).

Gratitude is a common experience across Judaism (Schimmel, 2004), Christianity, and Islam (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000), and has been found to be positively correlated with religiosity (McCullough et al., 2002; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). The experience of gratitude may occur naturally, but it is also prescribed in many religions, and most clearly so in prayers and blessings. For instance, Jewish law requires the recitation of certain blessings which explicitly express gratitude (e.g. the morning blessings: "blessed is he who dresses the naked…

who fulfills all my needs…who gives strength to the sleepy"). These blessings concern the most mundane matters, including waking up in the morning (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 46:1), going to sleep at night ("blessed is he who makes sleep fall upon my eyes", Shulchan Aruch O.H. 239:1), using the restroom (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 6:1), and eating (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 85). One is required to make a blessing on speciously negative outcomes as well: "One is obligated to make a blessing on bad [outcomes], just as he makes a blessing on good [outcomes]" (Tractate Berachot 9:5). A compilation of Jewish laws and folklore that was written roughly from the first century, B.C.E., through the fifth century, C.E. The Talmud says that one must recite one hundred blessings every day (Tractate Menachot 43b) and this has been codified into Jewish law (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 46:3).

Likewise, Islamic prayer dictates the expression of gratitude (Padwick, 1997). Islam also requires the recitation of certain blessings which explicitly express gratitude for mundane actions, including waking up in the morning (Sahih al-Bukhari 80:16), going to sleep at night (Sahih al-Bukhari 80:7), using the restroom (Sahih al-Bukhari 80:15), and eating (Sahih al-Bukhari, 70:2, 54). Prayers, therefore, may explicitly require adherents to express and experience gratitude.

Different religions prescribe the experience of gratitude, in part, because it facilitates the acknowledgement of the divine as the source of one's well-being. The expression of gratitude for the most mundane affairs guarantees that this awareness of the contribution of the divine is continuous and ever present. The prescription of gratitude may serve another purpose. One of the goals of religion is to create a community of people with shared values (Durkheim, 1915/1965; Graham & Haidt, 2010). To the extent that experiencing gratitude fosters pro-social action tendencies, gratitude may also help create positive interpersonal interactions within religious communities.

13.3.3   Joy

Joy is a pleasant emotion which is typically experienced when desired goals have been achieved (Carver, 2001). It reflects positive evaluations, signals safety, and facilitates interpersonal trust (Forgas, 2011; Krumhuber et al., 2007; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993; Van Doorn, Heerdink, & Van Kleef, 2012). To the extent that religions prescribe emotional experiences that support religious goals and values, they might deem the experience of joy desirable when safety and trust are consistent with religious values, and deem the experience of joy undesirable when they are not.

In the Talmud, there are several explicit references to joy. The Talmud explicitly dictates that joy is desirable only when experienced in moderation, by stating that it is forbidden for one to be overly joyous (Tractate Berachot, 31a). The Talmudic discussion explains that it is forbidden for one to be completely joyous before the messiah arrives. One explanation of this decree is that it is propelled by the concern that the intense experience of joy may lead people to be overly satisfied with their current state and, as a result, neglect their religious duties, which would delay the

coming of the messiah (Tractate Sanhedrin 97b). By discouraging the intense experience of joy, the Talmud may help adherents fulfill their religious duties, setting the stage for the coming of the messiah.

Proscription of joy is also reflected in relation to the destruction of the holy temple in Jerusalem (70 CE). Certain activities which can induce joy, such as playing musical instruments and wearing ornaments, are prohibited, and these have been codified into the authoritative and binding source of Jewish law, The *Shulchan Aruch* (O.H. 560). The Talmud's justification for these prohibitions is that it is inappropriate to experience joy when the temple lies in ruins. According to the Talmud, these prohibitions are to be lifted when the temple is rebuilt in the messianic era.

Interestingly, according to the Talmud, although intense joy is generally undesirable, moderate joy may be desirable, but only to the extent that it arises from the fulfillment of religious duties (Tractate Shabbat 30b). Likewise, In Islam, only joy which arises from the fulfillment of a religious duty is encouraged (Koran 3:170), while joy which arises from nonreligious duties is discouraged (Koran 13:26). By encouraging the experience of joy in this manner, the religions motivate both the performance of religious activities and their positive evaluation.

The examples above suggest that religions can dictate the desirability of specific emotional states across contexts. However, religions may also prescribe specific emotional experiences in specific contexts. Such prescriptions can promote religion-congruent appraisals of certain contexts and encourage behaviors that are consistent with religious values. For example, in the Jewish tradition, there are particular contexts in which increasing or decreasing the experience of joy is explicitly prescribed. In particular, the Talmud dictates that: "When [the month of] Adar begins, we increase joy" (Tractate Ta'anit 29a, Schottenstein Trans.). This instruction is not merely a description of what typically happens during the month of Adar, it is a decree that is as binding as other rabbinic decrees that relate to ritual or ceremonial law. In this sense, it is a clear example of a case in which religions set explicit emotion goals in a specific context.

Why is the experience of joy desirable during the month of Adar? During this month, Purim is celebrated to commemorate the deliverance of the Jewish people from their Persian enemies. The story of Purim serves as a prototype for the divine deliverance of the Jewish people from its enemies, and modern enemies, including Hitler, are often equated with the Persian enemy in the original story (Yerushalmi, 1982). To the extent that joy elicits positive evaluations and a sense of safety, the up-regulation of joy in this context promotes gratitude and trust in God's ability to deliver the Jewish people from its enemies.

In contrast, the Talmud dictates that: "When the month of Av begins, we curtail our joy" (Tractate Ta'anit 26b, Schottenstein Trans.). Why is the experience of joy undesirable during the month of Av? According to the Jewish tradition, both holy temples in Jerusalem were destroyed in the month of Av (586 BCE and 72 CE), a month during which other calamities also took place throughout Jewish history. The down-regulation of joy in this context promotes the negative evaluation of such events and reaffirms the symbolic meaning of the holy temples. The Talmud similarly dictates the attenuation of joy in contexts commemorating other calamities in Jewish

history, including the fast commemorating the beginning of the Roman siege of Jerusalem, and a fast commemorating the breaching of Jerusalem's walls. By calling to decrease joy in these contexts, the Talmud may strengthen the perceptions of loss and promote remorse and repentance.

Together, these examples demonstrate how religions can explicitly prescribe certain emotional experiences in general, as well as in particular contexts. In addition, although further evidence is required, these examples are consistent with an instrumental account. They demonstrate how religions may prescribe emotional experiences that promote the maintenance of religious values.

13.3.4   Guilt

Guilt is an unpleasant emotion that arises primarily when one senses he has wronged another (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994, 1995). Guilt makes people aware that their conduct is unfitting and facilitates reformative actions to correct the misdeed. Engaging in corrective action (e.g., apologizing), in turn, deactivates guilt (Watts, 1996, 2007). According to Geyer and Baumeister (2005), in a religious context, guilt serves as a feedback mechanism which lets adherents know when their behavior is not in line with religious values and prompts corrective action. If so, religions might prescribe guilt in order to promote adherence to its value system.

Indeed, at least some religions seem to accommodate the experience of guilt. Much as institutionalized award ceremonies, common to American culture, create opportunities to experience pride (Mesquita & Albert, 2007), the Catholic ritual of confession creates opportunities to experience guilt (Martinez-Pilkington, 2007), guaranteeing a pardon on condition that resolutions are made to amend one's behavior (Watts, Nye, & Savage, 2002). Jewish rituals also encourage experiences of guilt, particularly during the time leading up to *Yom Kippur*, the day of atonement. During this period, confessions are recited every morning. The culmination of the period is Yom Kippur itself. As with confession in Catholicism, Yom Kippur guarantees a pardon only on condition that resolutions to amend one's behavior have been made (Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, Ch. 1). Thus, both the Catholic ritual of confession and Jewish rituals associated with Yom Kippur provide opportunities to experience guilt, and guarantee forgiveness only when resolutions are made to amend one's behavior. Because guilt arises primarily when one senses that he has wronged another (Baumeister et al., 1994, 1995), guilt plays an important role in maintaining harmonious community relations, which is important in all religions.

13.3.5   Hatred

To the extent that religions prescribe emotional experiences that are consistent with religious values and goals, differences in emotion goals may reflect differences in underlying values. This may be reflected in the different attitudes of Judaism and

Christianity toward hatred. Hatred is elicited when another person or group is viewed as evil and impervious to change (Elster, 1999). Hatred promotes a willingness to harm the hated object (Halperin, 2008).

On the one hand, hatred is consistent with a fixed moral worldview, where reward and punishment are commensurate with behavior. On the other hand, hatred is inconsistent with a more malleable moral worldview, where any act can be forgiven and any character can be transformed. These world views may differentially map on to Judaism and Christianity, respectively (Cohen, Malka, Rozin, & Cherfas, 2006). Judaism maintains, generally, that one's reward and punishment is commensurate with one's behavior (e.g. Tractate Avot 2:7; Tractate Rosh Hashanah 12a; Tractate Sotah 1:7). Christianity maintains, generally, that divine grace can correct all human ill-doing (McGrath, 1994). To the extent that hatred is based on the idea that evil cannot be changed, hatred may enforce the Jewish theological value that reward and punishment are commensurate with behavior. In contrast, hatred clashes with the Christian theological value that grace may extend to all, regardless of their past behavior. Accordingly, hatred of evil is encouraged in Judaism and discouraged in Christianity.

Consistent with this analysis, it appears that in Judaism, one should hate that which is evil (Tractate Pesachim 113b; Soloveichik, 2003, 2005; Soloveitchik, 1958/2003). This is reflected in the Jewish Bible, where hatred of evil is explicitly prescribed: "Lovers of God, hate evil" (Psalms 97:10). In contrast, in Christianity, one should not hate, but learn to forgive evil doers (Hesburgh, 1997). This is reflected in the New Testament: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:43–44, KJV)." Hatred, in other words, is never justified in Christianity (Soloveichik, 2003). Religions, therefore, may prescribe the increase or decrease of hatred, in a manner that reinforces religious worldviews.

In conclusion, in this section we have argued that religions set emotion goals. In particular, religions can prescribe emotional experiences that serve to promote the religion's values. We provided several examples. The experience of awe may be encouraged to increase awareness of God. The experience of gratitude may be encouraged to increase awareness and appreciation of God and to build social relations in a religious community. The experience of joy may be encouraged (or discouraged) to motivate the pursuit of religious duties and as an expression of trust in God. The experience of guilt may be encouraged to promote religious values and to help maintain social relations. Finally, the experience of hatred may be encouraged to enforce the theological value of reward and punishment, or it may be discouraged to enforce the theological value of divine grace.

Although they are anecdotal, the examples presented above are consistent with the argument that religion can determine which emotions people are motivated to experience. Thus, one way religion shapes emotion regulation is by setting desired emotional end-points. When concurrent emotional experiences differ from the desired emotional experiences, individuals might attempt to regulate their emotions. Here too, religion might play a role. In particular, we suggest that religion may influence the process of intrinsic emotion regulation, as discussed in the following section.

13.4   Religion Influences Intrinsic Processes in Emotion Regulation

Religion may influence intrinsic processes of emotion regulation. We propose that it does so by promoting basic self-regulation skills, by influencing adherents' beliefs about the malleability of emotions, and by teaching adherents strategies for emotion regulation. We describe each of these processes below.

13.4.1   Self-Regulation Skills

McCullough and Willoughby (2009) observed that many religious settings require exercise of self-regulation. For example, religious communal affairs require exercise of self-regulation in order to be in line with behavioral norms for socially approved or censured behaviors. Likewise, many religious rituals require the exercise of self-control. For example, fasting, a central ritual of the Muslim month of Ramadan and a ritual that occurs six times a year in the Jewish tradition, requires exercising self-control.

According to the strength model of self-control, resources for self-control are limited (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). By regularly exercising self-control, these resources decrease in the short term, but increase and replenish in the long term (Denson, Capper, Oaten, Friese, & Schofield, 2011; Muraven, 2010; Muraven, Baumeister, & Tice, 1999; Oaten & Cheng, 2006). By setting strict rules of conduct, religion requires the constant exercise of self-control. By doing so, over time religion may help increase adherents' general self-regulatory resources. Such resources enable all forms of self-regulation (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007), including the regulation of emotion. Therefore, by instructing adherents to exercise self-control, religion increases self-regulatory resources that enable the successful regulation of emotion.

There is now empirical evidence for the link between religion and general self-regulation skills, and some have argued that religion facilitates self-regulation (e.g., McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). There is evidence that religious individuals are more likely than non-religious individuals to engage in self-control and self-regulation (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Another study has found that parents' religiousness was positively associated with their children's self-control (Bartkowski, Xu, & Levin, 2008). There is even some evidence for the causal role of religion. In particular, Rounding, Lee, Jacobson, and Ji (2012) found that priming religious concepts increased performance in self-control tasks, including enduring discomforts and delaying gratification. We propose that such developed self-regulation skills are likely to facilitate all forms of self-regulation, including emotion regulation.

13.4.2 Religion Influences Beliefs About the Malleability of Emotions

People differ in their beliefs about the malleability of personal attributes. Dweck and colleagues have referred to such beliefs as implicit theories (for a review, see Dweck, 1999; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995). Entity theorists maintain that a given attribute is fixed and cannot be changed by intervention, practice or habit. Incremental theorists maintain that a given attribute is malleable and may be changed. Implicit theories have cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences. For example, implicit theories of intelligence can determine how much effort is exerted (Dweck, 1999). Entity theorists of intelligence exert less effort than incremental theorists of intelligence (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999).

Tamir, John, Srivasta, and Gross (2007) have shown that people also differ in their implicit theories of emotions. Individuals with an incremental theory of emotion believe that emotions are controllable, whereas individuals with entity theories of emotion believe that emotions are relatively less controllable. Individuals with an incremental theory of emotion have a greater sense of self-efficacy in emotion regulation, and use more adaptive regulation strategies, whereas the opposite is true for individuals with an entity theory of emotion.

By prescribing to its adherents what to feel, religion promotes an implicit assumption that emotion can be regulated. In doing so, religion can indirectly promote an incremental theory of emotion. This point is demonstrated in the following quote by Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1969/2003):

> Man, Judaism, maintains and insists, is capable of determining the kind of emotional life he wants to live… Man must never be overwhelmed by his emotions. He can invite emotions as well as reject them, opening the door and inviting feelings and sentiments if they are worthy, and slamming the door on those which are degrading and unworthy of attention. (p. 10)

It appears, therefore, that by implying that emotion can be regulated, religion can facilitate an incremental theory of emotion. Endorsing such a theory, in turn, may have important implications for emotion regulation and emotion experience. The belief that emotions are malleable is essential for the initiation of emotion regulation (Tamir et al., 2007). In order to try to regulate one's emotions, one must first believe that active change of emotional experience is possible. By fostering the belief that changing emotions is possible, religion enables adherents to initiate emotion regulation processes.

13.4.3 Religion Fosters the Use of Specific Emotion Regulation Strategies

In addition to developing general self-regulatory skills and the belief that emotions can be controlled, religion may directly contribute to the effective use of specific emotion regulation strategies. We propose that religion identifies, demonstrates, and

encourages the use of specific emotion regulation strategies, including reappraisal, distraction and expression modulation. We will discuss each strategy and provide examples for the role of religion in disseminating it below.

13.4.3.1 Cognitive Reappraisal

Cognitive reappraisal involves giving a new meaning to a situation in a way that changes the situation's emotional significance (Gross & John, 2003). Religion, as a symbolic meaning-making system, provides ready reappraisals of negative events (Davies, 2011; Pargament, 1996; Watts, 2007). One of the ways by which this is accomplished is prayer. Sharp (2010) investigated the mechanisms by which prayer manages negative emotions. She found that one way in which it does so is by reinterpreting situations in a way that makes them less negative. For example, religion offers explanations for (i.e., reappraisals of) human suffering.

Human suffering, according to most religions, is not random, but rather is governed from above for a purpose that may not be known to man but is known to the divine agent. Reappraising negative life events as resulting from God's will can cause the event to be perceived as less negative. For example, McIntosh, Silver, and Wortman (1993) found that the more important religion was in the life of parents who lost an infant, the greater meaning they found in the loss and the greater well-being they reported a year and a half after the loss. By re-interpreting events as being willed by a divine agent, religion provides a different overreaching and comforting meaning to negative events that can make them relatively easier to bear.

More generally, many theological systems have dealt with the problem of theodicy – the question of innocent human suffering vis-à-vis a just, benevolent, and omnipotent God or Gods. How is it possible that someone who is innocent suffers, while an all-powerful benevolent divine agent looks on (Weber, 1968)? First, religions may suggest that what appears as innocent human suffering is not actually so: all humans are guilty, as in the Christian conception of original sin (McGrath, 1994). Second, religions may suggest that suffering has positive qualities. For example, suffering may be construed as a redemptive act which actually elevates the sufferer (Soloveitchik, 1960/2003). Third, religions may suggest that the benevolent divine agent may compete against another divine agent, such as a satanic figure, and it is he who causes innocent human suffering (e.g., The Book of Job, Ch. 1). Framing suffering as part of a divine struggle provides a transcendental meaning to suffering. By re-interpreting events as being willed by a divine agent or as being part of a divine struggle, religion provides a framework that adherents can use to reappraise other events. Such an exercise not only helps adherents apply reappraisal to resolve the issue of human suffering, it also provides the opportunity to practice and apply reappraisal to cope with other undesirable emotional states.

13.4.3.2 Distraction

Distraction refers to the reduction of emotion by deploying attention away from the emotion eliciting object (Gross, 1998). Religious texts encourage and demonstrate how distraction can be effectively used to regulate emotions. There are several examples for using prayer to distract one's self from negative events or from temptation. The Talmud, for instance, encourages the distraction from evil and immoral thoughts by prayer and religious studies (Tractate Berachot 5a). Religious prayers can help individuals focus their attention away from temptation (e.g., Sharp, 2010).

A powerful example for using prayer as a form of distraction comes from the Talmud (Tractate Berachot 61b), in a story about Rabbi Akiva following the revolt of the Jews in Israel against the Roman Empire between 132 and 135 CE: When the Romans took Rabbi Akiva out to be executed, it was time to recite the daily nighttime prayer. As the Romans tortured Rabbi Akiva, he recited a prayer. In this story, Rabbi Akiva is able to use his ritualized religious obligations to distract himself from physical pain. By demonstrating how prayer can be used as a form of distraction, and by motivating people to do so when confronting intensely negative emotional stimuli, religion may cultivate and encourage emotion regulation. So far, we have demonstrated that religion recommends its adherents to change the way they appraise negative emotions and the attention they give to stimuli that arouse negative emotions. However, it remains unclear if once the emotion is experienced religion prescribes control over the expression of emotion.

13.4.3.3 Expressive Suppression

Expressive suppression is a form of emotion regulation which involves modulating overt emotional expressions (Gross & John, 2003). Religions often prescribe certain emotional expressions in certain contexts. For instance, Maimonides (Hilchot De'ot 2:3, Moznaim Trans.) suggested the following: "He should school himself not to become angry… If he should wish to arouse fear in his children and household… to motivate them to return to the proper path, he should present an angry front to them to punish them, but he should be inwardly calm." On the one hand, Maimonides identifies anger as an undesirable emotion. On the other hand, Maimonides suggests that given certain circumstances it can be justified, but only if it is faked. Maimonides assumes that the inner state of emotion may be divorced from the outer experience. Since the expression of anger can have positive consequences, Maimonides recommends modulating the emotional response such that anger will be expressed without being experienced.

We have seen therefore that religion fosters the use of specific intrinsic emotion regulation strategies. More specifically, religion enhances cognitive reappraisal by providing powerful schemas for reinterpreting events that elicit negative affect, provides means for distraction from the adversities of life, and instructs its followers to modulate the expression of their emotions.

13.5   Religion Influences Extrinsic Processes in Emotion Regulation

In the previous section, we suggested that religion may contribute to intrinsic emotion regulation. Religion, however, may also contribute to extrinsic emotion regulation. It can do so, in part, by creating communities and developing rituals that provide external sources of emotion regulation. We elaborate on each of these processes below.

13.5.1   Religious Communities

Religion creates social communities (Durkheim, 1915/1965; Graham & Haidt, 2010), which provide a network of social support (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011). Most religions involve regular communal meetings that afford people the opportunity to engage in social interactions on a regular basis. Christians go to church on Sundays, Muslims meet in the mosque on Fridays, and Jews meet in the synagogue on Saturdays. These regular meetings provide a basis of social support for members of the religious community. Diener et al. (2011) found, in a large worldwide survey, that people who were more religious reported receiving greater social support.

One of the important benefits of social support involves emotion regulation. Receiving social support helps individuals decrease unpleasant emotions when dealing with negative life events (Lakey & Orehek, 2011). Similarly, the negative association between social support and depression may be mediated by increased interpersonal (or extrinsic) emotion regulation (Marroquín, 2011). Social sharing of emotions helps individuals cope with negative emotional events (e.g., Rime, 2007). Indeed, some evidence suggests that merely holding another person's hand can alleviate emotional pain (Coan, Schaefer, & Davidson, 2006).

By creating and maintaining tight social communities, religion may foster networks of social support. For instance, McIntosh et al. (1993) examined how parents who lost a child coped with that loss. They found that perceived social support among religious practitioners was positively correlated with adaptive coping both 3 weeks and 18 months after the tragedy. The more parents were involved in a religious community, the better they coped with the loss. Thus, it appears that religion provides social support, which in turn, provides extrinsic emotion regulation.

13.5.2   Religious Rituals

Previously, we showed that religions prescribe specific emotional states. One of the ways religions foster these emotional states is through rituals (Alcorta & Sosis, 2005; McCauley, 2001). Rituals refer to standardized behaviors which are endowed with symbolic meaning (Kertzer, 1988). An aphorism that guides ritualized practices in Judaism states: "The heart is pulled by the deed" (Sefer HaChinuch,

Commandment 20). Having previously elaborated on the emotions of awe and guilt, in what follows we describe how religious rituals help up-regulate these emotions.

Ritualized blessings require acknowledgement and awareness of life's most minor details and considering the wondrous quality of such details. Therefore, religions, including Judaism, foster awe through ritualized blessings (Wettstein, 1997). Earlier, we mentioned that blessings can teach adherents the importance of gratitude, but before they do so, they induce some degree of awe. For example, according to Jewish law, people must recite a standardized blessing upon awakening in the morning. The act of awakening, however, is not described merely as such. Instead, it is described as God returning man from a temporary state of near-death, where God is described as "the one who gives life to the dead" (Shulchan Aruch O. H. 6:8). By describing the mundane act of waking up in the morning in such terms, religion directly increases the experience of awe through prayer. Similar descriptions apply to blessings concerning the wonders of a functional digestive system (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 6:1), the wonders of the first fruit blossoms of the new year (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 226:1), hearing lightning or seeing a rainbow (Shulchan Aruch O.H. 227:1, 228:3, 229:1), and others. These ritualized blessings take a natural phenomenon, some of which are quite mundane, and presenting it as a wondrous and miraculous act of God. Such descriptions are perhaps intended to increase the experience of awe, thereby strengthening religious beliefs.

Similarly, there are Jewish and Christian rituals which are explicitly attuned to regulate guilt. Leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement for transgressions, Jews recite *Slichot* in which they confess their personal and collective misdeeds. These confessions are recited when one is bent forward, banging on one's chest. The purpose of banging on one's chest is to promote the feeling of unpleasant emotions, such as sorrow and guilt. These feelings are conducive to repentance, which is the theme of Yom Kippur. Indeed, in line with research on embodiment (for reviews, see Barsalou, 2008; Barsalou, Niedenthal, Barbey, & Ruppert, 2003; Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2005), slouched postures can induce negatively valenced states (Stepper & Strack, 1993).

Consistent with these ideas, the fourth century Christian theologian Augustine argued that behaviors associated with prayer are meant to intensify emotional states (Matthews, 1980). By bending one's knees, stretching out one's hands, and prostrating during prayer, "the heart's affection which preceded… grows because they [these behaviors] are made" (On Care to Be Had for the Dead, 7, Browne Trans.). The postures dictated in these rituals may play a causal role in promoting unpleasant emotional experiences, such as guilt.

13.6   Implications for Well-Being

Religious individuals tend to have higher subjective well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Diener et al., 2011). Subjective well-being, in turn, is comprised of both cognitive (i.e., satisfaction with life) and emotional (i.e., positive and negative

affect) components (see Diener, 1984). Religious individuals may have higher well-being due to differences in cognitive evaluations, including a stronger sense of meaning in life (Diener et al., 2011; Steger & Frazier, 2005), or due to differences in emotional components, including more positive than negative emotions over time (Diener et al., 2011; Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003). We propose that processes of emotion regulation may contribute, to some degree, to the links between religion and the cognitive and emotional components of well-being. Below, we focus on the different ways reviewed in this chapter in which religion shapes emotion regulation, and discuss possible implications for well-being.

13.6.1   Emotion Goals and Well-Being

We have argued that religion sets emotion goals which are instrumental to achieving religious goals. By setting clear goals for regulation, religion initiates the process of emotion regulation and determines its direction. Such effects could influence well-being at both a molecular and a molar level. At the molecular level, the short-term emotional outcome depends on the emotion goals prescribed. Specifically, to the extent that religion prescribes the increase of positive emotions (e.g., awe, gratitude) or the decrease of negative emotions (e.g., hatred), religion may contribute to a more positive hedonic balance, which would increase well-being. In contrast, to the extent that religion prescribes the increase of negative emotions (e.g., guilt) or the decrease of positive emotions (e.g., joy), religion may contribute to a less positive hedonic balance, which would decrease well-being.

At the molar level, however, there may be positive implications for having clear emotion goals, regardless of whether they target positive or negative emotions. First, merely having personal goals is positively associated with well-being (Diener et al., 1999; Emmons, 2003, 1986). Having personal goals in which one is invested and considers important promotes a sense of meaning and purpose in life (Emmons, 1986; Pomerantz, Saxon, & Oishi, 2000). Since religion has a strong influence over its adherents, religiously prescribed emotion goals should be deemed meaningful and important.

Second, there is evidence that some emotion goals may be instrumental for the attainment of higher-order goals (e.g., Tamir, 2009). Goal attainment, in turn, leads to positive affect and greater meaning in life (Carver, 2001; Emmons & Diener, 1986). To the extent that the emotion goals prescribed by religion are instrumental for the attainment of valued religious goals, such emotion goals can promote higher-order goal achievement, and in doing so, contribute both to meaning in life and to greater hedonic balance over time. Indeed, there is evidence that the more people are willing to experience pleasant or unpleasant emotions in the service of higher-order goals, the greater their subjective and psychological well-being (Tamir & Ford, 2012b).

13.6.2 Self-Regulation Skills and Well-Being

Self-regulation requires the ability to pursue long-term goals despite immediate temptations and obstacles. Greater self-regulation resources enable people to pursue their goals more effectively. Effective self-regulation has been related to greater competence, including academic and social competence, verbal fluency, and attentiveness (Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988). In addition, effective self-regulation has been related to better coping with stress (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989), lower delinquency (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009), and lower substance use (Walker, Ainette, Wills, & Mendoza, 2007). To the extent that religions helps promote self-regulation skills (Geyer & Baumeister, 2005; Koole, McCullough, Kuhl, & Roelofsma, 2010; McCullough & Willoughby, 2009), they may facilitate people's ability to effectively pursue their long-term goals and contribute to the development of other competencies, thereby increasing well-being.

13.6.3 Implicit Beliefs and Well-Being

We proposed that religion promotes an incremental theory of emotions, which refers to the belief that emotions are malleable and can be regulated. Such beliefs are necessary in order to initiate the process of emotion regulation (Kuhl, 1984; Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996). Holding an incremental theory of emotion, as opposed to an entity theory, is related to greater well-being (Tamir et al., 2007). Individuals who believe that emotions are malleable experience more positive and less negative greater well-being, less depression, better social adjustment, and less loneliness. If an incremental theory of emotion promotes emotion regulation and greater well-being, religion should promote well-being, in part, by promoting an incremental theory of emotion.

13.6.4 Emotion Regulation Strategies

Some emotion regulation strategies are more adaptive in some contexts, and some are more adaptive in others (Sheppes, Scheibe, Suri, & Gross, 2011). Having options for emotion regulation strategies allows the regulator to select the strategy that is most adaptive in the given context. It is possible, therefore, that by increasing adherents' repertoire of emotion regulation strategies, religion not only provides adherents with a more sophisticated tool box, it also enables them to fit the strategy to the given context. If so, religion may contribute to more effective emotion regulation, which in term, contributes to greater well-being.

13.6.5   Social Communities and Well-Being

Earlier we proposed that religion regulates emotions, in part, by creating social communities. Such communities help create novel emotional experiences (e.g., joy), and they help regulate existing emotional experiences (e.g., sadness). This form of external emotion regulation has both emotional and social implications, both of which can impact well-being. At the emotional level, extrinsic emotion regulation is quite effective in regulating emotions. To the extent that religion contributes to effective emotion regulation, it is likely to contribute to well-being as well.

At the social level, extrinsic emotion regulation can help strengthen social bonds and facilitate social support. For instance, experiencing emotions with others can draw people closer together (Rime, 2007). Strong interpersonal relationships and social support, in turn, are among the strongest predictors of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tay & Diener, 2011). By strengthening social bonds and facilitating social support, religion can promote greater well-being. Indeed, there is evidence that social support mediates the relation between religion and well-being (Diener et al., 2011). We propose that at least some of the beneficial effects of social support on well-being are mediated by emotion regulation processes. Consistent with this idea, McIntosh and colleagues (1993) found that following the loss of a child, religious parents reported higher social support, better coping with loss and higher levels of well being, compared to nonreligious parents.

13.6.6   Rituals and Well-Being

Rituals turn self-regulation into a regular habit, making self-regulation a relatively more automatic process (Koole et al., 2010). Automatic self-regulation is more efficient in demanding situations, since it requires less conscious effort (Koole, Jostmann, & Baumann, 2012). Thus, rituals can help automatize emotion regulation, and in doing so, make it more efficient. This could benefit well-being, but only to the extent that the regulation process that is automatically triggered is itself adaptive.

13.7   Conclusion

In this chapter, we argued that religion is a powerful regulator of emotion. As a cultural system that includes faith and relationship with the divine, people follow religion with exceptional faith and conviction. Religion shapes emotion regulation by influencing three important components. First, religion sets emotion goals which may be instrumental in serving higher-order religious values. Second, religion influences intrinsic processes in emotion regulation, including developing self-regulation skills, fostering beliefs about the ability to regulate emotions, and teaching specific emotion

regulation strategies. Third, religion influences extrinsic processes in emotion regulation, including forming religious communities and dictating religious rituals. By shaping emotion regulation in this way, religion impacts emotional experiences and well-being, broadly construed.

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Chapter 14
Humility and Religion: Benefits, Difficulties, and a Model of Religious Tolerance

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With the increased popularity of positive psychology in recent years, interest in the study of virtues is growing (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Positive psychologists argue that cultivating character strengths and virtues may help to promote thriving and healthy individuals, families, and communities. In recent years, Peterson and Seligman empirically constructed and organized a comprehensive list of these strengths and virtues. Specifically, they identified 24 measurable strengths (e.g., creativity, bravery, kindness, and prudence), which they organized into six broad categories (i.e., Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence).

Many of the strengths and virtues put forth by Peterson and Seligman (2004) have been studied in depth, and their positive associations with psychological health and well-being are established. For example, the literatures examining the virtues of forgiveness (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010) and gratitude (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010) have rapidly expanded over the past several years. In contrast, despite being described as a virtue by various traditions within theology, religion, and psychology, the role of humility in promoting psychological well-being is not well established. Definitions of humility vary widely. Most notably, some lay definitions of humility include negative connotations associated with humiliation, low assertiveness, self-disparagement, or low self-esteem, particularly in individualistic cultures where modesty is not as highly valued as in more collectivistic cultures. Supporting this

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negative view, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a humble person as one who is "not proud or haughty, not arrogant or assertive, ranking low in a hierarchy or scale."

In contrast, theological and psychological writing often casts humility in a more positive light. Throughout religious teachings and writings, humility is a consistent theme, and most religions promote humility as a foundational virtue, on which the practice of other virtues relies (Bollinger & Hill, 2012). In the present chapter, we first provide a brief review of the importance of humility in several major world religions. Second, we review psychological definitions of humility, and present some initial empirical work linking humility to positive health outcomes. Third, we explore one difficulty about the relationship between humility and religion: it may be difficult to balance humility with commitment to a strong religious identity, because such an identity may lead individuals to develop strong convictions regarding existential issues, which can exacerbate tension between groups. Finally, we describe a model of intellectual humility (humility in the context of one's beliefs and ideological perspective) in the context of religion.

14.1 Religious Perspectives of Humility

Many of the world religions promote humility as a virtue. For example, in Judaism, humility is viewed as one of the most important virtues (Green, 1973; Nelson, 1985). In the Wisdom literature, such as the Psalms and Proverbs, the fear of the Lord, which is described as the highest of virtues, is equated with humility and reverence before God. In contrast to self-abasement and self-loathing before another human, the Jewish scriptures describe experiences of being rendered incapacitated by the glory of God. For example, Jewish law forbade humans to enter the most sacred parts of the temple (i.e., the Holy of Holies), for, in that time, religious believers thought that doing so would cause certain death. Similarly, looking upon the face of God was believed to result in instant death. In contrast, arrogance and self-sufficiency before God was viewed as the greatest kind of sin. For example, scriptural accounts assert that Satan fell from the angels due to *pride*, which is often viewed as the antithesis of humility. Likewise, Moses was unable to enter the Promised Land because instead of humbly submitting to God through obedience, he acted selfishly by striking a rock to create water. Most of the high holidays within Judaism are designed to confront arrogance and instill humility. For example, during Yom Kippur, many practicing Jews say the Vidui, which is a private confession of guilt. Some individuals will bow or lie prostrate on the floor. Jewish scriptures teach that God is pleased when humans trust Him rather than relying on their own strength. In this way, humility is viewed as a means of "forgetting of the self" relative to the glory of God.

Christian scriptures also emphasize the important of humility, perhaps most explicitly in Philippians 2, where Paul states that Jesus Christ will receive the highest honor because he modeled humility before God. This theme is echoed in other

stories from the life of Jesus, including when Jesus takes the role of a servant and washes his disciples' feet, or when he enters into a celebration in Jerusalem riding a donkey—a humble animal—instead of a horse—an animal associated with greater status and power. Jesus repeated the refrain "the first will be last, and the last will be first" throughout the gospels (e.g., Mt 20), suggesting that his view of honor and status was diametrically different than the status quo which honored the rich and powerful. Thus, in Christian scriptures, humility is a virtue that involves surrender to God, understanding that one only has worth through relationship with the Sacred and is nothing apart from such a relationship.

Humility is widely espoused through Islam as well, and teachings about this virtue are ubiquitous in the Koran. For example, in order to know Allah, Islam teaches that one must seek Allah in humility with meekness, abandoning pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency. Some followers of Islam believe that revelation is the only way to know what is "good" and "right" (Ansari, 1989). Thus, Muslims are encouraged to recognize their intellectual limits and to prefer revelation from Allah over personal reason. One function of the *salat* (ritual prayer) is to practice a habit of humility before God (Winchester, 2008). Several times a day, Muslims stop what they are doing to respond to the call for prayer, allowing their relationship with God to take precedence. Furthermore, Muslims have described the very act of prostration during prayer as an exercise in humility (Winchester, 2008).

Humility holds a similarly important place in Eastern religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism. For example, in the sacred Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, humility is considered one of the most critical human virtues (Jeste & Vahia, 2008). Understanding one's place in the universe, as well as one's connection to all other things, diminishes one's self-view and confirms that one is only a part of an integrated whole—no more important, valuable, or significant, than any other part.

Similarly, Buddhism teaches individuals to jettison selfish cravings and attachments to things of this world, and instead promotes a non-striving acceptance of the way things are. Such an approach approximates humility insofar as one is content and self-aware, not intent to gratify selfish motives or promote oneself. Remaining self-focused leaves one desiring things which do not lead to true fulfillment, therefore focus must be turned away from the self and replaced with an effort to see the true nature of life (Bollinger & Hill, 2012). In fact, followers of Buddhism are required to have a sense of humility in order to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment. Furthermore, recognizing one's own weaknesses and limitations plays a key role in proper interactions with others. For example, in order to learn to be less condemning of others, some Buddhists develop a habit of thinking about their own limitations anytime they feel critical of another (Wilson, 2012). Like the major monotheistic religions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, Islam), Eastern religions often extol the virtue of humility.

Empirical research has also supported a connection between religion, spirituality, and humility. For example, Rowatt and colleagues (Powers, Nam, Rowatt, & Hill, 2007; Rowatt et al., 2006) found that spirituality was positively correlated with several unpublished self-report measures of humility (although it was not related to the implicit association test of humility versus arrogance). Krause (2010) found that

humility was linked with church attendance and spiritual support. He found that spiritual support was related to higher humility, which, in turn, was associated with greater reported health. In future research, it will be important to determine the extent to which religion and spirituality predicts humility-related behaviors, rather than merely self-reports that may be influenced by socially desirable responding. For example, in a related literature, Davis, Worthington, Hook, and Hill (2013) found that religion and spirituality was moderately related to trait forgivingness (i.e., the degree to which people viewed themselves as generally forgiving of people) but weakly related to forgiveness of actual offenses.

A common thread across religious perspectives of humility involves a stance of reverence and awe before the Sacred. Namely, humility is not "lowering one's head" for the sake of self-deprecation. Rather, it involves an appropriate awareness of one's incredible smallness relative to the transcendent power, knowledge, and goodness of the Sacred. Instead of promoting humiliation, fear, or shame, these religions attempt to help people experience awe and gratitude at being in a relationship with the Sacred. These religious perspectives underscore the pervasive role of humility in a virtuous life as described by religious teachings; however, they represent only one side of a critical examination of humility. In the next section, we describe some of the empirical research in the field of psychology on the virtue of humility.

14.2 Psychological Perspectives of Humility

Humility has been variously defined, although researchers generally agree on what humility is not (i.e., arrogance, narcissism; Tagney, 2000). Most researchers also agree that it is not sufficient for a truly humble person to simply avoid being arrogant or narcissistic. Narcissism describes the low end of the humility spectrum, but consistent with the general theme of positive psychology, it is important to clarify what it means for someone to express high levels of humility (Davis, Worthington, & Hook, 2010).

Most humility researchers agree that one component of humility involves having an accurate or moderate view of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. Where researchers seem to disagree is about what interpersonal qualities to also include in a definition of humility. Tagney (2000) includes five facets of humility: (a) accurate assessment of one's abilities (i.e., not low self-esteem, self-deprecation); ability to acknowledge mistakes and limitations; (b) openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice; (c) keeping one's abilities and accomplishments in perspective; (d) relatively low self-focus; and (e) appreciation of the value of all things.

The complexity of such definitions is one of the reasons humility has been hard to study. In an attempt to consolidate definitions, Davis and colleagues (2010) suggested that humility involves integrity of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and motivational qualities. Namely, humble people (a) have an accurate view of self, (b) are able to regulate egotism in socially appropriate ways, and (c) display unselfish, other-oriented motivations towards others. This third component proposes that

people will not generally consider an act to be humble if it is viewed as being motivated by selfish rather than cooperative reasons. In addition, drawing on personality judgment principles, Davis and colleagues (2010) argued that humility is most accurately judged in situations in which it is strained (e.g., conflict, receiving a coveted honor, power struggle in a relationship). Initial empirical work has found evidence consistent with this theoretical model (Davis et al., 2011).

14.3 Benefits of Humility

In contrast to the dictionary definition that is more akin to humiliation, the virtue of humility, as defined by religious traditions and psychologists, is likely associated with benefits to the individuals and their relationships, which is the focus of our review. Below we highlight four areas in which humility may be beneficial: physical health, mental health, performance, and relationships.

14.3.1 Physical Health

The first study, to our knowledge, to link humility and physical health outcomes was conducted by Krause (2010), who found that humility was related to better physical health in older adults. Using a large-scale sample of older adults, participants in this study reported their spiritual support, church attendance, humility, and rated their current health. Proposing a model linking spiritual support and religious activities (i.e., church attendance) to humility, Krause found that spiritual support was associated with greater (self-rated) humility, which, in turn, was associated with greater (self-reported) health. These initial findings are promising, though we interpret these results cautiously, as (a) these data are correlational in nature, (b) humility was self-reported (which may complicate measurement issues), and (c) there were no objective health indicators (rather this study relied on self-report measures of physical health). Nonetheless, this study provides initial evidence for the relationship between humility and physical health, and it points to the possible benefits of humility for physical health.

14.3.2 Mental Health

Because humility is intricately related to one's self-concept, it stands to reason that humility should be related to mental health outcomes. Very low humility is most notably associated with narcissism, which is currently classified as an Axis II personality disorder in the DSM-IV-TR, and the negative effects of narcissism are amply documented; examples include increased aggression (Twenge & Campbell,

2003), especially when one's ego is threatened (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Because humility involves a moderate view of self, one may be less likely to react with interpersonal aggression when challenged or when one's ego is threatened. Less is known about the benefits of high humility for mental health, though we suspect those effects are positive: for example, previous theorizing suggests that overly positive views of self are related with poorer mental health (Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995; Robins & Beer, 2001). To the degree that one has a moderate view of self, one may be protected from the costly effects of positive self-illusions on mental health when things go wrong. We hasten to clarify that humility does not require that one possess a low opinion of oneself, which would likely be associated with depressive symptoms. Toward this point, Rowatt et al. (2006) found that depression was unrelated to various self-report measures of humility, as well as the implicit measure of humility relative to arrogance.

14.3.3 Performance

Humility has also been linked with improved performance in recent research. We note that the qualities associated with humility (i.e., accurate view of self, other-oriented) are different from defensive pessimism (i.e., low expectations, anxiety related to performance), which has also been linked with academic performance (Eronen, Nurmi, & Salmela-Aro, 1998). For example, humility has been linked with better academic performance (Owens, 2009) and job performance (Johnson, Rowatt, & Petrini, 2011). These positive benefits of humility are likely driven by an (a) accurate view of self, which (b) allows individuals to accurately estimate their abilities, and (c) engage in positive relationships at school and work. Moreover, narcissism—which is one inverse of humility—has been related to impulsivity and self-defeating behavior (Vazire & Funder, 2006), both of which may undermine one's performance in a variety of domains. Similarly to how individuals with high, but fragile, self-esteem are prone to strong, aggressive reactions when threatened, narcissism is related to poor self-control and an inability to regulate selfish motives, both of which stand in stark contrast to the humble person.

14.3.4 Relationships

Humility has also been linked with pro-social qualities and benefits to relationships. For example, research by Peters and colleagues (Peters, Rowatt, & Johnson, 2011) found that humility was positively correlated with a measure of social relationship quality. Also, research has found that humility is positively related to qualities associated with positive relationships, including generosity (Exline & Hill, 2012) and helpfulness (LaBouff, Rowatt, Johnson, Tsang, & Willerton, 2012). In addition to these cross-sectional studies, Davis et al. (2013) recently presented two longitudinal

studies that found humility to be related to the strengthening of social bonds. In the first study, undergraduates ($N=84$) completed group activities that were designed to challenge humility, such as completing difficult GRE questions while presumably competing with other groups. The group could not advance to the next question until all members agreed on the answer to each question. Higher reputations of humility (i.e., as perceived by others in the group) were linked with higher status and acceptance in the group over time. In the second study, which involved 123 undergraduates who had been hurt in a romantic relationship, humility (i.e., the victim's view of the offender's degree of humility) was associated with how quickly victims forgave over time.

14.4 Humility and Religious Convictions

We have spent the first part of this chapter providing evidence that religious and psychological perspectives teach and promote humility and view it as a positive quality. We have also reviewed evidence supporting the link between humility and well-being. In the following section, we explore a possible paradox regarding the relationship between religion, humility, and well-being. Namely, although most world religions teach and advocate for humility as a virtue among their adherents, expressing humility about one's own religious convictions is often difficult to practice. To outsiders, when religious individuals hold strong convictions that their religion is better than other religions (e.g., believing that only people from one religion will go to heaven), these convictions may be judged as arrogant and offensive by other groups. Also, religious scripture and authority has been used to help certain groups (e.g., kings, males, whites, heterosexuals) maintain positions of power. For example, religious norms regarding gender or sexuality are often very difficult to change, and many religions have institutionalized norms related to gender or sexuality that are very powerful within modern society. Indeed, certain religious constructs have been related to prejudice toward outgroup members (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010).

Religious adherents may also view certain forms of self-righteousness as problematic. For example, the Christian gospels portray religious leaders as a misguided, overly legalistic, privileged group (e.g., Mk 7). At the same time, many believe that religious authority is essential to a functioning religious group, and religious communities may view people who challenge certain cherished beliefs of the community as arrogant and threatening. For example, we hypothesize that religious individuals may view those who challenge authority as inappropriately elevating their own perspective above God or appointed religious authority.

A quick glance at history reveals the pervasive use of religion to advance political aims. Indeed, the vast majority of the world population believes in God or a higher power, and many consider religion to be an essential part of their life (68 % of humans, or about 4.6 billion say that religion is an important part of their daily

lives; Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011). Thus, an important problem of increased globalization and interdependency in the world is how to promote a form of religious tolerance where various communities can live in close proximity—physically and technologically—without letting religious differences lead to escalating conflicts that are entrenched for generations. These questions are timely and important, considering the unsettling historical (and continuing) connection between religion and violence (Juergensmeyer, 2003).

There are a variety of social psychology theories that have sought to explain why religion remains such a powerful motivator of human behavior, despite the fact that many traditional teachings of religion have been corrected by science. In the present chapter, we draw on one—terror management theory (TMT)—because of its relevance to the paradox of religious tolerance. TMT (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986) is based on the premise that humans are similar to other animals because they will eventually die, but they are unique from other animals because their increased intellectual capability and capacity for self-awareness and symbolic thought allows them to anticipate their own death. According to TMT, this awareness would have caused a debilitating amount of anxiety if humans had not efficiently developed ways of managing this anxiety. One way that human beings avoid this potentially devastating anxiety is to believe in and adhere strongly to cultural worldviews. Cultural worldviews involve a constellation of beliefs that imbue one's existence with meaning, significance, and permanence. Cultural worldviews provide (a) *self-esteem* if people live in accordance with the values of their cultural worldview and (b) *symbolic or literal immortality.* Symbolic immortality allows a person to be a part of something greater than the self, which will live on after one's death (e.g., nationalism, social justice). Literal immortality teaches that there is life after death, available to those who adhere to the tenets of the particular cultural worldview (e.g., heaven, reincarnation).

TMT has amassed a large body of evidence consistent with its testable predictions (see Greenberg, Solomon, & Arndt, 2008; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, & Maxfield, 2006; and Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2004 for reviews; but see also Proulx & Heine, 2006 and McGregor, 2006 for critiques). In the majority of empirical studies on TMT, researchers prime participants to think about their own death (i.e., mortality salience) or elicit death-thoughts without overt awareness (e.g., standing by a funeral home; see Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2002). After mortality is made salient, participants are more likely to (a) support and defend their own cultural worldviews, (b) derogate the cultural worldviews of those who believe differently (i.e., worldview defense), and (c) act aggressively toward those that hold such views (see Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). For example, when primed to think about their own death, American participants showed more positive responses toward a pro-U.S. author and more negative responses toward an anti-U.S. author relative to a control condition (Greenberg et al., 1990). A particularly poignant theoretical assertion of TMT is that the processes involved in the defense against death-related anxiety operate in the absence of mortality-reminders; that is, individuals strive to uphold and defend their cultural worldviews even when reminders of death are not salient (Solomon et al.,

2004). Such processes are simply intensified following reminders of mortality (e.g., such as 9/11; Pyszczynski et al., 2003). Therefore, TMT provides a powerful account of human behavior, including the psychological function of adherence to cultural worldviews, identification with cultural groups, and conflict between different cultural groups.

Religion is thought to provide an especially powerful form of terror management because it provides its adherents with both literal immortality, through afterlife beliefs; and symbolic immortality, through a community of believers who will continue the work of the particular religious group after one's death (Vail et al., 2010). Because religious claims are difficult to falsify, adherence to a particular religion requires some element of faith. Faith in a particular religion is helped through consensual validation from others (Vail et al., 2010). In other words, encountering others who share one's religious beliefs should increase one's faith, but encountering others with different views may weaken one's faith. Thus, in order to deal with doubt about their religious beliefs, religious individuals may try to avoid, derogate, convert, or kill followers of other religions (Vail et al., 2010).

The predictions of terror management in relation to religious identification and belief have received initial empirical support in several studies (Vail et al., 2010). For example, Greenberg and colleagues (1990) conducted a study of Christians in which half of the participants were randomly assigned to reflect on their own death (i.e., mortality salience), and half of the participants were randomly assigned to a control condition. Participants then made judgments about two individuals, one who was Christian and one who was Jewish, on several factors (e.g., intelligence, adjustment, liking). Participants in the mortality salience condition increased attraction to the Christian target and decreased attraction to the Jewish target, relative to the control condition.

TMT may help explain part of the difficulty in practicing humility in regard to one's religious convictions. Namely, holding a strong existential religious conviction may make humility costly to practice. In addition to causing existential anxiety, practicing humility in regard to one's religious convictions may also lead to social isolation, as one person's expression of doubt may trigger anxiety and defensiveness in other members of the religious community.

Although TMT provides theoretical and empirical evidence that it may be difficult to practice humility in regard to one's religious convictions, we propose that humility may have an important role in promoting religious tolerance and peace, especially given the reality that most world religions promote humility as an important virtue. In the next section, we consider how intellectual humility (i.e., humility in regard to one's beliefs or ideologies) in regard to one's religious convictions might help to promote religious tolerance. Namely, although openness to different religious perspectives may decrease cohesiveness within one's religious group and increase existential anxiety, a stance of humility may help religious groups maintain an effective balance of reinforcing cherished beliefs while also reducing conflict with both ingroup and outgroup members who hold dissonant beliefs.

14.5   A Model of Intellectual Humility and Religious Tolerance

Whereas TMT tells an elegant story about why religious tolerance is often difficult, less is known about the factors that promote greater intellectual humility in contexts where religious differences create (a) potential for escalating conflict to erupt or (b) increasing levels of avoidance and segregation between groups with a history of conflict with each other. Preliminary work has found that priming humility-related values such as tolerance (Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Chatel, 1992) or compassion (Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009) can decrease defensive reactions to thinking about one's own death. Thus, one way to promote religious tolerance and decrease reactivity to existential threats may be to help religious individuals focus on religious teachings that emphasize love and compassion toward others.

However, there may be limitations to this strategy. Namely, although the majority of religions include love and compassion for others as central virtues, other virtues such as purity or fairness may receive priority during religious conflict. It may be difficult to emphasize certain compassionate values strongly enough to offset the powerful context that prioritizes moral reactions associated with the defense of one's own religious group. We live in a pluralistic society, and the diversity of strongly held religious and moral perspectives appears to be expanding rather than consolidating (see Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Thus, in addition to promoting love and compassion toward others, it may be important to promote intellectual humility regarding one's religious convictions related to the convictions of others (Quinn, 2002). This model of intellectual humility and religious tolerance focuses on how a person relates to individuals with different religious worldviews.

We define *intellectual humility* as the ability to regulate one's need to be right, respond non-defensively when one's perspective is challenged, and express curiosity, interest, and a willingness to learn about alternate points of view. Being intellectually humble requires people to recognize the limitations of their knowledge, and the biases of their beliefs. We suspect that expressing intellectual humility in the context of religious convictions will be difficult to practice, because it may be challenging to maintain a balance between demonstrating commitment to one's own beliefs while also appreciating and honoring the viewpoints of others. However, we theorize that the advantage of intellectual humility is that it facilitates the formation and maintenance of social bonds, even in the face of ideological differences. This may be important to help increase cohesion and decrease schisms within religious communities. In addition, humility may help groups form strong alliances with other groups.

We also posit that intellectual humility involves a person's ability to recognize and honor when he or she observes others having integrity to their existential beliefs, even when those beliefs conflict with that individual's moral sensibilities. For example, the intellectually humble person is curious and open to alternative perspectives that differ from their own. This point is crucial to forming a bond with someone from a differing religious faith. Furthermore, the intellectually humble person is not concerned with being "right" or forcing their viewpoint on others. They are also

able to tolerate ambiguity, such that they are able to hear an alternate religious perspective without experiencing an existential crisis.

This should be most difficult when there are fundamental clashes between cherished values. For example, politically liberal religious individuals may view a woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion as an important individual right and a social justice issue, whereas politically conservative religious individuals may view abortion as a violation of a fundamental principle that one should not end a human life. Moving away from their convictions might evoke strong shame reactions, signaling to the individual a problem with their integrity to cherished values of their group. Very little is known about how to help people hold convictions with both integrity and humility.

Based on integration and application of TMT to religious tolerance, we theorize that two qualities are important for development intellectual humility in the context of religious diversity: existential security and span. *Existential security* involves one's relative sensitivity or reactivity to existential threats regarding religious differences. There may be personality characteristics related to high or low levels of security. For example, openness to experience may be related to high levels of security. Neuroticism or authoritarianism (Greenberg et al., 1990) may be related to low levels of security. Having high levels of self-esteem may be related to high levels of security because it reduces death-related anxiety (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004).

Furthermore, some initial theorizing suggests that individual differences in approaches to religious belief and identification might be related to resiliency, stability, and security in one's religious identity. For example, Fowler (1981) described six stages of faith development, and theorized that at higher stages of faith, individuals are able to engage and maintain closeness with those who are different, even those who are threatening to the self. Furthermore, Beck (2004, 2006) posited that individual differences in religious orientations, specifically in regard to assuaging existential concerns, lead to reliably different reactions to dissimilar others. Namely, to the degree that individuals adopt a *defensive* religious stance—defined as those beliefs characterized as overly simplistic, precisely designed to "repress existential realizations and terror" (Beck, 2004, p. 213)—they may be more sensitive to threats and more likely to engage in avoidance, derogation, or aggression towards outgroup members, as the cost of "absolute" existential certainty is dogmatism, suspicion of others, and moral outrage following threats (Beck, 2004). However, to the degree that individuals adopt an *existential* religious stance—defined as a simultaneous realization of existential predicaments and a commitment to faith (Beck, 2004)—they may be more tolerant, open-minded, and less defensive given the contemplativeness with which they hold their beliefs.

The second construct that may help promote intellectual humility in the context of religious convictions is *span*, which involves one's capacity and motivation to explore and understand diverse perspectives. We theorize that reactivity and capacity for exploration will be inversely related. In his model of understanding the values of religious clients, Worthington (1988) posited that counselors and clients have *zones of toleration* in regard to their religious values. In other words, individuals can

tolerate a range of values in another person without feeling uncomfortable. For example, span for a conservative religious individual might involve the ability to consistently form strong social bonds with individuals from very liberal groups. For someone who is a devout atheist and politically liberal, their span would be related to their ability to consistently form strong social bonds with individuals from very conservative religious groups. Put differently, span has to do with one's ability to form alliances with individuals from adversarial groups. It involves finding ways to bridge with members from different groups; perhaps findings shared values that can, at for short periods of time, supersede group membership. For example, individuals from different religious groups might both value peacemaking or nonviolent engagement, and this shared value might be more important than one's religious differences.

Becoming a more humble and religiously tolerant individual likely involves deliberately placing oneself in situations that allow a person to explore and understand a variety of perspectives, and work toward enlarging one's zone of toleration of a variety of religious values. Alternatively, one's zone of toleration may increase as one is required to interact with others who hold differing beliefs but must continue ongoing, positive relationships due to being part of a working collective (e.g., joining the faculty at a university, moving into a new neighborhood). This aspect of religious tolerance also extends research on the contact hypothesis for reducing prejudice and discrimination between racial groups (Allport, 1954). To the degree that people have consistent, positive experiences with individuals holding diverse perspectives, they may be less likely to react defensively to existential threats regarding religious differences.

14.6   Conclusion

The virtue of humility has received attention from religious and psychological perspectives, both of which point toward its positive intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on well-being. In this chapter, we reviewed the integral role of humility in variety of religions, briefly outlined some of the benefits of humility, and explored the difficulties of expressing humility within the context of different religious convictions. To address the difficulty of holding one's beliefs with conviction while remaining humble to divergent (and even disconfirming) viewpoints, we posited that intellectual humility is a highly desirable characteristic that should motivate religious tolerance. Research on humility is still developing, but already, evidence points toward the salutary effects of being humble, and we encourage future researchers who add to this burgeoning field of study to consider exploring the full range of religious and psychological benefits of practicing this ancient virtue.

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Chapter 15
Gratitude and Spirituality: A Review of Theory and Research

Derrick Wirtz, Cameron L. Gordon, and Juliann Stalls

> *"[I]n gratitude the one put under obligation stands a step lower than his benefactor."*
>
> (Immanual Kant, Practical Philosophy, p. 576)

Gratitude has long captured the interest of scholars, from philosophers and theologians to psychologists. The philosopher Immanual Kant characterized gratitude as a "duty" and ingratitude as "loathsome" (Kant, p. 576). Most of the world's major religions emphasize the cultivation of gratitude (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000), toward other people or toward God. Psychological scientists have conceptualized gratitude as a characteristic that is deeply engrained in the human experience through evolution, and which is an important factor in maintaining social and economic order (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008). In recent years, a renewed interest in positive emotions and characteristics has focused greater attention on gratitude, resulting in the development of new theoretical frameworks and an array of empirical findings that demonstrate the connections that gratitude has to our physical and emotional well-being, as well as to spirituality and religiosity. In this chapter, the authors examine the link between gratitude and spirituality in terms of current theoretical and empirical findings, and describe future directions for research on gratitude and spirituality.

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## 15.1	Theoretical Approaches to Gratitude

There has been surprising diversity in theoretical conceptualizations of what, exactly, constitutes gratitude. Within the field of psychology alone, several different perspectives on gratitude have been offered. For instance, gratitude can be represented as a dispositional trait, or a more transitory state (Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, & Joseph, 2008). In addition, gratitude has been examined in relation to cognitions (Watkins, Grimm, & Kolts, 2004; Wood, Joseph, Lloyd, & Atkins, 2009), emotions (Lambert, Fincham, & Stillman, 2012; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001), and behaviors (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010). Yet perhaps one of the most fundamental differences among conceptualizations of gratitude lies in whether it is considered an inherently interpersonal process occurring between people, or an intra-individual experience that does not require others (Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011). This warrants further discussion in the present chapter because it bears particular importance on how gratitude may be experienced in a spiritual context.

### 15.1.1	Is Gratitude an Interpersonal or Intrapersonal Experience?

Several conceptualizations of gratitude have placed primary emphasis on the *interpersonal* or social nature of gratitude. For instance, Tsang (2006) defined gratitude as "a positive emotional reaction to the receipt of a benefit that is perceived to have resulted from the good intentions of another" (p. 139; see also Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). Similarly, others have argued that gratitude occurs when one individual directs appreciation toward a benefactor who has conferred a costly, intentional, and altruistic favor (Emmons & Shelton, 2002; Wood et al., 2008). The broadest of these interpersonal conceptualizations acknowledges that gratitude can be felt toward another person, toward nature, or toward God (Emmons, McCullough, & Tsang, 2003).

In contrast, some perspectives have highlighted the *intrapersonal* experience of gratitude—suggesting that appreciation for positive events or experiences may occur even if it is not directed at another (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). For instance, Seligman et al. (2005) defined gratitude as becoming "aware of and thankful for the good things that happen" (p. 412). Such a definition highlights the possibility of intra-individual experiences of gratitude. This is a relatively parsimonious definition of gratitude to the extent that it only requires (1) the presence of good things, and (2) one's awareness of those good things.

In a recent review of the literature, Wood et al. (2010) argued that gratitude is a broad trait that involves "a wider life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in the world" (p. 891). The authors argued that this intra-individual "life orientation" conceptualization captures a higher-order latent construct that envelops more specific, lower-order manifestations of gratitude, such as those derived

from the interpersonal exchange of favors. In other words, one with a grateful life orientation views the world through a lens that is likely to amplify those cognitions, emotions, and behaviors associated with gratitude.

Intrapersonal perspectives on gratitude, like the life orientation perspective, do not require the individual to attribute positive events or experiences to others' actions, nor do such perspectives focus on behavioral interactions, such as receiving gifts from a benefactor or expressing thanks to another person. Thus, the intrapersonally-focused life orientation conceptualization of gratitude is flexible because it incorporates interpersonal exchanges (e.g., expressing thanks to an employer who gives a productive employee a bonus), while still allowing for inward feelings of gratitude that are not directed at any benefactor. For instance, if one were to easily pass through a major metropolitan area without being slowed by anticipated traffic delays, one may experience gratitude without actually associating his or her appreciation with a benefit received from any identified benefactor (e.g., a city planner, construction crews that keep the roads in good working order, etc.).

We suggest that when generating hypotheses related to gratitude, one should begin with the broadest "life orientation" conceptualization. The working definition of gratitude can then be narrowed to fit a more specific theoretical context of interest (e.g., how gratitude may influence an individual's effort in the workplace, relationship quality among married couples, etc.) by postulating how a grateful life orientation may fuel specific state- or trait-level cognitions, emotions, and behaviors occurring on an individual or interpersonal basis.

15.1.2 Applying Theories of Gratitude to Spirituality

In keeping with our suggestion to understand gratitude in a spiritual or religious context, we first consider it from an intrapersonal perspective, in which the two fundamental processes needed are *noticing* and *appreciating*. If one does not first notice something positive, then one cannot appreciate it—thus, noticing would appear to be a necessary condition of gratitude. In the psychological literature, noticing aligns well with the construct of mindfulness. Although there has been an explosion of interest in mindfulness among psychological researchers in the past several decades, a detailed discussion goes beyond the scope of this chapter and can be more completely addressed elsewhere (e.g., Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011). Nonetheless, the argument has been made that a lack of mindfulness may undermine gratitude (Gordon et al., 2011). This is important to the discussion of gratitude in a religious context because many world religions (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism) promote mindfulness of good things (e.g., health, well-being, a relationship with a benevolent creator, etc.) through regular participation in rituals or activities such as prayer or meditation. Hence, regular participation in spiritual practices should theoretically put one on a path toward noticing the good in the world and directing one's appreciation, particularly when positive events or experiences are not attributable to others, to God.

While the processes of noticing and appreciating may, at the broadest level, illuminate many experiences of gratitude, individuals often view themselves as having an interpersonal relationship with a higher power. Thus, we return to interpersonal models of gratitude for additional insights. Recall that interpersonal models of gratitude revolve around the appreciation of a benefit received from a thoughtful benefactor who provided an altruistic and costly favor (e.g., Wood, et al., 2008). An important point is raised, however, by Algoe and Stanton (2012), who argue that if the recipient does not wish to build a stronger social relationship with the benefactor, then the favor may be met with anger or hostility and result in increases in relational distance due to the imposed social debt of gratitude. Because most individuals who engage in religious practice are inherently demonstrating a desire to strengthen their relationship with the benefactor (in this case, God), this condition will most always be met in religious contexts. In other words, although benefits received from others can actually lead to frustration rather than gratitude in some social contexts (e.g., when the recipient does not wish to strengthen his or her relationship with the benefactor), this obstacle is not present in religious contexts, where most individuals are already expending effort to strengthen their relationship with God. Thus, the perception of receiving positive things from God should more consistently lead to gratitude and its resulting benefits than it would in other social contexts where gratitude for benefits received may be hindered by one's wish to remain more autonomous or independent.

Viewing oneself as having an interpersonal connection with a divine benefactor may lead to beneficial outcomes. A growing body of literature suggests that gratitude is associated with stronger and more fulfilling relationships. For example, past research has indicated that one's gratitude for a benefactor increases one's motivation to engage in relationship maintenance behavior (Kubacka, Finkenauer, Rusbult, & Keijsers, 2011). Similarly, Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, and Keltner (2012) found that one's own gratitude for a romantic partner promoted greater commitment to one's relationship. Extrapolating these findings to a religious context suggests the hypothesis that gratitude felt toward God may lead one to increase commitment to spiritual practice and invest greater effort in behavior that continues to promote one's relationship with God (e.g., reading scripture, praying, attending religious services, etc.). Furthermore, relationship research has demonstrated that gratitude is associated with an increased sense of communal strength (Lambert et al., 2010) and relationship satisfaction (Algoe, Gable, & Maisel, 2010), and both inward experiences of felt gratitude and outward expressions of gratitude uniquely predict individuals' own marital satisfaction (Gordon et al., 2011). These findings are theoretically relevant to religious contexts because they suggest that feeling grateful toward God, and expressing thanks to God through prayer may each uniquely enhance the spiritual individual's relationship with God. Since feeling grateful and expressing thanks through prayer are both highly promoted values in a number of major religions, it appears that religious contexts provide fertile ground for strong feelings of gratitude that may enhance one's perceived connection to God. In other words, religions promote the expression of gratitude (e.g., through prayer, tithing,

etc.), while relationship science suggests that the expression of gratitude, in turn, promotes greater spirituality through a feeling of closeness to God.

While findings from relationship science may be theoretically extrapolated to fit religious contexts (to the extent that one seeks to establish and maintain a satisfying relationship with God), some important theoretical differences also warrant attention. For instance, gratitude toward a higher being would constitute appreciation for gifts intentionally conferred by a thoughtful benefactor, which is consistent with interpersonal models of gratitude. However, it is typically considered important that the grateful person also perceive the benefactor to have some substantial cost or inconvenience associated with the aid provided. This may be considered less essential in a religious context due to widely held conceptions of God as omnipotent (which preclude one from perceiving God as having any difficulty providing the appreciated benefits). Instead, perhaps it is sufficient that the grateful individual is appreciative of a divine power's specific consideration and care—after all, a worshipper will typically view himself or herself as relatively insignificant in comparison to the transcendent being he or she is worshipping. Thus, perhaps understanding gratitude in a religious framework requires less emphasis on the favor's perceived cost to the benefactor and a stronger emphasis on the role of one's humility in relation to God.

Such a component to gratitude would be consistent with previous observations that humility is positively correlated with gratitude (Exline, 2012; Rowatt et al., 2006) and negatively correlated with narcissism (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998). Furthermore, Wood et al. (2008) argue that an ungrateful individual is likely to view a received benefit as having little cost to the benefactor, as given in order to satisfy ulterior motives, or as having little value. Whereas such perceptions could certainly cause ingratitude, an additional explanation for ingratitude may be that the individual lacks humility (or possesses entitlement). Specifically, an entitled individual may perceive the benefactor's incurred cost, altruistic intent, and the value of the benefit conferred—but discounts these factors because he or she feels important enough to be deserving of the benefactor's sacrifices. If this is the case, then a lack of humility could be a threat to the development of gratitude. This is relevant to the present discussion because in religious contexts individuals inherently take a subservient and humble role toward the higher power they choose to worship. Taken together with our earlier consideration of how a broader life orientation definition of gratitude may apply to spirituality, religious contexts that promote individual mindfulness of good things and interpersonal humility would seem to provide a fertile environment for the development and experience of gratitude.

15.1.3 Summary

Recent theoretical perspectives offer insights about the possible connections between gratitude and spirituality. Intrapersonal theories (e.g., Wood et al., 2010) suggest that gratitude can be experienced when an individual notices and appreciates positive

events or experiences, leading to the hypothesis that mindfulness-enhancing practices—such as prayer or meditation—foster feelings of gratitude. Interpersonal viewpoints and findings from relationship science highlight the associations between gratitude and positive outcomes, such as relationship commitment and satisfaction. Such findings suggest the hypothesis that, in a spiritual context, feelings of gratitude may strengthen commitment to one's religion and promote a feeling of closeness to God. In addition, a sense of humility in relation to a higher power may serve to enhance feelings of gratitude.

15.2   Empirical Research on Gratitude and Spirituality

15.2.1   Is Gratitude Associated with Spirituality?

Our review of gratitude theory suggests that a feeling of appreciation (e.g., toward God) may enhance and be enhanced by spirituality and religious practices. This theoretical connection is confirmed in the research literature, where studies have demonstrated an association between self-reported gratitude and spirituality. McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) posited that gratitude may be related to spirituality because religions often promote gratitude explicitly and because when people experience positive events that cannot be attributed to an identifiable source, they may attribute them to God—something they are unlikely to do for negative events. The authors constructed and validated a measure of dispositional gratitude (GQ6; McCullough et al., 2002), which positively correlated with spiritual transcendence, self-transcendence, and other religious variables (e.g., importance of religion, frequency of attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer, etc.). The association between gratitude and spiritual transcendence replicated across student and non-student samples, with the largest correlation found among adult non-students. Other measures of gratitude produced compatible results: when gratitude was assessed using a diary method, mean levels of grateful moods over a 3-week period were positively associated with spiritual transcendence, self-transcendence, general religiousness, intrinsic religious orientation, and interest in religion; but not extrinsic religious orientation or "quest" religious orientation (McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004). Gratitude—both as a disposition and as a daily mood state—has also been positively associated with self-reports of personal importance placed upon religion, religious practices such as attending services and reading scriptures, using religion in problem-solving, feeling a personal relationship with God, and feeling as though one's personal strivings bring one closer to God ("sanctification"), in a largely Christian, adult sample with neuromuscular disease (Emmons & Kneezel, 2005; see also Rosmarin, Pirutinsky, Cohen, Galler, & Krumrei, 2011, for similar results in a combined Jewish-Christian sample). Thus, the available empirical evidence suggests that greater spirituality is associated with more state and trait gratitude.

15.2.2 Why and How: Explaining the Gratitude-Spirituality Link

The association between spirituality and gratitude reflects several possibilities. First, being spiritual or religious may cause people to experience more feelings of gratitude, because—for example—religious practices promote noticing and appreciating, as described in the preceding theoretical review. Second, experiencing feelings of gratitude may lead people to participate more frequently or intently in religious or spiritual activities. This outcome could be attributable to the enhanced sense of connection to God that might result from the experience of gratitude, as an interpersonal theoretical perspective might suggest. Third, some other variable or variables may lead individuals to experience both gratitude and a sense of spirituality, without implying a causal relation between gratitude and spirituality. These possibilities are not mutually exclusive, but rather could each account for a portion of the relation between gratitude and spirituality.

15.2.2.1 Does Spirituality Lead to More Gratitude?

Gratitude figures as a prominent theme in many religions (e.g., Emmons & Crumpler, 2000); thus, one hypothesis is that those individuals who are more religious or spiritually engaged feel gratitude more frequently or intensely. According to this perspective, some aspect of religion or spirituality fosters a stronger experience of gratitude; for example, regular prayer or attendance at religious services could promote mindfulness of positive occurrences and encourage the attribution of such events to a higher power.

Addressing one of these possibilities, Lambert, Fincham, Braithwaite, Graham, and Beach (2009) examined whether prayer impacts gratitude. In two different samples, prayer frequency positively predicted trait gratitude measured 6 weeks later, suggesting a unique effect of praying on later experiences of gratitude. Since the assessment of prayer frequency occurred prior to the assessment of gratitude, the results were consistent with a causal effect of prayer on gratitude. However, gratitude measured at the start of the study also positively predicted prayer 6 weeks later in one of the samples, suggesting the reverse causal direction (i.e., being grateful inclines individuals toward prayer). In a third sample, participants were instructed to engage in prayer daily. Compared with participants who listed daily activities or articulated positive thoughts about a romantic partner, those who prayed reported greater levels of trait gratitude four weeks later, controlling for baseline gratitude, social desirability, and general religiosity. Thus, it appears that prayer may be a unique predictor of gratitude above and beyond simply focusing on positive aspects of life.

Frequency of religious service attendance has also been explored as a predictor of gratitude, across time. The results of a national longitudinal survey indicated that among a sample of older, retired adults, those who reported attending religious services more often also reported higher levels of gratitude 2 years later (Krause, 2009). In other words, frequent worship positively predicted changes in gratitude

over time. This may be due, in part, to the belief that other congregational members share one's values, and the social and emotional support that results from contact with other churchgoers—which can result in greater feelings of appreciation toward God (Krause & Ellison, 2009).

While correlational studies such as these report associations between prayer, attendance at religious services, and gratitude (see also McCullough et al., 2002), experimental research is ultimately needed to test the direction of causality. Tsang, Schulwitz, and Carlisle (2012) attempted to address the causal direction by presenting individuals with a prime (scrambled sentences containing words with a religious connotation), thus experimentally manipulating the salience of religion. The authors reported that participants who completed the religious prime (versus a neutral prime) subsequently gave more money to an ostensible partner as part of a resource allocation game—presumably as an expression of gratitude, in response to the partner allocating money to the participant. While this outcome appears consistent with the hypothesis that activating the concept of religion led to greater gratitude, religiously primed participants also gave more money to their "partner" when they believed that the prior round of resource allocation was random, in which case there should have been no specific sense of gratitude directed at the partner. In other words, when participants benefitted from chance, they may have experienced a positive mood, but presumably not a sense of indebtedness to the partner, calling into question whether giving money to the partner constituted gratitude or, instead, a more general expression of generosity. Indeed, religiously primed participants did not self-report greater feelings of gratitude. Additionally, participants' level of intrinsic religiosity did not moderate behavioral or self-reported gratefulness to the partner, even as intrinsic religiosity was positively associated with trait gratitude (cf., McCullough et al., 2004). Taken together, these results suggest that manipulating the salience of religion led to participants giving more, but not as a specific response to a favor. Further, making religion experimentally salient did not affect self-reported gratitude, leaving the hypothesis that thinking about religion leads to stronger feelings or expressions of gratitude not fully supported.

In summary, while prayer and frequency of attendance at religious services may constitute religious practices affecting gratitude, additional experimental research is needed to further evaluate the strength and direction of causality between spirituality and gratitude. More specifically, additional studies utilizing priming and other techniques to manipulate religion or spirituality will help to evaluate the causal role that religion plays in behavioral and self-reported gratitude. Similarly, studies that manipulate gratitude before measuring spirituality are needed to evaluate the reverse causal direction.

15.2.2.2 Social Desirability in the Spirituality-Gratitude Relation

It is possible that some additional variable or variables lead individuals to experience or report both stronger gratitude and stronger spirituality. For example, an alternative explanation for the association between spirituality and gratitude is that

socially desirable responding may partially or completely explain the relation. According to this viewpoint, because spirituality and gratitude are both desirable characteristics, research participants may attempt to present themselves in a positive manner by more strongly endorsing items measuring each construct. The motive for positive self-presentation in terms of gratitude may itself be moderated by a person's level of religiosity; that is, the emphasis placed upon gratitude in many religions suggests that the more strongly one identifies as a spiritual person, the greater the likelihood of perceiving or presenting oneself as grateful (Tsang et al., 2012; see also Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010, for a review supporting the hypothesis that religiosity satisfies self-presentational motives).

Researchers have attempted to address social desirability in the gratitude-spirituality relation by measuring and statistically controlling for its effects. Though self-reported gratitude is correlated with social desirability, the relation between gratitude and spirituality generally remains when social desirability is controlled (McCullough et al., 2002). Thus, the role of social desirability may account, at best, for only a portion of the relation between gratitude and spirituality. A second technique to account for socially desirable responding is to employ behavioral measures that may be more resistant to self-presentation (e.g., the resource allocation task used by Tsang et al. 2012). In summary, social desirability does not appear to fully explain the connection between gratitude and spirituality, although additional studies utilizing multiple methods of assessing these variables are an important future direction for researchers.

15.2.3   Gratitude and Spirituality Across Cultures and Religions

The majority of existing research linking gratitude with spirituality has been conducted in the U.S., has focused on general spirituality (McCullough et al., 2002, 2004), and has employed predominantly Caucasian, Christian participants (e.g., Adler & Fagley, 2005; Tsang et al., 2012). Does the link between gratitude and spirituality extend to other cultures and religions? Gratitude has been identified as a common theme in Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000), as well as in Buddhism (Berkwitz, 2003; Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Gratitude or giving thanks is mentioned in the holy texts of each religion and religious practices, such as prayer or fasting, are linked to the cultivation of a sense of general gratitude or gratitude specifically toward God. Furthermore, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Jewish research participants rate gratitude as a highly desirable emotion (Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). Krause (2012) found that gratitude toward God was greater among older Mexican American and older Black (versus older White) participants; for Black participants, this effect was partly explained by the spiritual support provided by peers, leading to greater self-understanding and a stronger sense of religious meaning.

Yet, while gratitude may theoretically be linked to spirituality across different religions, and viewed as desirable, it remains possible that the extent and nature of the relationship may be affected by religion and culture. For instance, Ahmed (2009) described some of the difficulties of generalizing common measures of religiosity from Judeo-Christian traditions to Islam—observing, for example, that assessing religious attendance or prayer as an indicator of religiosity may be flawed as there are different expectations and meanings associated with these practices for Muslims than for those who practice other religions. At the same time, gratitude, when measured as a character strength (see Peterson & Seligman, 2004), was found to be positively associated with religious commitment in American Muslim youths (Ahmed, 2009), suggesting that when measured appropriately, the connection between spirituality and gratitude extends to Islam.

Overall, while it has been suggested that gratitude may be linked to spirituality across religions and cultures, additional research with diverse participant samples is needed to more fully evaluate this possibility. The strength of the relation between gratitude and spirituality may be moderated by religious or cultural context, and may be mediated by different beliefs or practices, depending on one's specific religious or cultural background.

15.2.4 Summary of Existing Research and Future Directions

Theories of gratitude—including intrapersonal (e.g., Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010) and interpersonal approaches (e.g., Emmons & Shelton, 2002; Wood et al., 2008)—offer explanations for how gratitude might be understood in relation to spirituality. Our review of empirical findings demonstrates the existence of a relation between gratitude and spirituality, while also leaving a number of important questions for future research. We highlight the following questions as some of those that will help advance a scientific understanding of gratitude and spirituality.

15.2.4.1 Does Spirituality Strengthen Gratitude, or Does Gratitude Strengthen Spirituality?

Although spirituality and gratitude are positively associated, relatively little is known about the direction of causality. Does spirituality create a sense of gratitude, does gratitude incline individuals toward spirituality, or does a reciprocal relation exist? The available research has focused primarily on the causal effect that spirituality might have on gratitude. Time-lagged designs (Krause, 2009; Lambert et al., 2009) assert a positive effect of spiritual engagement (i.e., prayer) on subsequent gratitude. However, little experimental research exists manipulating either religion to observe its effect on gratitude or manipulating gratitude to observe its effect on spirituality. While priming religiosity affected resource allocation in a laboratory task (Tsang et al., 2012), and a prayer intervention increased trait gratitude over a

4-week period (Lambert et al., 2009), further research is needed to evaluate the possibility that spirituality causally enhances experiences of gratitude. The direction of reverse causality, in which trait or state gratitude might incline an individual toward spirituality, has seldom been evaluated (see Lambert et al., 2009, Study 3). As described earlier in this chapter, gratitude has been found to strengthen relationship commitment and satisfaction. To the extent that an individual perceives a personal relationship with a higher power, these findings offer predictions for how gratitude might enhance commitment to or satisfaction with God.

15.2.4.2 What Are the Mediators of the Spirituality-Gratitude Relation?

To the extent that gratitude and spirituality are associated, the continued examination of potential mediators of this relation is needed to clarify the specific aspects of spirituality or religious involvement that predict or are predicted by gratitude. Our theoretical review suggests several possibilities, such as the role of prayer or meditation in promoting the noticing and appreciating of positive events. Consistent with this reasoning, prayer and frequency of attendance at religious services have each been suggested as causal predictors of gratitude, or changes in gratitude across time (Krause, 2009; Lambert et al., 2009). Krause (2012) proposed that church attendance is positively linked to spiritual support from others, in turn leading to a better understanding of oneself and others, producing a strengthened sense of religious meaning in life—a path which culminates in greater feelings of gratitude directed toward God. Other religious variables that have been associated with gratitude include frequency of reading scripture or other religious materials, and number of religious friends (McCullough et al., 2002).

Further research is needed to evaluate these potential mediators and to compare them (i.e., what is the unique prediction of multiple correlated variables when considered simultaneously?). In addition, general social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral factors might be explored. For example, religious involvement may promote greater social engagement with members of one's religious group, which may in turn provide opportunities to experience gratitude in response to others' friendship or support. Similarly, the hypothesis that religious individuals give credit for positive (but not negative) outcomes in their lives to God (versus to chance or other factors) and experience gratitude toward God as a consequence posits a testable attribution pattern (McCullough et al., 2002, 2004).

15.2.4.3 Does the Spirituality-Gratitude Link Replicate Across Cultures and Religions?

Research examining the connection between one's level of spirituality and dispositional or affective measures of gratitude has tended to focus on Caucasian, Christian participants in the United States (see Ahmed, 2009; Krause, 2012, for exceptions). Religion and culture remain two relatively understudied variables with respect to

gratitude. Members of varying religions around the world experience gratitude to different degrees—the experience of gratitude was reported as most frequent among Muslims and least frequent among Hindus—despite members of each placing a similarly high value on the experience of gratitude (Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). These findings suggest a complex relation between gratitude and religion, and it remains unclear whether practitioners of the same religion experience gratitude with different frequency or intensity across differing cultural contexts. Similarly, culture might affect which variables serve as the strongest mediators of the spirituality-gratitude association.

15.2.4.4 How Can Gratitude and Spirituality Be Measured Using Multiple Methods?

The majority of the available research on gratitude and spirituality utilizes self-report measures and correlational research techniques. These methods have proven valuable in establishing a basic understanding of gratitude and how different aspects of spiritual or religious engagement might enhance one's gratefulness. Yet one-time self-report measures, which may be subject to socially desirable responding, might be complemented with behavioral observations, peer reports (McCullough et al., 2002), or experience sampling and diary methods (McCullough et al., 2004). Incorporating multimethod approaches may help clarify the spirituality-gratitude relation: for example, Tsang et al. (2012) reported a discrepancy in which more religious individuals reported higher dispositional gratitude, yet did not behave more gratefully in a resource allocation task—thus indicating a conflict between self-report and behavioral measures.

15.2.4.5 How Do General Theories of Gratitude Apply in Religious or Spiritual Contexts?

Advancing research in these directions also highlights a need to clarify conceptualizations of gratitude within a religious or spiritual context. This goal may compel researchers either to unify the diverse perspectives on gratitude presented at the beginning of this chapter with a broad definition such as the life orientation view (Wood et al., 2010) or to advance a more specific theoretical conceptualization that takes into account the unique aspects of gratitude in spiritual contexts outlined above.

15.3 Conclusion

Considered individually, gratitude and spirituality are two constructs that have captured the interest of scholars and laypeople from diverse walks of life for thousands of years. Recent advances in psychological science, and closely related fields of inquiry, have begun to illuminate the ways in which gratitude and spirituality

combine to give meaning to life for individuals of different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Despite the widespread and longstanding interest in these concepts, the science of gratitude in a spiritual context is still in its infancy. Many questions remain about how and why gratitude and spirituality associate with one another and how this association can be utilized by individuals and communities to enhance sustainable life satisfaction and promote greater well-being. We hope that this theoretical and empirical review, as well as the future directions outlined above, will help to advance this important area of inquiry.

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Chapter 16
Religion and Forgiveness of Others

Mark S. Rye and Cara F. McCabe

Forgiveness is a positive psychology construct that relates to a variety of beneficial health outcomes. For instance, forgiveness relates to lower blood pressure, fewer self-reported illnesses, less fatigue, better sleep quality, and decreased cardiovascular reactivity (Lawler et al., 2003, 2005). With respect to mental health, forgiveness relates to decreased depression (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004), less hopelessness (Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008), lower levels of suicidal behavior (Hirsch, Webb, & Jeglic, 2011), and greater existential well-being (Rye et al., 2004).

Given these findings, researchers are trying to understand factors that promote forgiveness. Because major world religions encourage forgiveness and many individuals draw upon their faith when forgiving (Rye et al., 2000), a comprehensive understanding of forgiveness can only be obtained by taking into account religious perspectives. However, basic and applied researchers often ignore religious dimensions of forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Worthington et al., 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of research about the role of religion in forgiveness. Although religion is relevant to many types of forgiveness (e.g., forgiving oneself, seeking forgiveness from others), this chapter will focus on forgiving others. We will begin by discussing how religiosity and religious affiliation impact the conceptualization and practice of forgiveness. Particular attention will be paid to religious rationales for forgiveness, prayer and meditation, sanctification, and congregational support. We will also describe religiously based forgiveness interventions. Finally, we will discuss implications of research findings for clinicians and researchers working with religious individuals who want to forgive.

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16.1 Religious Rationales for Forgiving Others

Religions offer rationales for why it is important to forgive others. Although denominations within the same religion may interpret doctrine differently, some broad generalizations can be made. We will briefly discuss rationales for forgiveness among Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and Buddhism, although it is important to note that many other religions similarly value and encourage forgiveness (e.g., Hinduism, Jainism).

16.1.1 Forgiveness and Judaism

Judaism emphasizes that people should forgive others because God is forgiving (Rye et al., 2000). Forgiveness is an important theme in both the Written Law (i.e., Torah and other scriptures) and the Oral Law (i.e., Mishnah, Babylonian Talmud, Shulhan Arukh, rabbinic commentaries) (Dratch, 2002). In addition, forgiveness is a central focus of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), which is the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. However, as noted by Rabbi Elliot Dorff (1998), forgiveness is not required unless the offender has met the conditions of *teshuvah* (i.e., the process of return) as outlined in the *Mishneh Torah* by Maimonides. According to Maimonides, before asking for forgiveness, the offender must acknowledge the wrongdoing, make a public confession, express remorse, offer compensation, request forgiveness, avoid circumstances that precipitated the offense, and act differently in the future (Dorff, 1998). Rabbi Mark Dratch wrote, "The righting of wrongs and the exacting of justice are prerequisites for achieving forgiveness" (p. 13) and "most Jewish authorities are of the opinion that there is no absolute obligation to forgive in all circumstances" (p. 14). However, according to the *Mishneh Torah*, victims who refuse to forgive after the offender has met the conditions of *teshuvah* are considered to be sinners (Dorff, 1998).

Jewish perspectives on forgiveness have undoubtedly been shaped by experiences of religious persecution. Jews have wrestled with whether or not forgiveness is a possible or desirable response to atrocities, such as those committed during the Holocaust. Perhaps no book better illustrates the challenge of forgiving severe transgressions than Simon Wisenthal's (1998) *The Sunflower*. While imprisoned in a concentration camp, Wisenthal listened while a Nazi solider, who lay dying in his hospital bed, asked for forgiveness after recounting horrendous crimes he had committed against Jews. Wisenthal walked away without offering forgiveness. The last section of the book contains differing opinions from scholars as to whether or not he made the correct decision.

16.1.2   Forgiveness and Christianity

Forgiveness is central to Christian theology (Jones, 1995; Marty, 1998). Christians consider forgiveness to be part of the *ethos* of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (Marty, 1998), and it is a reoccurring theme in Christian scriptures. According to the New Testament, Jesus spoke about forgiveness through parables. One of the best known examples is the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32, New Revised Standard Version), in which a father welcomes his son back with open arms after his son left home and squandered his inheritance. In Matthew 18:23–35, Jesus recounted a story about a king who grants mercy to a servant who could not pay his debts. When the servant subsequently fails to show mercy to a fellow servant, the king reprimands him.

Jesus also directly discussed forgiveness with his disciples. In Matthew 18:21–22, Peter asked Jesus whether he should forgive his brother as many as seven times. Jesus replied that he should forgive his brother "seventy-seven times," which implies that forgiveness should be a way of life. Jesus also emphasized the importance of forgiving one another before receiving forgiveness from God in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:14–15). Thus, it is not surprising that many Christians believe that God's forgiveness is contingent upon whether people forgive each other (Exline, 2008).

Jesus also taught about forgiveness by example. As recounted in John 3:8–11, the Pharisees brought a adulterous woman to Jesus and asked whether she should be stoned. After stating, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7), Jesus told her that he did not condemn her (John 8:11). Jesus also asked God to forgive those who crucified him, even as he was hanging on the cross (Luke 23:34). In John 21:15–17, the risen Jesus communicated forgiveness to Peter even though Peter denied him on the night of his arrest (Jones, 1995). Taken together, Christian scriptures suggest that forgiveness should be practiced without preconditions.

16.1.3   Forgiveness and Islam

Consistent with other Abrahamic religions, Islam encourages forgiveness of others. Rye et al. (2000) summarized some of the ways that forgiveness is highlighted in Islam. For example, *Al-Ghafoor* (i.e., The Forgiving One), is one of the 99 attributes of God. Furthermore, forgiveness is an important theme in the Qur'an. Examples include, "…though if a person is patient and forgives, this is one of the greatest things" (42: 43, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem), and "…but if you overlook their offences, forgive them, pardon them, then God is all forgiving, all merciful" (64:14). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad forgave those that persecuted him and his followers while he lived in Makkah (Mecca).

Although forgiveness is valued within Islam, seeking justice following mistreatment is also emphasized. In fact, the Qur'an suggests that taking revenge to the extent of the original injury is allowed (42:40). However, the same verse also suggests that those who forgive will be rewarded by God. Moreover, if the victim exceeds the original damage then he/she becomes an offender (Rye et al., 2000). Consequently, many Muslims view forgiveness as a preferred strategy that brings rewards from God, improved relationships with others, and happiness to the victim (Rye et al., 2000).

16.1.4   Forgiveness and Buddhism

Forgiveness is also consistent with Buddhism, which considers both forbearance and compassion as *paramitas* (i.e., perfections cultivated by those who are awake) (Rye et al., 2000). Buddhism is devoted to overcoming suffering and teaches that anger increases suffering for both the victim and the offender. The Dhammapada contains numerous passages related to overcoming anger. Examples include "Abandon anger, give up pride; overcome all attachment" (17:1, trans. T. Cleary), "Speak the truth, do not become angered…." (17:4), and "Do not say anything harsh; what you have said will be said back to you. Angry talk is painful; retaliation will get you" (10:5). These passages are consistent with the laws of Karma, which suggests those who pursue retaliation and revenge are likely to experience future suffering. Buddha and bodhisattvas (i.e., people whose aim is enlightenment) serve as role models for compassionate living, and Buddhist practitioners seek to follow their examples. In the foreword to Helen Whitney's (2011) book entitled *Forgiveness: A Time to Love and a Time to Hate*, the Dalai Lama wrote, "Someone once asked me if there was anything I thought was unforgivable? And I think the answer is that the only thing I might find unforgivable would be if I myself were unable to forgive. In fact, in Mahayana Buddhism, not to forgive, especially when someone has offered you an apology, is considered a serious transgression of the bodhisattva's altruistic pledge" (p. x).

16.1.5   Comparing Forgiveness Across Religious Traditions

Religions differ with respect to when forgiveness is encouraged. In general, Christianity and Buddhism encourage forgiveness without conditions whereas Judaism outlines specific steps that offenders must take prior to being granted forgiveness. According to Islam, forgiveness following an offense is a preferred strategy that will be rewarded by God but revenge to the extent to which one has been harmed is allowed. Rationales for forgiveness also differ across religions. Among Abrahamic religions, the most important rationale is that God is forgiving and humans are expected to emulate God. In contrast, Buddhists encourage forgiveness because it can alleviate suffering and because failure to forgive can have negative consequences for subsequent reincarnations. In spite of these differences, all of these religious traditions

deeply value and encourage forgiveness and researchers have begun to examine whether individuals practice forgiveness in accordance with the teachings of their faith.

16.2 How Religiosity Relates to Forgiveness

Researchers have examined the relationship between religiosity and forgiveness. We will first describe studies examining how religiosity relates to dispositional forgiveness and forgiveness of a specific offense. Next, we will discuss research concerning the extent to which individuals draw upon their religious faith when forgiving. This will be followed by a summary of studies comparing forgiveness across religious groups.

There is evidence that religiousness is positively related to forgiveness. For instance, a telephone survey of randomly selected individuals living in the United States revealed that Christians scored higher on willingness to forgive others than nonreligious individuals (Toussaint & Williams, 2008). Another study found that willingness to forgive was associated with highly religious Muslim youths but not with comparison youth (i.e., undergraduates at a university with no religious affiliation) (Ahmed, 2009). In addition, Fox and Thomas (2008) compared forgiveness between individuals from Abrahamic religious traditions and secular educational groups. Religious participants scored higher on valuing forgiveness (i.e., general attitudes toward forgiveness, willingness to forgive hypothetical future offenses) than those in the secular group. Interestingly, prayer and belief in God were better predictors of willingness to forgive hypothetical transgressions than religious affiliation. Moreover, Mullet et al. (2003) found that regular church attenders reported greater willingness to forgive than participants who did not attend church or believe in God.

Studies have also found that religiosity is positively related to forgiveness of a specific offense (e.g., Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2007). However, the associations between religiosity and transgression specific forgiveness tend to be weaker than those between religiosity and dispositional forgiveness (McCullough & Worthington, 1999: Tsang, McCullough & Hoyt, 2005). When considering possible explanations, Tsang et al. posited that measurement problems, such as recall biases, may be a factor. Specifically, they noted that offenses that have not been forgiven may be more difficult to recall than forgiven offenses. Moreover, forgiving individuals may have a harder time remembering transgressions than less forgiving individuals. They also suggested that complex religious systems of meaning motivate some adherents to rationalize motives that are contrary to forgiveness.

Researchers have also examined the extent to which individuals draw upon their religious faith when forgiving. Covert and Johnson (2009) conducted an online survey comparing motivations for forgiveness between individuals enrolled at a Christian University and other adults (recruitment method unspecified). The most commonly reported motivations for forgiveness included religious reasons (43 %), relational reasons (30 %), and desire for well-being (29 %). Participants who indicated they forgave for religious reasons scored significantly higher on religious commitment than those who reported forgiving for other reasons. Similarly, Krumrei, Mahoney, and Pargament (2008) found that about 75 % of divorced individuals reported

looking to God for assistance with forgiveness. Interestingly, the extent to which one reported turning to God for help with forgiveness was related to increased verbal aggression toward the ex-spouse 1 year later. The authors suggested that calling upon God may have also been accompanied by a "spiritual one-up position" (p. 309) that could have contributed to decline in civility in communications. Also, the authors note that those who experienced the highest levels of distress about the divorce were more likely to turn to God.

Qualitative studies have similarly shown that many individuals rely upon their faith when they forgive. Kidwell, Wade, and Blaedel (2012) explored how religious beliefs impact forgiveness by interviewing adherents of a variety of religions (i.e., Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim). When asked about how they forgive, participants cited both religious (e.g., relying upon God for strength, praying, reading religious texts) and nonreligious strategies (e.g., developing empathy for the offender, paying attention to offender's positive qualities, focusing on growth following the offense). Jewish participants emphasized that Yom Kippur helped them work toward forgiveness.

In two studies, Barnes and Brown (2010) examined why religious individuals predict that they would forgive others. In study 1, university students completed measures of attitudes toward forgiveness, tendency to forgive, and forgiveness of hypothetical transgressions. Positive views of forgiveness mediated the relationship between religiosity and predictions of forgiveness. In study 2, university students were asked to predict whether they would be able to forgive the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. Results showed that participants considered their religious values when predicting future forgiveness and this was a better predictor than past forgiveness experience.

16.2.1   Comparisons Across Religious Groups

Researchers have found differences in how forgiveness is conceptualized and practiced across religions. For instance, Cohen, Malka, Rozin, and Cherfas (2006) conducted three studies that examined whether Protestants or Jews were more likely to consider offenses as being unforgivable. Study 1, which compared Jewish and Christian students enrolled in introductory psychology, found that Jews were significantly more likely than Christians to believe that some offenses are unforgivable. For Protestants, religious commitment was negatively correlated with belief in unforgivable offenses, whereas these variables were unrelated for Jews. In study 2, these results were replicated among another group of university students, even after controlling for dispositional forgiveness. In study 3, researchers presented members of university religious groups with hypothetical forgiveness scenarios that did not meet criteria for forgiveness as described in Jewish law. Jewish participants were more likely to rely on theological reasons to explain why offenses are unforgivable. Although Heim and Rye (2002) found no differences between Christian and Jewish participants on situational or dispositional forgiveness, Jewish participants were more likely to agree that forgiveness should only occur after the offender has expressed contrition.

Researchers have also studied how the Christian practice of forgiveness compares to Buddhists and Muslims. For example, Paz, Neto, and Mullet (2007) compared

Christians and Buddhists from Macau on dispositional forgiveness and found that Buddhist participants were more likely to be resentful and less forgiving than Christian participants. However, the authors cautioned that these differences could have occurred because Christian participants more closely identified with the conceptualization of forgiveness as reflected in survey items than Buddhist participants. Another study, which compared Lebanese Muslims, Lebanese Christians, and French Christians on dispositional forgiveness, found that Muslims scored lower on unconditional forgiveness than the Christian participants (Mullet & Azar, 2009).

Taken together, these studies suggest that theological differences in conceptualization of forgiveness across religions may be reflected in forgiveness attitudes of adherents. Research suggests that Christians are most likely to favor forgiveness without preconditions. However, caution is advised when interpreting the findings from these studies. All of these studies used self-report forgiveness measures. Self-report measures are useful because forgiveness involves emotional and cognitive changes that cannot be easily observed. However, forgiveness also involves behavioral changes and psychologists need to develop reliable and valid observer measures of forgiveness behavior (Rye et al., 2005). Without objective behavioral measures of forgiveness, the possibility remains that adherents of certain religious traditions are more likely to say they value and practice forgiveness without discernable behavioral differences across groups.

Researchers should be cautious about generalizing their findings about forgiveness to the religion as a whole. Obtaining a representative sample is difficult given the wide variation in viewpoints that exist across different branches of each religion. Major branches of Judaism (e.g., Orthodox, Conservative, Reform), Christianity (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox), Islam (e.g., Sunni, Shiite, Sufi), and Buddhism (e.g., Mahayana, Theravada) differ in ways that could impact the conceptualization and practice of forgiveness. Furthermore, religions that are practiced globally are shaped by regional language and customs (Rye et al., 2000). Replications across multiple studies using diverse samples are needed to enhance confidence that results can be generalized.

In addition to studying how forgiveness relates to religiosity, researchers are beginning to examine how forgiveness relates to particular religious practices. Specifically, we will discuss research that relates forgiveness to sanctification/desecration, prayer/meditation, and congregational support.

16.3 Forgiveness and Religious Practices

16.3.1 The Role of Sanctification and Desecration in Forgiveness

Religion can impact the forgiveness process through sanctification. Sanctification of everyday aspects of life is a common phenomenon (Mahoney, Pargament, & DeMaris, 2009). Sanctification for theistic religions involves connecting aspects of life with one's experience of God, whereas for nontheistic traditions, it involves

connecting with aspects of life that are transcendent (e.g., interconnectedness of all beings, timelessness, ultimate value) (Mahoney, Rye, & Pargament, 2005). Thus, for religious individuals, forgiveness can be viewed as a means of developing a closer connection with God and/or transcendent dimensions of life.

There is evidence that sanctification of forgiveness relates to increased motivation to forgive. For instance, Davis, Hook, Van Tongeren, and Worthington (2012) found that sanctification of forgiveness was related to stronger religious commitment, less avoidance of the offender, and less desire for revenge. Moreover, sanctification predicted changes in forgiveness over time even though religious commitment did not, which suggests that religious beliefs must be engaged when thinking about the transgression. Moreover, believing one's relationship with God is adversely affected by failure to forgive was associated with more rapid forgiveness.

Religious individuals may view their relationship with the offender as being sacred. For instance, transgressions sometimes occur within marital relationships, which are often imbued with sacred qualities (Mahoney et al., 2009). If a marital partner commits a transgression, forgiveness can be viewed as an opportunity to heal this sacred relationship. In contrast, choosing not to forgive might create a sense of disconnection with the divine or transcendent.

While sanctification can motivate forgiveness, viewing a transgression as a desecration may make forgiveness more difficult (Mahoney et al., 2005). When transgressions are perceived as desecrations, the victim believes the offender has failed to treat a sacred aspect of life with reverence. Desecration expands the context of the transgression from a negative interaction between two or more individuals to one that involves spiritual entities or principles (Mahoney et al., 2005). This may explain why viewing negative events as desecrations relates to increased levels of emotional distress. Pargament, Magyar, Benore, and Mahoney (2005) asked a randomly selected sample of adults to consider the most difficult event that they had encountered in the previous 2 years. Participants who believed the event involved a desecration or a sacred loss experienced higher levels of intrusive thoughts and negative mood. Several factors that may influence willingness to forgive following a desecration include the degree to which the offense was intentional, whether the offender apologized and offered restitution, and whether the offender and the victim had a pre-existing relationship that was considered sacred by the victim (Mahoney et al., 2005).

16.3.2   The Role of Prayer and Meditation in Forgiveness

Many people rely on prayer when coping with interpersonal transgressions (McMinn et al., 2008). McMinn et al. used structured interviews to examine the role of prayer in interpersonal forgiveness among Christian students at an evangelical university. Beginning with open-ended questions, the researchers found that over half of the participants (54 %) spontaneously mentioned prayer as playing an important role in their attempts to forgive. When asked to describe the impact of prayer on

forgiveness, participants noted that they shared their concerns about the transgression with God, gained empathy for the offender, released emotional pain, and diminished desire for revenge.

A variety of types of prayer and meditation can be used when coping with a transgression. Prayer and meditation are not mutually exclusive and many individuals combine these spiritual coping strategies. Common forms of prayer include conversational prayer (i.e., informal discussions with God), petitionary prayer (i.e, asking God for specific outcomes), and contemplative prayer (i.e., quiet reflection) (Poloma & Gallup, 1991). Meditation comes in many forms but we will focus on those that enhance compassion. Below we examine how various forms of prayer and meditation can be applied to forgiveness.

Studies have shown that praying for an offender can help individuals forgive. Lambert, Fincham, Stillman, Graham, and Beach (2010) conducted two studies examining the effects of petitionary prayer on forgiveness. In study 1, undergraduate psychology students who were wronged were randomly assigned to an experimental or control condition. In the experimental condition, participants were instructed to say a prayer for their romantic partner. Control participants were instructed to pretend they were describing the physical attributes of their romantic partner to a parent. Participants in the pray-for-partner condition scored significantly higher on forgiveness at posttest than those in the control condition.

In study 2, undergraduate psychology students were randomly assigned to pray for a friend, pray about any topic, or think positively about their friend. Participants from all conditions were instructed to engage in their assigned activity once per day for 4 weeks and to reflect on their experiences through journaling. Participants in the prayer-for-friend condition showed greater increases in forgiveness and selfless concern for others than those in the other two conditions. Moreover, selfless concern for others mediated the relationship between prayer and forgiveness. Thus, it appears that prayer promotes forgiveness because it enables participants to focus less on their self-interests and more on the other person's well-being.

Jankowski and Sandage (2011) investigated the relationship between contemplative prayer and forgiveness. Drawing upon a relational view of spirituality for their theoretical framework, they found that both hope and adult attachment mediated the relationship between contemplative prayer and interpersonal forgiveness. The authors suggested that contemplative prayer allows victims of transgressions to experience comfort from God following a transgression. Consequently, they are able to better regulate their emotions and are more likely to forgive the offender.

Meditation, as taught by Buddhism and other religions that originated in the East, can help the practitioner focus on the present moment rather than ruminate about the past. Rumination about negative events has been linked to anxiety and depression (McLaughlin & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011) and there is evidence that mindful meditation can decrease rumination and distress (Jain et al., 2007). Meditation can also enhance awareness of rumination and promote reflection on how negative thoughts are connected to negative emotional states.

Meditation can also focus on enhancing empathy for the offender. For example, Tonglen is a Tibetan meditation practice designed to enhance compassion by

drawing upon memories, emotions, and images that increase awareness of one's natural tendency to feel love toward others (i.e., *bodhichitta*) (Chodron, 2001). Compassion and loving-kindness meditations can increase positive affect and reduce stress (Hofmann, Grossman, & Hinton, 2011). Compassion meditation also activates areas of the brain that promote empathy and positive feelings (Engstrom & Soderfeldt, 2010). Moreover, training in contemplative practices has been shown to promote prosocial responses (Kemeny et al., 2012). Given these promising findings, clinicians and forgiveness researchers may want to consider incorporating prayer and meditation into forgiveness interventions for religious clients.

16.3.3   Congregational Support for Forgiveness

Another way religion contributes to the forgiveness process is by providing adherents with opportunities to interact with others who value forgiveness. Wuthnow (2000), in a study examining how religious groups facilitate forgiveness of others, found that 61 % of participants believed their religious group helped them to forgive an offender. Results also showed that those who attended religious groups weekly were 1.5 times more likely to indicate the group helped them forgive than those who attended less frequently. Group activities that related most strongly to forgiveness included praying, studying the bible, and sharing personal problems.

16.4   Religious Forgiveness Interventions

Forgiveness interventions have generally been effective at facilitating forgiveness and improving mental health (Rainey, Readdick, & Thyer, 2012; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005). However, only a few forgiveness interventions have explicitly incorporated religious elements (Rye & Pargament, 2002; Rye et al., 2005; Stratton, Dean, Nonneman, Bode, & Worthington, 2008; Toussaint & Worthington, 2012). Below, we review research on both group and community based forgiveness interventions that explicitly incorporate religion.

16.4.1   Group Forgiveness Interventions

Rye and Pargament (2002) compared the effectiveness of secular and religious forgiveness interventions for college women who had been wronged in a romantic relationship. Participants were randomly assigned to a secular condition, a religiously integrated condition, or a no-intervention comparison condition. Both of the interventions consisted of six weekly sessions lasting 90 min each and were facilitated by advanced clinical psychology graduate students. Both interventions included discussion topics designed to facilitate forgiveness (e.g., feelings about the

transgression, strategies for coping with anger, definition of forgiveness, obstacles to forgiveness, relationship of forgiveness to mental health, development of empathy for the offender, self-forgiveness). The session content differed only with respect to the emphasis on religion/spirituality. Components unique to the religious intervention included consideration of how one's religious/spiritual life had been affected by the wrongdoing, examination of relevant scriptures, discussion of religious role models for forgiveness, and exploration of religious/spiritual coping techniques. Participants in both intervention conditions improved significantly more than those in the no-intervention condition on forgiveness and existential well-being. There were no differential treatment effects between the secular and religiously integrated conditions, suggesting that adding religious elements to the forgiveness intervention did not enhance the effectiveness of the intervention. Interestingly, participants in both intervention conditions reported using religious strategies when working on forgiveness.

In a similar study, Rye et al. (2005) compared the effectiveness of secular and religious group interventions designed to help divorced individuals forgive their ex-spouse. Participants were randomly assigned to a secular intervention condition, a religious intervention condition, or a wait-list condition. Both intervention conditions consisted of eight weekly sessions lasting 90 min in which participants engaged in exercises and discussions designed to facilitate forgiveness. Only participants in the religious intervention were encouraged to draw upon their faith when forgiving (e.g., examination of theological rationales for forgiveness, utilization of prayer, consideration of scripture passages, reliance on religious role models for forgiveness). Participants in both intervention conditions increased significantly more than comparison participants on self-reported forgiveness of an ex-spouse and understanding of forgiveness. Participants in the secular condition also showed a greater decrease in depressive symptoms than comparison participants. Consistent with the findings of Rye and Pargament (2002), participants in both intervention conditions reported using religious strategies when working on forgiveness.

Another outcome study of a religious forgiveness intervention used the REACH model developed by Worthington (2001). REACH is an acronym for the following forgiveness steps: recall the hurt, empathize, altruistic gift of forgiveness, commit publically to forgive, and hold on to forgiveness. Stratton et al. (2008) compared the effectiveness of the 5–6 h religious REACH workshop with a forgiveness essay writing exercise. Participants were randomly assigned to a workshop condition, an essay writing condition, a workshop and essay writing condition, or a control condition. Participants assigned to the essay writing condition wrote an essay about the transgression that they experienced, the extent to which they forgave the offender, the role that their Christian beliefs played in their decision to forgive, and what benefits, if any, were experienced after forgiving. Participants completed measures at pretest, first posttest, and second posttest. By the second posttest, participants assigned to the workshop plus essay writing condition showed more forgiveness than those assigned to the essay only condition and the control condition. This study did not include an intervention condition that excluded religious content so it is not possible to discern whether the religious content made the intervention more effective.

16.4.2   Community Forgiveness Interventions

Researchers have also designed religiously based interventions to facilitate forgiveness among communities. For instance, Toussaint and Worthington (2012) examined whether an intervention could facilitate forgiveness across a Christian college campus. The intervention consisted of both passive programming (e.g., chalk messages, Facebook messages, student newspaper articles, brochures, forgiveness t-shirts) and active programming (e.g., lectures on forgiveness, chapel services, college ministries, residence life programs). Participants completed a variety of measures related to forgiveness and religious commitment at pretest and posttest. Following the program, forgiveness ratings improved across a variety of types of relationships (i.e., friends, roommates, parents). Moreover, participants showed less anger toward God.

Magnuson and Enright (2008) recommended a multidimensional approach to helping Christian church communities foster forgiveness. According to this approach, development of a forgiving church community must start with the leadership. First, the pastor becomes educated about the forgiveness process and delivers at least five sermons each year on the topic of forgiveness. Second, the pastor and associate ministers work closely with lay volunteers in addressing issues related to forgiveness in everyday church life. Third, music ministers reinforce the theme of forgiveness through music selection for worship services. Fourth, youth and singles ministers implement forgiveness education and foster a forgiving attitude among those with whom they work. This model also emphasizes the importance of training pastoral counselors and lay volunteers in the forgiveness process so they can better assist individuals in the community with forgiveness.

16.5   Implications for Clinicians and Researchers

Studies summarized in this chapter have important implications for clinicians and researchers. To begin, clinicians and researchers should be aware that religious adherents may be more likely than nonreligious individuals to pursue forgiveness as a therapeutic goal. Research findings are less clear as to whether religious individuals are more likely than nonreligious individuals to forgive a specific transgression. Researchers should work on developing reliable and valid observer-report measures of forgiveness that could be used to corroborate self-reported forgiveness of specific transgressions. Replication is needed for studies showing differences in how adherents of various religious traditions conceptualize and practice forgiveness, with careful attention paid to whether samples are representative of major denominations of each religion. The finding that Jews are more likely than Christians to believe that forgiveness should be contingent upon the offender's willingness to express remorse and provide restitution has been replicated and may be a reflection of basic theological differences. Consequently, clinicians working with religious clients on forgiveness should inquire about their basic assumptions concerning when forgiveness is appropriate.

Research has generally failed to find that religiously based forgiveness interventions are more effective than nonreligious forgiveness interventions. However, it

should be noted that individuals in both religious and secular interventions often report drawing upon their religious faith when forgiving, irrespective of the intervention content. An important question that has not been adequately examined is whether religious clients are more likely to be satisfied with forgiveness interventions that contain religious content. If so, this could lead to less attrition and would provide an important reason to integrate religious strategies into forgiveness interventions for religious clients. Encouraging religious clients to draw upon their faith when forgiving is also consistent with the goal of honoring and respecting the worldview of clients when possible. Worthington et al. (2007) provided several suggestions for adapting secular interventions for use in spiritual or religious communities including maintaining central components of the secular program, ensuring that adaptations fit the religious community, and evaluating the effectiveness of the adapted program.

Studies have shown that individuals who pray for their offender tend to improve more on forgiveness than those who do not. Mindfulness meditation may help victims decrease rumination and develop compassion for the offender. Based upon these preliminary findings, clinicians may wish to explore whether religious clients would like to use prayer and/or meditation as a strategy when working toward forgiveness. However, additional studies are needed to understand when incorporating prayer and/or meditation into forgiveness interventions is most likely to be beneficial.

Another important question that has not adequately been addressed by researchers is the extent to which religious perspectives can impede the forgiveness process. As noted earlier, viewing a transgression as a desecration might be particularly difficult to forgive and could motivate acts of revenge. Furthermore, religious individuals who have a propensity to demonize people who insult their religious beliefs might be more likely to retaliate rather than forgive. Another interesting question is whether belief in a punishing God, which generally relates to poor adjustment (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000), impacts willingness to forgive others.

In conclusion, researchers are only beginning to understand the role of religion in forgiveness. However, it is clear that individuals from diverse religious backgrounds often rely on their faith to provide them with inspiration and comfort when trying to forgive. Consequently, clinicians and researchers should strive to learn as much as possible about the ways in which religious beliefs and practices can facilitate or impede forgiveness of others.

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Chapter 17
Religious Ecstasy and Other Intense Emotions

Ralph W. Hood Jr.

> Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries. (Elizabeth Barret Browning)

The relatively recent emergence of positive psychology has focused concern upon positive emotions and the study of factors that contribute to human flourishing. However, critics remind us that many of the concepts studied by positive psychologists have a long history of being studied by psychologists that preceded the emergence of this new psychological specialty and whose research should not be ignored (Ryff, 2003). Arguably one of the areas in which there is a substantial body of richly theoretically informed empirical research is that of intense religious emotions. The irony is in the qualifier "religious," as the positive psychology emphasis on human flourishing is, for many theorists, the hallmark of secularization and the turn away from anything religious (Taylor, 2007). Indeed the case could be made that positive psychology seeks to remove intense emotions from the sphere of the sacred to that of the secular, and hence the title of this chapter is a misnomer. However, our purpose in this chapter will be to frame the study on two intense emotions within a theoretical perspective that suggest that the appellation "religious" is more than appropriate for the study of intense emotions. While any number of emotions could be selected for study, we will focus upon two extremes, the mystical and the ecstatic. Both are emotions well studied in the psychology of religion as it has been the great faith traditions that have sought to cultivate such states and to provide meaningful interpretations of them. However, secular interpretations can also meaningfully frame such states, as neurophysiologists have long noted their existence. Indeed, the identification of these states in purely secular terms is not unrelated to a specific theory of emotions well grounded both in neurophysiology, and

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in psychological theory that recognizes that one cannot easily separate emotions from cognition. Furthermore, one cannot deny the implications of the complex ways in which individuals struggle to interpret ecstatic and mystical states (Hood, 2005, 2007). That they do struggle to interpret such intense emotional states forces us first to consider a thought experiment proposed by Averill (1996).

In responding to Watts' (1996) plea for a more conceptual and theoretical dialogue between psychology and religion, Averill proposes to take seriously what emotion would be an afterlife such as those proposed in Christianity or Islam. At one extreme, what would disembodied emotion be? To take the theological claims seriously as a thought experiment surely "stretches the imagination" (Averill, 1996) but it has a benefit of breaking the tendency among psychologists to view emotions primarily within a biological frame that dichotomizes cognitions and emotions.

If we focus upon the two main schools of thought about the role of intense emotions in religion, we can contrast intense ecstatic emotional arousal associated with both classical Pentecostalism (Hood & Williamson, 2008) and the contemporary charismatic movements (Watts & Williams, 1988) and then with the calming of emotional states associated with mystical traditions in both the East and West (Coward, 1990; Hood, 2006). In so doing we can first focus upon the body, not to maximize the role of bodily states in intense religious emotions, but rather to identify a congruence between phenomena long identified in the psychology of religion and independently identified by researchers committed to the neurophysiology of emotion often secularly interpreted.

17.1 A Neurophysiologic Model of Emotion

In their comprehensive review of neurophysiological studies on meditation, Cain and Polich (2006) caution that at our present state of knowledge, any claim to *the* neurophysiology of meditation is unrealistic. However, one theory of the neurophysiology involved in both ecstatic and meditative states that has a long history proposes two functional systems identified as the trophotropic and ergotropic. The theory is rooted in the early work of the biologist Hess (1925) and has been independently developed by Gelhorn (1967a, 1967b, 1970) and Fischer (1971, 1986). Even its harshest critics admit that it has "a grain of truth in each proposition" (Austin, 1999, p. 287).

The theory proposes that the system that has evolved in humans to control adaptation and development is composed of two antagonistic systems, the ergotropic and the trophotropic. The former responds to immediate environmental stimuli, mediates the flight-or-flight response, and is associated with sympathetic nervous system arousal. The latter is associated with less dramatic emotions, helps maintain internal body homeostasis, and is associated with parasympathetic nervous system arousal. Since the ergotropic and trophotropic systems tend to inhibit one another, increased activity in one system decreases activity in the other; hence the two systems are antagonistic. Gelhorn (1967a, 1967b, 1970) has been the leading researcher to demonstrate that the relative activity of each system is susceptible to conditioning and therefore can be changed. However, for our purposes, Fischer's (1971, 1986)

work is most relevant, for he has proposed a model that allows for a cartography of human emotional experience, ranging from extreme hyperarousal in ecstasy to extreme hypoarousal in mysticism.

Fischer (1971) proposes that ecstatic and mystical experiences are only apparently disparate phenomena. He identifies human experience on a circular continuum based upon relative degrees of ergotropic/trophotropic arousal. If we mark normal waking consciousness at one point on the circular continuum, increasing arousal of the sympathetic nervous system (ergotropic arousal) moves through mild anxiety to flight-or-fright reactions that can increase and become psychotic states which in turn may result in intense ecstasy or the maximum state of hyperarousal.

However, if we move in the opposite direction of the circular continuum, one becomes tranquil, turns inward, and moves toward increased parasympathetic activity (trophotropic arousal) that may result in unitive states of consciousness long associated with mysticism and extreme hypoarousal. Interestingly, both Fisher and Geilhorn note that while the ergotropic/trophotropic systems function antagonistically, responses can be conditioned and learned, and individuals may be able to directly enter the extremes of ecstasy or mysticism with the necessity of tarrying in any intermediary state. Furthermore, in each extreme state, whether ecstasy or mysticism, there is a loss of normal sense of self or "I" as it becomes identified with an expanded self to which it is experienced as united. It is important to note that the experience of the loss of the normal self and union with a larger self is widely agreed to be part of the phenomenology of the experience of ecstasy and mysticism and not simply an interpretation of the experience (Fischer, 1971; Hood, 1994; Stace, 1960). The distinction between experience and interpretation is crucial and leads us into a consideration of the cognitive aspects of what is narrowly restricted to the neurophysiological aspects of bodily arousal, whether hypo-or hyper-, will ignore what is most significant about ecstatic and mystical states.

17.2 Interpretation and Experience: A Jamesian View

In a chapter entitled "The methods and snares of psychology" in his widely acclaimed *Principles of psychology*, James (1890/1981, Ch. VII) noted that among the basic terms defining psychology there was no satisfactory term for designating all states of consciousness. His own preference was to use the terms feeling and thought interchangeably, and to use "both words in a wider sense than usual (p. 186)." This often overlooked mixing of terms by James has led to an emphasis on what is often seen as James' theory of emotion where cognition and physiological are seen as independent. In this view, some form of physiological arousal is seen as the emotion that then can be cognitively labeled based upon socially constructed cues. This is a narrow reading of James and distorts his refusal to simply dichotomize cognition and affect. Watts (1996, p. 76) notes that the term *feeling* has quaint old-fashioned overtones to the ear of a modern psychologist. But by replacing it with the term "emotion" preferred by Watts and most contemporary psychologists, we can see the relevance of James' study of religious experience to ecstatic and

mystical states. For while we referred to James' mixture of the terms *feeling* and *thought* above, Watts' reference to feeling is from James' definition of religion in his other undisputed classic text, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985).

In the *Varieties*, the distinction of mixing of cognition and feeling is crucial. His definition of religion is "the feeling, acts, and experiences" of individuals in their solitude (James, 1902/1985, p. 34). Note that if James was writing today he undoubtedly would replace "religion" with "spiritual" and his definition of spirituality would remain the same. As Gorsuch and Miller (1999) have noted, James would likely title his Gifford lectures as varieties of *spiritual* experiences if he were writing today; Fuller (2000, p. 130) has also said, "If any one individual ever personified what it means to be 'spiritual but not religious,' it was William James." Likewise, positive psychologists are more likely to speak of spiritual rather than religious experiences (Averill, 2005).

The distinction between religion and spirituality has generated a massive conceptual and empirical literature that we have reviewed elsewhere (see Hood 2003a, 2003b; Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009). However, for James, it is clear that religion emphasizes the explicit cognitive interpretation of experience. His position in the *Varieties* is to ignore differences in interpretation (religion) in terms of identifying what otherwise might be similar feelings or experiences (spirituality). The ignoring of interpretation in favor of feelings or experiences not cognitively mediated is associated with what has been termed the unity thesis (Hood, 2003a) or the common core theory (Hood, 2006; Stace, 1960) of mysticism. It has been most closely identified with empirical research on mysticism, but as we will note below, it also is associated with empirical research on ecstasy. While not denying that many, or even most experiences are social constructions, this theory affirms on both conceptual and empirical grounds that some experiences escape linguistic and social contractions and hence are unmediated (Benedikter, 2007; Hood, 2006; Parsons, 1999). Such a view is unpopular among most psychologists. As Barnard (1997, p. 120) notes in his study of James' psychology,

> There has been such a stress on the linguistic nature of experience in recent philosophical thought that any claims to immediacy or to a knowledge that is not structured linguistically are instantly suspect (Barnard, 1997, p. 120).

If ecstatic and mystical states are seen as states that are either pre- or post-conceptual it does not mean they are not noetic (sources of knowledge) but paradoxically that the knowledge is ineffable. Further, two consequences of this claim are that first, feelings need not be contrasted with cognitions. Both are noetic but feelings cannot be fully explicated cognitively. Thus we may speak of social expression rather than social constructions where language is an effort to express what is ineffable knowledge (Hood, 1994, 1995). As both feelings and cognitions are noetic, both can be seen as rational. Contrasting rational cognition with irrational emotions is a false dichotomy. De Sousa (1987) argues for (as his book is titled) *the rationality of emotions* while others note that emotions may be viewed as pre-conceptual adaptations within an evolutionary psychology model (Plutchik & Kellerman, 1982). Second, while evolutionary psychology models of emotions tend to be constructionist in nature, they need not be. As Nishitani (1982) has stated of the

trophotropic hypoarousal that both he and Fischer illustrate with *samādhi* in Eastern yoga and Zen traditions, "Samādhi is not simply a psychological concept but an *ontological* one" (p. 165, emphasis in original).

Second, James' discussion of the *varieties* of religious or spiritual experiences culminates in what he identifies as the "root and centre of all religion" (James 1902/1985, p. 376). He identifies this center as mysticism and his two most notable criteria are that this state is noetic and ineffable and thus theories about mysticism must be forever separated from knowledge of mysticism. It is not simply that those who know do not say, but that they cannot say. Here is the strongest claim to situate James with the common core or unity school of mysticism. Ironically, it is first expressed in a curious quote given James' intent to battle with monism. "In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness" (James, 1890/1985, p. 332). James' reference to the Absolute is partly sleight of hand, for he readily admits in the written lectures that his preference is for God since God is (a) a medium of communion and (b) a causal agent (James 1902/1985, p. 402, footnote 32). Furthermore, that consciousness is not obliterated is crucial for James, for he insists in the written lectures that, "Consciousness of illumination is of us the essential mark of 'mystical states'" (James 1902/1985, pp. 323–324, footnote 28). Thus, at the extreme, James sides with what Stace (1960) refers to as introvertive mysticism, a state of undifferentiated awareness, devoid of time and space. Since descriptions about this can vary widely, James seeks to avoid discussion of beliefs about mysticism (religion) in favor of the experience itself (spirituality). His commitment to the common core or unity thesis is obvious:

> In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian Mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land.

The "eternal unanimity" of James is best expressed as what is introvertive mysticism. In order to understand this experience we must note two things. First, it implies that a distinction can be made between experience and its interpretation. Second, it suggests that for at least some linguistic descriptions, an underlying uniform experience cuts across language differences (Hood, 2003a, 2003b, 2006). This position has been most systematically developed by Stace (1960) under the rubric of the common core thesis and is the basis of the most commonly used empirical measure of mysticism, the Mysticism Scale which has been used in numerous studies for more than a quarter of a century (Hood, 1975, 1997).

17.3 Mysticism: Religious and Secular

Of particular relevance for our discussion is what Stace refers to as introvertive mysticism, an experience of union in which there is simply an ineffable awareness of pure consciousness. The report of this experience can be measured and has been

found in many cultures to be ineffably the same in such diverse cultures as America, China, and Iran (Chen, Zhang, Hood, & Watson, 2012; Hood et al., 2001).

17.3.1 Constructionists vs. Common Core Theorists

There are two major contending schools in the contemporary empirical study of mysticism in the West. One championed by Proudfoot (1985) and several scholars who have rallied around Katz (1977, 1983, 1992) denies the distinction between experience and interpretation. Basically the crucial claim is that there can be no unmediated experiences, an assumption that continues to affirm the dominance of Kant's philosophy in contemporary psychology (Robinson, 1995, pp. 219–226) and among the first generation of postmodern philosophers (Benedikter, 2007, part 2, p. 7).

The other school of mysticism is championed by Parsons (1999) and those who have rallied around Forman (1990, 1998). This camp does not accept neo- Kantian thought uncritically and is heavily influenced by Eastern philosophy. They refuse, in Barnard's (1991, p. 116) phrasing, to privilege Kant over Dōgen and argue for the reality of ineffable experiences of union for which, as Stace (1961, p. 203) has noted, there is no *principium individuationis*. In Brainard's (2000, p. 269) phrasing, such experiences are "nondiscursive intimations of direct experience" and in a similar phrasing Benedikter (2007) refers to a "pre-conceptual life stream" (part 2, p. 12) or a "pre-conceptual self-awareness of consciousness" (part IV, p. 1). They are associated with trophotropic hypoarousal and offer evidence in favor of a direct, unmediated experience of reality acceptable in many Eastern philosophical systems (Coward, 1990) and in forms of Western apophatic mysticism (Benedikter, 2007; Cupitt, 1998). They anchor one extreme of religious emotions whose intensity is in the depth of hypoarousal. The experience itself is bathed in positive affect often interpreted as sacred or holy. While mystical experiences are ineffably noetic, mystics speak and write prolifically about their experiences.

> The fact is that mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content of its own. It is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies provided only that they can find a place in their framework for its particular emotional mood (James, 1902/1985, p. 337).

Thus, despite widely different interpretations, the identification of introvertive mysticism and its reliable measure indicate that this extreme state of trophotropic hypoarousal identifies one intense positive emotion that is arguably the root experiential basis of many of the great faith traditions, both East and West, but can be separated into a spirituality freed from its initial religious framing (Hood & Chen, 2013). It is empirically associated with a wide variety of psychological states that are indicative of healthy indicators, especially within the frame of positive psychology. It is rarely associated with pathological indicators, and for many, the experience and interpretation of introvertive mystical experiences provides the ultimate meaning for their lives (Hood, 2006). While mystical states are most often

cultivated by specific techniques of to facilitate hypoarousal, a long standing controversial claim is that they can also be facilitated by the use of a specific class of chemicals once called psychedelics but are now more commonly referred to as entheogens.

17.3.2 *Chemically Facilitated Mysticism*

Entheogens have long been associated with the facilitation of mystical states in casual street use (Stevens, 1987). However, they have also been subject to controlled experimentation. Among the more famous studies is Pahnke's (1966) "Good Friday" study in which Protestant Seminary students were administered psilocybin in poorly designed double blind procedure while attending a Good Friday religious service. Participants in the experimental group reported extreme mystical experiences assessed by Stace's criteria that remain meaningful for those identified in Doblin's (1991) follow up study nearly 25 years after the original experiment. Recently, researchers at Johns Hopkins have taken a cue from the Good Friday experiment, using a similar design with a much more rigorous methodology. They used an entheogen under favorable set and setting conditions to with the specific goal of elicit mystical experiences (Griffiths, Richards, McCann, & Jesse, 2006). Thirty entheogenic naïve volunteers received psilocybin and menthylphenidate (Ritalin) in counterbalanced order over two sessions. An additional 6 randomly assigned volunteers received methylphenidate on the first two sessions and unblinded psilocybin on the third session. The purpose of this condition was to obscure the study design to both participants and guides. Despite using an experienced entheogenic guide (who was drug free when guiding) and additional knowledgeable monitors, almost one quarter of sessions were misclassified with methylphenidate identified as psilocybin or psilocybin identified as some other drug. Thus, this double blind was successful.

Participants were volunteers with some religious and/or spiritual interests. Thirty six participants (20 females) were medically and psychological healthy, without histories of prior entheogen use. Ages ranged from 24 to 64 (mean age was 46). Most were college graduates and half had post-graduate degrees. Thirty participants were told that they would receive psilocybin and also that various other drugs might be administered (double blind conditions) while six participants who received methylphenidate on the first two sessions were told that on the third session they would receive psilocybin. All participants met with the primary monitor over four sessions (for 8 h total) and on four occasions (for 4 h total) after each session. This study is an ongoing longitudinal study, in that participants will be followed up and assessed on a wide variety of measures at various intervals. To date they have taken the M Scale three times, once before the experiment, 2 months after, and approximately 1 year after.

While several measures were used, for our purposes we will restrict the discussion of results to Hood's M Scale, an operationalization derived from Stace's (1960) common core thesis discussed above. Two months after the experiment, psilocybin

participants had higher scores of the M Scale than the methylphenidate controls. Scores on the M Scale after psilocybin predicted the spiritual significance of the experience (r=.77) in a 12–14 month follow-up (Griffiths, Richards, Johnson, McCann, & Jesse, 2008). M Scale scores were significantly greater than the initial screening scores at both the two month and 14 month follow-ups for those receiving psilocybin. Thus, with appropriate set and setting entheogens can elicit mystical states indistinguishable from those that occur spontaneously or are facilitated by religious practices. In terms of Fischer's model, mysticism is not simply the extreme state of hypoarousal, but as a trophotropic state indistinguishable regardless of the numerous ways in which it can be facilitated. But what of the other extreme, the ecstatic state of ergotropic hyperarousal?

17.4 Ecstasy: Religious and Secular

As with mysticism, a major debate among scholars who study ecstasy is whether or not one can define ecstasy in terms of characteristics that are minimally interpretative. As we noted above, many psychologists are essentially neo-Kantian in that they assume that all human experience is mediated. These social constructionist views are challenged by those who maintain that some intense emotional experiences have a common core independent of culture. At the extremes of hyperarousal and hypoarousal ergrotrophic and triphotropic states are assumed to facilitate the loss of the normal sense of self, or "I," and produce a realization of a self not only identical in both states of arousal, but allow the transition from one state to the other among adepts (Fischer, 1971). Ecstasy as the extreme state of hyperarousal of the sympathetic nervous system (ergotropic arousal) like mysticism as the extreme state of hypoarousal of the parasympathetic nervous system can be viewed as universal potentials of humankind insofar as we share similar physiologies and are participants in the same ultimate reality. Thus, as noted above, both ecstasy and mysticism are psychological and ontological states that at least are authoritative for those that experience them. However, neurophysiology alone does not exhaust the definition of ecstasy any more than of mysticism. Both states are identified phenomenologically by an awareness of being in a distinct altered state of consciousness associated with alterations in the same ultimate sense of self experienced (Fischer, 1971; Goodman, 1988; Stace, 1960).

17.4.1 The Commonality of Religious Ecstasy

While ecstatic states are often sensationalized in popular media, researchers have documented their commonality in both developed and underdeveloped countries (Greeley, 1974; Lewis, 1971). The euphoria experienced in ecstatic states often has a cognitive component in which there may be an experience of a loss of one's

normal consciousness and of a sense of being lifted out of one's body and an awareness of a merger with a larger conscious. This cognitive aspect of experiencing an altered state of consciousness that one feels drawn into contributes to the intense affective experience (ergotropic arousal) often identified as euphoria. Thus, ergotropic arousal provides the major emotional characteristic of ecstasy. Like mysticism, ecstasy may or may not be given a religious framing.

Survey studies have documented that ecstatic states are reported by a significant minority of persons in most western countries. A pioneering work is that of Laski (1961), noted more for its establishment of the commonality of ecstatic states than its methodological rigor. Laski, a novelist untrained in the social sciences, became interested in whether or not the experience of ecstasy she had written about in a novel was experienced in modern life. Initially using a convenience sample of friends and acquaintance sampled over a period of 3 years, she essentially asked persons to respond in an interview to the primary question: "Do you know a sensation of transcendent ecstasy?" (Laski, 1961, p. 9). If she was asked to explain what was meant by transcendent ecstasy, she told her respondents to "Take it to mean what you think it means" (Laski, 1961, p. 9). It only took 63 persons to produce 60 affirmative responses; perhaps because of the highly educated and literary nature of Laski's friends (20 of the 63 identified themselves as writers).

Laski primarily analyzed responses obtained from her 60 interviews and from comparisons to 27 literary and 24 religious excerpts from published texts (selected for their intuitive demonstration of ecstatic experiences similar to those reported by the interview group). Her work is an extensive discussion of various means of classifying and identifying the nature of these experiences, primarily in terms of the language used to describe them. Laski's own limited data-analyzing skills were balanced by her perceptive analysis of language. The citations of the primary texts and interviews make it easy for the reader to judge the value of Laski's own analyses. Her conclusions raise several issues that have been the focus of more rigorous studies, including those with children and adolescents (Hood et al., 2009, Chs.5, 11). Among Laski's conclusions is that transcendent ecstasy is a subset of mystical experience, defined and demarcated by the language used to describe it. It can be of three subtypes: experience of (1) knowledge, (2) union, or (3) purification and renewal. It is transient, and is triggered or elicited by a wide variety of circumstances and contexts. Generally, it is pleasurable and has beneficial consequences. However, it need not have unique religious value or provide evidential force for the validity of religious beliefs. Laski's own preference was to interpret transcendent ecstasy as a purely human capacity to experience joy in one's own creativity. In this sense she anticipated a perspective common among positive psychologists (Averill, 2005). She concluded that in both the past and the present, those who believe that they have experienced God are indeed mistaken; they have made a misattribution (Laski, 1961, pp. 369–374). However, this conclusion has not been favored by those who study ecstatic states within specific religious contexts suggesting as with mysticism that ineffable experiences can be expressed in ways with radically different ontological implications (Taves, 1999).

17.4.2   Ecstasy in American Protestantism

The distinction between ecstatic experience and its interpretation is best represented in the psychology of religion in which ecstatic states are both facilitated and sustained by interpretations that they are indications of participation in something sacred. While this is common, as Laski noted in secular interpretations of ecstasy, it is perhaps most frequent in American Protestantism and in what historians identify as the Great Awakenings. These awakenings were centered upon revivals in which set and setting were carefully planned to elicit intense emotional states. The most famous Pentecostal-like revival occurred in 1801 at Cane Ridge, Bourbon County, Kentucky. Led initially by a group of Presbyterian ministers, they were later joined by Methodist clergy in a revival that continued for over one year and was characterized by some of the most intense emotionality ever observed in American Protestantism. The interest and excitement of this event escalated to the level of a large-scale camp meeting in 1801, giving birth to what would become known in modern times as the American camp meeting revival. Everywhere revivals emerged, similar ecstatic states occurred (Hood & Williamson, 2008). They continue today in what Hood & Williamson (2012) refer to as primitive Pentecostalism and what Watts and Williams refer to the charismatic movement. What both share in common is the phenomenon of glossolalia or speaking in tongues, which when religiously framed as an ecstatic state has raised a continuing debate as to whether such states necessarily are trance states.

It is clear that while the specific religious framing of the experience provides it with meaning, the experience has been identified cross-culturally and is not restricted to the American cultural context nor to specific religious interpretation. For instance, anthropologists have documented the cross-cultural similarity of glossolalic utterances explained by a self induced trance that can be triggered by a wide variety of practices, suggesting a common core to the ecstatic trance state regardless of triggering condition (Davidson, 1976; Goodman, 1988; Lewis, 1971; Winkelman, 1986).

Some researchers have challenged the claim that ecstatic trance states are cross-culturally uniform on the grounds that even when data are collected from different cultures, if possession by the holy spirit is embedded in Pentecostal beliefs than these beliefs account for similarities in both the induced state of euphoric glossolalia and its interpretation. For instance, linguistic patterns similar to glossolalia have been identified in the linguistic patterns of preachers in Appalachian Mountain region of the United States, even though such preaching does not occur in a trance state. While such preaching can induce euphoria in both the preacher and believers, there is no reason to equate this euphoria with being in a trance. Thus, the ecstasy experience by speaking in tongues is likely an interpretation that one has experienced possession by the Holy Spirit and the interpretation of what neurophysiologic activation occurs is likely a major factor in producing ecstasy. Physiologically dissociative or trance states have been subtly mastered by Pentecostals so that cultural clues allow them to enter, control the depth of, and exit from such states always identified as ecstatic (Hood & Williamson, 2008).

The combination of contextual cues and physiological dissociation that likely interact to explain glossolalia are also as likely to interact to explain another phenomenon associated with Pentecostals in the Appalachian Mountains and shown to be a powerful elicitor of ecstasy. Believers who experience a phenomenon they describe as a direct experience of feeling God have been observed by researchers to be in a type of trance similar to those seen with reactions induced by entheogens taken in natural settings. When in this state, believers believe they can handle poisonous serpents with immunity. While the tradition continues despite documented deaths, researchers have attributed the success of the tradition to the intense ecstasy produced when in this anointed state, believers handle poisonous serpents (Hood & Williamson, 2008).

17.4.3 The Commonality of Secular Ecstasy

Surveys have repeatedly established the normalcy of the report of ecstasy. An example of a widely used survey question to assess the frequency of reported ecstatic states is associated with the work of Greeley (1974). His question, "Have your ever felt as though you were close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift you out of yourself?" has been administered as part of the General Social Survey (GSS) of the National Opinion Research Center. The GSS is a series of independent cross-sectional probability samples of persons in the continental United States, living in private homes, who are 18 years of age and English-speaking. It was found that overall, in a GSS sample of 1,468, 35 % of the respondents answered "yes" to this question. Several other surveys in both the United States and Great Britain have used this question and obtained similar percentages. (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009). Many other surveys have established similar frequencies of the report of ecstasy in America and Western Europe (see Hood, Hill, & Spilka, for review). Most survey studies have included additional questions and demographic characteristics that can be correlated with the reports of religious experience. No simple pattern has emerged from the studies mentioned above, and each study must be considered in terms of its sampling and the statistical models used. The range of data analysis is large, from naïve to state-of-the-art sophistication. The major consistent findings are easily summarized: Women report more such experiences than men; the experiences tend to be age-related, increasing with age; they are characteristic of educated and affluent people; and they are more likely to be associated with indices of psychological health and well-being than with those of pathology or social dysfunction and for many, especially those who identify themselves as spiritual but not religious, the experience of ecstasy is not religiously framed.

17.4.4 Chemically Facilitated Ecstasy

Certain drugs have long been noted to induce ecstatic states. These include natural occurring substances such the use of peyote among Native Americans and the brewing of ayahuasca, a psychoactive brew consumed throughout the entire Amazon region of

South America (Shannon, 2002). They also include laboratory synthesized substances such as LSD-25 (Lysergic acid diethylamide), psilocybin, DMT (N, N dimethyltreptamine) and MDMA (3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine). Indeed, so common is the claim that these substances induce ecstasy states that for many researchers they are identified as entheogens, a term specifically linked to spiritual states of consciousness and contrasted with the former terms for such drug, psychedelics (Hood et al., 2009). So common is the claim that entheogens can facilitate ecstatic states that DMT has been referred to as the "sprit molecule" and MDMA goes by the common street name of "ecstasy" in America. Studies of chemically facilitated ecstasy are among the best experimentally controlled research, with appropriate Internal Review Board approvals and results published in rigorous peer reviewed journals. Neurophysiologists seek to determine the precise chemical pathways in ecstatic states of consciousness. An emerging consensus is that chemically facilitated ecstasy, like chemically induced mysticism, is not different from that which apparently occurs spontaneously or is cultivated in religious settings (Clark, 1969; Shannon, 2002; Strassman, 2001). Furthermore, as one major researcher has concluded,

> Therefore, let's consider the proposal that when our volunteers journeyed to the further bonds of DMT's [*N,N*-dimethyltryptamine's] reach, when they felt as if they were *somewhere else*, they were indeed perceiving different levels of reality. The alternative levels are as real as this one. It's just that we cannot perceive them most of the time… (Strassman, 2001, emphasis in the original)

Thus, as with empirical research on mysticism, chemically induced alternate states can be seen as expansions of more ordinary states of conscious that can occur spontaneously, cultivated in religious settings, or chemically facilitated in laboratories in appropriate setting. Both set and setting are crucial for both the facilitation of these experiences and the interpretation of their possible meanings.

17.5   Set and Setting Conditions for Ecstasy and Mysticism

The fact that ecstatic and mystical states can be elicited with moderate dosages of a variety of entheogens is tempered by the crucial requirement that set and setting are appropriate. The common factor associated with entheogens lies in their ability to facilitate altered states of consciousness. When this is done in an appropriate setting and with the proper set, these states can be mystical when hypoarousal occurs or euphoric when hyperarousal occurs. Furthermore, as Fischer's model allows for an oscillation between these states, this is something commonly noted within research on entheogens. However, set and setting are crucial in all studies of ecstasy and mysticism, whether facilitated by chemicals or not. For instance, in apparently spontaneous experiences of ecstasy and mysticism, investigators have often been able to trace conditions that, unknown to the subject, likely triggered the experience. One major condition that applies to numerous experiences of ecstasy is set and setting stress incongruities. An experience anticipated as stressful but actually experienced as non-stressful can trigger ecstasy or mysticism as can an experience

anticipated as non-stressful but actually experienced as stressful. In the latter case the successful working though of an unanticipated stressful experience can trigger an ecstatic or mystical state. Thus, in spontaneous experiences of ecstasy or mysticism, it is likely that set and setting stress incongruities trigger what is experienced as a sudden and spontaneous ecstatic or mystical feeling (Hood, 1978),

In circumstances where persons deliberately seek to induce ecstatic or mystical states, it has also been found that both set and setting are crucial factors. This is particularly the case for chemically induced experiences. The two most studied set effects are mood and expectation. The single best predictor of mood is the participant's mood just prior to the event assumed to trigger ecstasy. Positive prior moods prepare the participant to experience chemically induced euphoria. Likewise, ecstatic states are greatly facilitated by expectations. To anticipate an altered state, such as indicated by Greeley's survey question noted above, increases the likelihood that if the state actually occurs, it will be experienced positively as a deeply felt emotional state regardless of the way it is interpreted.

Setting effects are separated into proximate and distal. Proximate settings include the place where ecstasy or mysticism is anticipated, whether the person is alone or in a group, and the rapport between the participants and significant others. Generally, group settings reduce the occurrence of anxiety for participants and thus facilitate positive emotions. This often occurs in camp meetings, revivals, and other religious settings as we discussed above.

Distal setting effects include the broader context within which ecstatic or mystical states occur. The history of the study of ecstasy in America is inalterably tied to the ecstatic experience of religion associated with American Protestantism, as we noted above. Ecstatic states cultivated in some forms of American Protestantism have parallels to spirit possession common in non-western cultures, which scholars have long associated with what is simply termed ecstatic religion (Lewis, 1976). Fischer (1971) notes that the hypertrophic state is one end of a perceptual-hallucination continuum and Shannon (2002) notes the meaningful role hallucinations play in such experiences. The failure of efforts to pathologize such experiences has been challenged by psychologists and other scholars. Positive psychologists has rightly challenged American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) classification as both philosophically and empirically suspect (Maddux, 2005) and others have challenged the role of special interests in literally creating diseases (Kirk & Kutchins, 1992).

Much of positive psychology can be seen as an effort to deconstruct mainstream psychological and psychiatric discount of intense feelings and behaviors, especially when taken out of their appropriate cultural contexts (Maddux, 2005). While refusing to abandon notions of madness, the authors of various the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) editions, starting with DSM-III, have continually cautioned against interpreting intense emotions and states of consciousness outside their cultural contexts (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). For instance, in its last several revisions, editions of DSM have included cautions about identifying hallucinations and possession experiences as pathological if there is normative support for these practices. This was made especially clear in DSM-III-R:

> When an experience is entirely normative for a particular culture—e.g., the experience of hallucinating the voice of a deceased in the first few weeks of bereavement in various North American Indian groups, or trance and possession states occurring in culturally approved ritual contexts in much of the non-Western world—it should not be regarded as pathological. (American Psychiatric Association, 1987, p. xxvi)

In DSM-IV, a hallucination is defined only as "a sensory perception that has the compelling sense of reality of a true perception but that occurs without external stimulation of the relevant sensory organ" (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 767); it is not automatically deemed to be an indication of mental illness and as we have noted above, it cannot be discredited simply because it may be chemically facilitated.

The most recent edition of this manual (DSM IV-TR) simply cautions that "a clinician who is unfamiliar with the nuances of an individual's cultural frame of reference may incorrectly judge as psychopathology those normal variations in behavior, belief, or experience that are particular to the individual's culture" (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. xxxiv). Hence, distal set or culture as we have noted above protects experiences from being psychopathological, and psychologist unfamiliar with the various cultural contexts in which identical experiences are differentially evaluated are at risk for misunderstanding the various range of experiences and realities that define the human condition.

Taves (1999) has documented the debate as to the perceived legitimacy of ecstatic and mystical experiences, based upon whether they are perceived to be spontaneous or induced by psychological techniques that might include such things as rhythmic preaching that may induce an hypnotic state, that even if euphoric, is perceived by some as illegitimate. Likewise, we have shown that the evaluation of the legitimacy of euphoric and mystical states is affected by the perceived triggers of the experiences (Hood, 1980) as well as the cultural legitimacy assigned to particular practices (Hood, Williamson, & Morris, 1999). Indeed, one noted authority said:

> Every religion in historic fact, began in one man's "revelation"—his dream or fugue or ecstatic trance. Indeed, the crisis cult is *characteristically* dereistic, autistic, and dreamlike precisely *because* it had its origins in the dream, trance, "spirit" possession, epileptic "seizure," REM sleep, sensory deprivation, or other visionary state of the shaman–originator. All religions are necessarily "revealed" in this sense, inasmuch as they are certainly not revealed consensually in secular experience (LaBarre 1972, p. 265; emphasis in original).

The correction should be obvious in that we need not talk about specifically religious interpretations of ecstatic or mystical states. Consensual validation can be found in secular experiences as positive psychology is documenting. Secular does not necessarily entail that such states are denied a spiritual quality in a deeply personal and fully human sense. Our appeal to methodological agnosticism (Hood, in press-b) for the study of ecstatic and mystical states requires that as psychologists, the ontology issues remain open, especially for those whose knowledge about such states is second hand. It seems that ecstatic and mystical states, however produced and interpreted, remain an identifiable human experience that can be embedded in various frames that give significance and meaning. We are less interested in the framing of the experience than the experiences themselves. It may be that ecstatic and

mystical states of arousal are best when interpreted within a meaningful frame. Still, one must be cautioned not to equate the experience with its interpretation, nor to think that because interpretation varies, the experiences necessarily differ.

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Chapter 18
Spiritual Resilience and Struggle Following the Experience of a Stroke

Margaret Feuille Bockrath, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Sharon K. Ostwald

Historically, researchers and practitioners in psychology and healthcare have tried to distance themselves from religion and spirituality. Though figures like S. Weir Mitchell and William James saw spirituality as compatible with healthcare and psychology, the dominant figures of behaviorism and psychoanalysis—B.F. Skinner and Sigmund Freud—both rejected religion as an illusion that humanity would outgrow as it progressed. Empirical research, however, has shown that religion and spirituality often provide people with vital resources to facilitate resilience in the face of major traumas, including illness. Empirical research also indicates that trauma can shake and even shatter people spiritually. Spiritual struggles are not uncommon and have been tied to declines in physical and mental health, though they have also been linked to reports of growth.

This chapter explores the double-edged character of spirituality—its capacity to sustain people in their most difficult times, and its ability to provoke profound struggle and strain about matters of deepest importance to people. We will review the theory and research that speak to these points and bring material to life with references to qualitative studies of one particular group of people, those who have experienced a stroke and their caregivers. Because strokes raise fundamental issues of finitude, loss of control, and suffering, the experience of stroke may be an important context for studying religion and spirituality as both a source of resilience and struggle.

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18.1 Effects of Stroke on Well-Being

It is estimated that 2.6–2.7 % of adults living in the United States have experienced a stroke (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). In addition to the physical limitations and neurological deficits that result from stroke, stroke can have detrimental effects on other aspects of functioning and well-being among stroke survivors and their families. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have found that a substantial subset (20–30 %) of survivors of stroke report clinically significant anxiety or depressive symptoms across time-points—from just after stroke to several months later (Burton, Murray, Holmes, Astin, Greenwood, & Knapp, 2012; Hackett, Yapa, Parag, & Anderson, 2005). Social and job functioning are also significantly diminished (e.g., Teoh, Sims, & Milgrom, 2009), even among those without severe physical limitations (Hommel, Trabucco-Miguel, Joray, Naegele, Gonnet, & Jaillard, 2009). The evidence suggests that individuals with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and other medical illnesses share similar challenges, including poor life satisfaction (Dijkers, 1997), increased distress (De Carvalho, Andrade, Tavares, & de Freitas, 1998), and elevated depression (Katon, 2003).

The impact of stroke on primary caregivers—often a spouse—is significant as well. Evidence indicates that many stroke caregivers experience diminished life satisfaction, emotional health, social functioning, and quality of family relationships as a result of their responsibilities as caregiver (Gaugler, 2010; Godwin, Ostwald, Cron, & Wasserman, 2013; Ostwald, 2008; Ostwald, Bernal, Cron, & Godwin, 2009; Ostwald, Godwin, & Cron, 2009). Similar to caregivers for stroke, caregivers for a range of other medical issues share similar challenges, including elevated distress and decreased well-being (see meta-analysis by Pinquart & Sorensen, 2003).

While there now exists a substantial literature on the social, psychological, and physical well-being of stroke survivors and their caregivers, the literature addressing spirituality and religion in stroke populations is relatively sparse. Five quantitative studies have examined this topic specifically (Berges, Kuo, Markides, & Ottenbacher, 2007; Giaquinto, Sarno, Dall-Armi, & Spiridigliozzi, 2010; Johnstone, Franklin, Yoon, Burris, & Shigaki, 2008; Skolarus, Lisabeth, Sanchez, Smith, Garcia et al., 2010; Teel, Duncan, & Lai, 2001). Here we will review recent literature on spirituality and religion in medical populations, highlighting literature specific to rehabilitation and stroke populations. We will also discuss the implications of this literature. We begin by offering some background on religion and spirituality that will provide a theoretical framework to organize our review of the literature and subsequent discussion of its implications.

18.2 Characterizing Religion and Spirituality

Much research on religion and spirituality presupposes that these constructs are traits that are stable over time and not appreciably influenced by circumstance. There is evidence, however, that religion, spirituality, and related variables may change over time and shift in response to changing stressors and contexts. For this

reason it is useful to understand religion or spirituality as a process, a *search*. Pargament has defined religion as "the search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (Pargament, 1997). The word "search" emphasizes that finding and developing a relationship with something significant is not a time-limited event, but, rather, is something people continually strive towards over the course of their lives. Elaborating on the concept of "search", Pargament uses the terms "pathways" and "destinations" to describe the various routes people may take toward ultimate significant goals or ends in living. The term "sacred" refers both to traditional notions of God and divinity as well as to other aspects of life that are imbued with sacred qualities (Pargament, 2007). Sacred qualities include: *boundlessness,* lacking the limits which characterize ordinary reality; *ultimacy*, containing the elemental truths of existence; and *transcendence*, beyond mundane concerns (Pargament, 2007). The search for significance becomes religious in nature, according to Pargament, when the sacred is part of the pathways toward or destinations of significance. For example, when one prays for health, the goal or destination of health is not necessarily sacred, but the action or pathway—prayer—is sacred in character, making prayer for health a religious activity. As another example, abstaining from alcohol may become religious: even though the action or means—abstinence from alcohol—may be considered ordinary, it can become religious if one does so in order to comply with a religiously-based moral code.

It should be noted that the understanding of the religious and spiritual articulated here does not presuppose that religion and spirituality are necessarily good, and leaves room for the possibility that religion and spirituality may be associated with outcomes or behaviors considered harmful or undesirable. As we will see, studies on religion and spirituality in medical populations suggest that religion and spirituality can have both beneficial and harmful effects on health-related variables for both patients and their care-givers.

18.3   Functions of Religion and Spirituality in Times of Crisis

Why might individuals turn to religion and spirituality after stroke? Pargament (1997) argues that individuals turn to religion and spirituality in times of stress in order to serve key functions, which may be summarized with the following labels—meaning, control, closeness to God, closeness to others, and life transformation (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). In this section, we draw on qualitative data from stroke populations to explain and illustrate these functions, paying attention to both positively and negatively-valenced ways that individuals may engage with religion or spirituality after the experience of stroke.

Two important functions religion may serve in times of crisis are that of providing *meaning* and a sense of *control*: religion offers ways to preserve crucial global beliefs regarding the benevolence of the world and its predictability in circumstances that threaten these beliefs (Park, 2012). To illustrate, in a qualitative study of stroke survivors, several participants reported reminding themselves of God's plan for them. In the words of one survivor, "when God closes one door, he opens

another," (Bays, 2001, p. 23). Another participant described holding onto a benevolent world view by focusing on God's involvement in his/her life and recovery: "I think that God wants me to get well and that He has put in my world the things to aid me to get well," (Bays, 2001, p. 23). Similarly, in a qualitative study of caregivers of stroke survivors, a caregiver assured herself, "God does not give you more than you can handle," thus reassuring herself that she can manage her stressors and that God is still in control (Pierce, 2001, p. 348).

Stroke survivors may also engage negatively with religion towards these same ends of finding meaning and/or maintaining a sense of control (Pargament et al., 2000). In a qualitative study of prayer after stroke, some survivors reported asking God in prayer why the stroke had happened, and one reported worrying that God was punishing her (Robinson-Smith, 2002). We may speculate that interpreting illness as punishment allowed this individual to preserve her sense of the world as comprehensible and just, while sacrificing a belief in her own status as a basically good and virtuous person. In other cases, individuals may choose to blame God rather than themselves, an interpretation which challenges God's benevolence in order to preserve a sense of personal value and integrity. As a stroke survivor from Hong Kong told authors of a qualitative study, "I did everything right but I wondered why God tortured me," (p. 318, Chow & Nelson-Becker, 2010).

Another key function religion may serve after stroke or other crises is that of providing *closeness to God* and *closeness to other people*. A qualitative study of prayer after stroke identified "connecting to God" as a major theme in participants' interviews. One survivor reminded herself, "God has always been with us" (Robinson-Smith, 2002, p. 359). A Chinese Buddhist stroke survivor described her experience of praying to the Bodhisattva Kwan Yin, saying, "It is as if I am revealing my deepest concerns to the High Power who is in control and I feel comfort in return" (Chow & Nelson-Becker, 2010, p. 320). Regarding closeness to others, numerous studies support associations between religious involvement and increased social support (Cummings & Pargament, 2010). Similarly, studies suggest stroke patients and caregivers cope by drawing on spiritually—or religiously-based social support—for instance, attending religious services, asking for others' prayers and support, offering prayers to others (e.g., Pierce, Steiner, Havens, & Tormeohlen, 2008), and seeking counsel from clergy (Price, Kinghorn, Patrick, & Cardell, 2012).

Just as with the functions of meaning and control, we can speculate that stroke survivors may seek closeness in negatively valenced ways as well. For instance, survivors may complain to God (e.g., Chow & Nelson-Becker, 2010) or express anger towards one's spiritual community or spiritual leaders as a way of maintaining communication at a time when disengaging from religion may be a compelling alternative.

A final function of religion is that of *life transformation* (Pargament, 1997). After stroke or other medical crises, individuals may find themselves drawn to a deeper religious faith or a new faith tradition as they let go of goals that illness may have taken from them and refocus on new goals consistent with their new circumstances and limitations. For instance, in a qualitative study of Malaysian Muslim women with breast cancer, one woman described at first experiencing despair after her

diagnosis of terminal cancer. She found new drive and purpose when she turned to her faith and interpreted her illness as an opportunity to direct her energy towards growing closer to Allah and preparing her soul for death and the afterlife (Ahmad, Muhammad, & Abdullah, 2011). In other cases, individuals may go through a period of spiritual struggle before reengaging with religion in a positive manner. Here a stroke survivor describes how he questioned God for a time before recovering his faith: "Did God inflict this stroke on me? Is that the kind of God there is? And then I said to myself, but still there is beauty. And the fact that there's beauty says I think God is loving and wants to give us pleasure" (Price, Kinghorn, Patrick, & Cardell, 2012, p. 114). This stroke survivor subsequently took up photography, focusing in particular on beauty in nature, which for him represented God's loving presence in the world.

While these individuals and many others may harness religion to transform their lives in positive ways, it's important to note that struggles with religion and spirituality are not always resolved so neatly (e.g., Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2004). Some may continue to struggle, and, as religion becomes a source of persistent distress, a portion of those who are struggling may choose to turn away from religion altogether. As an example, a year after her stroke, one survivor who reported initially praying to cope stated, "I can't pray now; it is giving me no confidence at all" (Robinson-Smith, 2002, p. 359).

In summary, qualitative studies suggest that engagement in religion and spirituality after stroke may be analyzed with the same theoretical framework used to conceptualize engagement of religion and spirituality after other kinds of crises. And, further, qualitative data suggest that this engagement may take on a positive or negative valence which, depending on the circumstances, may be associated with resilience or distress after stroke. Below we examine empirical data regarding patterns in religious coping after stroke and other medical crises, and the degree to which religion/spirituality may be a source of resilience or struggle in individuals coping with their own stroke or that of a loved one.

18.4   Religion and Spirituality as a Source of Resilience

Quantitative studies have documented that religion and spirituality are modestly associated with better adjustment in stroke populations. Two studies of Mexican-American stroke survivors highlight religion as a possible source of resilience. A cross-sectional study comparing Mexican-American stroke survivors to non-Hispanic white stroke survivors found that the Mexican-American survivors scored higher on a measure of non-organizational religious and spiritual belief (Skolarus et al., 2010). The authors suggest that this difference in religion/spirituality may account for higher survival rates among Mexican-American stroke survivors relative to non-Hispanic white stroke survivors. In another study examining spiritual engagement as a possible explanation for improved survival, more frequent church attendance prior to stroke longitudinally predicted better post-stroke outcomes among older Mexican Americans (Berges et al., 2007). Specifically, among those

who attended church more frequently prior to stroke, physical functioning deteriorated less, relative to those who had been attending church less frequently. These beneficial effects of church attendance held even after adjusting for demographic variables and comorbid chronic conditions.

Studies do not always support a robust association between religious engagement and resilience however. Sometimes differing findings are present in the same study, suggesting that it is an oversimplification to conclude that any kind of increased religious engagement confers benefit. For instance, in one study of cross-sectional relationships between health status (as indexed by SF-36 scores) and measures of religion and spirituality in stroke survivors, only religious and spiritual coping were significantly positively related to the mental health subscale of the SF-36, while other aspects of religion/spirituality (daily spiritual experiences, belief in God, religious and spiritual coping, private religious practice, participation in organized religious practice, and religious social support) were not significantly associated with mental health (Johnstone et al., 2008).

The equivocal findings in this study reflect the conclusions of systematic reviews of religion and spirituality in medical populations generally. In a review of well-designed studies of physical health outcomes associated with religion and spirituality, Powell, Shahabi and Thoresen (2003) concluded that the literature failed to support hypotheses that religion or spirituality would slow the progression of cancer or hasten rehabilitation from illness, as measured by physiological indicators. A systematic review of associations between religion/spirituality and physical and mental well-being among breast cancer survivors also concluded that evidence was limited for positive effects in this population (Schreiber & Brockopp, 2012).

What might account for these inconsistent findings? There are a number of possibilities. In the following section we explore some important considerations that may help explain equivocal findings.

18.4.1   The Stress Mobilization Effect and Cross-Sectional Design

One possible explanation has to do with problems inherent in cross-sectional design: religious coping may often be associated with poorer health and mental health cross-sectionally, not because religion and spirituality are detrimental, but because greater stress mobilizes higher levels of religious coping (along with other kinds of coping). This has been termed the "stress mobilization effect" (Pargament, 1997). One recent study illustrates nicely how the stress mobilization effect can cloud the beneficial impact of positive religious coping when associations are examined cross-sectionally rather than longitudinally (Paiva et al., 2013). In this study, researchers measured religious practices in a sample of 23 cancer patients about to begin chemotherapy and then examined health outcomes among these patients at later time-points. Cross-sectional data showed that religious practices were associated with poorer outcomes, but longitudinally, religious practices were found to

have a buffering effect on declines in health related to chemotherapy: after four cycles of chemotherapy, patients with low scores on a measure of religious practice prior to chemotherapy experienced significant worsening of fatigue and nausea, while patients with higher scores on a measure of religious practice did not experience this worsening in symptoms (Paiva et al., 2013).

But stress mobilization does not tell the whole story: it is not only in cross-sectional studies that data are equivocal regarding the benefit conferred by religion and spirituality in stroke and other medical populations. For instance, a study of a largely Catholic sample of Italian stroke patients found that religious and spiritual belief were not significantly correlated with changes in anxiety and depressive symptoms or with changes in functional independence, suggesting that religious and spiritual belief did not affect stroke recovery in this sample (Giaquinto et al., 2010). Likewise, in a longitudinal study of primary care-givers for stroke patients, researchers found only marginally significant associations between spirituality (as indexed by a measure of centrality of spiritual beliefs to one's life) and physical health problems (Teel et al., 2001). By comparison, other predictors (including fatigue, sorrow, stress, depressive symptoms, financial problems, scheduling problems, family conflict, vigor, and esteem in care-giving role) prospectively predicted physical health. Similarly, equivocal longitudinal findings have been obtained in studies of other medical populations (e.g., Ai, Wink, & Shearer, 2011; Hills, Paice, Cameron, & Shott, 2005; Park, Malone, Suresh, Bliss, & Rosen, 2008; Perez et al., 2009). These findings suggest there may be other important considerations at work besides stress mobilization and cross-sectional design.

18.4.2 Reflections of Personal Characteristics in Religious and Spiritual Behaviors

Another possible explanation for equivocal findings is that various indices of religion and spirituality reflect somewhat different general underlying personal characteristics, tendencies, or coping strategies, which themselves are differentially associated with benefit (Cummings & Pargament, 2010). Bonaguidi, Michelassi, Filipponi, and Rovai (2010) articulated this possibility in explaining equivocal results regarding the utility of religion in improving survival rates among liver transplant patients. Authors pointed out that the religious coping strategies not found to predict survival rates—that is, waiting for God's help and reminding oneself of God's plan—appear to reflect a more passive approach to coping, while the religious coping strategy that did significantly predict reduced mortality—labeled "seeking God"—may reflect a generally more active and adaptive approach to recovery from surgery.

Just as Bonaguidi and colleagues (2010) suggest that different kinds of religious engagement may differentially reflect active or passive forms of coping, other researchers (Ai et al., 2010, 2011) highlight an underlying tendency toward negative emotionality as a possible explanation of conflicting findings in their studies of heart

surgery patients. In one of these studies (Ai et al., 2010), pre-operative prayer coping was found to robustly predict lower levels of depression 30 months post-surgery, while religious reverence—that is, reported experience of feelings of reverence in religious contexts (e.g., in church, while reading the Bible)—actually predicted *higher* levels of depression longitudinally, even after controlling for demographic and relevant psychosocial variables. To explain these differences in their results, the authors suggest that patients endorsing greater religious reverence may display greater emotionality in other settings, a characteristic which may make a person more vulnerable to depression after negative life events. Another study in this population (Ai et al., 2011) found that reverence in *secular* settings (e.g., when in nature, sight-seeing, or serving others) predicted shorter hospital stay, while religious reverence did not. These results led the authors to highlight that religious reverence may entail negatively-valenced emotions like fear or awe (Otto, 1928) more so that reverence experienced in non-religious settings, such that religious reverence may be a marker for a tendency towards negative emotionality in a way that secular reverence is not (Ai et al., 2011; Ai, Wink, Tice, Bolling, & Shearer, 2009).

18.4.3   Interactions Between Personal and Situational Characteristics

A third explanation for differing or equivocal findings is that personal and situational characteristics may interact to determine whether a particular form of religious or spiritual involvement confers benefit. A recent longitudinal study on depression in heart failure patients found that no religious or spiritual variables measured (organized religious commitment, private religious practice, religious social support, daily spiritual experience, religious coping) were significantly associated with depression until Health Locus of Control (HLOC) was included in the model (Park, Sacco, & Edmondson, 2012). The authors had hypothesized that patients with lower perceived internal control over their health would be more likely to experience religiousness and spirituality as protective against depression. Results partially supported this hypothesis, but differed depending on the measure of religiousness or spirituality used. Daily spiritual experiences predicted less depression for those with *low* internal HLOC, as hypothesized, while organized religiousness predicted less depression for those with *high* internal HLOC. To explain these contrasting results, the authors point out that organized religiousness may reflect a more active coping style consistent with a higher internal locus of control, while spiritual experience may represent a more passive and emotional coping style consistent with a lower internal locus of control. This study illustrates how complex the picture can become when we simultaneously examine situational characteristics (e.g., the degree to which personal control can influence outcomes), health-specific attitudes (e.g., HLOC), and the general tendencies reflected in a particular religious or spiritual coping strategy or behavior (e.g., active vs. passive; tendency toward negative emotionality).

18.4.4   Summary

In summary, we have inconsistent evidence that greater religious or spiritual engagement (prior to or in response to medical crisis) contributes to better adjustment in stroke and other medical populations. Also, while researchers are beginning to examine the factors that determine when and for whom religion may be an important source of resilience, clear and replicable patterns are lacking at the current time. This ambiguity with regard to religion and spirituality as sources of resilience stand in contrast with the robust findings on associations between maladjustment and negatively valenced spiritual engagement, which is the subject of the next section.

18.5   Religion and Spirituality as Sources of Struggle

We now transition from a discussion of religion and spirituality as resilience to a discussion of religion and spirituality as sources of struggle after stroke. While quantitative studies of stroke populations have yet to address this topic, two studies of heterogeneous rehabilitation populations suggest that individuals in these populations can be significantly negatively affected by religion and spirituality. One cross-sectional study in a sample of rehabilitation patients (27 % stroke patients) found that negative spiritual experience correlated significantly and negatively with general health and mental health, though these relationships became non-significant after controlling for demographic variables (Johnstone & Yoon, 2009). A four-month longitudinal study of rehabilitation patients (17 % stroke patients) found more robust associations with maladjustment (Fitchett, Rybarczyk, DeMarco, & Nicholas, 1999). In this study, negative religious coping was found to predict higher depression, lower life satisfaction, and lower scores on a measure of activities of daily living, and these associations remained significant even after adjusting for demographic and health-related and mental-health-related covariates at pre-admission.

As with research on religion as a source of resilience, these findings regarding rehabilitation populations are reflected in the broader literature on religion and spirituality in medical populations. A systematic review concluded that existing literature provides adequate support for the hypothesis that religion and spirituality can have detrimental health effects in medical populations (Powell et al., 2003). Summarizing research on negative religious coping, or spiritual struggle, Abu Raiya, Pargament and Magyar-Russell (2010) concluded that "[t]he weight of the evidence is clear… certain forms of religion can pose a significant risk to health and well-being" (Abu Raiya et al., 2010, p. 402). Further, the literature suggests that this pattern generalizes across religious traditions, including Judaism (Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, & Tarakeshwar, 1999), Hinduism (Tarakeshwar, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2003), and Islam (Abu Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney, & Stein, 2008).

Not all studies of spiritual struggle have found robust effects, however. For instance, in a careful study of patients with HIV/AIDS, inclusion of negative and

positive religious coping in the model led to significant but small increases in predicted variance in quality of life (overall and HIV mastery), depression, spiritual well-being, and CD4 count (a biomedical indicator that diminishes as HIV/AIDS progresses), over and above variance predicted in these five outcome variables by demographic and psychosocial measures at baseline (Trevino, Archambault, Schuster, Richardson, & Moye, 2012). The change in R squared was only about 0.01 for each of the outcome variables, and, with the exception of spiritual well-being, it was negative religious coping which carried the significant beta weight, rather than positive religious coping. Beta weights were in the expected direction—that is, greater spiritual struggle was associated with higher levels of depression and diminished overall functioning, HIV mastery and CD4 count.

It is not always clear why spirituality is more detrimental in some instances and less so in others, but there are few studies that have begun to examine important moderators of the negative effects of spirituality in medical populations. We review three potentially important moderators here: the valence of the religious or spiritual engagement being measured, the degree to which an individual is religiously committed, and the chronicity of religious and spiritual problems.

18.5.1   Valence of Religiousness and Spirituality

One moderator we mentioned above is the valence of religious or spiritual engagement being measured. Most studies of religion as a source of problems use a negatively-valenced indicator of religiosity or spirituality, such as negative religious coping (also termed spiritual struggle), punishing God image (Ironson et al., 2011) or past negative religious experience (Johnson et al., 2011). This general pattern of course begs the question, what leads to negatively-valenced engagement with religion or spirituality rather than positive engagement? This question is outside the scope of this paper, but initial findings suggest negative engagement in other areas of life (specifically, dispositional neuroticism and more negative situational appraisals) may be an important predictor of spiritual struggles (Ano & Pargament, 2012).

Note that there are some important exceptions to these general patterns that negatively-valenced religion/spirituality predicts maladjustment and positively valenced religion/spirituality predicts benefit. Serving as exceptions to the former pattern, negative religious coping has been found to predict stress-related growth in a number of samples, including military veteran cancer survivors (Trevino et al., 2012) and elderly hospital patients (Pargament et al., 2000). And, serving as exceptions to the latter pattern, some studies have found that positively-valenced measures can predict undesirable outcomes. For example, in a longitudinal study of patients presenting with a first myocardial infarction, both positive and negative religious coping predicted higher levels of depression 1 month later, even after controlling for demographic variables, social support and baseline depression symptoms (Park & Dornelas, 2011).

Another important study showing undesirable effects for positive religious coping suggests that positive religious coping can be tied to active use of medical care to an extent that may be maladaptive (Phelps et al., 2009). In this study, 664 advanced cancer patients were given baseline measures and then followed until the time of data analyses, by which time 345 patients with adequate data had died. Patients were then divided into groups of high and low positive religious copers, based on whether they scored above or below the median on the positive religious coping scale at baseline. After controlling for demographics, a high level of positive religious coping at baseline was found to be associated with greater receipt of mechanical ventilation (11.3 % vs 3.6 %, AOR = 2.81) and intensive life-prolonging care (13.6 % vs. 4.2 %, AOR = 2.90) in the last week of life. The relationship between high positive religious coping and intensive life-prolonging care was still significant after controlling for other coping methods, terminal illness acknowledgment, support of spiritual needs, preference for heroics, and completion of advanced directives. In addition to highlighting how positively-valenced spirituality can have undesirable effects, this study also demonstrates how characteristics of the circumstances and the stressor may help determine whether particular kind of religious behavior is adaptive or maladaptive.

18.5.2   Religious Commitment

A second potentially important moderator of negative effects of religion is the degree to which an individual is devout or religiously committed. It makes intuitive sense that one must have, in the past or present, placed a certain amount of importance on religion or spirituality in order to develop a religious or spiritual struggle. This led researchers to hypothesize that spiritual struggle should be more common among those who are religious or spiritual (e.g., Exline, Yali, & Lobel, 1999), but, interestingly, some studies have found just the opposite: that less religiousness is associated with greater struggle (Exline, Park, Smyth, & Carey, 2011; Exline, Yali, & Sanderson, 2000). Perhaps more intuitively, some studies have found that struggle is more detrimental among the devout, even if it is less prevalent in this group. For example, in a longitudinal study of heart failure patients, religious struggle was found to predict greater depression three months later, as well as longer hospital stays, and effects were found to be stronger for more religious patients (Park, Wortmann, & Edmondson, 2011).

A study by Kristeller, Sheets, Johnson, and Frank (2011) provides further evidence for the relevance of struggle to the religiously devoted. In a cluster analysis of 114 cancer patients at a Midwestern oncology practice, 14 % of the sample was found to fall into a cluster characterized by high negative religious coping scores along with high levels of private religious practice, frequent spiritual experiences, and high positive religious coping scores. This group experienced higher depression than any of the other three clusters identified.

18.5.3   Chronicity of Religious and Spiritual Problems

A third potentially important moderator of the negative effects of spiritual struggle is chronicity. In a longitudinal sample of medically ill elderly patients, endorsement of struggle was found to robustly predict worse adjustment, in particular when it was chronic—that is, when individuals endorsed struggle at both baseline and follow-up 2 years later (Pargament et al., 2004). In contrast, endorsement of struggle at only one of these time points was not a robust predictor of adjustment in this sample. Further qualitative and quantitative research may help us understand how and why some stroke patients and other patients are able to adaptively resolve or manage religious and spiritual struggles, while others are not able to do so. This research may also inform efforts to effectively address or intervene on spiritual struggle and other spiritual and religious problems in these populations before these problems become chronic.

18.6   Intervention Studies

The evidence reviewed above indicates that spirituality and religion can have important health consequences in medical populations and suggests that it may benefit patients to specifically address religious and spiritual concerns in medical contexts. Research on patient preferences and perceptions of medical care support the utility and appropriateness of dealing with religious and spiritual concerns in medical contexts. Studies have shown that patient populations report significant spiritual needs (e.g., Balboni et al., 2007; Fitchett, 1999; Lui & MacKenzie, 1999; Williams, Meltzer, Arora, Chung, & Curlin, 2011), that many patients want health-care providers to talk with them about religion and spirituality (Cotton et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2011), and that patients (Williams et al., 2011) and families (Ando et al., 2010) value attention to spirituality and religion in medical care.

In light of these studies on patient preferences, intervention studies have begun to examine ways to apply the above research findings on health consequences in medical populations. The authors were able to identify six such studies, which together suggest that paying particular attention to spiritual and religions concerns may yield modest benefits for patients. Cole and Pargament (1999) developed a spiritually integrated intervention for individuals with cancer, which explored the themes of control, identity, meaning and relationship, paying particular attention to spiritual resources and spiritual problems related to these themes. A pilot study found that participants in the intervention group experienced stable depression and pain severity from pre- to post-test, while the no-treatment group experienced worsening of these symptoms (Cole, 2005). Tarakeshwar, Pearce, and Sikkema (2005) developed and piloted a spiritual intervention for adults with HIV/AIDS, providing instruction and support in engaging in positive spiritual coping strategies and managing spiritual struggles. Intervention participants (n = 13) demonstrated significant increases in self-rated religiosity and use of positive spiritual coping from pre- to post-test, as well as significant decreases in depressive symptoms and negative spiritual coping.

   Randomized controlled trials have also been conducted to address the incremental benefit of attending to the spiritual, as compared to secular interventions. Dramatic results favoring a spiritual over a secular intervention were found in a randomized controlled trial comparing effects of spiritual and secular mantra meditation among migraine sufferers. Spiritual meditation yielded significantly greater benefits relative to secular meditation regarding spiritual experiences, pain tolerance, headache frequency, and mental health (Wachholtz & Pargament, 2008). Another RCT similarly found significant benefit for a spiritual intervention relative to a control group who received no intervention (Kristeller, Rhodes, Cripe, & Sheets, 2005). This study examined whether brief conversations about spirituality and religion with an oncologist made a difference in the well-being of cancer patients. Follow-up measures administered 3 weeks later showed that those in the intervention group experienced greater improvements with respect to depression and quality of life relative to the control group.

   Other randomized controlled trials have found only modestly improved outcomes for a spiritual intervention relative to a similar secular intervention. In one such study, McCauley, Haaz, Tarpley, Koenig, and Bartlett (2011) randomly assigned chronically ill adults to a spiritual intervention and a secular intervention. In the spiritual intervention, participants watched a video showing how patients of diverse spiritual backgrounds harnessed their spirituality to cope with illness. They were also given an accompanying workbook to complete. In the secular intervention, participants watched an educational video on cardiac risk factors developed by the National Heart Counsel and were also given an accompanying workbook focused on learning to adapt and cope with their illness. Results showed that the secular and spiritual interventions were equivalent in their effectiveness on all measures of adjustment except energy level: those randomized to the spiritual intervention experienced increases in energy over the course of treatment, while those in the secular intervention experienced decreases (McCauley et al., 2011). A similar study among low-income cancer patients likewise found only modest differences between spiritual and secular treatments (Moadel et al., 2012).

   These intervention studies represent promising initial efforts to apply findings of the growing body of research reviewed here on associations between religion, spirituality and well-being in medical populations. Taken together it appears that specifically attending to the religious and spiritual can be beneficial for patients, at times more so than comparable secular interventions. Further research is needed regarding when and how religious and spiritual concerns can be usefully addressed when working with medical populations.

18.7   Conclusions

The descriptive studies reviewed in this chapter indicate that spiritual and religious concerns can have important health consequences in medical populations, and findings of existing intervention studies support the potential benefit of specifically attending

to religious and spiritual concerns in medical contexts. Providers for stroke and other medical populations can begin incorporating the existing research findings into their practice by encouraging survivors and families to access religious and spiritual resources. Accessing spiritual and religious resources could involve conversations with the hospital chaplain, reconnecting with religious or spiritual communities post-stroke, or engagement in meaningful private religious practices, such as prayer or reading religious/spiritual literature. Practitioners working with stroke patients and caregivers should also be attentive to the possibility of spiritual struggle in this population and may assist patients and caregivers with struggles by normalizing them and encouraging further conversation. Likewise, religious organizations should be aware of the spiritual needs of stroke patients and may consider developing strategies to identify and support stroke survivors and their families who have spiritual and religious concerns.

We await continued research on religion and spirituality in stroke and other medical populations that can help us understand when and how spirituality and religion may be helpful or harmful, how to effectively and sensitively guide patients in drawing on spiritual and religious resources, and how to mitigate the negative consequences that spirituality may precipitate in patients and their caregivers.

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Chapter 19
Religiosity and Immigrant Family Narratives in Korean American Young Adults

Sumie Okazaki and Nancy Abelmann

Korean Americans are known to be a highly religious population. According to the recent Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report *Asian Americans: A mosaic of faiths* (2012), 71 % of Korean Americans identified themselves as Christian, only second among Asian American groups to the overwhelmingly Catholic-identified Filipino Americans (89 %). Among Korean Americans, the majority (61 %) identified as themselves as Protestants (with 40 % identifying as evangelical or born-again and 10 % with mainline denominations) and an additional 10 % identified as Catholic, 6 % as Buddhist, and 23 % as unaffiliated. Of particular note, even among the American-raised, English-fluent second-generation Korean American adolescents and young adults, many continue to affiliate with Korean congregations rather than non-ethnic churches (S. Kim, 2010).

The Korean ethnic church has been a critical institution in the formation and maintenance of Korean American community since the early waves of immigration (Yoo, 2010). Korean church youth groups and second-generation Korean American churches serve not only as religious communities but also as places that nurture cultural and ethnic identities (S. Kim, 2010), provide leadership opportunities (I. Kim, 1981), and foster the development of social capital through networking and information sharing (Lew, 2006). However, relatively little attention has been paid to how Korean Americans' religiosity contributes to the values and factors associated with positive psychology. Positive psychology scholars have documented that religiosity increases happiness, especially among those living in societies with difficult life circumstances, by increasing social support, respect, and meaning in life that, in turn, lead to subjective well-being (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011). Beyond individual happiness, religion has

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also been found to promote spiritual qualities such as forgiveness, gratitude, and hope (Watts, Dutton, & Gulliford, 2006) that are features of positive psychology character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In this chapter, we examine how Korean American young adults narrate and interpret immigrant family lives through the lens of religiosity. We argue that their religiosity contributes to positive functioning by providing a religious narrative framework that promotes character strengths (e.g., forgiveness, gratitude, prudence), which the young adults employ to make meaning out of the past challenges in their immigrant families.

19.1   Religion, Family, and Korean Americans

Although only about 20 % of South Korean population identify themselves as Protestant Christians, South Korea has also been a site of rapid Protestant expansion over the past half century (A. E. Kim, 2000). Scholars have argued that Korean Christians combined Christianity with their own culture of hierarchical relationships and with shamanistic religious emotionalism (A. E. Kim, 2000). Christians were concentrated especially among educated, urban residents within South Korea, and also emigrated at higher rates and quickly established ethnic churches in the United States. Korean ethnic churches have long served a civic function in the immigrant community. Historically, Korean ethnic churches in the United States played a central role in the Korean independence movement against Japanese colonial rule (Lyu, 1977).

The largely sociological research on the immigrant generation and their religious involvement has focused on the functional aspects of religion, with the ethnic church serving both formal and informal social service roles in the process of settlement and adaptation (Hurh & Kim, 1990). Churches and religious centers may, for example, provide assistance with housing, English-language instruction, naturalization and visa applications, job referrals, school registration and babysitting referrals for children, translation services, and so on (Kwon, 1997). Churches may also provide social networks for ethnic entrepreneurs whose businesses cater to co-ethnics (I. Kim, 1981). Min (1992) has argued that first-generation Korean immigrants also use religion to retain ties to their heritage culture, with churches conducting adult worship services in the Korean language, providing Korean language and cultural classes for children, and providing fellowship opportunities (e.g., meals after services) with co-ethnics. The moral codes and teachings of conservative Protestant Christianity are also thought to be congruent with the moral, social, and family values of Korean culture (particularly the patriarchal Confucian features) for the immigrant generation (R. Y. Kim, 2006).

In contrast to the focal role of the church in the social adaptation for the immigrant generation, studies of second-generation Korean American religiosity have portrayed the ethnic church created by the children of immigrants as a "hybrid third space" (S. Kim, 2010) that is distinct from mainstream evangelicalism and from the parents' Korean ethnic churches. Although the second-generation Korean Americans mirror the religious practice of mainstream evangelical Christianity, it has been argued that their church also serves as a refuge from marginalization in the

mainstream culture and a place for socialization and affirmation of positive ethnic identity (Chong, 1998). Data collected from second-generation Korean American evangelical Christians as well as from Korean American pastors themselves (R. Y. Kim, 2006; S. Kim, 2010; Park, 2011) suggest that second-generation Korean American churches provide their members with a sense of racial belonging, cultural and national confidence, leadership opportunities, and a comfort zone, even while struggling with the tension between Christian universalism and ethnic particularism. Other scholars have also discussed the intergenerational divide through the church. For example, some younger generation Christians critique their immigrant parents' religiosity as at best less spiritually observant and at worst hypocritical or heretical (Abelmann, 2009). To these Korean American Christians, their parents' ethnic church represented the materialistic, upwardly mobile, hierarchical, and instrumental form of religion, whereas their Christian practice typically involved more fervent, ecstatic, and musical form of spirituality (R. Y. Kim, 2006). Some members also see second-generation Korean American congregations as "more spiritual" and "more evangelical" than other non-Korean congregations (Ecklund, 2006).

Although much has been examined with respect to the intersection between religiosity and ethnic identity among Korean American Christians (Abelmann, 2009; Park, 2011), less is known about the role of religion in their psychological health and wellness. A handful of studies are beginning to examine the relationship between religiosity and psychological outcomes among Korean American adolescents. In one study, Kang and Romo (2011) surveyed 248 Korean American adolescents in grades 7 through 12 about their church engagement, personal spirituality, mentoring relationships, and depressive symptoms. They found that higher levels of church engagement predicted greater personal spirituality (i.e., daily spiritual practices, religious beliefs, and private religious practices), which in turn was associated with less depressive symptoms among girls and boys in higher school grades. In their study of 155 Korean American adolescents, Seol and Lee (2012) investigated the relationship between religious socialization in Korean immigrant families and the adolescents' religious identity and psychological functioning. Seol and Lee found that religious socialization by parents and friends (i.e., discussions and support of religiosity) was associated with higher religious identity among adolescents but was not generally associated with internalizing (e.g., anxiety, worries, unhappiness) or externalizing symptoms (e.g., fidgeting, fighting, lying or cheating). There was, however, an interactive effect of parental religious socialization and adolescent identity on externalizing symptoms. Specifically, the Korean American adolescents who were not highly religious themselves but had parents who were trying to socialize them to be more religious had more externalizing symptoms. Finally, in a study of 174 Korean American adolescents attending Korean Catholic churches, Kim, Miles-Mason, Kim, and Esquivel (2013) found that the adolescents' self-reported religiosity and spirituality (particularly daily spiritual experiences, forgiveness, and congregational support) were associated positively with life satisfaction.

In the present study, we focus on how religiosity helps Korean Americans young adults navigate the travails of immigrant life. We present a narrative analysis (Josselson, 2011) of interviews with five Korean American college students whose immigrant family stories are narrated through the lens of Christianity.

19.2   Narrating Religion and Immigrant Family Life

In a larger study of redemptive narratives of immigrant family hardships (Kang, Okazaki, Abelmann, Kim-Prieto, & Lan, 2010) from which the present cases were drawn, we employed grounded theory methods to analyze the interview data from Korean American college students. We first describe the methodology of the Kang et al. study here to set the context for the five cases we present in detail. The larger study was titled "Redeeming immigrant parents" based on our finding that Korean American college students were actively engaged in narrative strategies to "redeem" immigration-related family hardship that they experienced. According to McAdams (2004), a life story that emphasizes the themes of suffering, redemption, and personal destiny (i.e., redemptive narratives) is a particular narrative form that reflects American cultural ideals such as clear moral values, emphasis on individual growth, and the power of human redemption in the face of suffering.

Because of our study's focus on Korean American Christian college students, it is also important that we convey the religious landscape of the campus in which the interview data were collected. The large public university in the Midwestern United States, the site of our study, has long drawn a sizable cohort of Korean American college students (as well as Korean international students). Of particular significance is the presence of the large nondenominational campus church, which in the 1990s had been overwhelmingly Korean American and undergraduate but by mid-2000s had become multicultural (largely pan-Asian American) with some working professionals and young families as well as students, numbering some 800 worshippers attending a typical Sunday morning service. Notably, this large campus church is a familiar one for Korean American Christians in Chicago area, from which all our study participants hailed, as many Chicago area Korean youth ministers and Sunday School teachers have passed through this campus church. Many Chicago area Korean American Christian high school groups also travel to this campus church for religious events. The presence of this evangelical church – which, despite its multicultural pan-Asian congregation retains distinctly Korean characteristics – in the campus life of Korean American students is quite salient. Additional ethnographic accounts of this campus church in the life of Asian American and Korean American Christians can be found in Abelmann (2009) and Abelmann and Lan (2008).

19.2.1   Redeeming Immigrant Parents

19.2.1.1   Korean American Students

The 19 Korean American students (11 women, 8 men) in the larger study were undergraduates enrolled in a large public university in the Midwest. Their age ranged from 18 to 22 (M = 19.9, SD = .9). Their parents were all first generation Korean immigrants, with the year of immigration spanning from 1968 to 1992 (median = 1980). Fourteen of the students who were interviewed were from

two-parent households; there were three cases of divorced or separated parents and two families with deceased fathers. Seventeen participants had both mothers and fathers who worked full time while they were growing up; two participants' mothers had stayed at home. All students had graduated from high schools in the Chicago metropolitan area, an area of significant Korean ethnic concentration. In fact, many had attended high schools with a large number of Korean Americans. Sixteen participants identified themselves as Christian and 3 identified themselves as either agnostic or having no religious affiliation. Many of the Christian participants had belonged to a Korean American church in their hometown. Thus most of our participants had experiences in the Korean American community beyond the family.

Interviewees were selected from 65 (of 104 total) Korean American college students who had participated in an online survey of college students' well-being and family functioning and indicated their willingness to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Because the research aim in the Kang et al. (2010) study was to examine the ways in which Korean American emerging adults make sense out of their past experience of immigration-related family challenges, we selected interviewees who based on survey results we expected would be able to report on some aspect of personal or family difficulties. Specifically, we selected the interviewees according to one of two criteria: (1) questionnaire or narrative report of their own emotional distress on the survey, (2) questionnaire or narrative report of their perception of poor family functioning or parental distress (e.g., "[my mother] is very stressed out usually with running the cleaners; she works too much," "Deep down [my mother] is sad; doesn't know English that well and [is] often annoyed because of it"). Through this screening process, 20 were selected for in-depth interviews (10 who reported high personal distress, 10 who reported poor family functioning or parental distress). We conducted 20 interviews but due to a recording device malfunction one interview was not recorded; thus 19 transcripts were submitted for analysis. One out of 19 interviews did not refer to any immigration-related family challenges. Because of this research's interest in Korean American emerging adults' narration of their families' immigration-related challenges, only the 18 interviews containing recalled immigration-related challenges were analyzed further.

19.2.1.2 Interview Procedures and Protocol

The larger study had used a grounded research approach because it offers systematic procedures to generate explanations from the data through identification of context and process as well as the key constructs of the phenomenon of interest and their relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Interviews were conducted until a point of saturation was reached, as indicated by the recurring themes and the emergence of clear trends (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Interviews were semi-structured with broad questions followed by probes. The questions served as a guide but did not restrict the course of the interviews, as we had aimed to obtain interviewees' own narrative accounts of their family experiences, including immigration-related challenges. Thus, questions focused on family history, daily life ecology, and any change in

parent-child relationship over time as well as their current sense of well-being, and their own and their parents' mental health over the course of their childhood. Key questions included, for example: "What are some vivid memories you have of your childhood?" "What was a typical day like in your family as you were growing up?" "Looking back, how was your general relationship with your parents?" "How is the relationship with your parents now?"

All interviews were conducted in English. We (a psychologist and an anthropologist) and two trained graduate students in psychology and anthropology conducted the interviews. The interviews ranged from 1 to 3 h long, with an average of 1.5 h. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and checked for accuracy. In addition, each interviewer kept a detailed research journal with notes following each interview. As outlined by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), the purpose of these research journals was to record an outline of the topics covered during the interview, notes about emerging themes, nonverbal behavior during the interview, and other salient features of the interview – as well as emerging analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). These research journals and transcripts were reviewed by the entire research team in weekly meetings throughout the course of conducting the interviews.

19.2.1.3   Data Analysis

Kang et al. (2010) followed the phases of grounded theory analysis outlined by Henwood and Pidgeon (2003): (1) Open-coding to capture the detail, variation, and complexity of the basic qualitative material, (2a) constantly comparing data instances, cases, and categories for conceptual similarities and differences, (2b) sampling new data and cases on theoretical ground as analysis progresses, (2c) writing theoretical memoranda to explore emerging concepts and links to existing theory, (3a) engaging in more focused coding of selected core categories, (3b) continuing to code, make comparisons, and sample theoretically until the point at which no new relevant insights are being reached, and (4) [engaging in] additional tactics to move analysis from being descriptive to more theoretical levels. By engaging recursively in the axial and selective coding phases of grounded theory methods (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003), we identified four students as using Christian maturation narratives, in which a more sympathetic and mature understanding of past immigration-related familial hardship was narrated with some Christian inflection. However, even among other students whose narratives that we (Kang et al., 2010) had not classified explicitly as a Christian maturation story, it was apparent that Christianity and their involvement in an ethnic church had played a role in their lives.

19.2.2   Making Sense of Family Life Through Religious Narratives

We now introduce the narratives of five Korean American students (four of whom were also identified as using a Christian maturation narrative in Kang et al., 2010) that reflect the centrality of religion in the meaning-making of their immigrant

family lives, grouped thematically into three broad ways in which Christianity serves Korean Americans as they wrestle with their immigrant family pasts. In the first theme, foundational Christian doctrinal ideas help the youth revisit their childhood in a new light; most profoundly, Christian ideas of human frailty compel the students to forgive their parents any transgressions. This transformation or forgiveness can be a matter of the individual alone (Megan) – that is, nothing needs to have changed for the student to see their family anew – or of the family at large (Mary). In the second theme, the manner in which Christianity figures as these students revisit their pasts is, by contrast, to register actual familial transformation through Christianization; in the cases of Jay and Esther, the families are redeemed because they have in fact changed their ways as adherents. In the third theme, Christianity figures as the landscape, offering a widely available resource for general personal reform and/or forgiveness. In each of these themes, from the doctrinal and individual; to the familial and transformational; and again to the somewhat inchoate and broadly contextual, Christianity is at the heart of the narration of redemption, in that the family is revisited and reinterpreted in some manner. These Christian inflections aside, however, we also appreciate that all of the narratives we introduce here (and in Kang et al., 2010) are at once maturation stories in that the college students demonstrate their newfound maturity.

19.2.3 Drawing on Christian Doctrine: Megan and Mary

Both Megan and Mary include Christian principles and constructs in their family redemption narratives: Megan speaks of Christian (Catholic) ideas of human imperfection and prayer, while Mary describes Christian notions of ideal love and empathy – and echoes Megan on imperfection. While Megan's is a case of individual transformation, Mary's is a story of familial transformation.

Megan, a 20-year-old American-born daughter of a retired machinist father and a night-shift nurse mother, revisited her difficult childhood through a Catholic-inflected redemption narrative. At the time of our interview, Megan's religious conviction was strong enough that she was even contemplating becoming a nun. Like many of the students we interviewed, Megan described an emotionally distant family that spent little time together and in which parents and children constantly bickered. She spoke of growing up with her mother who drove her children hard to succeed – so much so that Megan's uncle (and her mother's younger brother) felt compelled to intervene by telling Megan's mother that if she continued to try to control her children's academic and career lives that they would grow up to resent her. Megan also attributed her older sister's depression to her mother's harsh regime. It was witnessing her mother's relentless pressure on her sister to pursue a career as a pharmacist despite her sister's wish to become a teacher that led Megan to think of her mother as "inflexible" and "stubborn": "You know, she keeps doing it, keeps doing it." Megan also described her own distant relationship with her mother: "I think the communication is not good, you know, just in general, so… like I think it would've been cool if – you know – she, I guess she knew more about

me or – you know, stuff like that. But I mean, I know she's tired and stuff." When asked to speak about her father, Megan simply said, "My dad? I feel like I don't know him well."

With a mother who was "too tired" and too inflexible to listen and a distant father, Megan sought out spiritual guidance from a Sister at her church who helped her not only pray about her career dilemmas but also provided her with a Christian perspective on her immigrant family life. Megan also recalled a Bible study teacher who had helped her weather periods of sadness and loneliness during high school. In college she became actively involved in a Catholic fellowship group for single students who are considering a Catholic vocation (e.g., priesthood) that led her to consider repairing her relationship with her family: "Like you have to build your relationship with everyone, you know *including your family*." [emphasis added]. Citing human imperfection, she spoke of a prayer that guided her to "accept your parents with their faults, with their, you know, like all the things they lack and stuff like that. And like, you know, seeing them as just another person, you know." She described the Catholic sacrament of reconciliation as "very encouraging" and told us that it gave her "peace." Megan summarized how it was that the church helped her to successfully redeem her past:

> [Without the church] I would have just held onto more of like the grudge… Like I didn't understand her [her mother]…I think I would have stayed more like that… instead of trying to change my relationship with her [mother].

She continued that the church helps her to see things in a different way. On the one hand, Megan suggested that it was her mother's character that had made for a tense and difficult relationship. On the other hand, Megan understood that her mother's pushing was motivated by "the security thing, and prestige," a tendency which she knew was shared by many other Korean immigrant parents as well: "… since a lot of them [i.e., Korean immigrants] came overseas and like had to work with so little." Although not quite at peace with her family circumstances at the time of the interview, it was clear that Megan was trying hard to recast her difficult relationships with her immigrant parents through Christian idioms in which she "accepted her parents," relinquished her "grudges," and understood her family circumstances in light of her parents' immigration travails.

Mary, a 21-year-old American-born daughter of a small entrepreneur father and a night-shift nurse mother, was both among the most explicit on the difficulties of her immigrant upbringing and among the most religious when it came to explaining how she had been able to forgive her family. She was forthright, "…I didn't grow up in a good family when I was younger" and continued, "my family, my life stunk. So I felt extremely alone." The "emotional low point" of her younger years was when she felt that in addition she did not have many friends. Mary sketched a childhood household in which there was little family communication: "I would come home and then my Mom would just be cooking dinner. She wouldn't want to talk or anything. My Dad would just eat and go to bed. It was just… the day was just not filled with much interaction." Her mother, she described, was twisted with unreasonable material desires – "focused on the things she didn't have," and bitter and disillusioned with

life and always disappointed in her children. Her father, in turn, was obsessed with money, "so consumed and driven to reach a standard that was impossible to reach," and largely absent from the family life.

In Mary's redemption narrative, the Christianization of the family, precipitated first by the mother, allowed all of the members of her family to distance themselves from the past in productive ways.

> Before [my mother] became a Christian, I think, um, the *ideal love* wasn't very much empha-sized in our family. I really felt like it was four independent individuals sort of living under one roof. You know like each person was doing their [sic] own work, and your purpose was just to succeed and to excel, you know? And at the same time there was no real sense of cohesiveness and really caring for one another. And so, I don't know, growing up I felt lonely a lot just because I didn't feel like I could relate to my parents. I couldn't tell them personal things. When she changed, I think it really kind of started to change the dynamics as we started to understand what it meant to support each other. Not only by succeeding or doing well, but also by really being there for each other. Um, as awkward as it was learning to share with one another, what we're feeling, what we're going through. [emphasis added]

Mary described the Christian value placed on "empathy," "not so much focusing on how your own needs are being met…being empathetic and in tune with other's people's needs…you know? And how other people are hurting as well." She described this empathic stance as a "mentality and perspective." It was this perspective, Mary elaborated, that allowed the family to collectively redeem the suffering they caused one another, although without having to verbalize it directly: "I feel like all of us know how we've hurt each other, you know."

To redeem her parents, Mary also drew on the Christian idiom of human imperfec-tion as well as a growing appreciation for their immigrant hardship: "…It was being so familiar with their pain too, you know? It's just how hard it's been for them in America. So, really [it's] being constantly empathizing with [them] that I think really helps me to keep a right perspective. In the fact that they're not supposed to be super human, perfect beings, you know?" Mary's empathic stance toward her immigrant parents' hardship, through the lens of Christian empathy, seemed to have contributed to greater affection for her parents.

19.2.4 Family Transformation: Jay and Esther

In this second group, family Christianization is at the heart of redemption, but less so in terms of Christian doctrine per se; instead, the reference is to a generally better and happier Christian family. However, we also note that the two cases differ in the ways in which the students attribute family transformation to religion, with Jay crediting his parents' increased religiosity for improving the family dynamic and Esther crediting her widowed mother's increased church involvement for improving her mother's own well-being through social support,

Jay, the 19-year-old Korean-born son of a factory supervisor father and a secretary mother, narrated a story of family change as a result of family members' increasing

religious involvement in the church. He remembered his parents being harsher when he was a child. He discussed his father as having been quick-tempered and his mother pushing him academically. "My mom pushed me a lot when I was younger, but now… They've changed over the years, like, they're more lenient now." When asked to what he attributed this change, he spoke hesitantly, "I want to say, like, they've actually become, like um, really good Christians over the years, so I think maybe like, just like the fact that they've changed as a Christian, maybe." He noted that his father's hot temper had abated and his mother had stopped her nagging.

Jay also detailed past communication problems with his parents, partly because he became frustrated by his parents' lack of English language fluency and knowledge of American mores. Jay credits his own growing religiosity for both his efforts to get along better with his parents and for preventing him from engaging in "bad things." Jay admitted that he used to "party" with his White friends in high school and that it was Korean church friends who had counseled him to stop partying. We would be remiss to characterize Jay's narration of change in his relationship with his parents purely in religious terms. Jay also described his own maturation, his regret for having behaved badly in adolescence, and a growing appreciation of his parents for having "given up, like their future in Korea to, like come here for me, where they had to, like suffer through, like, prejudice. You know, like racism and all that."

Esther, a 20-year-old American-born student lost her mechanic father to a workplace accident when she was still in elementary school. She recalled the shock and sadness at her father's sudden death and the hardship that followed for her immigrant mother. At the time of Esther's father's death, her mother did not speak much English, nor did she even know how to drive. Esther talked appreciatively of her mother who had grown up in a wealthy Korean family but spent her adult life in the United States working in a factory, raising her two American-born children as a widowed single mother in a small apartment. Esther credits her own religiosity for keeping her from engaging in rebellious behavior:

> And I think a lot has to do with um, being Christian and being like in, like when you ask about support system, I think it's important that like to have a belief, you know? And for me, like I think that was important that helped me to just mature along the way without feeling the need to rebel against something and like… um, wanting to like ex… do wrong and see like what happens from that, and supposedly learning from my mistakes. And um, I think a lot of people like experiment and see how things would be, but I think like um, my mom's proud like that I didn't fall into those situations…like drugs… and like I don't know, like I don't know what's out there but… in terms of that I feel very sheltered but I'm guessing like drugs and like drinking and like sexual behavior whatever.

In fact, it was Esther's increased religiosity that prompted her widowed mother – who had been an inconsistent churchgoer – to become more involved in a Korean church where she would find a support network. In college, however, Esther also sensed her mother's worry that Esther was becoming too involved with the campus church at the cost of her studies: "She's not very agreeable when I do attend church all the time, you know? She doesn't want it to be my entire life, which it's not, but even the fact that me attending these three events like three times a week, it seems too much for her, for like a person. And she tells me like, you know kind of like, 'Is God going to take care of everything?' you know, like that."

We note here that Mary had also narrated significant family transformation as a result of deepening family religiosity. However, Mary was much more explicit in the invocation of Christian doctrine that allowed her and her family members to reach reconciliation, whereas Jay and Esther credits their religion as providing more diffuse support and moral guidance.

19.2.5   General Christian Milieu: David

In the third theme of Christian change that we identified, best exemplified by David, the young adult attributes their new take on family not to Christian doctrine or family transformation per se, but generally to inchoate Christian culture. For David, it mattered that his parents had been Christian missionaries in that their immigrant hardship was inextricable from their faith that had motivated the immigration. However, it was not his parents' Christian faith but the Christian ethics and mores of his Korean American friends to which David attributes his personal change.

David, a 20-year-old male student, was born in South Korea and immigrated to the United States with his Christian missionary parents and his older brother when he was 6 years old. He described a childhood and early adolescence in which his parents fought frequently and loudly over money matters. David attributed the improvement in his parents' relationship – less fighting and less shouting – to the pastoral counseling that his parents received at their church as well as to his own active intervention in their fighting. Having seen his studious older brother suffer psychologically from considerable parental pressure to achieve academically and become a doctor, David described his own adolescent rebellion as "a bad kid" who smoked, drank, used recreational drugs, skipped classes, got into frequent fights, and hung out with "gang bangers." However, David also spoke of somehow being able to keep up the good grades in school despite the drug use and skipped classes. Interestingly, David's narrative does not make a direct reference to his own or his parents' religiosity. He admits he himself is not particularly religious, even as he acknowledges that his Korean Christian friends not only helped him to sustain his academic motivation but also to slowly veer away from "bad" behavior.

Also an element of David's Christian milieu are the hardships that his parents endured as immigrant Christian missionaries. He spoke of his parents' work in this way: "Kinda like, it's a very, it's a very hard job, I mean, not literally 'bloodwork', but, I mean, something like, life giving you know [m-hmm]. You would give your life for that work [right]." It was perhaps this growing appreciation for his parents' immigrant suffering that led him to be understanding of the harsh parenting they had exerted on his older brother. He spoke:

> I don't wanna blame my parents, you know. 'Cause it's just they just push for (pause) what (pause) like they want their children to have a very secure life and, and like in Korean society being a doctor is a very, is a very secure job. It's a hard job you know? You have to be very studious as well as ah very diligent… When our parents came over here they work very hard, you know? They came over with nothing, and they made a very big impact on, um the minority influence in the States, and that's all because they were diligent.

Here, David – like Jay and Mary – shows a contextualized understanding of his parents' earlier harsh parenting. And also like Jay and Esther, David credits his Korean American Christian friends for keeping him on a more moral path. Absent from David's narrative, however, is any account of his own or parents' religiosity.

19.3   Discussion

Scholars have long discussed the instrumental roles of Korean ethnic churches in assisting the immigrant generation to adapt to life in the United States (Hurh & Kim, 1990). In contrast, research on the second generation Korean Americans and their religiosity has largely focused on the intersection between their religious and ethnic identity (Ecklund, 2006; R. Y. Kim, 2006; S. Kim, 2010). There is, however, little discussion of the role that religiosity plays in the family lives of Korean Americans. Our study, then, is one of the first to examine the narration of immigrant life through the lens of Christianity.

The narrative analysis of five Korean American college students revealed themes of forgiveness, gratitude, reconciliation, compassion, and empathy in relation to their immigrant parents and the hardships of growing up in immigrant families. Both Mary and Megan turned to Christian doctrine (human imperfection, love, compassion, and acceptance) in their narration of forgiveness and acceptance of their parents' past parenting failings. These narratives echo what S. Kim et al. (2013) had found in their study of Catholic Korean American adolescents: that greater endorsement of "forgiveness" in the Korean American adolescents' religiosity and spirituality was highly associated with increased life satisfaction. In a thorough review of the literature on the religiosity and mental health of youth, Van Dyke and Elias (2007) found that the values of forgiveness, purpose, and religiosity were associated with better well-being among adolescents.

For some of our interlocutors, the Christian-inflected narratives seemed to be intricately tied to their maturation and a greater appreciation of the parents' hardships as immigrants who "sacrificed" their own careers and needs to provide better opportunities for the children. For example, both Jay and David described a progression from rebellious adolescence to mature young adulthood, and in turn their empathy for their parents' immigrant hardships. Jay much more explicitly attributes the change to religiosity, while David's reference is to a more general Christian milieu. Nevertheless, both young men spoke of the centrality of religion in their parents' lives (and for Jay, in his own).

Both Jay and David also spoke of the role of their (or their peers') religion in turning away from "partying," and Esther credited her religiosity for keeping her on the straight path away from rebellious behavior. The role of religious affiliation as a protective factor against delinquent behavior has been documented in various populations (King & Furrow, 2004). Of interest, the role of religion in protecting against alcohol use seems particularly salient among Korean Americans. Luzack, Corbett, Oh, Carr, and Wall (2003) surveyed 159 Chinese American and 188 Korean

American college students about the presence or absence of heavy drinking episodes and also collected their genotyping data regarding ALDH2 (aldehyde dehydrogenase allele) status that has been associated with heavy episodic drinking. The researchers found that greater religious service attendance (largely in Christian churches) was associated with lower rates of heavy episodic drinking in Korean but only marginally so for Chinese.

Although Korean American college students' religious narratives revealed many positive psychological features, they were not without hints of intergenerational discord over religiosity that has long characterized the Korean American ethnic congregations. For example, even as she was personally compelled to reconnect with her immigrant church through her increased religiosity, Esther's mother was reported to have been concerned that Esther was becoming too involved in her church. R. Y. Kim (2006) and Abelmann (2009) had both documented the second-generation Korean Americans' contention that their immigrant parents are both less interested in the spiritual aspects of Christianity and caution them against becoming "too religious" at the cost of academics and careers. For some second-generation Korean American students, the question of how to be an authentic Christian, which stands in contrast to the materialistic mores of Korean immigrants, was one that created conflicts in their relationships with their immigrant parents (Abelmann, 2009). The narratives of Christian change for Jay's family hint at this notion of authentic Christianity, as he credits his parents' transformation in their parenting practices to their becoming "really good Christians." Mary also talks of her family's Christianization and the more "caring" dynamic in contrast to the uncommunicative, success-oriented nature of her former family life. Implicit in these narratives are that becoming a more authentic, better Christian family signals a departure from the "Korean" family ways. In the cases in which the students do not narrate such Christian change in their immigrant parents, such as for Megan or even Esther (whose mother's religious involvement is primarily tied to her social support needs), their narratives about religion and family hint at remaining points of tension with their immigrant parents.

These parent-young adult disagreements notwithstanding, the five Korean American college students introduced here convey a largely positive role of religiosity in their personal and family lives. However, because of our study's focus on second-generation Korean American Christians, it remains an open question whether these types of religious narratives that redeem the immigration-related hardships are unique to Korean Americans. What little we know about other Asian American Christian young adults tend to come from studies of pan-Asian American churches (Abelmann & Lan, 2008; Garces-Foley & Jeung, 2013) that focus on their construction of race and ethnicity within these religious institutions. One exception is a recent study of religious belief and well-being among 183 Chinese Christian international students and immigrants (Wei et al., 2012). And although some of the Korean American college students in our study were Catholic, scholarly discourse on Korean American churches and religiosity remains an overwhelmingly focused on Protestantism. Future research with Korean American Catholic congregations and with non-Korean young adults of immigrant parents may be able to unpack the

role of religious narratives in immigrant family lives. Furthermore, this study relied on the retrospective report of Korean American young adults who were narrating their own "stories" about growing up in immigrant families, and as such it provides only the emerging adult's perspective on their families. A prospective longitudinal approach, starting with Korean American adolescents and their parents, may help to more fully understand how these positive psychological qualities in family relations – such as acceptance, forgiveness, empathy – develop over time in the course of the families' lives.

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