

Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief: Development and Validation of a New Measure

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Although spirituality often has been associated with better outcomes following bereavement, it can be significantly challenged by loss as well. Studies have shown that some bereaved individuals suffer profoundly not only in relation to the death of their loved one but also in their relationship with God and their faith community, a condition known as *complicated spiritual grief* (CSG). However, to date, in the absence of a simple, multidimensional, and well-validated measure of spiritual crisis following loss, investigators have measured CSG with nongrief-specific instruments. In this study, the authors tested the reliability and validity of a newly developed measure of CSG, called the *Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief* (ICSG). With 2 diverse samples of bereaved adult Christians (total $n = 304$), the authors found that the ICSG had strong internal consistency, and high test-retest reliability for both subscales in a subsample of participants. Analyses of both samples supported a 2-factor model, with one factor measuring Insecurity with God and the other assessing Disruption in Religious Practice. Analyses further supported the convergent and incremental validity of the 18-item ICSG relative to other theoretically similar instruments and measures of poor bereavement outcome, suggesting its usefulness in clinical research and practice.

The loss of a loved one is a ubiquitous human experience, yet responses to this unwelcome transition are surprisingly varied. As studies demonstrate, many bereaved individuals are resilient and rebound emotionally within

a few weeks or months of losing someone (Bonanno & Kaltman, 2001). Other bereaved people endorse significant grief symptoms for as long as 1–2 years before adapting to their changed lives (Bonanno & Mancini, 2006). In contrast, a substantial portion of the bereaved population suffers immensely and grieves for a prolonged period of time. This type of grief response—complicated grief (CG; Prigerson et al., 1995; Shear et al., 2011; also termed *prolonged grief disorder* [PGD]; Prigerson et al., 2009) is protracted, debilitating, and sometimes life threatening. CG is characterized by a state of prolonged grieving, during which the mourner

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experiences profound separation distress, psychologically disturbing and intrusive thoughts of the deceased, a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, trouble accepting the reality of the loss, and difficulty in making a life without the deceased loved one (Holland, Neimeyer, Boelen, & Prigerson, 2009; Prigerson & Jacobs, 2001). Recent research (Burke, Neimeyer, McDevitt-Murphy, Ippolito, & Roberts, 2011; Burke & Neimeyer, 2014, this issue; Burke, Neimeyer, Young, Piazza Bonin, & Davis, 2014, this issue; Lichtenthal, Burke, & Neimeyer, 2011; Neimeyer & Burke, 2011) has established a link between CG and complicated spiritual grief (CSG)—a crisis of faith following loss.

Understanding the relation between CG and CSG is necessary to inform researchers, clinicians, and spiritual leaders in developing and evaluating relevant psycho-spiritual interventions to assist spiritually inclined grievers who suffer a crisis of faith following loss. However, one barrier to increased understanding has been a dearth of grief-specific instruments designed to measure spiritual distress in bereavement. As a result, many bereavement researchers have necessarily used nonspecific instruments such as the negative religious coping (NRC) subscale of the Brief RCOPE (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998) to assess the construct.

Therefore, in this article we propose a new measure called the *Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief* (ICSG). The ICSG differs from other measures, such as the Brief RCOPE, in instructing participants specifically to consider their index loss as they respond to indicators of spiritual crisis concerning their relationship both with God and with fellow believers. An easy-to-use, multidimensional, and well-validated measure of spiritual struggle in the context of bereavement has not previously been developed and tested.

SPIRITUAL CRISIS

Spirituality is generally an adaptive method of coping with the death of a loved one (Hays & Hendrix, 2008; Wortmann & Park, 2008), as it frequently offers bereaved individuals a sense of peace and comfort and the promise of an afterlife reunion with their loved one. However, people who experience major life stressors sometimes struggle spiritually when they sense God's punishment or abandonment, or believe that "God continues to exist and exert control but does not provide them with care and comfort" (Edmondson, Park, Chadoir, & Wortmann, 2008, p. 754). In addition, when people perceive that life has been horrendously unfair, extreme anger toward God often ensues (Exline & Martin, 2005). In spite of such findings, studies of bereavement-specific religious coping are

relatively rare (Wortmann & Park, 2008). We will therefore review the need for a grief-specific measurement of spiritual distress as grounding for the present study.

COMPLICATED SPIRITUAL GRIEF

CSG refers to a spiritual crisis during bereavement that includes the collapse or erosion of the griever's sense of relationship to God and/or the faith community, such that he or she struggles to reestablish spiritual equilibrium following the loss (Burke & Neimeyer, 2012). Although more research is needed to determine its prevalence, 48% of respondents in a diverse sample of bereaved individuals endorsed some level of CSG (Burke et al., 2014, this issue). Thus, not surprisingly, CSG has been reported in a wide range of samples, including bereaved parents who struggle to make spiritual sense of their loss (Lichtenthal, Currier, Neimeyer, & Keesee, 2010) and homicide survivors who feel angry or distant toward God or church members (Burke et al., 2011) or who plead with God for a miracle following the murder of their loved one (Thompson & Vardaman, 1997). *Spiritual crisis* has been described as fury toward God, an inability to trust God's goodness in the face of unspeakable grief (Batten & Oltenbruns, 1999), and the catalyst that makes or breaks ones' faith following a stressful life experience (Hill & Pargament, 2008) or the loss of a primary attachment figure (Burke & Neimeyer, 2012).

The present study is grounded in pioneering research by Shear, her colleagues, and a team of Protestant pastors (2006), who piloted a brief, church-based grief intervention with grieving congregants. To inform their intervention, they traced the bereavement trajectory of 31 African American worshippers, most of whom had lost a loved one to natural causes, to determine the effect the loss had on their faith. Participant responses varied between "faith stronger than ever" to "faith seriously shaken," with 19% of the grievers reporting a negative change to their faith as a result of the loss. Shear et al. (2006) referred to this as "spiritual grief" (p. 7)—an anguished spiritual response to a seemingly untimely or unfair loss, believed to have come via the hand of God, which undermines the griever's prior spiritual understanding about life and death. Shear and her team contend that spiritual grief is akin to psychological grief (i.e., ranging on a continuum from highly resilient to severe CG responses), and refer to the more troublesome variation of spiritual grief as complicated spiritual grief (p. 18). Accordingly, the items on the proposed measure were derived through ongoing collaboration with church pastors who routinely work with bereaved parishioners.

NEED FOR A MEASURE OF SPIRITUAL CRISIS IN BEREAVEMENT

Spiritual crisis often is assessed in terms of negative emotions, attitudes, and behaviors related to God, and sometimes in terms of one's spiritual community. Some studies of the construct have used only single items (e.g., Exline, Yali, & Sanderson, 2000; Exline, Park, Smyth, & Carey, 2011), whereas others have used event-specific scales (e.g., Exline et al., 2011) or subscales derived using factor analysis (Gall, Kristjansson, Charbonneau, & Florack, 2009) to assess this construct. Other studies have assessed both supportive spirituality (e.g., positive religious coping [PRC]) and spiritual struggle (e.g., NRC; Brief RCOPE, Pargament et al., 1998; see also the Spiritual Assessment Inventory [SAI], Hall & Edwards, 2002; Attitudes Toward God Scale-9 or ATGS-9, Wood et al., 2010). These measures, although useful, dedicate only a few items to assessment of spiritual struggle. Although Exline and Martin (2005) found a parsing of such subscales to be informative in their exploration of disappointment and anger at God, the development of a dedicated measure of spiritual crisis in bereavement could advance research by permitting a psychometrically sound assessment of such struggle. Furthermore, developing a measure of various aspects of spiritual struggle, such as doubt and resentment toward God, dissatisfaction with religious activities and fellowship, and substantial changes in the griever's spiritual beliefs and behaviors following the loved one's death (see also Burke et al., 2014, this issue), could promote more nuanced understanding of the experience. The ICSG pursues a more fine-grained inquiry of spiritual crisis (e.g., "I don't feel very much like joining in fellowship to praise God or to glorify Him" or "I sense the absence of God more than I do the presence of God") compared to the more generic assessment of, for instance, the SAI (e.g., "There are times when I feel betrayed by God"; Hall & Edwards, 2002), the Brief RCOPE (e.g., "Felt abandoned by God"; Pargament et al., 1998), or the ATGS-9; (e.g., "Felt angry at God"; Wood et al., 2010).

The present instrument therefore comprehensively evaluated CSG using numerous candidate items bearing on such reactions, beyond the more generic measures of spiritual struggle included in currently available scales such as the SAI (Hall & Edwards, 2002), the Brief RCOPE (Pargament et al., 1998) or the ATGS-9; (Wood et al., 2010), all of which were tested with nonbereaved samples of adults experiencing a wide array of negative life events. Thus, in developing the current measure in the specific context of bereavement and pursuing its validation using two diverse samples of bereaved adults, we hope to shed additional light on mourners' spiritually inflected struggles to find meaning in loss (Neimeyer &

Sands, 2011) as well as to "gain comfort and closeness to God and others during times of frightening vulnerability" (Burke et al., 2011, p. 304).

Thus, to further clarify the construct of spiritual crisis in the specific context of bereavement, we sought to develop and psychometrically test a new measure called the ICSG. Specifically, we sought to (a) test its factor structure, using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in one sample and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in another, (b) evaluate its convergent validity with related constructs, (c) test its incremental validity by examining unique associations with CG symptoms after controlling for scores from a general purpose measure of spiritual struggle, and (d) assess the internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the new measure. In terms of convergent validity, we anticipated that the ICSG would be positively correlated with measures of negative religious coping and CG, and negatively correlated with measures of positive religious coping and meaning making.

METHOD

Participant Recruitment and Study Procedures

Following the university's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval, data were collected from samples of bereaved adults who were diverse in terms of ethnicity, type of loss, and church affiliation, and who met the following inclusion criteria: 18 years old or older, bereaved within the past 10 years, and endorsement of the Christian faith tradition. Specifically, data were derived from two separate samples, hereafter referred to as the *community sample* and the *college student sample* (see Table 1 for demographic and loss-related information).

Community Sample

A total of 152 bereaved individuals were recruited from: (a) several large, local churches ($n = 75$; 49.4%), (b) Victims to Victory (VTV), a local, faith-based homicide survivor advocacy agency that assists clients through counseling, support group, and victims compensation assistance ($n = 9$; 5.9%), and (c) psychology undergraduate classes at a large, mid-South, state university ($n = 68$; 44.7%) between June 2010 and April 2011. To maximize diversity in the sample in regard to ethnicity and type of loss, several churches in the Memphis area that serve (a) predominantly African American congregations, (b) primarily Caucasian congregations, and (c) multi-racial congregations were recruited. College students were also recruited as part of this sample to extend its representativeness for adults of different ages, and ethnic diversity was ensured

TABLE 1
Demographic and Loss-Related Information for the Community and College Student Samples

	<i>Community sample (n = 152)</i>	<i>College student sample (n = 152)</i>
Age	Mean = 33.4, SD = 17.8	Mean = 20.5, SD = 7.0
Gender	125 Women (82.2%) 27 Men (17.8%)	123 Women (80.9%) 29 Men (19.1%)
Ethnicity	61 Caucasian (40.1%) 83 African American (54.6%) 3 Asian (2.0%) 3 Hispanic/Latino (2.0%) 2 Other (1.3%)	60 Caucasian (39.5%) 82 African American (53.9%) 3 Asian (2.0%) 5 Hispanic/Latino (3.3%) 2 Other (1.3%)
Household income	49 < \$10,000/year (32.9%) 31 \$10,000–\$24,999/year (20.8%) 25 \$25,000–\$49,999/year (16.8%) 18 \$50,000–\$74,999/year (12.1%) 18 \$75,000–\$99,999/year (12.1%) 8 > \$100,000/year (5.4%)	55 < \$10,000/yr (36.4%) 28 \$10,000–\$24,999/year (18.5%) 32 \$25,000–\$49,999/year (21.2%) 12 \$50,000–\$74,999/year (7.9%) 14 \$75,000–\$99,999/year (9.3%) 10 > \$100,000/year (6.6%)
Relationship to the deceased	56 Immediate family (38.8%) 60 Extended family (39.5%) 29 Friend (19.1%) 7 Other (4.6%)	15 Immediate family (9.9%) 120 Extended family (78.9%) 17 Friend (11.2%) 0 Other (0.0%)
Cause of death	74 Natural anticipated (48.7%) 36 Natural sudden (23.7%) 9 Accident (5.9%) 5 Suicide (3.3%) 22 Homicide (14.5%) 6 Other (e.g., perinatal death; 3.9%)	83 Natural anticipated (54.6%) 40 Natural sudden (26.3%) 16 Accident (10.5%) 3 Suicide (2.0%) 8 Homicide (5.3%) 2 Other (e.g., perinatal death; 1.3%)
Time since loss	Range: 7 days–9.9 years <i>M</i> = 3.4 years; <i>SD</i> = 2.6 years	Range: 1 month–9.1 years <i>M</i> = 1.25 years; <i>SD</i> = 11 months

through strong representation of both African American and Caucasian students in the university as a whole.

In the case of churches, participants were recruited through the distribution of brochures following congregational announcements during regularly scheduled meetings and at grief support activities. In the case of VTV, agency staff or the project coordinator offered brochures along with a brief explanation of our proposed study to clientele who met inclusion criteria during support group meetings or while offering regular support services. In both cases, interested individuals were instructed to respond by accessing our project's registration website or by calling, emailing, or writing us using contact information found in the brochure. Following this, they received instructions via email or phone about the date, time, and location of the assessment session. Although no remuneration was offered, in appreciation for their support, researchers offered bereavement-related education to participating churches and follow-up presentations on the results of the study.

Recruitment of the college student cohort entailed our presenting a brief description of the study to each undergraduate class and providing them with an Internet link that directed them to a screening survey that established their eligibility to participate. Individuals who met inclusion criteria were given the option to

participate either in person by completing paper and pencil measures in an on-campus classroom or online through the survey system, Qualtrics. Although no remuneration was offered, students received class credit for participating.

College Student Sample

A total of 152 bereaved individuals were recruited from psychology undergraduate classes at the same university between October and November 2011. ICSG data from a subset of 31 individuals were used for test-retest purposes.

Recruitment of the college student sample entailed activation of our study on the university's online survey system, SONA. Potential participants were directed to SONA by their psychology professors, where they were given a description of the study and instructions for completing a screening survey that established their eligibility to participate. Individuals who met inclusion criteria were given instructions for completing an online-only set of self-report measures.

In both samples, participants spent 30–45 minutes completing of a battery of scales that included the candidate ICSG items, several other measures used to establish convergent validity (described below), and an assessment of demographic variables.

Measures

Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief

(ICSG). The ICSG was developed to assess the extent of spiritual crisis experienced by bereaved individuals in the wake of loss. Instructions read: *Please think about your loss of _____, and then read each statement carefully. Choose the answer that best describes how you have been feeling during the past 2 weeks including today. Please answer these based on how you actually feel, rather than what you believe you should feel.* Item content was generated in collaboration with ministers in Christian congregations whose parishioners participated in the Shear et al. (2006) pilot study, and was further informed by three, 6-member focus groups from our community sample who were canvassed in relation to: (a) clarity and understandability of item wording and meaning, (b) item relevance to spiritually inclined grievers, and (c) their suggestions for additional questions to garner greater understanding of a person's spiritual struggle following loss. The initial item pool included 28 responses, each of which was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale to indicate degree of agreement with such statements as *I no longer feel safe or protected by God*, and *I go out of my way to avoid religious activities*.

Inventory of Complicated Grief–Revised

The revised ICG (ICG-R; Prigerson & Jacobs, 2001) is a 30-item measure rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), that gauges severe and prolonged grief reactions. The ICG-R has displayed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$), concurrent validity with another grief measure ($r = .71$), and good test-retest reliability across about a 2-week interval ($r = .92$; Boelen, van den Bout, de Keijser, & Hoijtink, 2003). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .96 for the ICG-R in both the community and college student samples.

Brief RCOPE

The Brief RCOPE (Pargament et al., 1998) is a reliable and valid measure of religious coping, using 14 items to assess both PRC (e.g., "Focused on religion to stop worrying about my problems") and NRC (e.g., "Felt punished by God for my lack of devotion"). The Brief RCOPE has shown adequate to high internal reliability for both subscales ($\alpha = .80$ and $.69$, respectively) in three distinct trials of distressed individuals (Pargament et al., 1998), and in samples of violently bereaved African Americans (Burke et al., 2011; PRC: $\alpha = .88$ and NRC: $\alpha = .79$). Cronbach's alphas for the PRC and NRC subscales were .90 and .90, and 94 and

.89, in our community and college student samples, respectively.

Religious Coping Activities Scale

The Religious Coping Activities Scale (RCA; Pargament, Ensing, Falgout, & Olsen, 1990) is a 29-item measure that uses a 4-point Likert scale to assess a broad array of religious coping, reflecting both PRC and NRC activities such as, "Prayed or read the Bible to keep my mind off my problems" and "Felt angry with or distant from God", respectively. Pargament and colleagues (1990) found that a five-factor structure for the RCA accounted for nearly 100% of the variance, with the sixth subscale consisting of three religious activities used as a means of avoiding problems. The Spiritually Based Activities subscale assesses reliance on a loving relationship with God. The Good Deeds subscale assesses conformity with religious commitments. The Discontent subscale measures anger and alienation related to God or the church, and questioning ones beliefs. The Interpersonal Religious Support subscale assesses reliance on clergy and church members. The Plead subscale focuses on bargaining with God to achieve a miraculous solution to one's problems. And finally, the Religious Avoidance subscale addresses religiously based efforts to direct one's attention away from stressful circumstances. Pargament and colleagues (1990) reported adequate to high internal consistency for each subscale in their sample ($\alpha = .61$ to $.92$). We used the Discontent subscale in the present study to measure spiritual struggle. In our sample, the Discontent subscale showed adequate internal consistency in both the community and college student samples ($\alpha = .82$ and $.84$, respectively).

Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale

Meaning made of loss was measured with the Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES; Holland, Currier, Coleman, & Neimeyer, 2010). This scale uses a 5-point response format ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) and assesses the extent to which a loss makes sense and allows for a hopeful, purposeful future for the bereaved individual. Representative items include "I have made sense of this event" and "My previous goals and hopes for the future don't make sense anymore since this event." Items were scored in such a way that higher scores indicated more adaptive integration of a loss. To increase participation in the community sample's college student cohort, they were given a smaller battery of questionnaires, which meant that only 83 participants completed the ISLES. Recent studies support the convergent and incremental validity of the ISLES as well as its internal consistency

and test-retest reliability (Currier, Holland, Chisty, & Allen, 2011; Holland et al., 2010). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .96 and .95 in the community and college student samples, respectively.

Plan of Analysis

The community sample was used for exploratory analyses, as we were interested in arriving at a model that could be applied to bereaved individuals who are diverse in terms of demographic (e.g., age) and loss-related (e.g., relationship to the deceased) factors. We first examined corrected item-total correlations (excluding the item of interest from the total score) and removed items with substantially lower item-total correlations (i.e., $<.50$) compared to the other items to ensure that each item represented a reasonable measure of the overall construct. Remaining items were analyzed using EFA in MPlus, Version 6.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010). In this analysis, individual items were treated as ordinal variables, and a weighted least squares, mean and variance adjusted (WLSMV) procedure (which is ideal when working with ordinal variables) was used to estimate parameters. In choosing the number of factors to retain, we considered parallel analysis results (Horn, 1965; O'Connor, 2000), the Guttman-Kaiser criterion (i.e., eigenvalues >1), and indices of model fit. Because we wanted items that primarily loaded on one factor, only items with loadings $\geq .40$ on one factor and cross loadings $<.30$ on all other factors were retained.

Once we arrived at an optimal pool of items and factor structure in these exploratory analyses, we used the college student sample to perform a CFA. In evaluating this model, we relied upon a variety of fit indices, including a chi-square goodness-of-fit test, the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993). CFI and TLI values $>.90$ are generally regarded as favorable (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005). Likewise, RMSEA values $\leq .05$ are considered close approximate fit, values between .05 and .08 suggest reasonable fit, and values $\geq .10$ are indicative of poor model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Individual items in this analysis were also treated as ordinal, and CFA was performed in MPlus with WLSMV.

Following these analyses, we also examined the reliability and validity of the ICSG in both samples. In particular, we examined the correlations between the ICSG and conceptually similar measures to assess convergent validity. To test the incremental validity of the ICSG, a multiple regression analysis was run in each sample that tested the unique association between ICSG scores and complicated grief symptoms (as assessed by the ICG-R), after controlling for scores from a general

purpose measure of spiritual struggle (as assessed by the NRC subscale of the Brief RCOPE). We also computed Cronbach's alphas for the total scale as well as for each identified subscale established in the factor analyses. Pearson correlations were calculated to determine 3-week test-retest reliability for the subset of participants in the college student sample who provided data at a follow-up assessment.

RESULTS

Exploratory Analyses With the Community Sample

Corrected item-total correlations with the entire pool of 28 items in the community sample revealed a mean item-total correlation of .57 ($SD = .12$). Five items were removed because their item-total correlations were $<.50$. An additional item was removed because it was left blank by roughly 4% of the sample, and among those who did respond, it was the least endorsed item indicating that many participants possibly viewed this item as unacceptable or irrelevant.

Parallel analysis using the remaining 22 items in the community sample suggested that a two-factor solution was optimal, with an eigenvalue of 13.90 for the first factor and an eigenvalue of 2.56 for the second factor. Subsequent factors all had eigenvalues <1 . We next conducted an EFA with promax rotation using these 22 items. This analysis also supported a two-factor solution, $\chi^2(188) = 274.04$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .055, which provided a better fit compared to a one-factor solution, $\chi^2(209) = 504.74$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .096. Based on the loadings for each item, we retained Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 18 for the first factor and Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 17 for the second factor, using the criteria described earlier (i.e., loadings $\geq .40$ for one factor and $<.30$ for the other). Descriptive statistics, item-total correlations, and the loadings for these 18 items are presented in Table 2.

Based on the content of the items, it appeared that the first seven-item factor captured the extent to which a participant struggled with feeling confused or unprotected by God, or experienced anger at God in the wake of the loss. As a result, this factor was labeled *Insecurity with God*. The second 11-item factor seemed to gauge the degree to which the loss interfered with one's fellowship with the faith community, worship, or other religious practices. Thus, this second factor was labeled *Disruption in Religious Practice*.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis With the College Student Sample

Next, we aimed to confirm this model in the college student sample. Consistent with the exploratory model

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics and Factor Loadings for the ICSG in the Community Sample ($n = 152$)

Items	Mean	SD	Corrected item-total correlations	Factor loadings	
				1	2
1. I don't understand why God has made it so hard for me.	1.60	0.89	.58	.83	.00
2. I have withdrawn from my fellowship with other believers.	1.44	0.91	.57	-.12	.87
3. I go out of my way to avoid spiritual/religious activities (e.g., prayer, worship, Bible reading).	1.29	0.79	.65	-.05	.92
4. I no longer feel safe and protected by God.	1.20	0.67	.57	.71	.18
5. I find that spiritual/religious activities are not very fulfilling (e.g., prayer, worship, Bible reading).	1.42	0.94	.57	.03	.80
6. I find it impossible to pray.	1.19	0.62	.65	.25	.72
7. I struggle with accepting how a good God allows bad things to happen.	1.65	0.99	.59	.77	.07
8. I find it difficult to surrender my life to God.	1.50	1.00	.58	.04	.80
9. I don't feel as comforted by church fellowship as I used to.	1.52	1.07	.62	-.02	.87
10. I can't help feeling angry with God.	1.33	0.72	.56	.86	-.00
11. I don't feel very much like joining in fellowship to praise God or to glorify Him.	1.37	0.94	.69	-.04	.97
12. The strong guiding light of my faith has grown dim and I feel lost.	1.38	0.85	.67	.09	.82
13. I'm confused as to why God would let this happen.	1.65	1.01	.60	.92	-.10
14. I have lost my desire to worship.	1.27	0.74	.71	.17	.85
15. I find it impossible to worship.	1.19	0.57	.61	.01	.91
16. I feel my loss is unfair.	1.77	1.15	.52	.87	-.11
17. I sense the absence of God more than I do the presence of God.	1.22	0.62	.55	.09	.73
18. I am a faithful believer, so I don't understand why God did not protect me.	1.39	0.84	.60	.81	.05

Note: ICSG = Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief. Corrected item-total correlations are based on the initial pool of 28-items. Likewise, the factor loadings were derived from an exploratory factor analysis that involved 22 items (with six removed due to low item-total correlations and missing data). The 18 items with loadings $\geq .40$ on one factor and $< .30$ on the other are presented in bold in this table. Factor 1 represents *Insecurity with God*; Factor 2 represents *Disruption of Religious Practice*.

arrived at in the community sample, we tested a model with two latent factors—one of which represented the Insecurity with God factor, measured with the 7 best items established in the exploratory analyses, and another that represented a Disruption in Religious Practice factor, measured with the 11 best items established previously. This two-factor model is shown in Figure 1 and was found to fit the data reasonably well, $\chi^2(134) = 224.52$, $p < .001$; CFI = .99; TLI = .99; RMSEA = .067, 90% confidence interval (CI) = .051–.082). In contrast, a one-factor model did not fit the data as well, $\chi^2(135) = 348.37$, $p < .001$; CFI = .98; TLI = .98; RMSEA = .102, 90% CI = .089–.115; χ^2 difference test (1) = 37.98, $p < .001$.

Convergent and Incremental Validity in the Community and College Student Samples

The seven items measuring Insecurity with God and the 11 items measuring Disruption in Religious Practice were summed to examine the performance of these items as subscales. Correlations between the total ICSG, ICSG subscales, and measures of related constructs (e.g., complicated grief symptoms, positive/negative religious coping) are presented in Table 3. As this table illustrates, the ICSG total scores were significantly correlated with each measure (except for Interpersonal

Religious Support in the community sample) in expected directions. Specifically, higher total scores on the ICSG were associated with more complicated grief symptoms, negative religious coping, religious discontent, and religious pleading. Higher ICSG scores were also associated with less positive religious coping, spiritually-based coping, religious good deeds, interpersonal religious support, religious avoidance, and meaning made of loss.

Examination of the correlations with the two subscales also revealed some interesting patterns. To objectively compare the magnitude of the correlations with the variables used in the convergent validity analyses for the Insecurity with God subscale versus those derived from the Disruption in Religious Practice subscale, we used Williams' (1959) t test. Williams' t can be used to test for differences between nonindependent correlations derived from a common third variable (i.e., in this case, the convergent validity variables) and the same sample of participants (see Steiger, 1980, for a full description of this procedure). As Table 3 highlights, in both samples the Insecurity with God subscale was more strongly correlated than the Disruption in Religious Practice subscale with complicated grief symptoms, negative religious coping, religious pleading and struggles to integrate the meaning of the loss. In contrast, it appeared that Disruption in Religious Practice was more strongly associated than Insecurity with God with

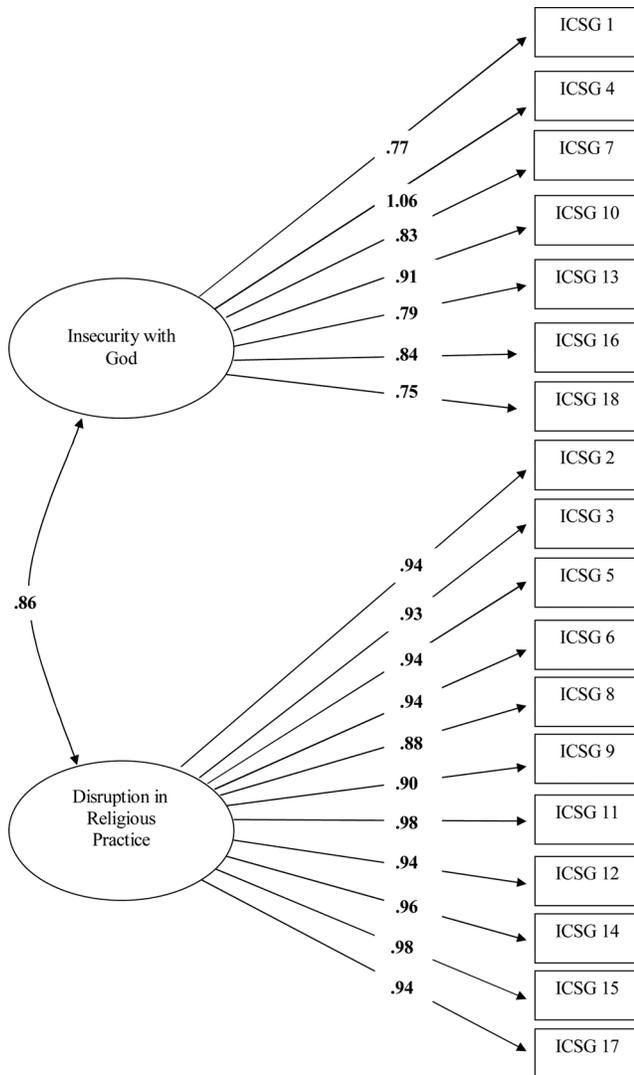


FIGURE 1 This figure displays results from the confirmatory factor analysis for the two-factor model tested in the college student sample ($n = 152$). Standardized factor loadings are given, all of which are statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. Factor loadings are regression coefficients, which may sometimes be larger than 1 (Jöreskog, 1999). ICSG = Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief.

less positive religious coping and fewer good deeds, and (in the community sample) religious avoidance.

In addition to these analyses, we also examined the association between the ICSG and demographic and loss-related factors. In both the community and college student sample, ICSG scores (as total and subscale scores) were not significantly associated with age, gender, or income level. In the college student sample, Caucasian students were significantly more likely to have higher scores for Insecurity with God, $t(149) = 3.06, p = .003$; Disruption in Religious Practice, $t(149) = 4.65, p < .001$; and the total ICSG, $t(149) = 4.46, p < .001$; compared to ethnic/racial minority students. In the community sample, a similar pattern of results was

observed for Disruption in Religious Practice, $t(150) = 2.53, p = .01$, and the total ICSG, $t(150) = 2.50, p = .01$.

In the college student sample, significant differences were also found between students who lost different types of relationships in terms of Insecurity with God, $F(2,148) = 7.24, p < .001$; Disruption in Religious Practice, $F(2,148) = 4.49, p < .01$; and the total ICSG, $F(2,148) = 6.15, p = .003$. Tukey's post hoc tests revealed that those who lost an immediate family member were more likely to report complicated spiritual grief reactions compared to those who lost extended family members or friends. Surprisingly, no significant differences were found on the ICSG in the community sample for different types of lost relationships. With regard to the cause of death, those who lost a loved one to violent causes (i.e., accident, suicide, or homicide) had higher scores for the Insecurity with God subscale, in both the community, $t(144) = 2.95, p = .004$, and college student samples, $t(147) = 1.94, p = .05$, as well as for the Disruption in Religious Practice subscale, $t(144) = 2.29, p = .02$, and total ICSG, $t(144) = 3.00, p = .003$, in the community sample only.

In our tests of incremental validity, we also found that higher ICSG scores were uniquely associated with more severe complicated grief symptoms after controlling for scores on the NRC subscale of the Brief RCOPE (a more general purpose measure of spiritual struggle), in both the community ($\beta = .22, p = .009$) and college student samples ($\beta = .36, p < .001$).

Reliability in the Community and College Student Samples

Good internal consistency was found among the seven items making up the Insecurity with God subscale ($\alpha = .89$ and $.87$ in the community and college student samples, respectively), the 11 items making up the Disruption in Religious Practice subscale ($\alpha = .93$ and $.96$ in the community and college student samples, respectively), and among the 18 items making up the total ICSG ($\alpha = .92$ and $.95$ in the community and college student samples, respectively).

We also examined test-retest reliability among the subset of participants in the college student sample ($n = 31$) who provided follow-up data 3–4 weeks after the initial assessment. Overall, high test-retest correlations were found for the Insecurity with God subscale ($r = .96, p < .001$), Disruption in Religious Practice subscale ($r = .95, p < .001$), and total ICSG ($r = .97, p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

Our goal in this study was to develop a measure of spiritual crisis in bereavement entitled the *Inventory of*

TABLE 3
Bivariate Correlations Between ICSG and Measures of Related Constructs in the Community and College Student Samples

Measure	Community sample (n = 152)				College student sample (n = 152)			
	ICSG total	ICSG F1 subscale	ICSG F2 subscale	Williams' t	ICSG total	ICSG F1 subscale	ICSG F2 subscale	Williams' t
Inventory of Complicated Grief-Revised	.34***	.42***	.20*	2.88**	.49***	.65***	.34***	6.18***
Brief Religious Coping Questionnaire: Positive	-.36***	-.17*	-.40***	2.99**	-.50***	-.39***	-.50***	1.91
Brief Religious Coping Questionnaire: Negative	.43***	.52***	.27***	3.46***	.50***	.56***	.41***	2.71**
RCA: Spiritually Based Coping	-.49***	-.34***	-.48***	1.91	-.63***	-.54***	-.60***	1.15
RCA: Good Deeds	-.32**	-.14	-.37***	2.95**	-.45***	-.38***	-.44***	1.01
RCA: Discontent	.53***	.53***	.41***	1.70	.57***	.44***	.57***	-2.37*
RCA: Interpersonal Religious Support	-.15	-.09	-.17*	.97	-.31***	-.28***	-.28***	0.00
RCA: Plead	.31***	.48***	.12	4.93***	.23**	.37***	.16*	3.42***
RCA: Religious Avoidance	-.27***	-.10	-.33***	2.91**	-.42***	-.34***	-.41***	1.16
Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale	-.28**	-.35***	-.16	-1.77	-.48***	-.56***	-.38***	-3.25**

Note. ICSG = Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief, F1 = Insecurity with God, F2 = Disruption of Religious Practice, RCA = Religious Coping Activities. In the community sample, analyses involving the Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale are based on only 83 participants. Williams' *t* tests are used here to assess whether or not correlations with variables used in the convergent validity analyses are significantly different for the two ICSG subscales.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Complicated Spiritual Grief or ICSG, and to evaluate its specific application to bereaved samples (see the appendix for a full version of the measure). We have presented the psychometric properties of the 18-item instrument, including its two subscales—Insecurity with God and Disruption in Religious Practice. Exploratory factor analysis with a community sample supported this two-factor solution assessing (a) feeling angry, confused, or unprotected by God following the loss and (b) withdrawal from worship and other religious practices as well as the mourner's spiritual community. Replication with a second sample using confirmatory factor analysis further evidenced the generalizability of this model. Overall, the ICSG performed well in terms of the internal consistency and high test-retest reliability of both subscales as well as the total ICSG.

Consistent with previous studies linking NRC with CG (Burke et al., 2011; Burke et al., 2013; Neimeyer & Burke, 2011) our findings revealed that bereaved individuals in our sample who scored highly on nongrief-specific measures of spiritual struggle and who were highly distressed over the loss of their loved one likewise scored high on the ICSG. Interesting patterns also emerged from analyses of both samples in terms of associations between ICSG subscales and other measures used to test convergent validity. Specifically, spiritually inclined grievers who were more displeased, disappointed, and felt less supported by God had more difficulty making sense of the loss and experienced more grief-related distress, whereas those who, as a result of the loss, reported more disruptions in religious participation at both an individual level and with their spiritual community engaged in fewer positive religious activities, performed fewer good deeds,

and endorsed greater levels of religious avoidance in relation to their loss.

Specific demographic factors also were associated with participants' ICSG scores. For example, Caucasian mourners in both groups endorsed greater disruption in terms of their religious activities than individuals of other ethnicities. Likewise, questioning God's intentions or attentiveness in relation to their loss was endorsed more frequently by bereaved Caucasian students than by other groups (primarily African Americans) in both cohorts in our sample. Perhaps these findings are a reflection of the overall higher endorsement of spiritual engagement by African Americans (Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004); although one study with violently bereaved adults found that African Americans seemingly endorsed high levels of both PRC and NRC compared to other samples of distressed individuals (Burke et al., 2011).

Although type of kinship to the deceased (e.g., spouse, parent, child) did not differentially predict spiritual crisis in our community sample, college students who lost a member of their immediate family reported greater spiritual distress than did students who lost a more distant family member (e.g., uncle, grandparent). In a large college student sample Laurie and Neimeyer (2008) also found that young adults who lost a closer versus a distant family member or friend reported greater grief. In addition, in our community sample, violent death loss (i.e., accident, suicide, or homicide) was associated with greater distress in the griever's relationship with God, and with greater interference with the griever's religious practices and fellowship across both samples. These results substantiate previous studies with African American homicide survivors (Burke et al., 2011).

Compared to previous measures, the ICSG is unique in offering a multifaceted measure of spiritual crisis using a wide array of statements representative of anger and distrust toward God, as well as disruptions in the bereaved individual's postloss spiritual practices and fellowship with the spiritual community. Notably, our incremental validity analyses supported the uniqueness of this new assessment tool, with ICSG scores being uniquely associated with more severe complicated grief reactions, even after controlling for scores from a more generic measure of spiritual struggle. Interestingly, the empirical structure of the scale seems to bear on the time-honored distinction between a "vertical" dimension of religiosity in relation to the divine, and a "horizontal" dimension bearing on the individual's relationship to the faith community (Moberg, 1979). The present results suggest that both may be significantly challenged by the death of a loved one, potentially compounding the losses associated with the death itself.

Limitations

Despite the evidence of its factorial and convergent validity, internal consistency and test-retest stability, the ICSG is not without limitations. For instance, although we had ample sample size across both cohorts in our study, using more diverse sampling techniques (i.e., multisite or multiregion) would have provided greater confidence in the generalizability of these findings. Testing its psychometric properties in the context of different samples should be a priority in future work.

A second limitation is the ICSG's possible restriction to Christian mourners or those in the broader Abrahamic or monotheistic traditions that cast God as a protector, in contrast to others like Buddhism that may confer meaning on suffering or impermanence, but without positing a personal relationship with God (Park & Halifax, 2011). Because grievers of various faith traditions likely experience spiritual crisis differently, one scale is unlikely to fit all. Thus, future research should consider a variety of spiritual traditions and develop measures pertinent to the distinctive features of each. In addition, inasmuch as even secular mourners often struggle with a breakdown in meaning making, further developing and refining measures designed to tap challenges and changes in their practical, naturalistic or philosophic worldviews is equally indicated.

CONCLUSION

We hope that the current development and initial validation of the ICSG will enable providers of psycho-spiritual care and researchers to (a) assess the phenomenon of spiritual struggle as it pertains specifically to loss rather than in the form of general spirituality or negative

religious coping, (b) differentiate spiritual struggle in terms of one's relationship with God and with the community of spiritual practice, and (c) better investigate the link between CSG and other grief-specific correlates or consequences, such as CG and meaning making. As this work proceeds, clearer answers should emerge concerning whether CSG pertains uniquely to Christianity or Abrahamic traditions, or whether loss-related spiritual struggle is experienced by spiritually inclined individuals irrespective of their faith tradition or lack of one. We also would hope that it might contribute to research and practice that pursues the possibility of positive outcomes in bereavement, as in evaluating the relation between CSG and posttraumatic growth, or defining foci for possible therapeutic interventions to alleviate spiritual distress among mourners and testing their efficacy. Thus, we view the ICSG as useful in conceptualizing, assessing, and reporting grief-specific spiritual crisis in response to a wide variety of empirical, clinical and pastoral applications.

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APPENDIX: INVENTORY OF COMPLICATED SPIRITUAL GRIEF

Please think about your loss of _____, and then read each statement carefully. Choose the answer that best describes how you have been feeling during the past 2 weeks including today. Please answer these based on how you actually feel, rather than what you believe you should feel.

Items	Not at all true	A little true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Very definitely true
1) I don't understand why God has made it so hard for me.	1	2	3	4	5
2) I have withdrawn from my fellowship with other believers.	1	2	3	4	5
3) I go out of my way to avoid spiritual/religious activities (e.g., prayer, worship, Bible reading).	1	2	3	4	5
4) I no longer feel safe and protected by God.	1	2	3	4	5
5) I find that spiritual/religious activities are not very fulfilling (e.g., prayer, worship, Bible reading) .	1	2	3	4	5
6) I find it impossible to pray.	1	2	3	4	5
7) I struggle with accepting how a good God allows bad things to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
8) I find it difficult to surrender my life to God.	1	2	3	4	5
9) I don't feel as comforted by church fellowship as I used to.	1	2	3	4	5
10) I can't help feeling angry with God.	1	2	3	4	5
11) I don't feel very much like joining in fellowship to praise God or to glorify Him.	1	2	3	4	5
12) The strong guiding light of my faith has grown dim and I feel lost.	1	2	3	4	5
13) I'm confused as to why God would let this happen.	1	2	3	4	5
14) I have lost my desire to worship.	1	2	3	4	5
15) I find it impossible to worship.	1	2	3	4	5
16) I feel my loss is unfair.	1	2	3	4	5
17) I sense the absence of God more than I do the presence of God.	1	2	3	4	5
18) I am a faithful believer, so I don't understand why God did not protect me.	1	2	3	4	5

Note: A sum of all items can be taken to compute a total Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief score. Likewise, items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 18 can be summed to compute the Insecurity with God subscale, and items 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17 can be summed to compute the Disruption in Religious Practice subscale.