Forgiveness and Alcohol-Related Outcomes

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Presentation Outline
1. Introduce & Define Forgiveness
2. Overview of Forgiveness and Health
3. Data

Introduction

• Forgiveness and its relationship to mental and physical health have recently been receiving increased empirical attention, with generally salutary relationships being observed. (Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Toussaint & Weisz, 2005; Worthington, 2005)

• Defining forgiveness can be elusive given differing philosophical perspectives.

Defining Forgiveness

• Victim-based, voluntary, internal process (Enright, 2001; Worthington, Sandage, & Berry, 2000)

• Independent of retribution (Rosenek & Hornor, 1992), restitution (Wahking, 1992), reconciliation, and continued vulnerability, yet allows for offender accountability (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998)
Defining Forgiveness

- Offered, felt, and sought in relation to self and others, including conceptions of deity (Toussaint & Webb, 2005)
- Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral aspects (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991; see also Worthington, Windle, Pietrow, & Miller, 2007)

Forgiveness Universality

- “Woven into the fabric of human existence but rarely recognized as such” (Fincham, 2000, p. 3)
- A boundless concept and construct, unlimited by culture, time, and geography (Webb, 2007)

Forgiveness and Health

- Health: "...a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1948; 2006)
- Forgiveness can be a salutary coping mechanism, distinct from other methods due to the volitional and motivational factors mentioned above, leading to health and well-being (Toussaint & Webb, 2005)
- Worthington, Berry, and Parrott (2001) describe the direct effect as being related to the consequences of unforgiveness and rumination which involve a variety of negative emotions such as resentment, hostility, and fear.

Forgiveness and Health

Worthington Model

- Forgiveness, like all emotions, involves a variety of physiological processes and it is these physiological changes that likely produce the direct salutary effect of forgiveness on health (Worthington et al., 2001)

Forgiveness and Alcohol Problems

- Forgiveness may operate through mediating variables such as, health behavior, social support, and interpersonal functioning (Temoshok & Chandra, 2000; Worthington et al., 2003)

Forgiveness May be an Important Component of Alcohol Problems and Recovery (AA, 2001; Worthington, 1998)

The Process of Forgiveness has been Identified in Empirically-Validated Treatments for Alcohol Problems (Webb & Troutman, 2010)
Forgiveness and Alcohol Problems

Mental Health and Social Support may mediate the relationship between Forgiveness and Alcohol Outcomes (Webb, Robinson, & Brower, 2009; Webb, Robinson, & Brower, in prep.)

Forgiveness and Alcohol Problems

Forgiveness and Alcohol Problems Research

Among Problematic Drinkers:

Forgiveness has been observed to be associated with:

The Relationship between Forgiveness and Alcohol-Related Outcome may operate through:

Forgiveness and Alcohol Problems Research

Two Samples:

Upper Midwest
Alcohol Use Disorders
Seeking Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment

Southern Appalachia
Likely to be Hazardous or Harmful Drinkers
College Students
(Webb & Brewer, in press-a; Webb, Hirsch, Williams, & Brewer, in preparation)

Demographic Data

Upper Midwest Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Follow-Up</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Female)</td>
<td>66.44%</td>
<td>66.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (White)</td>
<td>85.23%</td>
<td>85.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (M)</td>
<td>32.81 year</td>
<td>37.62 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Years)</td>
<td>11.87 year</td>
<td>13.61 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Status (Married)</td>
<td>31.36%</td>
<td>34.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status (Full-time)</td>
<td>75.56%</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Background (Christian)</td>
<td>39.20%</td>
<td>32.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Diagnosis (Dependence)</td>
<td>91.95%</td>
<td>95.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods

Upper Midwest Sample

- 157 people entering substance abuse treatment
- Longitudinal Study
- Fetzer Forgiveness Short Form (1999)
  - 3 single-item measures of dispositional forgiveness
    - of Self, of Others, & by God
- Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983)
  - 53 items; Total Score/Global Severity
- Social Support (Smith, Ross, & Rost, 1996)
  - 7 items; U of Arkansas Subs. Abuse Outcomes Module
- Alcohol-Related
  - 15 items; Short Index of Problems (3SM; Feinn, Tennen, & Kranzler, 2003; Miller, Tonigan, & Longabaugh, 1995)
  - Timeline Follow-Back Method; DDA, PHDD, DDD (Sobell, Brown, Lee, & Sobell, 1996; Sobell & Sobell, 1992)

Statistical Analysis

Mediation Analysis

- Baron & Kenny (1986)
  - Bootstrap Resampling [5,000]
  - 95% CI
### Mediation Analyses

#### Upper Midwest Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forgiveness of Self</th>
<th>Forgiveness of Others</th>
<th>Psychiatric Distress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Problems</td>
<td>Full Mediation</td>
<td>Full Mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Drinking Days</td>
<td>Full Mediation</td>
<td>Indirect Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Abstinent</td>
<td>Indirect Only</td>
<td>Full Mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks per Drinking Day</td>
<td>Indirect Only</td>
<td>Indirect Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-Up:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Problems</td>
<td>Full Mediation</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline to Follow-Up:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Problems</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Indirect Only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Discussion

- In sum, all but one of the relationships observed between forgiveness and alcohol were mediated through mental health only, suggesting that the relationship between forgiveness and alcohol use and related problems operates primarily through mental health, rather than social support.

- As such, results suggest the positive effects of forgiveness on reduced levels of alcohol consumption and related problems are mediated by higher self-reported ratings of mental health.

### Methods

#### Southern Appalachian Sample

- 126 Likely to be Hazardous or Harmful Drinkers
- Cross-Sectional Study
- Fetzer Forgiveness Short Form (Fetzer, 1999)
  - 3 single-item measures of dispositional forgiveness
    - of Self, of Others, & by God
- SF – 12 (Ware, Kosinski, & Keller, 1996)
  - 5 items: Global Mental Health Status
- Social Support (Alley, Alconesi, & Caplan, 1985)
  - 17 items: Social Support & Social Undermining
- Alcohol-Related
  - 10 items: Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT, Babor, Higgins-Biddle, Saunders, & Monteiro, 2001)

Scoring: Total, Consumption, Dependence, Negative Consequences
- 4 items: HALT (Webb & Brewer, in press-a)

#### Demographic Data

**Southern Appalachian Sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender (%)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.65</td>
<td>60.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (%)</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.52</td>
<td>45.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>22 (5.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status (%)</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.71</td>
<td>54.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Background (%): by God</td>
<td>46.13</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Education (year in college)</td>
<td>(4.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References


References


