

Forgive & forget? Attitudes towards forgiveness in the case of multiple, similar offenses

Erika DeSchiffart

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING AND
SPIRITUALITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

Saint Paul University

March, 2013

© Erika DeSchiffart, Ottawa, Canada, 2013

Abstract

New research has emerged detailing the potential risks of forgiveness for couples as well as its benefits (McNulty, 2008, 2010, & 2011). Given the lack of research conducted on the perspective of the offending partner within the forgiveness process, this mixed method study examines the couple's experience of the forgiveness and reconciliation process in the face of multiple, similar offenses. Though no support was found for the risks of forgiveness as proposed by McNulty (2011), factors that influenced the satisfaction of couples and the forgiveness process include self esteem, attachment, and spirituality. These factors, as well as the results from the qualitative interviews regarding inter-partner forgiveness, are discussed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	pg. 4
Chapter 2: Method.....	pg. 28
Chapter 3: Analysis.....	pg. 34
Quantitative.....	pg. 34
Qualitative.....	pg. 38
Chapter 4: Discussion.....	pg. 57
References.....	pg. 72
Appendix A: Informed Consent for Questionnaire	pg. 84
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	pg. 85
Appendix C: Informed Consent for Interview.....	pg. 101
Appendix D: Thematic Analysis.....	pg. 102

Chapter 1: Introduction

“A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers”- Robert Quillen

As this quote suggests, it seems it would be safe to say that it is impossible for two people in relationship to not hurt or offend one another at some point. These offenses can range in severity, and what is understood to be required in many cases for the couple to reconcile is forgiveness. Why so much clinical focus on forgiveness? As aforementioned, it is a key step so that couples can begin to start over, but regardless of whether or not reconciliation takes place, research suggests that forgiveness improves a person's quality of life, ensuring that they will not expend their energy in resentment, anger, and a preoccupation with obtaining revenge (Lundahl et al., 2008). In a study comparing those who held grudges to those who decided to forgive, it was found that forgiving thoughts gave the hurt person a greater sense of self-efficacy, and lower physiological responses, such as lower heart rate and blood pressure (van Oyen Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001). Nonetheless, forgiveness is not always easily achieved. For example, “Once a cheater, always a cheater”—this oft repeated warning is considered layperson wisdom for romantic relationships. As infidelity is one of the reportedly more difficult offenses that couple counsellors are faced with (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997), therapists have used the construct of forgiveness as an essential element to the task of couple reconciliation. Furthermore, forgiveness is an often used intervention for a variety of offenses within couple relationships (Johnson, 2002). Yet recent research warns against upholding forgiveness as the beginning point for all couples. What if forgiveness, rather than causing the offender to regret his/her actions and avoid repeating them, reduces the offender's guilt and, thereby, makes it easier for him/her to offend again or continue in the same offense longer term?

Wallace, Exline, and Baumeister (2008) identified a gap in forgiveness research when they stated that, “investigations of the perpetrator’s perspective are rare in the burgeoning literature on forgiveness and until they happen, unconditional endorsements of forgiveness would be premature” (p. 459). What is needed in the face of this seeming paradox is a deeper investigation into the consequences of forgiveness, and of the exact underlying motivations that cause people to avoid re-offending those who have forgiven them. Therefore, the purpose of this exploratory study is two-fold,

a) It is an investigation of the effect that McNulty (2011) demonstrated of the potential negative effects of forgiveness, or the “licence to transgress” effect, where more forgiving partners report higher levels of offenses committed against them than less forgiving partners. This will be attempted through a replication of McNulty’s (2011) study comparing individual’s levels of forgivingness and number of offenses experienced.

b) To qualitatively investigate both the hurt and offending partner’s perspectives and patterns of interaction in the face of forgiveness, specifically surrounding multiple offenses of a similar nature.

Relational Offenses Defined

Interestingly, there is very little research literature detailing what, exactly, constitutes a relational offense. This is highlighted by Leary and colleagues (1998) who write, “despite the pervasiveness and potency of instances in which people’s feelings are hurt, research on the topic is virtually nonexistent” (pg. 1225). Merriam-Webster’s dictionary describes offenses as either a. “something that outrages the moral or physical senses” or b. “the act of displeasing or affronting”. It is in the way of the second definition that Leary and colleagues (1998) attempt to delineate some of the causes and consequences are of hurt feelings, or being displeased or affronted by a relational offense. Leary et al. (1998) assert that “hurt

feelings” is a complex phenomenon, involving guilt, sadness, anger, and anxiety. They cite that one of the most common denominator of hurt feelings or being offended involves some kind of relational devaluation, meaning the perception that their partner does not view either themselves or their relationship as important, close, or valuable as they do (Leary et al., 1998). The researchers believe that this arises from a kind of sociometre (Leary & Downs, 2005), whose purpose is to alerts the individual to a threat of social exclusion. They maintain that the need to feel a sense of belonging is so strong that each person contains an affective and cognitive mechanism (the sociometre), which monitors for cues of social disapproval or rejection. Thus, when a person perceives that another individual is acting in such a way that signals possible social exclusion or relationship devaluation, they experience negative affect and thoughts that motivate them to minimize the likelihood of being excluded. This was supported by Leary and colleagues’ (1998) research, which found a significant correlation between feelings of rejection and acceptance by others, and their own self perception. If an individual felt hurt and rejected, they were much more likely to de-value themselves as well. Given the definition of relational offenses as anything that can be perceived as devaluing the relationship or partner, it is apparent that this is a very subjective experience and will differ from person to person. Thus, for the purpose of this study an offense scale will be used that has been validated through a pilot study completed by Luchies (2011), in which participants have rated the severity of a variety of offenses, with the top twenty being included in the scale.

In regards to the consequences of a relational offense, Leary et al. (1998) found that often offenses had serious consequences for the relationship. In this particular study, sixty-seven percent of the hurt persons stated that their relationship had been weakened with the offending party for some time afterward, and forty-two percent stated that it weakened their

relationship permanently. In less than 5 percent of cases did the individual report there was no effect. Furthermore, sixty percent of individuals trusted the offender less after the incident, and forty-four percent had increased feelings of dislike. There were also intrapersonal effects as well, as participants reported lower self esteem, increased social anxiety, and ninety-three percent of the participants stated that the event was still painful for them. Interestingly, the vast majority of the hurtful incidents that the participants reported were in close relationships, again reinforcing the need for some way in which these serious effects can be mitigated so that one can continue to have close, satisfying relationships. This brings to light the need for forgiveness.

Theological Definitions of Forgiveness

It was not until the mid 1980's that psychology began to study the literature on forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2000), however, forgiveness has a rich history in religious traditions. Rye et al. (2000) write that forgiveness has been endorsed by all of the major world religions. The Jewish tradition defines forgiveness as an active cancellation of a debt, with the offense being considered as totally wiped away (the Hebrew word *mehillah* connotes this) (Rye et al., 2000). This does not mean that a hurt individual must reconcile with the offender, but rather they accept that there may be a possibility of reconciliation. A Jewish religious scholar, Dorff (In Rye et al., 2000), takes note that a person can reconcile without forgiving and forgive without reconciliation. The Jewish religious tradition is different from Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism (McCullough et al., 2000) in that the hurt party is only obligated to forgive if the offender has demonstrated remorse, or gone through return. In fact, in the more serious offenses, forgiveness may be deterred due to an attempt to protect the injured party.

In the Christian tradition, forgiveness is also defined as an active letting go of an offense (Rye et al., 2000). It also includes a connotation of compassion (Rye et al., 2000), where the hurt party feels empathy or compassion towards the offender. Though Christianity warns against the concept of pseudo-forgiveness or cheap grace, injured parties are encouraged and supported to go through the forgiveness process, regardless of whether or not the perpetrator shows remorse. This is similar in the Buddhist and Islamic traditions, where forgiveness is also defined as a letting go, or wiping away of a debt or offense (Rye et al., 2000). The Buddhist tradition also underscores that there should be a reduction in negative affect as well as the removal of the debt (Rye et al., 2000). In the Muslim and Christian traditions, it is highlighted that an offense against man or creation is also an offense against the divine. Therefore forgiveness is not only necessitated from an individual, but God as well (Rye et al., 2000).

Psychological Definitions of Forgiveness

Defining forgiveness is a difficult task in the psychological tradition, namely because people, though able to describe what it is not, have trouble deciding what forgiveness actually entails. There seems to be a consensus among psychotherapist and researchers that forgiveness does *not* involve “pardoning” (a legal term), “condoning” (meaning that a person approves of their action against them), “excusing” (taking away some/or of the responsibility from the offender), “forgetting” (suggests that the memory of the offense just slipped away), “denying” (pretending that the offense never happened), and “reconciliation” (implying that the relationship is restored) (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). The debate of what forgiveness is usually centres around two questions (Luchies, 2011). Firstly, what is actually changed within the individual (i.e. affect, behaviour, cognition, motivation) in the

process of forgiveness, and secondly, is only a reduction of negative behaviour needed, or should there be prosocial behaviour towards the offender as well? A popular definition from McCullough et al. (2000) proposes that “forgiveness is an intraindividual, prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context” (pg. 9). Luchies (2011) suggests that though prosocial behaviour towards the offender is present in many cases of forgiveness, if one felt neutral towards the subject in the first place (e.g. the offender is a stranger in the grocery store) then it would seem unreasonable to suggest that one needs to act more positively towards that stranger once the individual had forgiven them. Therefore Luchies (2011) defines forgiveness as “the active reduction of negative affect and behaviour toward a perceived perpetrator” (pg. 13). This definition focuses on the fact that the person forgiving has a dynamic role—forgiveness does not just happen passively over time, but involves a conscious willingness to let go of resentment and the right to punishment. Secondly, it points to the fact that though forgiveness happens within the individual, it often takes place interpersonally, or within the relationship between two or more people. This is perhaps a more helpful definition in terms of couple and family therapy, as it allows for a more distinct line between forgiveness and reconciliation, as reconciliation would point more towards pro-social behaviour. Nevertheless, Fincham (2009) argues that “in the context of close relationships, change in regard to both positive (i.e. feeling more benevolent towards the offender) and negative (reduction of anger) dimensions of forgiveness seems necessary. It is difficult to imagine an optimal relationship without restoring goodwill towards the offending partner” (pg. 374).

Younger, Piferi, Job, and Lawler (2004) investigated whether the views of lay persons correlated with the aforementioned theoretical definitions. The most popular

definition of forgiveness within the community sample was a *letting go of negative feelings* or *letting go of grudges* (thirty-nine percent of individuals). The second highest definition with twenty-nine percent was *acceptance, dealing with the event, or getting over it*. These appear to correlate with the academic definitions of an active reduction in negative feelings and behaviour. Nevertheless, sixteen percent of those interviewed defined forgiveness as *continuing or resuming the relationship* and eleven percent stated that forgiveness meant to *forget the event*. This demonstrates that there may be a gap between laypersons definition of forgiveness and the academic, and therapist and researchers alike need to keep this in mind.

Finally, there is literature that conceptualizes forgiveness as a *process* rather than a discrete event. Imagine that you witnessed a discussion where one person had cheated on a test using the other's answers, and subsequently both had failed the class. If the hurt person had immediately said "it is all right, I forgive you", one might suspect that a kind of pseudo-forgiveness had taken place, where the hurt person had not fully acknowledged the depth of the injury that had been done against them. Being able to truly forgive a major offense may require a hurt person to go through certain steps or phases, and there is research to support this idea. In a meta-analysis of fourteen published articles of process-based forgiveness interventions compared to the more brief decision based models, it was found that those in the experimental group forgave more, had increased positive affect and self-esteem, and less negative affect (Lundahl, Taylor, Stevenson, & Roberts, 2008).

Process Models of Forgiveness

Baskin and Enright (2004) developed a detailed model of forgiveness that includes four phases. In the first phase, participants become aware of psychological blocks of

forgiveness resulting from an unjust injury, and uncover information about their worldviews, sometimes modifying them. Secondly, in the decision phase individuals are encouraged to consider forgiveness as a way of responding to the offender. In the work phase, persons develop empathy by re-framing the offense and the offender, and learn acceptance of the pain. In the final outcome phase, the hurt person looks for meaning in the event, and plans steps towards “moving on” in their life. Similarly, McCullough and Worthington (1995) propose a five-phase model with the acronym “REACH”. It stands for “recalling” the offense, building “empathy” for the offender, offering an “altruistic” gift to the offender, “committing” to forgive, and “holding on” to the forgiveness (Lundahl et al., 2008). In terms of marital therapy, these process models have been adapted by Gordon, Baucom, and Snyder (2000) to a three stage model that 1) involves accepting and experiencing the trauma of an interpersonal injury 2) attempting to find the meaning or purpose in the traumatic event, and use this information to inform the next step, which is 3) moving forward with one’s life within this new relational context. Though helpful to describe what happens in the process for the hurt partner, a weakness in these models for marital/couple therapy is that they fail to address the offending partner (Gordon et al., 2000). Case (2005) describes a specific technique of addressing infidelity through apology and forgiveness, which attempts to encompass both the hurt and offender. The forgiveness aspect includes four stages, “ceasing to seek/demand justice or revenge, ceasing to feel anger/resentment, wishing the other person well, and restoring relational trust” (pg. 43). The first three stages can be accomplished without the repentance and apology of the partner, however, if the final stage is to occur the offender must engage in some process of apology. This apology process includes acknowledgement of the offense, learning and expressing back to the hurt partner how the injury affected them, building trust through concrete acts, searching for an understanding of

why the injury occurred in the first place, identifying and sharing a plan to not injure again, explicitly expressing regret and asking for forgiveness, and committing to following through on these actions over time. While the above discussion make distinctions between process based forgiveness and decisional models, it is notable that in either case it is expected that the individual will make an explicit choice to forgive.

Unconscious Factors in the Forgiveness Process

As the above process models of forgiveness have suggested, many researchers and therapists alike have conceptualized forgiveness as a decision, however, recent research has contributed to the discussion by emphasizing the unconscious factors at play in forgiveness. Karremans and Van Lange (2008) seek to extend the definition of forgiveness to include the implicit processes that might be underneath forgiveness. They argue this largely based on the fact that forgiveness has been largely shown to fluctuate, meaning that a person's level of forgiveness towards a specific incident/offender can vary. McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003) demonstrated that an individual can believe that he or she has forgiven someone and still experience negative feelings from time to time. Conversely, one might feel that they can never forgive an offender and still experience feelings of goodwill from time to time. Karremans and Van Lange (2008) believe that these fluctuations could be largely attributed to implicit or unconscious motivations. In order to test this hypothesis they conducted a large number of studies using implicit priming of images that were previously found to facilitate forgiveness (such as justice images, power images, and words that indicate closeness and commitment). They found that when participants were implicitly primed with these images they were more likely to forgive than when primed with neutral images. Perhaps an even more convincing study utilized the perception of time to influence level of forgiveness.

Wohl and McGrath (2007) asked all participants to remember an offense from exactly one month ago. The researchers then split the participants into two groups, one who had to mark the event on a timeline that ran from September until April, whereas in the other condition participants were asked to mark the event on a timeline that ran from December until April. The result was that in the first condition the offense appeared to be much closer in time than in the second condition. The affected levels of forgivingness in that if people even *perceived* the offense to be closer in time (even though in both conditions the amount of time that passed was exactly the same), they were more likely to offer forgiveness. Karremans and Van Lange (2008) write that though they are unsure what the exact mechanism that underlies this phenomenon is, it demonstrates that forgiveness can be influenced by implicit processes such as perceived time and closeness/commitment salience as well as explicit conscious motivations.

Benefits of Forgiving

In their review on forgiveness, Karremans and Van Lange (2008) also examine the potential benefits to forgiving. They divide the positive effects forgiveness can have into three sections: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and generalized. In terms of the intrapersonal effects, Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer (2003) conducted a study in which they asked participants to recall either a forgiven offense or an un-forgiven offense, which occurred in all types of relationships. They found that those who recalled a forgiven offense reported a higher level of psychological well being, they had more life satisfaction, higher levels of state self-esteem, lower levels of negative affect, and higher levels of positive affect. Interestingly, this positive effect of forgiveness occurred only in relationships in which there was strong commitment. There was no difference in levels of psychological

well-being for those who remember incidents that had occurred in non-committed relationships, even after controlling for how long ago the offense occurred and the severity of the offense. Karremans and Van Lange (2008) believe that this highlights that forgiveness is not necessarily associated with potential psychological well-being per se, and that it may be further mediated by relationship variables such as commitment. Bono, McCullough, and Root (2008) found that forgiveness was causally related to well-being if the relationship included the following two factors: a) a high amount closeness and commitment to the partner and b) an apology from the partner. With regards to physical well-being, forgiveness was found to correlate with better health habits (less cigarette and alcohol use), more sleep, less physical symptoms and number of medications taken (Seybold, Hill, Neumann, & Chi, 2001; Lawler et al., 2005). Another aforementioned experiment asked participants to both imagine forgiving an offender and not forgiving the offender, while measuring their physiology. It was found that the forgiving response was associated with less facial tension, lower heart rate and blood pressure, and less skin conductance (Wivliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001). These research studies appear to demonstrate that forgiveness is associated with positive intrapersonal effects; however, as not by Karreman and Van Lange (2008) possible meditational variables demonstrate that perhaps an unconditional endorsement of forgiveness in romantic relationships may be unwise.

Interpersonally, forgiveness has been shown to have positive benefits as well. Maio, Thomas, Fincham, and Carnelly (2008) found that forgiveness was longitudinally associated with more positive family environments after one year. Paleari et al. (2005) found that being more forgiving after a serious offense was indicative of a higher marital quality six months after. Karremans and Van Lange (2008) write that one of the reasons forgiveness may help

interpersonal relationships is that it encourages pro-social behaviour. In an attempt to research this hypothesis, Karremans and Van Lange (2004) reminded one group of participants of an offense that they had for the most part forgiven, and reminded a second group of an offense that was still outstanding, or mainly un-forgiven. It was found that those who were reminded of a largely forgiven offense were more likely to cooperate in a social dilemma task with the person who offended them, were more likely act in a way that benefitted the relationship even in the face of another offense done by their partner, and were more willing to make a sacrifice for their partner. This claim is supported by research done by Van Lange et al. (1997), who gave participants four coins, each worth fifty cents to the participant but one dollar to their partner. Again, participants were asked to either think of a forgiven offense or an offense that they had not forgiven that their partner had committed against them. Each partner was then asked to give an amount of coins to their partner at the same time: if they gave more coins then they would promote the relationship well-being, however, if they kept coins back they would promote personal well-being. It was demonstrated that those who remembered an offense they had largely forgiven were more willing to give more coins, indicating that forgiveness helps transform an individual's focus from themselves to the relationship. One can see then how important forgiveness is to interpersonal relationships, as it works to promote a cycle of pro-relationship behaviours and motivations.

A second piece of evidence that forgiveness is beneficial interpersonally is that it helps to promote feelings of closeness between partners. McCullough et al. (1998) demonstrated that those who were more forgiving experienced higher levels of closeness after the offense. Another study done by Karremans and Van Lange (2008b) found that

partners were more likely to use relationship language (we versus me) if they remembered an offense that they had forgiven as opposed to an un-forgiven offense. Again, this effect was still robust after controlling for the severity of the offense, the commitment of each partner, and how much time had passed since the offense. Taking these factors in consideration, Karremans and Van Lange (2008) write that, “in light of the inevitable offenses that occur in interpersonal relationships, by promoting connectedness and pro-relationship behaviour...forgiveness is a *key* factor in relationship maintenance and health (pg. 231).

A third set of studies illustrate mixed conclusions regarding the benefits of forgiveness interpersonally. Wallace et al. (2008) conducted three studies to investigate whether or not forgiveness invites or deters further transgression. Two of the three studies provided support for the hypothesis that forgiveness deters transgression, however, within the first study an interaction was found. The first study actually induced participants to commit an offense against the other through a variation of the prisoner’s dilemma. All participants were told that they have been singled to compete (instead of co-operate) with both of the other two participants in the first round, and only one in the second round, so as to fulfill the experimenter’s true purpose. Half the participants were told that the game would last five rounds, the other half were told it would last two (all games in actuality only lasted two rounds). At the end of the first round participants were told that the individuals they had competed against (supposedly two other participants) had chosen to cooperate, thus meaning that the participants received a great payout and the others had received none. The experimenter then handed the participants two cards with pre-created responses “from” the other two participants (the real comment cards were not given): the first was a “forgiving” response that read: “Ouch. OK, I forgive you for competing against me, but let’s cooperate

so we can both get some money.” The second response was “unforgiving” and it read “What’s your problem?! You really screwed me. Remember – we’ll both get more money if we cooperate”. When given the choice to compete against either participant A or B, people were more likely to choose to compete against the unforgiving player only if there was no chance of retaliation. If there was a possibility of retaliation (i.e. they were playing five rounds instead of two) the number of participants who competed against the unforgiving player was non-significant to the number who chose to compete against the forgiving player. This suggests that if there is a possibility of retaliation from an unforgiving player, individuals are more likely to transgress against the forgiver. Based on this finding as well as the fact that in both studies that suggested forgiveness deters transgression a stable percentage of people (15-20 %) still chose to transgress against the forgiving participant, Wallace et al. (2008) are still reluctant to unconditionally endorse forgiveness.

Lastly, given the benefits of forgiving both intra and interpersonally, Van Lange and Karremans (2008) were interested in the potential benefits for society as a whole. In this light they designed two studies in which they tested whether remembering a forgiven offense contributed to a larger sense of community with others. In the first study they utilized the Inclusion of Other in the Self (Aron et al., 1992) scale, which depicts six pairs of circles ranging in degrees of overlap from not at all to almost complete overlap. Those who remembered a forgiven offense were more likely to indicate circles that were more overlapping of each other to represent how connected they felt towards others than those who had remembered an un-forgiven offense (Karremans, Van Lange, & Holland, 2005). In the second study, the experiment focused not only on feelings of connectedness but pro-social behaviour as well. It was found that not only were those who remembered the forgiven

incident more likely to volunteer for a charity; they were also more likely to donate money as well than those who remembered the un-forgiven incident. (Karremans, Van Lange, & Holland, 2005).

A Dark Side of Forgiveness?

Given all of the aforementioned research, the question of whether forgiveness can be accepted as a kind of “panacea” for all relational problems has been often discussed. The difficulty lays in the idea that by forgiving or cancelling an interpersonal debt one is thereby removing many of the psychological consequences of that debt, leaving the hurt person vulnerable to being hurt again. This is especially relevant for couple and family counselling, as forgiveness is almost always discussed with the further goal of reconciliation. McNulty (2011) examined this possibility by assessing newlyweds’ tendency to forgive and levels of psychological and physical aggression of the first four years of marriage. He found that those who expressed a higher tendency to forgive had the same levels of physical and psychological aggression over the four years, whereas those who were less likely to forgive experienced a decrease in spousal aggression over the same period. The theory underlining this study was based on Operant Learning, which suggests that negative consequences diminish negative behaviour and positive actions reinforce positive behaviour. This is what McNulty (2011) calls “antithetical” to the idea of forgiveness, which essentially calls for the hurt partner to release the right to blame, reject, or be angry at the offender. In an earlier diary study, McNulty (2010) found that newlyweds were more likely to report that their partners had transgressed against them on days after they had expressed forgiveness as opposed to days in which they had not offered their partner forgiveness for an earlier transgression. He warns that it may be dangerous for partners to forgive in relationships

where transgressions occur often. McNulty (2008) demonstrated that relationship satisfaction decreased when a spouse reported higher levels of forgiveness and a higher amount of transgressions. Forgiveness was positive for couples only when there was a reported low level of transgressions. In the same study, McNulty (2008) found that husbands would rate the offense as more severe to the extent that they were more forgiving. If they were less forgiving, however, the offense severity rating tended to stay the same.

Mixed results are reflected in Luchies (2002) dissertation research in which she conducted four distinct studies, three of which involved couples. She labelled McNulty's research as the "license to transgress" effect, and had significant evidence to support the hypothesis that people are more likely to transgress against those who are more forgiving in the first of two studies. Interestingly, this effect failed to be replicated in a study where the interpersonal relationship was one of friendship rather than a romantic relationship. Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, and Kumashiro (2010) found another potential "dark side" of forgiving in their studying examining forgiveness and self-respect. They demonstrated that forgiving can diminish one's self-respect and self-concept clarity if the offender does not demonstrate adequately that the partner will be safe and valued. Feeling safe and valued included items like the partner apologizing and being agreeable. Luchies et al. (2010) argue that this provides evidence that forgiving is not an independent decision, and that the other partner's behaviour influences not only the decision to forgive but the consequences of forgiving as well. So perhaps the more helpful questions might be: What are the underlying motivations and attitudes for the "hurt" partner when they forgive? Similarly, what are the underlying motivations and attitudes for the "offender" when they receive forgiveness? Finally, is there

a discernable pattern of interaction between the hurt partner and the offender that moderates the benefits and risks of forgiveness?

The Hurt Partner

The hurt partner's motivations for either giving or withholding forgiveness are more prevalent in literature. Again, two major factors include the level of closeness and commitment that a person feels towards their partner. Karremans and Van Lange (2004) found that individuals were more likely to report stronger feelings of forgiveness towards people whom they felt strongly committed to, as opposed to those they considered only weakly committed. Tsang, McCullough, and Fincham (2006) report that partners who are more committed to their partners are more accommodating, more willing to sacrifice, and rate their partner's offenses as less severe. Harber & Wenberg (2005) demonstrated that closeness also plays a role, as closer partners reported higher forgiveness. This raises a type of circular question of which comes first: closeness or forgiveness? Research has demonstrated that closeness and commitment help to facilitate forgiveness; however, if an offense has just been committed the hurt partner is less likely to feel close or committed. Furthermore, how does one begin to build a close and committed relationship without forgiveness? Fincham, McCullough, and Tsang (2006) asked these questions in their study about the longitudinal relationship between forgiveness and closeness/commitment. They divided hurt partner's responses into three motivations: revenge, avoidance, and benevolence. The data demonstrated that there was evidence for a reciprocal relationship between forgiveness and closeness and commitment. The evidence was stronger for the pathway of forgiveness facilitating commitment (i.e. increasing benevolence, reducing revenge and avoidance). There was less strong evidence for the alternate pathway, as

closeness and commitment appeared to only facilitate a reduction in avoidance, but not a reduction in revenge or an increase in benevolence (Fincham, McCullough, & Tsang, 2006).

Another important factor that allows individuals to forgive is self-regulation. Forgiveness is the opposite of one's perhaps immediate inclinations after being betrayed or hurt, which is usually to have some form of retribution or revenge. Research has highlighted that the better able others are at regulating that initial response, the more forgiving they are likely to be. Finkel and Campbell (2001) demonstrated that if one restricts the amount of time an individual receives to make a decision whether or not to forgive after an incident (limiting the amount of time they can engage in self-regulation), it decreases the likelihood of forgiveness. Molden and Finkel (2010) examined two different motivations that people use to self-regulate. The first is prevention related motivations, i.e. I do not want to lose all that I have invested. The second is promotion related motivations, i.e. will the gains outweigh the losses if I stay in this relationship. They demonstrated that if a person was more motivated by prevention strategies, they were more likely to cite commitment to the relationship as a reason to forgive. If they were motivated by promotion, they were more likely to cite trust in their partner as the reason to forgive. This follows intuitively, as trust indicates a belief that someone will act benevolently towards you as opposed to further betrayal. Similarly, a larger commitment to a person would mean that the hurt partner would have more to lose if they did not forgive (Molden & Finkel, 2010). Burnette, McCullough, Van Tongeren, and Davis (2012) found the factors that predicted the greatest forgiveness were relationship value and exploitation risk. If one perceived a low risk of being exploited or taken advantage of by their partner, and also highly values the relationship, then it was

more likely that the hurt partner would offer forgiveness, which is in agreement with the aforementioned literature.

If people recognize that they too commit the same offenses as their partner then they are more likely to forgive as well, which may relate to the fact that forgiveness is more likely to be given if the hurt partner is able to empathize with the offender (Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008, McCullough et al., 1998). Empathy is further helped by attributions; research has demonstrated that those who do not blame their partner completely for the offense, or make attributions to other factors, are more likely to forgive (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002). Again, forgiveness is facilitated if the hurt partner perceives that the offender is truly remorseful and committed to their relationship (Tabek & McCullough, 2011, McCullough et al., 1998). Moreover, research has demonstrated that those who forgive partners who continue to hurt them experience an erosion of self-respect as well as an erosion self-concept (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro, 2010). The researchers argued that forgiving an offender only has beneficial effects for a romantic partner if there is sufficient evidence that the offender is remorseful, and values the hurt partner. Luchies, Finkel, McNulty & Kumashiro (2010) conducted four studies, two longitudinal and two experimental, to assess the effect of ongoing offenses on self-respect and self-concept. All four studies demonstrated that in the case of multiple offenses self-respect and self-concept were lowered for partners. Given the research demonstrating that ongoing offenses appear to have an effect on one's view of the self, this provides an avenue to pursue in the quantitative data.

Though the contexts through which people are able to grant forgiveness are helpful, McCullough & Hoyt (2002) suggest that "it is reasonable to expect that enduring

characteristics of the victim (i.e. stable personality traits) would play a role as well” (pg. 1557). Research demonstrates that personality traits such as agreeableness vs. narcissistic entitlement have an influence on whether or not people grant forgiveness, as those who score higher in agreeableness are more likely to offer forgiveness (Exline et al., 2004).

Furthermore, recent research on attachment shows that those with more secure attachment styles are more likely to grant forgiveness to their ex-partner after a divorce (Yaben, 2009). Attachment theory asserts that one universal basic need of every human being is that of feeling securely attached, or bonded, to another person (Johnson, 2002). The secure attachment provides a safe haven from distress and a secure base from which a person can derive comfort, as well as the autonomy needed to explore the world (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). According to attachment theorists, there are two factors that are central to creating a secure bond, accessibility and responsiveness of the partner (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). If partners are neither accessible nor responsive it can create in the other partner an ultimate distrust of themselves, others, and the world. These kinds of interactions create attachment strategies that are not secure, which have been classified on a spectrum of avoidant and anxious (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010). Those who use avoidance as a coping strategy to self-soothe or regulate their emotions will dismiss their emotions and needs, and focus on tasks (Johnson, 2002). Those who are anxious may appear “clingy”, or even aggressive in their attempts to have a response from their attachment figures. Rather than suppressing their needs because a partner rebuffs them, they pursue the partner even more vigorously (Johnson, 2004). There are also those who can have both coping strategies as a result of the very chaotic care-giving experience (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Mikulincer, Shaver, and Slav (2006) conducted a study in which they measured tendencies to forgive with specific attachment styles. They found that those with a more avoidant attachment were

less likely to forgive and more likely to withdraw and seek revenge. There was no correlation between anxious individuals and the tendency to forgive, however, anxiously attached persons reported higher levels of vulnerability and humiliation when forgiving an offending partner. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) hypothesized that this is due to two competing forces for the anxious individual, with the pull to ruminate on the threat posed by their partner conflicting with their need for their partner to value them.

Furthermore, those who are insecurely attached have been shown to have more negative self and other views in the face of their partner's transgressions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Feeney (2004) demonstrated that those who are anxiously attached were more likely to have lowered self esteem and agree with statements such as "I'm stupid", whereas avoidant individuals were more likely to increase their negative views of others and relationships. Given the large number of literature that associates forgivingness responses to transgressions, and attachment style (Gaines & Henderson, 2002; Gaines, Work, Johnson, Youn, & Lai, 2000; Jang, Smith, & Levine, 2002; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Slav, 2006), an attachment measure will be included in the quantitative element to understanding couples who experience multiple, similar, transgressions. Given McNulty's (2011) study on the "dark side of forgiveness", this study will seek to broaden the perspective on the hurt partner by examining motivations for *continuing* to forgive following multiple offenses, while keeping both dispositional and contextual factors in mind.

The "Offending" Partner

Exline and Baumeister (2000) point out an important realization that though the hurt person's response to a transgression is an important factor in whether the offense will occur

again, it is not the *only* factor. They suggest other variables such as the offender's level of self-control, the attraction towards the offense (i.e. the lover or having an affair), and the extent of their desire to not harm again. Though little researched, they provide several predictions that would make forgiving dangerous, and what may lead to future transgressions. They suggest that if the offering of forgiveness is not made explicit the offender may not realize how much he/she has hurt the other partner, or that it may be confused with condoning their behaviour. Secondly, if the offender does not demonstrate an 'adequate level of repentance' or a pseudo-repentance, then it may be more dangerous to offer forgiveness. Finally, if the offender demonstrates no remorse at all, and seems very hostile towards the other, than it can be supposed that to offer forgiveness may only serve for the partner to be hurt again.

Attachment theory also has relevance for the offending partner as well. Though Mikulincer & Shaver (2006) highlight that little research has been done on the role of attachment and transgressions, they hypothesize that a more secure individual will be more likely to have a healthy sense of guilt, and be more willing to make reparations. Conversely, the authors argue that a more insecure person will be more likely to experience a debilitating sense of shame, limiting their sense of agency and self-worth. Beginning research correlates with these hypothesis, with Lopez, Gover, et al. (1997) showing that higher levels of anxiety and avoidance was associated with higher shame scores. Mikulincer & Shaver (2005) created a study in which they asked participants to recall an episode where they had hurt a partner or failed to meet their needs and then write it down. They then asked them to rate their feelings of hostility, shame, and/or guilt. The researchers found that anxious individuals reported more shame than guilt, and avoidant persons reported more hostility, less guilt, and less

shame. Those who were identified as secure exhibited more feelings of guilt, and less shame and hostility. This is significant because guilt is shown to be associated with more constructive responses to making a transgression, as it facilitates higher self-efficacy and helps to rectify offensive behaviour (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Though at times separated from the psychological definitions of forgiveness, forgiveness has strong spiritual and/or religious roots, which may be one reason why it was largely ignored by the scientific community until the 1980's (McCullough et al., 2000). Nevertheless, it has strong implications for the nature of this study, as one major factor influencing whether or not people transgress against their partner (or forgive them) could centre on a person's spirituality and/or religiosity. All of the major religions address forgiveness, such as Hinduism, Buddhism (though more implicitly through the idea of compassion), Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (Rye, Pargament, Ali, Beck, Dorff, Hallisey, Narayanan, and Williams, 2000). The religious definitions of forgiveness resound with the psychological, as they all contain an element of releasing negative affect/behaviour, and cancelling an actual debt. However, while the psychological definition may have room to depend of the amount of repentance of the offender, many religions urge their followers to forgive even in the face of no remorse. For example, Christianity's central figure Jesus Christ, has this to say about forgiveness: Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times". (Matthew 18:21-22). Nevertheless, Christian theologians warn against the concept of "cheap grace" where one transgresses without hesitation because of the assurance of forgiveness (Rye et al., 2000), as this is an abuse of the theology of the cross. For Islam repentance is not necessarily required

in interpersonal forgiveness, but in order to receive forgiveness from the divine there must be some remorse (Rye et al., 2000). For the Hindu, forgiveness without repentance is seen as more of a divine attribute, and one that is not expected for the human being. It is conceivable, therefore, to predict that some forgiveness may arise out of a sense of religious or spiritual duty, rather than out of a genuine compassion and desire to move on. It may even arise from a sense of fear, that if they do not forgive the offender, then God may not forgive them. This too may have an effect on whether or not the offender transgresses again against the hurt partner. These kinds of predictions will serve as a kind of guidepost to direct the qualitative nature of the study.

Research Questions for Quantitative Analyses

Given the mixed research results regarding a potential “license to transgress effect”, (McNulty, 2011; Luchies, 2011; Wallace et al., 2008), this exploratory study will attempt to quantitatively replicate the effect of forgivingness on offenses as found by McNulty (2011). Secondly, as McNulty (2011) has illustrated, there is a difference between a tendency to give forgiveness and a tendency to seek forgiveness. Given the previous link between tendencies to give forgiveness and number of offenses, it could be hypothesized that those who are quicker to seek forgiveness may be more likely to experience a higher number of offenses.

In a similar vein to Luchies (2011), who investigated both empathy and commitment as potential moderators of the connection between offenses and forgiveness, this study will also seek to quantitatively investigate other potential links, which have been shown by the literature review to be associated both with relational factors as well as forgiveness. As demonstrated by the literature review, closeness and commitment are integral aspects of the

hurt partner being willing to forgive an offense. As many theorists have conceptualized a secure attachment bond as a feeling of warmth, accessibility, and responsiveness (Johnson, 2002), which are ideal characteristics of a feeling of closeness, it could be hypothesized that attachment may play a key role in forgiving the multiple, similar offenses of one's partner.

Furthermore, as Luchies et al. (2010) have illustrated, forgiving can diminish one's self-respect and self-concept clarity if the offender does not demonstrate adequately that the partner will be safe and valued. Therefore, it could be expected that partners who rate their self-esteem as higher may be experiencing a safer context in which they feel they can forgive their partner's multiple offenses.

A third aspect that needs to be considered in regards to the hurt partner forgiving are personality traits, specifically agreeableness, as the literature has highlighted this link to forgiveness. This may also influence offenses generated against, as agreeableness may not allow for some of the consequences that an offending partner may need to feel in order to generate remorse.

Lastly, it has been demonstrated through the literature review that those who rate themselves as more spiritual are also more likely to offer forgiveness towards those who have hurt them. As many religions promote forgiveness as the ideal way of handling offenses, participants who are spiritual may find themselves offering at times forgiveness without their offending partner displaying any remorse. As discussed by Exline and Baumeister (2000), this could lead to further transgressions by the partner, therefore it could be conceptualized that there would be a link between spirituality and number of offenses experienced.

Therefore, the quantitative research questions include:

- a) Can the previously demonstrated link between forgivingness tendencies and offense be replicated? Is there a link between seeking forgiveness and number of offenses experienced?
- b) Are attachment styles, self esteem, agreeableness, and spirituality potentially linked with offenses experienced or the tendency to give forgiveness? Is there statistical evidence for these factors to be considered moderators of the connection between giving forgiveness and offenses experienced?

Research Question for the Qualitative Analyses

Given that there is not much known about the experience of couples who experience multiple, similar offenses within their relationship, as well as the experiences of the perpetrator in these cases, the second half of this study will seek to address this. As Morrow (2007) writes, qualitative studies are particularly useful when not much is known about the mechanisms of a phenomenon, or if the questions are of a “what” and “how” nature, rather than a “why” (pg. 211). Secondly, re-occurring offenses, infidelity and forgiveness are very complex processes as shown by the mixed messages that previous research has given us, and using an interview approach allowed the researcher to go more deeply than perhaps an overall quantitative measure could.

The approach that appears to be the most useful for the kind of study is the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach. Phenomenology can be subdivided into two broad categories: the first is called transcendental phenomenology and the other is hermeneutical (Larkin & Thomson, 2011). Transcendental is related more to the origins of phenomenology

as it was developed by a philosopher named Husserl, who created this term to describe the philosophical study of “Being”. This required suspending or “bracketing” one’s previous experiences, assumptions, and beliefs, in order to come to the essence of the thing being studied (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The phenomenological approach recognizes that there is a concrete thing to be known (perceptions of lived experience), however, it also understands that to perceive is always to interpret within a subjective experience. This is where hermeneutical phenomenology finds itself, as it realizes the impossibility of completely bracketing out oneself from the research process. Rather, the hermeneutical approach ensures validity through reflection and knowing oneself, so that the researcher is better able to understand the lens through which the information is being coloured (Larkin & Thomson, 2011). In an odd kind of contradiction, in qualitative research in order to understand the participant’s meaning, the researcher must first understand his or her own. Smith (2011) writes, “social science should do its best to avoid distorting biases, to prevent ideologies from skewing its findings, in order in the end to describe and explain what is true about what is real in social life. But note that this depends not on “value neutrality” but on its *opposite*: on value *commitments* to truth, scientific integrity, accountability...good science is thus always based not on bracketing or setting aside particular human notions of what is good, but rather on an absolute commitment to particular goods” (pg.8). A second aspect of hermeneutical inquiry is that it is also important to take the participant’s context, or lens, from which they see the world into account. This study will attempt to do so by understanding the demographics of the interviewees, as well as their spirituality and relational context.

Chapter 2: Method

Participants

Participants were drawn from various couple and family therapy centres, as well as the counselling centre at the university. They ranged in age from 22 to 67, with a mean age of 34 (mode = 23, SD = 11.87), with 30.1 percent of the respondents being male, and the rest identified as female. Ninety-two percent of participants identified as Caucasian, with 7.8 % identifying as other. The average length of time the participants had been in their relationship was 10 years, with a SD of 9.6 (mode = 4 years). Of the seventy-seven participants, fifty-three percent identified as Protestant, fourteen percent as Catholic, twenty-eight percent as Agnostic and/or Atheist, and four percent as Jewish. Participants for the quantitative measure considered themselves in a committed relationship with monogamous ideals.

Procedure (Quantitative)

The procedure for collecting data for the quantitative aspect of this study drew heavily on a previous study completed by McNulty (2011) on the relationship between the tendency to forgive and levels of psychological and physical aggression. The purpose of this aspect was to determine whether the “license to transgress” effect can be replicated for couples. A second relationship that was examined empirically is whether or not a tendency to seek forgiveness is associated with higher or lower levels of transgression experienced. Following the approval of the research ethics committee, data was collected through the use of self-report surveys completed separately by each participant. Matching codes was self-generated by partners instead of names to ensure confidentiality. At the end of the survey participants indicated their openness to being contacted for a follow-up interview, and if so, an opportunity to provide contact information was made available. Participants in the

interviews will be offered compensation in the form of ten dollars and their choice of refreshments. Due to the nature of the study, if both partners within a couple completed the survey and give contact information, they were more likely to be selected for individual interviews so that interaction patterns can be better analyzed. Following this criteria, individuals chosen for the interview was based on the number of similar multiple offenses reported (high and low) as well as on their reported tendency to both offer and seek forgiveness (high and low scores). The qualitative interviews were conducted by the principal researcher, Erika DeSchiffart, with a registered Couple and Family Therapist's contact information available if a participant should require/ask for further counselling. The researcher recognizes the possible psychological risks present in the study, as the subject matter is often highly charged with negative affect and distress, thus the necessity of having a fully trained therapist available to assess and treat possible distress. Couples selected were also seen separately as seeing them together was not a necessity for the procedure and could create more distress for the individuals involved.

Quantitative Measures

The Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness (Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Conner, & Wade, 2001) is a ten item scale that measures the tendency to express forgiveness by presenting spouses with five hypothetical situations, varying in severity, in which participants imagine themselves experiencing five transgressions and indicate their likelihood of forgiving each offender. This scale would be modified to reflect the couple relationship based on a research based transgression concepts such as "neglected supervision", "breach of trust" and "dubious self-defence" scenarios (e.g. snapping and insulting the spouse) (McNulty, 2011). The scale was made partner-specific based on the theory that a person's tendency to forgive in general may be different than their willingness

to forgive their partner. Modest correlations of this scale with Brown's (2003) Tendency to Forgive Scale (wives $r = .39$ and husbands, $r = .28$, $p < .05$) demonstrates that while it still has construct validity, there is can be a real difference with people's willingness to forgive depending on the person (McNulty, 2011). The participant is then asked to report whether or not they would express forgiveness in each scenario on a scale from 1-5 (1= definitely not forgive and 5 = definitely forgive).

The tendency to seek forgiveness scale is a fourteen item scale that was developed by Chiaramello, Sastre, and Mullet (2008), which involves asking participants to indicate their response 1 = completely agree and 7 = disagree completely to statements such as "I do not feel able to seek forgiveness even when the harm I have caused has clearly visible consequences on the person I have harmed". The scale is divided into three factors that make up one's tendency to forgive: the inability to seek forgiveness, b) sensitivity to circumstances, and c) unconditional seeking of forgiveness. Chiaramello et al. (2008) found that seeking forgiveness was associated with tendency to forgive, even beyond personality factors. This suggests that those who are high in expressing forgiveness should also be more willing to seek forgiveness, which may have interesting implications considering the relationship between retaliation and a person's tendency to transgress.

Relationship Violations: This aspect of the questionnaire strongly resembles Luchies' (2002) 19 item measurement of offenses, with a measurement of infidelity added to it. In a pilot study Luchies (2002) asked participants to rate the severity of the offenses on a scale from 1 (not very severe) to 5 (very severe). Transgressions ranged in severity from 2.4 – 4.15, indicating the participants would consider these actions to be offenses. Participants would answer the questions based on the amount of times these offense occurred in the past year (1=not at all, not once) and 6 (all the time, everyday). Statements included items like "forgot

something that is important to me” or “was physically aggressive to me”. Finally, infidelity would be measured by first explaining/expanding the definition of infidelity to more than just sexual acts, and then questioning whether or not they or a previous/current partner has committed an act of infidelity within their relationship. Follow-up questions would include whether or not they have been forgiven/forgiven the partner, whether or not they reconciled after the discovery of infidelity, and whether the relationship was breached again after the forgiveness process.

Rosenberg (1965) Self Esteem Scale: Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro (2010) found that forgiveness can bolster one’s self-concept if the offender has acted in a way that the hurt partner deems safe. If the hurt partner does not feel safe or valued then forgiveness can decrease their self-respect. Therefore the researcher has included Rosenberg’s ten item self esteem scale which contains items such as “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others” or “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure”. Participants are to answer on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Donnellan et al. (2006) Mini-IPIP Personality Scale: This twenty-item scale assesses for dispositional or personality factors. It includes items such as “I am the life of the party” or “I get chores done right away”. Participants are again asked to answer these questions on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Eastwick and Finkel (2008) Partner Specific Attachment Scale: This twelve-item scale is included to assess both partner’s attachment style, as previous literature has demonstrated its link to forgiveness (Yaben, 2009). It assesses for both anxious and avoidant attachments, with statements such as “I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me”, “It helps me to

turn to my partner in times of need” or “I get frustrated if my partner is not available when I need him/her”.

Intrinsic Spirituality: The purpose of this six-item measure is to determine whether an individual actually is living their spiritual orientation in a very real and personal way, which Allport and Ross (1967) has defined as being *intrinsically* religious. This is opposed to those who use religion as a tool for meeting their own needs, or those who are *extrinsically* religious. The Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (Hodge, 2003) is a six-item measure of intrinsic religiosity which has been demonstrated both good reliability and high validity (Hodge, 2003) and is designed to measure spirituality either within or outside of a religious framework. This expanded definition allows for a measurement of spirituality of individuals who do not necessarily fall within a specific religious tradition. The measure is given on a ten point scale and asks participants to complete the statements using the scale. For example one item asks “*When I am faced with an important decision, my spirituality...*” and the options given are 0 (*plays absolutely no role*) to 10 (*is always the overriding consideration*).

Procedure (Qualitative)

For the qualitative measures participants were in a committed relationship in which there is a pattern of multiple similar offenses and multiple forgivingness processes. The most applicable and useful method of qualitative research for this project appeared to be the phenomenological approach, as not much is known about the phenomenon, and the research question proposes something towards trying to ascertain the *essence* of the couple’s experience concerning infidelity and forgiveness (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The interviewers themselves are active in the qualitative process, and it becomes apparent that their own narratives must be made explicit so that the commitment to not imposing and to

understanding the other's perspective is upheld. This was carried out by the researcher journaling and reflecting with supervisors about his/her own experiences of relational offenses and the forgiveness process so that biases would be revealed and personal values made clear.

The interviews themselves were conducted semi-structurally, centring on three broad, open-ended questions: a) "What have you experienced in terms of the following: a) your relationship in regards to multiple, similar offenses, b) the pattern of offenses itself, and c) the forgiveness & reconciliation process?" and secondly: What motivates you to avoid re-offending your partner? Using thematic analysis, the data was coded according to its major themes and insights of the couples. The kinds of offenses detailed by the participants ranged in severity, with examples including the partner repeatedly not completing a household chore to an online affair.

. All participants considered themselves to be in committed relationships, with all four describing their relationship in a positive light. This is a potential limitation to the study, as the number of participants willing to engage in an interview was restricted. For generalization purposes, further analysis with couples identified as in distress is recommended. The benefit of interviewing couples who describe themselves in healthy, positive relationships is that the following themes paint a picture of what healthy interaction patterns look like for both the forgiveness process and the experience of multiple, similar offenses.

Chapter 3: Analysis

Quantitative

After the removal of cases in which the full questionnaire was not completed, the data consisted of 73 participants. Preliminary data screening included examination of histograms of scores on all seven variables and examination of scatter plots for all pairs of variables. Univariate distributions were reasonably normal with no extreme outliers; bivariate relations were fairly linear, and in general there were no bivariate outliers. In regards to the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness, many participants did not complete the third question for each case, which read, “If you have had similar experiences in your relationship, how forgiving were you?”. This may be due to the fact that many of the participants had not had similar experiences to the scenarios that were described within the questionnaire. As an examination of missing data revealed that more than 5 % of participants did not response to that question, it was removed from the data to have a more accurate representation. This is in line with the original scale developed by Berry et al. (2001), as the third aforementioned question was added by Luchies (2011) in her research.

Table 1: Descriptives of Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Cronbach's Alpha	.865	.90	.626	.985	.762	.900	.926	.655
Mean	39.61	37.84	44.87	37.15	18.46	11.52	59.11	23.96
SD	11.48	13.15	6.94	18.87	7.86	6.83	11.18	3.56

1= Giving Forgiveness; 2= Offenses; 3= Seeking Forgiveness; 4= Spirituality; 5= Anxious Attachment; 6= Avoidant Attachment; 7 = Self Esteem, 8 =Agreeableness

Table 2: Correlations of Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Give Forgiveness	---	-.129	.201	.257*	.075	-.117	.162	.096
Offenses		---	.105	-.062	.424**	.524**	-.140	-.306*
Seek Forgiveness			---	-.302*	.014	.160	.054	.178
Spirituality				---	-.066	-.208	.223	-.049
Anxious Attachment					---	.355**	-.344**	-.101
Avoidant Attachment						---	-.377**	-.253*
Self Esteem							---	.231*
Agreeableness								----

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; 1 = Giving Forgiveness; 2 = Offenses; 3 = Seeking Forgiveness; 4 = Spirituality; 5 = Anxious Attachment; 6 = Avoidant Attachment; 7 = Self Esteem, 8 = Agreeableness

The Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness and Relationship Violations: In regards to the “license to transgress effect”, as named by Luchies (2011), the hypothesis was not supported. Bivariate correlation demonstrated that there was a non-significant relationship between the tendency to give forgiveness and number of offenses, with $r(69) = -.129$, $p = n.s.$

The Tendency to Seek Forgiveness Scale and Relationship Violations: Using bivariate correlation it was determined that there is a non-significant relationship between the tendency to seek forgiveness and the number of relationship offenses reported, with $r(71) = .104$, $p = n.s.$ There is no evidence for the hypothesis that a tendency to seek forgiveness is associated with number of offenses experienced.

Attachment Anxiety and Relationship Violations: There is evidence for a medium-strong, positive, relationship between an anxious attachment style and number of offenses

experienced, with $r(71) = .424, p < .001$. It appears that as attachment anxiety within a relationship increases, so too does number of relationship violations experienced.

Attachment Avoidance and Relationship Violations: There is also evidence for a strong, positive relationship between an avoidant attachment style and relationship violations, with $r(71) = .524, p < .001$. It appears that as a person becomes more avoidant in their relationships, an increase also occurs in number of offenses experienced.

Intrinsic Spirituality and Self-Esteem: While the correlation between intrinsic spirituality and self esteem was not significant relative to the standard alpha level of .05, the p-value was .058. This may indicate that this correlation was approaching significance, and that there is a trend towards a positive correlation between intrinsic spirituality and self esteem, meaning that as self esteem levels increased so too did a person's level of spirituality, $r(73) = .223, p = n.s.$

Intrinsic Spirituality and Giving Forgiveness: There is a medium, positive correlation between giving forgiveness and a participant's level of intrinsic spirituality, $r(71) = .257, p < .05$. It appears that as one's level of intrinsic spirituality increases, so too does their tendency to give forgiveness.

Intrinsic Spirituality and Seeking Forgiveness: The data demonstrates a weak, negative correlation between seeking forgiveness and a participant's level of intrinsic spirituality, $r(69) = -.302, p < .05$. There is evidence that as the levels of intrinsic spirituality increase, the tendency to seek forgiveness decreases.

Anxious Attachment and Avoidant Attachment: There is a medium, positive correlation between anxious attachment and avoidant attachment, with $r(72) = .355, p < .01$. It appears that as one's level of anxious attachment increases, so too does their tendencies towards avoidant attachment.

Anxious Attachment and Self Esteem: The data demonstrates a medium, negative correlation between anxious attachment and self esteem, with $r(73) = -.344, p < .01$. There is evidence that as anxious attachment increases, self esteem levels decrease.

Avoidant Attachment and Self Esteem: There is a medium, negative correlation between avoidant attachment and self esteem, with $r(73) = -.377, p < .01$. It appears that as avoidant attachment increases, the levels of self esteem decrease.

Avoidant Attachment and Agreeableness: There is a significant, negative correlation between avoidant attachment and agreeableness, with $r(73) = -.253, p < .05$. It appears that as the level of avoidant attachment increases, the levels of agreeableness decrease.

Self Esteem and Agreeableness: There is a significant, positive correlation between self esteem and agreeableness, with $r(73) = .231, p < .05$. It appears that as levels of agreeableness increase, so too do levels of self esteem.

Offenses and Agreeableness: There is a significant, negative correlation between agreeableness and offenses, with $r(73) = .306, p < .05$. It appears that as agreeableness levels increase, level of perceived offenses decrease.

Given the number of medium-strong correlations that were revealed using bivariate analyses in regards to the attachment variables, regression analysis was performed to discern the predictive power of correlated variables.

Table 3: Regression of Attachment Variables on Offenses Experienced

Variables	B	SE B	B	Adj. R ²
(Constant)	24.83	3.56		
Anxious Attachment	.66	.17	.42**	.16
(Constant)	20.57	3.41		
Anxious Attachment	.42	.17	.26**	
Avoidant Attachment	.76	.19	.42**	.31

Table 4: Regression of Attachment Styles on Self Esteem

Variables	B	<i>SE B</i>	B	Adj. R ²
(Constant)	68.01	3.21		
Anxious Attachment	-.50	.16	-.34**	.10
(Constant)	70.77	3.29		
Anxious Attachment	-.50	.16	-.24**	
Avoidant Attachment	-.47	.19	-.29**	.17

Qualitative

For the qualitative semi-structured interview, there were two main questions discussed. First, what was the participant's experience of the forgiveness process in relation to multiple, similar offenses, and secondly, what motivated them to avoid re-offending their partner. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, six super-ordinate themes were identified for the first question, with eight subordinate-themes. The second question resulted in two super-ordinate themes, with two subordinate-themes. The quotes will be identified using the code of F1, F2, and F3 for the three female participants, R for the researcher, and M1 for the male participant. F1 and M1 are partners in the same committed relationship.

Question 1: What do you experience in regards to forgiveness when your partner commits multiple, similar offenses against you?

Theme 1: Benefits of Forgiveness

As noted previously, research has demonstrated that forgiveness has positive effects for individuals, both intra and inter personally. Again, it is important to note that the participants in this study identified themselves as in close, committed relationships, which Karremans and Van Lange (2008) identified as being the most likely to receive positive effects from forgiveness. The participants in the interviews supported this research by stating

that if they do not forgive the offenses that inevitably occur in relationships, it brings harmful results to both themselves and their relationships. The first three quotes demonstrate the positive effects forgiveness brings for the participants themselves (Sub-theme 1: Intrapersonal benefits).

F1: “If we don’t forgive it is like the cancer of our soul...sometimes just for myself I have to forgive”.

F2: “If you have to harbour resentment it gets so heavy and you are just so angry all the time”.

F1: “It makes me a better person to forgive because my reaction to other non-related instances is better”.

These quotes point to lower levels of resentment and anger due to the fact that they have forgiven their partners, which they recognized as related to more positive well-being. The next quotes illustrate the positive effects that forgiving has on the relationship (sub-theme 2: interpersonal benefits):

F1: “If you choose not to forgive someone then you are lording something over someone and they know that. Especially in a marriage relationship, if I am lording something over my husband he knows that, my attitude changes towards him. I’m short with him, and I’m angry with him... That is what happens if I withhold forgiveness”.

R: “So for your relationship forgiveness is not holding that thing against them- so what does that look like?”

F3: “Um...I guess I can sometimes see when a person links one thing to another and says you do this and you do this and you do this...so focusing on the one thing and not holding on to the other thing, that it where that comes from”.

According to these quotes, one of the main benefits that the participants identified for their relationship was that they did not carry over anger and resentment from a previous instance into next arguments or conflicts. As demonstrated by the “lording over” piece, one female reported that it felt like a “power play” when she withheld forgiveness, upsetting the balance of power or equality in their relationship. This was interpreted by the researcher to relate to the third sub-theme found in the analysis, which was the forgiveness implies forgetting in committed relationships. Three of the four individuals identified that forgetting was an essential part of forgiving, as related to not wanting to hold their partner’s previous mistakes over them.

F1: “Before we got married we had drama...later on I had a girlfriend who asked for advice, and I was married at the time. I told her that her current boyfriend shouldn’t be treating her like this and that she should leave if he did not change. Her reaction to me was that you have obviously forgotten all the drama you went through before you got married. So ya, I married him. So I have to forget. Otherwise every day I’ll be thinking, he did this, he did that. How unhealthy would it be to not forget? I think there is a huge component of interaction of forgiveness and forgetting. Maybe if you aren’t in relationship you don’t have to forget, but in relationships you do. You have to let it go, and maybe forgetting is part of letting it go.

This quote illustrates the element of power and forgetting, however, it was also illustrative to me as the researcher of the difficulty involved in this question of forgiveness and offense in committed relationships. The participant here identified her own inconsistency in action: she gave advice to her friend who was experiencing certain offenses that she should leave, while she herself chose to stay and forgive in the face of similar offenses from

her own partner. In this specific instance the participant stated that it was because she felt her partner really cared for her that she chose to stay. Her partner expressed similar views in regards to forgiving and forgetting:

M1: "Forgetting has always been a consistent thing. If I say I forgive than I forget about it. Except if that person reminds me but otherwise, when I say I forgive it is forgotten".

The participant reported that also as he got older forgiveness became more difficult for this very reason, as it became more difficult for him to forget.

Theme 2: Spirituality

Two of the four participants identified themselves as Christian, one Roman Catholic and the other Protestant, however, a third participant stated that she had grown up as a Catholic and thus made a correlation between forgiveness and spirituality. For the two Christian participants, spirituality was a large part of the discussion and permeated their relationship. They both believed that forgiving each other was an act that they are required to do, regardless of whether or not they reconcile. The next two quotes present an idea that was specific to one participant, and related to her spirituality. She expressed that forgiveness was not necessarily a duty, but the right thing to do, and that it was to occur regardless of whether or not her partner changed. She stated that she hopes that he will change, but that ultimately that is not up to her behaviour. It is interpreted by the researcher that she believes that her behaviour cannot change her partner, and that it is only through divine intervention that other people can change. It was her experience that one should not forgive with the expectation of change, regardless of whether this is the first time the offense occurred, or the tenth.

F1: “It is an act of obedience to God to clear things up with me and God, I have to make sure I forgive, I have to expect that the other person will do it again, hope that they will not, and that is part of my faith grounding is that I know God can work miracles in anybody and change all kinds of behaviour”.

F1: “I feel I need to be clean hearted during the worship service. Does that offense happen often? Yes, you have to expect that the behaviour will keep on going but have hope that God will change their heart”.

Her partner expressed a similar ideal of forgiving without the expectation of change; however, his definition of forgiveness appeared to differ from his wife’s. She defined forgiveness as an active letting go of an offense, as well as a working through of the anger and hurt. He defined forgiveness as giving a person a second chance, and forgetting their previous offense. This appeared to the researcher as two different styles of forgiving, as illustrated by the following quote:

R: So we’ve talked a lot about you, and thank you for being so open. Is there a specific thing that your wife does?

M1: To tell you the truth, I’m not the type that loves going about fishing. I’d rather let that go...as I say I take a lot. And I thank God for the fact that I am Catholic and practice my faith as much as possible, confession, the counselling that comes with that helps a lot. I’d rather leave that to the Lord.

This participant reports that he “takes a lot” and forgiveness is more of a passive letting go as opposed to the active working through of hurt and anger which his wife describes. He stated that he has a line in which it becomes “too much” and then he will say

something, but otherwise he attempts to utilize his spiritual resources to forgive without necessarily an expectation of change from his partner.

Theme 3: Empathy for their Partner:

Consistent with the literature on the process models of forgiveness, interviewees found it easier to forgive when they were able to view their partner in a realistic, empathic light.

M1: It is reminding yourself that we are all of a broken nature, I should not forget that he is human, just like any other person.

F3: Forgiveness for me is really letting go of not secretly being upset, people are human, they mess up...that was a mess up. Move along no one is perfect...We all make mistakes, you have to extend empathy to the other person.

F1: I know him well enough to know where he is coming from, my husband is not just a perpetrator.

There were several elements that related to generating empathy for their partner. First, all four participants expressed that it was human nature to make mistakes, and in that way they expect that it is inevitable that their partners will mess up or offend them. Secondly, there was an element of including themselves in the statement of “we all make mistakes”. As M1 expressed, “we all are of a human nature”, meaning that they recognize that as their partner has offended them, so too do they make mistakes. Thirdly, the final quote illustrates the idea that part of empathy is to see the offender as more than just the act that they committed; they are “not just a perpetrator”. This is an essential part of forgiving,

as demonstrated by Exline et al. (2008). Realizing this appeared to help the participants to forgive their partners when they continued to commit offenses against them.

Theme 4: The Severity of the Offenses Matters

F1: My husband is always late, but is that enough to actively need to forgive? That is not a deep offense, I kind of have other coping mechanisms now, like I told him that we needed to be here at 9.

F3: What, do I have to forgive him because he doesn't put his socks in the laundry?...It is always the same stuff that bugs you about your partner. Sometimes I bring it up but mostly I let the little stuff go. At least they are in the sink? At least he isn't a slob...which is more effort, getting him to put his dishes in the dishwasher or putting them there myself?

F2: Like, if it is not important enough to keep fighting about it, is it really that important?

F3: You just have to let them go...pain, guilt, annoyance just get you to change something. That is a good impetus to change how you are interacting, but for things you cannot change how much happier will I be though if I let go of that annoyance. Why bother carrying all that angst? It is part of acceptance. It all depends on the behaviour, I accept minor things.

All four of the interviewees indicated that the severity of the offense contributed to the reaction that they gave. They appeared to make a distinction between small, common offenses and larger, more hurtful actions. In this first quote, the interviewee questioned the necessity of even engaging in a forgiveness process for the smaller offenses. She states that she has developed other coping mechanisms to handle that specific conflict in their relationship. This is congruent with F3's quotes as well; as she expressed that it is more effort for her to become annoyed over the small offenses than it is to put the socks in the laundry or dishes in the sink herself. She mentions that there is an aspect of acceptance that

occurs for behaviour that she feels is unchangeable. The central question for these quotes appears to be “Is it worth it?”, meaning is the angst or annoyance from the offense enough to warrant the effort towards asking the partner to change. An important factor that arises from this question is the fact that it appears with each offense the interviewee makes a judgment about the severity and makes a choice resulting from that judgment. As *F1 stated, “If he cheats on me when we are married, I can choose to stay or leave. There is always a choice. If he was hitting me, I make a choice”*. The male interviewee reported this idea as well, albeit with a greater sense of black and white. He stated, *“If I know that person is going to hurt me then I will not keep in that relationship. If they will be of hurt to me I let that person go”*. This highlights the second sub-theme under the heading of the severity of the offenses, and that is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. While forgiveness is essential to the task of reconciliation between couples, for two of the interviewees the distinction between the two was made explicit:

R: So you feel forgiveness is a process as well as a choice?

F1: Yes, if you are going to stay in a relationship where there is forgiveness, the reconciliation is the process. Are the actions going to change? Is it going to escalate next time? All that stuff, that is the reconciliation process...forgiveness is my work. To reconcile that is couple work and a process he needs to be involved in.

For her, forgiveness is an act that occurs within herself, and the choice lays not so much in whether or not to forgive as whether or not to reconcile. In the decision to reconcile that gets made, questions such as escalation and change become important, not in the question of forgiveness. It is interpreted by the researcher that for this woman, the actions of her partner do not influence her decision to forgive, but his actions are considered when it comes to

deciding whether to come together again or not. This was seconded by the male participant as well:

M1: “To tell you the truth you can forgive someone, and then let them be so that the chance of them re-offending me is slim”. This again implies that forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate things, and that one does not always mean the other. Both participants identified themselves as Christian, and this may be one of the reasons as to why the actions of the other is separated conceptually by them from the process of forgiveness. This is supported by research done by Auerbach (2005), who stated that Christianity highlights the ability to forgive and give mercy without preconditions. This relates back to one of the original questions of defining forgiveness and whether or not it requires a pro-social change in behaviour towards the offender. From the interviews with these two participants, it is interpreted by the researcher that forgiveness for them does not necessarily imply reconciliation, even when one is in a committed romantic relationship.

Theme 5: Context Surrounding the Offense

Three of the four participants made mention of that the context surrounding the offense was very important to their decision of whether or not to forgive and reconcile with their partner. ***F2: “It’s also realizing that the person isn’t necessarily doing it on purpose. That’s a big thing for me, why are you doing that? It must be something else, you are hungry, you are tired, or are not feeling well.”***

F3: “I really don’t feel that I have to guard myself with him. I feel safe with him. I know he did not do it on purpose, so why would I stay mad?”

These quotes highlight that specifically that the lack of intention perceived by the injured partner helps them to forgive. This correlates with the aforementioned research done by Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia (2002), which highlight the importance of attribution to

generating empathy and forgiveness. *F2* underlines this in her statement, as she makes external attributions for her partner's behaviour: he is either hungry, or tired, or perhaps sick. The second quote listed highlights that a sense of a lack of intentionality makes her feel safe with her partner. This sense of safety is supported by attachment theory, which states that healthy, non-distressed romantic relationships foster feelings of safety and security. As demonstrated by the quantitative analysis, participants who felt more secure in their relationships (had accessible and responsive partners) were correlated with a lower amount of offenses. The next quote is important to note because it appears to be an exception to the previous theme on the severity of the offenses. It is included in the exposition of the current theme due to a mention of a lack of intentionality, however, it does make mention of the difficulty the participant has in forgiving a minor, but constant offense:

F2: "I'll nitpick at small things, like crumb, counters are full of crumbs! Come on now, really?...I have a hard time forgiving him for that kind of stuff when it's constant. When it is small or unintentional, which happens every couple of days, then usually we are pretty good at that stuff".

This is an exception because while the participant labels the offense as small, she states that it is more difficult to forgive when the offense happens multiple times, however minor. In this case, she mentions the second important element that appeared in the theme of context: previous attempts made to change.

R: So you feel that the person has to be looking to make amends?

F2: Yep, if he does something over and over and over again, but is getting better at it, I will be like you are still driving me crazy but it is better.

R: If there was not a change do you feel you would be able to forgive?

F2: Over time it would be harder, if there was no discussion or attempt to change, that would be really hard.

This was mentioned by two other interviewees as well, who said that in the consideration of the offense attempts to change are noted and the effort that the partner exerts in regards to not re-offending:

M1: “You hope that the person has learned from the mistake and will not do it again, in case that happens again you see the attempts made to not do it again”.

F2: “He is still forgiving me because I am working on it, if I wasn’t working on it, it wouldn’t be the same situation”.

A final element that was mentioned in regards to the context surrounding the offense was whether or not the partner showed remorse. This is again consistent with forgiveness literature which states that an apology can facilitate forgiveness, if partners are in satisfied relationships and perceive the apology to be sincere (Schumann, 2012). This research showed that couples who were in satisfied relationships were more likely to perceive their partner’s apologies as actual reflections of remorse, as opposed to couple who were in high levels of distress. Thus, if the interviews had included a couple who was in high distress, this sub-theme may or may not be as prevalent as it was for the non-distressed couples.

Nevertheless, in this analysis, three of the four participants mentioned that apologies and explicit demonstrations of remorse helped to facilitate forgiveness:

M1: “One thing I have noticed and tried to be consistent with is that the word sorry is not far from my mouth. If I am at fault, I’m sorry”.

F1: “The pain that I think I felt, I think my husband felt more than that. It goes against his morals, not that he needed to be punished, but he felt that”.

F3: “I definitely apologized up and down, almost more than I felt”.

Theme 6: Forgiveness Does Not Mean There Are No Consequences

M1: “All of the sudden silence plays a role, after I’m hurt maybe we will talk once in two days, even if you don’t get the message you clearly get it....When it gets to that point where I am full, that is when I go into my shell. At times she does some things and I let it go, but when it gets to there I go quiet”.

F2: “After a certain point you say, I told you how many times? Sometimes I feel I have to get mad at him until it clicks.”

F3: “Obviously if you forgive someone and there are no repercussions they would do it again”.

F3: “I’ve told him before so it isn’t like I am being a martyr. I’ve told him before and he hasn’t done it then sometimes it is just easier to do it myself. Just forgiving as you go along.

All of the participants mentioned that to forgive did not mean that the offense was brushed over or not paid attention to. This collaborates with forgiveness theorists who states that forgiveness is not denying, condoning, or excusing. As illustrated by the quotes above, the way the offense is handled varies (from getting angry, or becoming silent), however, in some way the partner is made aware that they have hurt the other person. Again in two of the quotes it can be noted that the theme of the severity of the offense re-occurs, as one participant mentions the aspect of whether or not it is worth the effort and the other mentions that he has a kind of quota. Yet, as **F3** expresses, “it isn’t like [she was] being a martyr”. She has made it explicit to him in some way that his behaviour bothers her.

In the following quotes, it becomes apparent that becoming angry or silent are not the only way to communicate punishment or consequences to their partner. All interviewees mentioned that a discussion of the offense is essential to forgiveness and reconciliation.

F2: "Usually we try to talk about it as soon as it happens rather than waiting to bring it up much later...cause if you bring it up later you might not remember the external circumstances. So it is figuring out that...communicating..."

F3: "After an hour of him being mad, and I was being very apologetic, he calmed down enough to ask me why and I began to explain to him how I felt ignored and I started bawling...like oh my God. So ya, he knew he had been taking me for granted...and I was like you can't do that. I'm not high maintenance but I'm not low maintenance either. So we kinda talked about it for a few days and eventually it was fine".

M1: "We have set up ways in which we need to communicate, she knows when to raise up issues. We cannot both be sick, poor, mad, and angry, we cannot both be unhappy. So we know when to bring things up".

In these above quotes it is important to note that the discussion about the offense contained identified elements that help to facilitate forgiveness. *F2* stated that having a discussion helps her to realize external factors that might have contributed to the offense. In the second quote the discussion helped both partners to become aware that both had been at fault. This underscores the interactive elements of relationships, in that the offense that a partner commits does not occur in isolation. In this case, the participant reported that what had precipitated the offense was a feeling of being taken for granted by her partner. The last quote illustrates that discussion does not always happen right away for couples, and that at times couples may need to pick a specific time to work through their hurt. The only

exception to this theme was that *F1* stated that the amount of discussion that occurs with her partner when she goes to him to apologize is minimal:

F1: “If he comes to me and say he is sorry I usually will talk it out, if I go to him and apologize there isn’t much discussion.

As this in reference to the only male participant in the qualitative aspect of this study, one explanation is that it may be a gender difference between male and female ways of handling apologies or discussions of a more intimate nature. This was supported by research conducted by Vogel, Turcker, Wester, and Heesacker (1999), which assigned sixty couples to three conditions: where they had to discuss everyday items, intimacy in their relationship, and a control condition. They found that men and women exhibited more traditional sex roles, beliefs, and behaviours (i.e. men are more independent, less emotional), when discussing intimate topics as opposed to everyday topics.

Question 2: What motivates you to avoid re-offending your partner?

Theme 1: Harm to the Partner

All four interviewees mentioned an aspect of this theme, stating that the hurt their partner experiences as a result of their offenses motivates them to avoid re-offending. This could be related to the degree of empathy that the participant feels towards the partner, as empathy can be defined using the Greek term *empathia*, meaning an appreciation of another’s feelings (Hojat, 2007, pg. 5). Another popular definition of empathy is the one created by Rogers (1957/1992), who described empathy as sensing “the client’s private world ‘as if’ it were your own but without ever losing the ‘as if’ quality” (p. 832). This is reflected in *MI*’s interview, as he expressed that the reason he did not want to re-offend his wife was that he followed the principle of “***Do unto others what you would have them do unto you...I respect her and when you say you respect someone, you don’t want to do that***

[the offense] again...you don't want to do that again because you have placed yourself in that shoe. Would you want that to be done again? I don't think". In this case *M1* specifically mentions placing himself in his wife's shoes, and knowing that he would not want to be experiencing the hurt again. This quote also highlights how the concept of respect was highly valued by the participant. He stated, *"I have to respect her because I love this idea of respect. If you don't give it you can't have it"*. In this transcript it becomes evident that part of placing yourself in another's shoes is the idea that if you want to be treated in a certain way, you have to treat others in that same way. So not only are participants motivated to not hurt their partners, they also are motivated by the expectation of experiencing reciprocal treatment. In looking at the pattern of interaction for this specific relationship, it appears that his wife is also motivated by empathy and respect. *F1* stated that *"I think knowing that I am hurting him stops me from re-offending"*. They also displayed a mutual recognition that being in relationship means looking after the needs of the other. *F1* articulated that their relationship is *"loving because we love each other. For us it means taking care of each other's needs...and meeting one another where we are at"*. *M1* conveyed a similar sentiment when he stated that *"the most important thing is that she is happy. If she is happy the house is happy"*. The line "if she is happy the house is happy" is interpreted by the researcher to not be a completely altruistic motivation, as peace in the household was very important for this interviewee. This again highlights that in empathizing with their partner and attempting to meet one another's needs, there is an expectation of reciprocal treatment.

A sub-theme as identified by the researcher is that multiple similar offenses also bring harm to the relationship as well as the other person. This is illustrated well by *F3* who stated this in regards to a more serious offense, *"I guess if I thought I could get away with*

doing it for another couple months and only one weekend of fighting, would it be worth it? No, his trust would be broken, and at that point he would either have to be ok with me doing that, or he would have to trust me to not do it again. And how do you fix trust once it has been broken like that?" This participant appears to recognize that even if the explicit negative consequences were minimal to her re-offending, that there would be enduring harm that would affect the relationship in regards to trust. She illustrates that trust is an important element to relationships, and is something that is very difficult to re-build once broken. This is supported by research done by Conley, Moors, Ziegler, and Feltner (2011) who demonstrated that trust was the strongest predictor of relationship satisfaction in a number of close relationships, including the romantic relationship. *F1* also noted the effect that multiple, similar offenses have on the relationship by portraying what happens when she experiences forgiveness from these injuries. She described it as *"When I hurt him, and it happens often, then do I say sorry? Ya, then do I from there..I don't know, the relationship stops getting pressed down, [it is] revitalized"*. From this statement it is like for her the relationship becomes weighed down under offenses, and is unable to flourish when pressed down from the injuries.

Theme 2: The consequences from the offense:

This theme ties neatly with the participant's experience of being on the receiving as well as the giving end of similar, multiple offenses, as related to the fact that the forgiveness process is not an either/or situation. While interviewees reported that they gave consequences for being hurt, they also stated that they experienced consequences from their partners:

F1: "I also don't want him to be angry, and I don't want to deal with all the drama. First of all, I don't want to hurt him, but I also don't want the consequences."

M1: “My peace is essential, I love my peace. If my peace is taken away from me, I would rather walk away from that thing”.

F3: “Oh god, I would never hear the end of it. There were very few repercussions before, now he would make me quit videogames or start snooping through my stuff, this and the emotional fallout, he would be really hurt I think”.

In all quotes participants mentioned the aforementioned theme of not wanting to hurt their partner, but also the fact that their partner would become angry. The second interviewee mentioned concrete consequences as well as the “emotional fallout”. When discussing the consequences that motivated her not to re-offend **F2** mentioned a more implicit and interactive response, she stated, ***“I’m motivated [to not re-offend] by not disappointing him, we rarely disappoint one another it is not a pattern in our relationship”.*** In this case it is not anger or tangible costs, it is the feeling she receives when she experiences herself as disappointing her partner. Furthermore, she was the only participant who mentioned disappointment in herself as a motivator. **F2: “I think it is my own disappointment in myself, I feel like I should be able to do this. He will express his frustration but he won’t be like until you do this I am going to be really mad at you”.** In her experience, it is interpreted by the researcher that it is not the external consequence that she receives from her partner necessarily that helps her to not re-offend, but an internal drive to improve.

When asked which reason was the biggest motivator between being forgiven and experiencing a consequence, **F1** replied that, ***“well I want to say forgiveness but of course it is a rat and a cage thing, I don’t want him to get angry. Do I want that to be the answer no, no I don’t want that to be the answer. I don’t like that it is my answer”.*** This supports the forgiveness literature that states that forgiveness does not mean being a doormat, and excusing or condoning offensive behaviour. The relationship between forgiveness and

consequences was further extrapolated by *F1* and *F2* in a sub-theme of forgiveness particularly aiding in the reconciliation process.

F1: “The consequences change my behaviour, but he forgiving me quickly motivates me to be in relationship with him. That is what gives me the community feeling with him. The forgiveness is the base of how we interact with each other, getting back to what we are for each other and towards each other is really what is more important to me. Like the punishment is the surface and the forgiveness is the foundational”.

What this quote highlights is that while forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate entities, this interviewee expresses that forgiveness is essential to the reconciliation process. In this way, she describes forgiveness as “foundational” to her relationship, in that it facilitates them coming back towards one another. This fits with couple research in that offenses are inevitable within relationships, and that forgiveness is the way in which couples are able to stay together. While the punishments help to motivate the offense from not re-occurring, it is the forgiveness process that ultimately provides the context for relationships to heal. *F2* mentions the potential harmful effects that could occur for relationships if consequences were the only response to offense:

F2: “He is just a little less abrasive than me but there has been a few times where he has hurt me and I pull him aside after, and that he apologizes and then that is it. That is part of the strength of our marriage is that we deal with something and move on. None of that stupid shit about cold shoulders or ignoring”.

Gottman and Silver (1999) report that one of the four markers of couples that are headed towards divorce is stonewalling, which is akin to what the interviewee was referring to when she spoke “cold shoulders”. They state that when this negative behaviour is prevalent in couple relationships, it indicates severe marital distress. The above participant

recognizes the negative effect that prolonged stonewalling can have on relationship, and states that “a strength of their marriage is that we deal with something...none of that stupid shit about could shoulders”. This reinforces the idea that it is forgiveness that aids in reconciliation, as prolonged punishment is not healthy for couples.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this study was two-fold: a) investigating the “license to transgress” effect as identified by McNulty (2011), and b) to examine couple’s experience of the forgiveness process in regards to multiple, similar offenses. The license to transgress effect was not supported by the data, as neither giving nor seeking forgiveness was significantly associated with number of offenses experienced, which could be explained through a variety of factors. The first is that this study was not an exact replication of McNulty’s (2011) study, as he had couples utilize a longitudinal diary method to record when and how often a specific offense occurred. Due to time constraints with the thesis process, this method was replaced with a retroactive memory task, in which couples recalled how often a specific offense had occurred within the past six months. This type of self-report task has inherent limitations in that research has shown that memory is not unbiased. A second possibility for the inconsistent finding between this and McNulty’s finding is that his study was conducted over four years, whereas this study focused on a six-month period. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a negative correlation appeared between agreeableness and giving offenses. This provides support for the idea that those who are more agreeable, and more willing to forgive, experience less offenses from their partners. Given the support for this concept is mixed as demonstrated by the previous discussion of Luchies’ (2002) research, it would be wise to continue to design further replication and extension studies to examine the reliability of this potential effect.

In regard to the second question, the quantitative and qualitative data did illustrate what contributes in part to relationship satisfaction and safety. The quantitative data demonstrated that number of offenses, though not related to the tendency to give forgiveness, was related to attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. The data demonstrated that the

higher the level of avoidance and anxiety in the relationship, the higher the number of offenses. This seems to suggest that attachment security in part contributes to a safe context in which partners can readily forgive. Attachment anxiety and avoidance was also negatively correlated with self esteem, as higher levels of attachment insecurity were related to lower levels of self esteem. As self esteem was not related to number of offenses, it appears to suggest that while self esteem may not be a contributing factor to number of offenses experienced, it may be a by-product of attachment insecurity and number of offenses experienced. This is supported by attachment theory, which states that healthy relationships are securely attached relationships. As demonstrated by the results, there was a strong correlation between attachment avoidance and anxiety and the number of offenses supported.

Furthermore, it was found that anxiety and avoidance was a significant predictor of the number of offenses within a relationship. Not only does it follow logically that more insecure relationships (less accessible and responsive interactions) would contain a higher number of relational offenses, it can also be hypothesized that the working models of self and other of an insecurely attached individual would be at play. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) compiled a number of studies that demonstrate that avoidant individuals have a working model of the other as unsafe, while their working model of self is generally perceived to be safe. They also illustrate how anxious individuals have a working model of the other as safe, while they perceive themselves to be unsafe. It would be an avenue of further investigation to pursue whether working models of self and other contribute to number of offenses perceived. It could be hypothesized that an avoidant individual may take careful note of partner offenses because it would support their working model of the other as unsafe. Similarly, it could be hypothesized that an anxious individual would take careful note

of partner offenses due to the fact that they are hyper vigilant to signs of abandonment or disregard from their partner.

A second explanation, as shown by Mikulincer and Shaver (2007), is that anxious individuals will react to perceived abandonment with pursuing behaviours, (e.g. calling partner numerous times, extreme outbursts), often inviting the exact types of behaviours and offenses from their partner that they are trying to avoid. This could be another underlying reason as to why anxiously attached individuals experience a higher number of perceived offenses.

The attachment concept of working models of self and other fits nicely with the significant relationship finding between self esteem and attachment. It was found that as either anxiety or avoidance increased in the relationship, self esteem decreased. Again, using standard regression, it was found that attachment insecurity was a significant predictor of levels of self esteem. This could be explained by the fact that anxious individuals have an intrinsic distrust of themselves (Johnson, 2002); however, the working model of self would not explain why avoidant individuals experience low self esteem at almost the same strength of relationship as anxious individuals. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) attempt to elucidate this apparent paradox by summarizing studies showing that, “avoidant individuals exhibited little self-criticism in non-social domains, but they consistently appraised themselves unfavorably on social and interpersonal domains; that is, avoidant people seemed to know, or believe, that they are not very competent in social settings” (p. 158). As romantic relationships are considered by many to be a vital, if not the ultimate, interpersonal domain, it could explain why avoidant individuals rated themselves lower of the self esteem scale. Though the self-esteem scale was not specifically related to couple relationships, as this was couple research

and the individuals were answering questions based on their romantic relationships, they may have been primed to answer the self esteem questions in regards to the interpersonal domain.

Interestingly, Murray, Bellavia, Rose, and Griffin (2003) demonstrate that persons who are in committed relationships where they are feel valued are in a better place to handle situation where they felt either hurt or rejected by their partners. As the authors writes, “sustaining a sense of felt security in a partner’s continued availability and responsiveness seems to require an inferential leap of faith, putting the best possible spin on the available evidence (particularly when that evidence is negative)” (p. 128). They compiled evidence to support this, stating that those in committed and satisfying relationships are more likely to benevolently explain their partner’s attraction to others, to attribute many of their partner’s offenses to external aspects of the situation as opposed to internal traits, they attempt to regulate their negative responses to their partner’s offenses, and attempt to instead react in a constructive manner. They are also more likely to list virtues in their partner that their friends do not see, or even that their partner is aware of. Finally, they are also more likely to see strengths in their own partner that they do not see present in their friend’s partners (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Rusbult et al., 1991; Murray, Holmes, Dolderman, & Griffin, 2000; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996; Rusbult, Van Lange, Wildschut, Yovetich, & Verette, 2000). This supports the positive coping strategies that all four participants mentioned in their qualitative responses to the question of their experiences in the face of multiple, similar offenses. Keeping in mind that all four participants stated that they considered themselves in positive, healthy relationships, many of the themes that arose out of the analysis fit underneath the banner of putting the best possible spin on available evidence. For example, the themes of taking the context into account (attributing to external variables), moderating the severity of the offense (accepting smaller offenses, finding other coping strategies),

considering intentionality and previous attempts to change, approaching their partner and discussing the offense in a constructive manner, empathy for their partner, and recognizing the benefits of forgiving their partner could all be ways in which satisfied couples negotiate the inevitable, multiple offenses that come from their partner. According to Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006), the most important variable in regards to the question of forgive and forget is not “How many times?” but rather, “How valued am I?” When the answer to that second question is yes, it allows an individual to engage in the positive, relationship reconciling strategies as mentioned above. Thus, as one of the participants mentioned, while consequences to an offense may help to motivate a partner to not re-offend, it is the reconciling and forgiving acts that built a positive foundation for relationship.

Furthermore, data from Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006) also supports the themes found from the question of what motivates a perpetrator to not re-offend. The two themes that emerged from that question were a) harm to the partner and b) the consequences from the offense. If one assumes the fundamental principle of the Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006) risk regulation system to be true, that healthy relationships are founded on a mutual belief of being valued by the other, then it would follow logically that harming the partner would have negative consequences on the relationship. Acting in hurtful ways would undermine the trust their partner has in how much the perpetrator appreciates and values them. This might explain Gottman and Silver’s (1999) research that for every negative interaction in healthy relationships, there must be four positive interactions. If an individual values their partner and their relationship, they understand that to continue to harm their partner poses a risk of losing that relationship.

Secondly, the risk regulation system supports the relationship between receiving consequences for an offense and the desire to not re-offend. As hypothesized by Murray,

Holmes, and Collins (2006) appraising behaviour from an upset partner would most likely cause the offender to perceive themselves as dropping in value in their partner's esteem. According to Murray, Holmes, and Collins (2006), this drop in partner's esteem would correspond to a drop in the offender's own self esteem. In other words, they internalize the consequences as valuing themselves less. This would then motivate them to re-gain esteem, with re-offending their partner being a highly unlikely method of doing so. This would explain the powerful effect that consequences can have to curbing behaviour, however, only if they are carried out in such a way that the offender will still desire to be in relationship with the hurt partner. If the offender no longer values the relationship or the other partner, they will be less likely to internalize consequences as a drop in self esteem and similarly, less motivated to not re-offend. This concept is supported by a quote from the qualitative data, in which *F3* stated: ***"I wouldn't be with someone unless I thought they were totally awesome and they thought I was totally awesome. And they would have to think that they were totally awesome, and know that I am pretty wicked too"***.

Clinical Implications for Counselling and Spirituality

"Here, again in short, Christianity got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites, by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious". G.K. Chesterton-Orthodoxy.

Given the data that has come from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, how then should couple counsellors answer the question of forgive and forget? As the researcher studied the data and previous research, one meta-theme that appeared repeatedly was that a) in order for forgiveness to occur there must be a sense of being valued, or what the researcher has named "relational safety", and b) forgiveness is not only a result of relational safety, but that it can also contribute to a sense of being valued. The robust findings of attachment insecurity (anxiety and avoidance) being strongly related to number of offenses

experienced and not to forgivingness tendencies, demonstrates that a lack of safety and security in relationships was the strongest predictor of offenses experienced. The lack of support found for a relationship between attachment anxiety and forgiveness tendencies is corroborated by research conducted by Barnes, Carvallo, Brown, & Osterman (2010), who found that the need to belong was more likely to interfere with the process of forgiveness than aid it. This goes against commonly stated wisdom, which believes that the more one feels the need to be with someone, or belong, the more likely they are to forgive offenses, and “put up with” them. Yet, Barnes and colleagues (2010) conducted three studies in which those with a higher need to belong actually practiced forgiveness with less frequency, and *only upon the satisfaction of the need to belong*, were they more likely to offer forgiveness. Therefore, as research has demonstrated, since offenses lead to a perception of being devalued, or not having relational safety, this research would support the idea that they would be less likely to offer forgiveness in the face of multiple offenses if they did not perceive themselves to be valued or have belonging with the other. This suggests to the couple counsellor that perhaps the more fitting question should not be “Whether or not to forgive?”, but “How valued does this partner by the other partner? The divine? Themselves?” In addition, as the quantitative data has shown through the link between attachment security and self esteem, a valued, secure partner is not only less likely to experience offenses from their partner, but also more likely to have a more positive self-concept. The qualitative data also supported the concept that relationship safety is what contributes to a positive vision of their relationship. As stated by one participant about forgiveness: *“I really don’t feel that I have to guard myself with him. I feel safe with him”*.

Furthermore, given this research, perhaps it is more important for couple counsellors to be aware of what seems to be a more common danger, aptly captured by Barnes et al.

(2010): “Because relationships in which old wounds are allowed to fester do not promote the true connectedness that humans desire, we believe that any attempt at reconciliation that is not accompanied by forgiveness may backfire by preserving relationships that ultimately cannot satisfy belongingness needs and by taking away from personal resources that could be used to build new relationships. This suggests that maintaining relationships in which personal injuries have not been forgiven could be as problematic as abandoning relationships the first time an injustice is suffered. In a world where caring relationships are a precious commodity, holding on to friends who have wronged us is important, but so, too, is forgiving them when we do” (pg. 1158).

The researcher believes that much of the data underscores the idea that for healthy relationships in which each partner feels a sense of value and safety, forgiveness is not only a viable option, but one that promotes both health and happiness. This is supported by the interview themes of the benefits of forgiveness for the relationship, in which participants recognize that forgiveness towards their partner is what allows the relationship to become revitalized. Tools that appear to help in this process are a feeling of empathy, respect, and a partner’s spirituality. In regards to the client’s spirituality, it would be an imperative for the couple counsellor to understand what the client’s perspective is in regards to forgiveness. As demonstrated by the interview data, those who identified as religious were more likely to endorse forgiveness as a response to hurt, regardless of whether or not the offending partner demonstrated remorse or a change in behaviour. The couple counsellor must take this into account when assessing the context of safety and value in the relationship.

The researcher believes on the basis of the data that it is also important in the case where forgiveness leads to reconciliation for the offending partner to understand the extent of the hurt that was caused, and the potential consequences of this mistake. This was illustrated

in both the hurt partner and the offending partners' perspectives, as the perpetrator recognized that many times the consequences brought about a change in behaviour. This, coupled with a desire to not hurt their partner, is what stopped them from re-offending. It follows then, that if the perpetrator is not made aware to the extent of how their behaviour is affecting their partner, then they may be less likely to stop the behaviour. This also corroborates with Luchies et al. (2010) research that those who consistently did not express the hurt from the offenses, the "doormat effect", experienced a diminished sense of self-respect and self-esteem. Therefore, it would be wise for the couple therapist supporting a client to forgive to allow them to express the hurt in a way that gets heard by the offending partner. This may help to create a sense of being valued by one another that appears to be so vital for a sense of safety in relationship.

Lastly, the researcher included the beginning quote by G.K. Chesterton to address the qualitative finding that forgiveness and consequences are not mutually exclusive. As previously stated, "forgive and forget" appears to not be an either/or situation. In answer to the question of whether or not one needed to forget in order to facilitate close relationships, the participants answered with a yes! Secondly, in response to the question of what helps them to not re-offend and whether or not there was a choice to consider reconciliation, the interview participants also answered with a yes to needing consequences to facilitate remorse. As suggested by Chesterton, perhaps the best way to answer the question is to affirm both as needed, and keep both "furious". Yes, partners in close relationships should consider their own sense of being valued in relationship, and recognize that they have a choice of whether or not to forgive. At the same time, yes, partners in close relationships need forgiveness in order to restore closeness and trust. Perhaps it is best captured by this participant, who said: "*The consequences change my behaviour, but he forgiving me*

quickly motivates me to be in relationship with him. That is what gives me the community feeling with him. The forgiveness is the base of how we interact with each other, getting back to what we are for each other and towards each other is really what is more important to me. Like the punishment is the surface and the forgiveness is the foundational”.

Further Research

Unfortunately, not all couples are in a place of feeling valued and loved by one another, and thus, are not able to respond constructively to the experience of being offended by their partner. As Johnson (2004) has highlighted, often couples in distress become caught in negative cycles of disconnection and escalated conflict. This is supported by research conducted by Murray, Bellavia, and Rose (2003), who affirm that, “the tendency to read rejection and hurt into daily events may make it difficult for intimates who chronically feel less valued by their partner to respond constructively to difficulties. Instead, they might react to the acute pain of rejection with anger and by taking the defensive step of actively distancing from the source of the hurt---the partner or relationship... in romantic relationships, people may not have this luxury of leaving the other person [as in friendships or other close relationships]. They are often caught in the position of feeling hurt by the very person whose acceptance they most need. It is for this reason that we believe that a sense of acceptance needs to be secured in romantic relationships before intimates are likely to be willing to respond to acute feelings of hurt and vulnerability by behaving constructively” (p. 128-129). So the question becomes, how does a therapist begin to facilitate a sense of connectedness and shared value within a severely distressed couple, especially a relationship in which there has been multiple, similar, severe offenses?

Johnson (2002) has labelled certain offenses that block couples from reconciling as “attachment injuries”, defined by an incident in which the one partner feels abandoned and betrayed by not receiving support from their attachment figure at a crucial time (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001). Attachment injuries have direct bearing to the bond between the couple, often creating difficulty for the couple to be able to re-engage and trust in one another. Makinen and Johnson (2006) refer to these attachment injuries as relationship traumas, in which the hurt partner experiences destructive Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder type symptoms: such as hyper-vigilance, avoidance, and numbing. They have developed the Attachment Injury Resolution Model (Makinen and Johnson, 2006), with the goal of helping couples who have experienced relationship traumas or more severe offenses, such as multiple infidelities. They break down the model into eight steps, with the first two illustrating the starting point for distressed couples who are blocked by an attachment injury or offense. This is signalled by an injured partner who relates the offense in a highly emotional manner, with an offending partner who denies or minimizes the incident and becomes defensive. In the third step, the injured partner is given an opportunity to express the impact the offense has had on them, and its significance for their belief in the safety and security of the relationship. The offending partner at this step begins to understand and validate the significance. In the fifth and sixth steps of re-engagement, the injured partner expresses their grief and becomes vulnerable again, with the offending partner becoming emotionally engaged and responsive. The offending partner at this stage should demonstrate empathy, regret, and remorse. The final steps includes forgiveness and reconciliation, where the hurt partner is able to risk asking for comfort that was previously unavailable and the offending partner responds in a comforting and caring manner (Makinen and Johnson, 2006).

However, as noted by Makinen and Johnson (2006) in their verification of the process, this model has not been yet generalized to couples who have experienced more than one severe offense, or, to couples who experience re-occurring more minor offenses of a similar nature. Further research would need to address how couples who experience this can begin to trust and value one another again, which would stop the negative cycle of re-occurring offenses according to the risk regulation system. The Attachment Injury Resolution Model may provide one avenue of research, as testing its efficacy with the above types of couples could illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of this model.

In a similar vein, in light of the concept that couples who perceived themselves as valued are more resilient in the face of offenses, the question becomes, how resilient is this buffering effect? After how many offenses does one begin to doubt the quality of the offending partner's appreciation and love? What factors help to contribute to the feeling of being valued, and what factors help couples to foster responsiveness and connection? This is a second avenue of research that is created with the analysis of couples' experience of multiple offenses. As F2 already noted, *"I have a hard time forgiving him for that kind of stuff when its constant...Over time it would be harder, if there was no discussion or attempt to change. That would be really hard"*.

A third potential further research question stems from the emphasis on spirituality by two of the four interviewees. They both stated that their religious and spiritual beliefs were essential in their motivations. They expressed that it both helped them to engage in the forgiveness and reconciliation process, as well as motivated them to not re-offend or hurt their partner. In many ways, an individual's relationship to the Transcendent can be conceptualized using attachment theory. As Pickard and Nelson-Becker (2011) write, "attachment refers to the impression of something or someone held within oneself that

provides a sense of well-being or security. This idea of attachment may be applied to the Transcendent. By taking a broader perspective of one's life and feeling supported even if one perceives the world offers little comfort, individuals can maintain mental health and life satisfaction when facing stressful life events" (p. 138-139). Thus, a person's attachment to God is relational, similar to couple relationships. One Christian theologian writes that persons, as created in the Image of the Trinitarian God, are fundamentally relational, containing relationships to the self, other, God, and earth (Medley, 2002). Therefore, people not only form meaningful relationships with others, but also with the Transcendent, and that this relationship can also provide the safety and security of a person to person attachment bond. This, taken with the concept of feeling valued as facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation, invites the question of whether feeling valued by the Transcendent can also help to promote forgiveness and reconciliation. Research should examine whether or not spirituality can be a resilience factor in the face of multiple, similar offenses from a partner, as the feeling of being valued by God or the Transcendent may help to boost self esteem and constructive ways of dealing with conflict.

Limitations

There are a couple of limitations within this study. Although 99 cases of survey responses were collected, screening out the participants who did not complete the full questionnaire narrowed this subset number to 73. Given that the recommended number of participants for regression is 100, this study could be enhanced by having more participants as it would increase power and decrease the likelihood of a Type I error. Similarly, in regards to the qualitative research, this study would also be improved by interviewing more couples than individuals, so that the pattern of interaction between individuals could be better examined. Also, in regards to the types of couples that were studied by the qualitative data, they only

included persons who identified themselves as being in positive, satisfied, and stable relationships. To increase the generalizing ability of the data, it would be beneficial to examine couples who identified as being in distress or who could pinpoint specific attachment injuries that have occurred multiple times. This explains the fact that the analysis and discussion did not contain a mention of infidelity, as none of the participants who had experienced the severe offense of infidelity consented to being an interviewee for the qualitative data.

As previously mentioned, another limitation to this study was that it was not an exact replication of McNulty's (2011) research concerning the possible "dark side of forgiveness". This would have required time that was not possible within the Master's level of study (a four year longitudinal study). This must be taken into consideration with this study's finding that there was no evidence to support a "license to transgress" or the idea that increased levels of forgivingness are associated with a higher level of offenses experienced.

Lastly, a more theoretical limitation includes the mixed definitions of forgiveness. For example, some theorists believe forgiveness to contain a behavioural component, where one begins to act more pro-socially towards the offender. However, for other theorists, forgiveness does not require this behavioural component, or reconciliation. For all four participants within the qualitative data, forgiveness did not necessarily insinuate reconciliation, whereas the researcher held the assumption that within couple relationships forgiveness often translates into reconciliation, as it means the partner is willing to let go of the hurt of the offense. It may be important for further research to examine the link between forgiveness and reconciliation, especially within couple relationships. As previously noted by Murray, Bellavia, and Rose (2003) it is not always the same level of choice whether or

not to reconcile with a partner as with a friend, as a romantic partner is considered to be one of the main sources of acceptance and validated for an adult.

Despite the limitations, this study has made several contributions to the understanding of couple's experience in the face of similar, multiple offenses. As aforementioned, multiple similar offenses is a difficult and common stressor for couples, and the researcher foresees this study as helping couples (and clinicians) to more clearly delineate when forgiveness is appropriate, making relationships stronger, healthier, and perhaps preventing the reoccurrence of these transgressions. This kind of in-depth analysis was necessary because a) there is a scarcity in amount of research done on the possible risks of forgiveness and b) little is known of the perspectives of the "offending" partner especially. This research highlights how healthy couples are more resilient in the face of offenses due to a sense of being valued, and provides clinicians with a picture of positive coping strategies. Secondly, it provides clinicians and couples with a picture where forgiveness and/or consequences is not an either/or situation, that in satisfied couples hurting one's partner is internalized as hurting oneself (the consequences are inherent) and forgiveness provides the foundation from which couples can reconcile. It demonstrates that for healthy couples dealing with offenses there is communication about the offense as well as demonstrations of remorse from the offender. It also highlights that satisfied couples do not prolong the "punishment" or consequences (e.g. cold shoulders), and that when it is safe to do so, couples are able to forget offenses and move forward.

References

- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Social and Psychological Psychology*, *63*, 596–612.
- Auerbach, Y. (2005). Forgiveness and reconciliation: The religious dimension. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *17* (3), 469-485.
- Baskin, T. W., & Enright, R. D. (2004). Intervention studies on forgiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *82*, 79-90.
- Barnes, C., Carvallo, M., Brown, R., & Osterman, L. (2010). Forgiveness and the need to belong. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *36* (9), pg. 1148-1160.
- Baumeister, R.F. & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, (3), 497-529.
- Berry, J., Worthington, E., Parrott, L., O'Connor, L., & Wade, N. (2001). Dispositional forgivingness: Development and construct validity of the transgression narrative test of forgivingness (TNTF). *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *27*(10), 1277-1290.
doi:10.1177/01461672012710004
- Blow, A.J., & Hartnett, K. (2005). Infidelity in committed relationships II: A substantive review. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, *31*(2), 217-233. DOI: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.2005.tb01556.x
- Bono, G., McCullough, M., & Root, L. (2008). Forgiveness, feeling connected to others, and well-being: Two longitudinal studies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *34*, 182-195.

- Bradbury, T.N. & Fincham, F.D. (1990). Attributions in marriage: Review and critique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 2-23.
- Brown, R. (2003). Measuring individual differences in the tendency to forgive: Construct validity and links with depression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(6), 759-771. doi:10.1177/0146167203029006008
- Burnette, J., McCullough, M., Van Tongeren, D., & Davis, D. (2012). Forgiveness results from integrating information about relationship value and exploitation risk. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(3), 345-356. doi:10.1177/0146167211424582
- Case, B. (2005). Healing the wounds of infidelity through the healing power of apology and forgiveness. In Percy, F., Hertlein, K.M., & Wetchler, J.L. (Eds.), *Handbook of Clinical Infidelity* (41-54). New York: The Haworth Press, Inc.
- Chiaromello, S., Sastre, M. T. M., & Mullet, E. (2008). Seeking forgiveness: Factor structure, and relationships with personality and forgivingness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 45(5), 383-388. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2008.05.009
- Conley, T.D., Moors, A.C., Ziegler, A., and Feltner, M.R. (2011). Trust and satisfaction in adult child-mother (and other) relationships. *Basic and applied social psychology*, 33, 239-254.
- Cooper, A.J., Smillie, L.D., & Corr, P.J. (2010). A confirmatory factor analysis of the Mini-IPIP five factor model personality scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48, 688-691.
- Creswell, J., Hanson, W., Clark Plano, V., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236-264.
doi:10.1177/0011000006287390

- De Stefano, J., & Oala, M. (2008). Extramarital affairs: Basic considerations and essential tasks in clinical work. *The Family Journal, 16*(1), 13-19.
doi:10.1177/1066480707309128
- Drigotas, S. M., Safstrom, C. A., & Gentilia, T. (1999). An investment model prediction of dating infidelity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*(3), 509-524.
doi:10.1037/0022-3514.77.3.509
- Eastwick, P.W. & Finkel, E.J. (2008). The attachment system in fledgling relationships: An activating role for attachment anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(3), 628-647.
- Exline, J. J., Baumeister, R. F., Zell, A. L., Kraft, A. J., & Witvliet, C. V. O. (2008). Not so innocent: Does seeing one's own capability for wrongdoing predict forgiveness? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*(3), 495-515.
doi:10.1037/0022-3514.94.3.495
- Exline, J. J., Baumeister, R. F., Bushman, B. J., Campbell, W. K., & Finkel, E. J. (2004). Too proud to let go: Narcissistic entitlement as a barrier to forgiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 87*(6), 894-912. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.87.6.894
- Exline, J.J. & Baumeister, R.F. (2000). Expressing forgiveness and repentance: Benefits and barriers. In McCullough, M.E., Pargament, K.I., & Thoresen, C.E. (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice* (133-154). New York: The Guilford Press
- Feeney, J.A. (2004). Hurt feelings of attachment from parents to romantic partners: Effects of individual and relational variables. *Journal of Family Studies, 10*, 220-238.
- Fincham, F.D., Paleari Gl, & Regalia, C. (2002). Forgiveness in marriage: The role of relationship quality attributions, and empathy. *Personal Relationships, 9*, 27-37.

- Fincham, F. (2009). Forgiveness: Integral to close relationships and inimical to justice. *Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law*, 16, (2), 357-384.
- Finkel, E.J. & Campbell, W.K. (2001). Self-control and accommodation in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 263-277.
- Finkel, E.J., Rusbult, C.E., Kumashiro, M., & Hannon, P.A. (2002). Dealing with betrayal in close relationships: Does commitment promote forgiveness? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 148-164.
- Gaines, S.O. & Henderson, M.C. (2002). Impact of attachment style on responses to accommodative dilemmas among same-sex couples. *Personal Relationships*, 9, 89-93.
- Gaines, S.O., Work, C., Johnson, H., Youn, M.S.P., & Lai, K. (2000). Impact of attachment style and self-monitoring on individual's responses to accommodative dilemmas across relationship types. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 17, 767-789.
- Gordon, K. C., Baucom, D. H., & Snyder, D. K. (2008). Optimal strategies in couple therapy: Treating couples dealing with the trauma of infidelity. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 38(3), 151-160. doi:10.1007/s10879-008-9085-1
- Gottman, J.M. & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Harber, K. & Wenberg, K. (2005). Emotional disclosure and closeness toward offenders. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(6), p. 734-746.
- Hojat, M. (2007). *Empathy in patient care*. New York: Springer.
- Jang, S.A., Smith, S.W., & Levine, T.R. (2002). To stay or to leave? The role of attachment styles on communication patterns and potential termination of romantic relationships following discovery of deceptions. *Communication Monographs*, 69, 236-252.

- Johnson, S. (2002) *Emotionally focused couple therapy with trauma survivors: Strengthening attachment bonds*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy: Creating connections*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Johnson, S., Makinen, J.A., & Milikin, J.W. (2001). Attachment injuries in couple relationships: A new perspective on impasses in couples therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 27*, 145-155.
- Karremans, J.C., Van Lange, P.A. M., Ouwerkerk, J.A., Kluwer, E.S. (2003). When forgiveness enhances psychological well-being: The influence of interpersonal commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 1011-1026.
- Karremans, J.C. & Van Lange, P.A.M. (2004). Back to caring after being hurt: The role of forgiveness. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 34*, 207-227.
- Karremans, J.C., Van Lange, P.A.M., & Holland, R.W. (2005). Forgiveness and its associations with prosocial thinking, feeling, and doing beyond the relationship with the offender. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*, 1315-1326.
- Karremans, J.C. & Van Lange, P.A.M. (2008). Forgiveness in personal relationships: Its malleability and powerful consequences. *European Review of Social Psychology, 19*, 202-241.
- Kareemans, J.C., Van Lange, P.A.M. (2008b). The role of forgiveness in shifting from me to we. *Self and Identity, 7*, 75-88.
- Lawler, K. A., Younger, J. W., Piferi, R. L., Jobe, R. L., Edmondson, K. A., & Jones, W. H. (2005). The unique effects of forgiveness on health: An exploration of pathways. *Journal of Behavioural Medicine, 28*, 157-167.

- Larkin, M. & Thompson, A.R. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis in mental health and psychotherapy research. In Harper, D. & Thompson, A.R. (Eds.) *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Laumann, E., Gagnon, J.H., Michael, R.T., and Michaels, S. The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States. 1994. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Also reported in the companion volume, Michael et al, *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey*, 1994).
- Leary, M.R., Springer, C., Negel, L., Ansell, E., & Evans, K. (1998). The causes, typology, and consequences of hurt feelings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1225-1237.
- Luchies, L. (2011). *Is high expected forgiveness a license to transgress?* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.
- Luchies, L.B., Finkel, E.J., McNulty, J.K., & Kumashiro, M. (2010). The doormat effect: When forgiving erodes self-respect and self-concept clarity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 734-749.
- Lopez, F.G., Gover, M.R., Leskela, J., Sauer, E.M., Schirmer, L., & Wyssmann, J. (1997). Attachment styles, shame, guilt, and collaborative problem-solving orientations. *Personal Relationships*, 4, 187-199.
- Lundahl, B., Taylor, M., Stevenson, R., & Roberts, K. (2008). Process-based forgiveness interventions: A meta-analytic review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 18(5), 465-478. doi:10.1177/1049731507313979
- Marshall, C. and G. B. Rossman (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, C.A., Sage Publications.

- Maio, G. R., Thomas, G., Fincham, F. D., & Carnelley, K. B. (2008). Unraveling the role of forgiveness in family relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*, 307–319.
- Makinen, J.A. & Johnson, S.M. (2006). Resolving attachment injuries in couples using emotionally focused therapy: Steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 74*(6), 1055-1064.
- McCullough, M.E., Fincham, F.D., & Tsang, J.A. (2003). Forgiveness, forbearance, and time: The temporal unfolding of transgression-related interpersonal motivations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 540-555.
- McCullough, M., & Hoyt, W. (2002). Transgression-related motivational dispositions: Personality substrates of forgiveness and their links to the big five. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*(11), 1556-1573. doi:10.1177/014616702237583
- McCullough, M.E., Pargament, K.I., & Thoresen, C.E. (2000). The psychology of forgiveness: History, conceptual issues, and overview. In McCullough, M.E., Pargament, K.I., & Thoresen, C.E. (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice* (1-16). New York: The Guilford Press.
- McCullough, M. E., Rachal, K. C., Sandage, S. J., Worthington Jr, E. L., Brown, S. W., & Hight, T. L. (1998). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. theoretical elaboration and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(6), 1586-1603. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.75.6.1586
- McCullough, M. E., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (1995). Promoting forgiveness: The comparison of two brief psychoeducational interventions with a waiting-list control. *Counseling and Values, 40*, 55-68.

- McNulty, J. (2008). Forgiveness in marriage: Putting the benefits into context. *Journal of Family Psychology, 22*, 171-175.
- McNulty, J. (2010). Forgiveness increases the likelihood of subsequent partner transgressions in marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology, 24*, 787-790.
- McNulty, J. (2011). The dark side of forgiveness: The tendency to forgive predicts continued psychological and physical aggression in marriage. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 37*(6), 770-783. doi:10.1177/0146167211407077
- Medley, M.S. (2002). *Imago trinitatis: Toward a relational understanding of becoming human*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America, Inc.
- Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P. (2005). Attachment theory and emotions in close relationships: Exploring the attachment related dynamics of emotional reactions to relational events. *Personal Relationships, 12*, 149-168,
- Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics and change*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P., & Slav, K. (2006). Attachment, mental representations of others, and gratitude and forgiveness in romantic relationships. In M. Mikulincer & G.S. Goodman (Eds.), *Dynamics of romantic love: Attachment, caregiving, and sex* (pp. 190-213). New York: Guilford Press.
- Molden, D.C. & Finkel, E.J. (2010). Motivations for promotion and prevention and the role of trust and commitment in interpersonal forgiveness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46*, 255-268.
- Morrow, S. (2007). Qualitative research in counseling psychology. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(2), 209-235. doi:10.1177/0011000006286990

- Murray, S.L., Holmes, J.G., and Griffin, D. (1996). The benefits of positive illusions: Idealization and the construction of satisfaction in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*, 79-98.
- Murray, S.L., Holmes, J.G., & Griffin, D.W. (2000). Self esteem and the quest for felt security: How perceived regard regulates attachment processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*, 478-498.
- Murray, S.L., Bellavia, G.M., Rose, P. Griffin, D. (2003). Once hurt, twice hurtful: How perceived regard regulates daily marital interactions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(1), 126-147.
- Murray, S.L, Derrick, J.L, and Leder, S. (2008). Balancing connectedness and self-protection goals in close relationships: A levels of processing perspective on risk regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *94*(3), 429-259.
- Murray, S.L., Holmes, J.G., and Collins, N.L. (2006). Optimizing assurance: The risk regulation system in relationships. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*, p. 641-666.
- Paleari, F. G., Regalia, C., & Fincham, F. (2005). Marital quality, forgiveness, empathy, and rumination: A longitudinal analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *31*, 368–378.
- Paulhus, D.L. (1984). Two-component models of socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63* (3), 598-609. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514-46.3.598.
- Percy, F., Hertlein, K.M., & Wetchler, J.L. (2005). Infidelity: An overview. In Percy, F., Hertlein, K.M., & Wetchler, J.L. (Eds.), *Handbook of Clinical Infidelity* (5-16). New York: The Haworth Press, Inc.
- Pickard, J.G. & Nelson-Becker, H. (2011). Attachment and spiritual coping: Theory and practice with older adults. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, *13*, 138-155.

- Rogers, C. (1972/1992). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 60*(6), 827.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rusbult, C. E., Van Lange, P. A. M., Wildschut, T., Yovetich, N. A., & Verette, J. (2000). Perceived superiority in close relationships: Why it exists and persists. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 521–545.
- Rusbult, C. E., Verette, J., Whitney, G. A., Slovik, L. F., & Lipkus, I. (1991). Accommodation processes in close relationships: Theory and preliminary research evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 53–78
- Rye M.S., Pargament K.I., Ali, A., Beck, G.I., Dorff, E.N., Hallisey, C. Narayanan, V. & Williams, J.G. (2000). Religious perspectives on forgiveness. In McCullough, M.E., Pargament, K.I., & Thoresen, C.E. (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice* (17-40). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Schumann, K. (2012). Does love mean never having to say you're sorry? Associations between relationship satisfaction, perceived apology sincerity, and forgiveness. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 29*(7), 997-1010.
- Seybold, K.S., Hill, P.D., Neumann, J.K., & Chi, D.S. (2001). Physiological and psychological correlates of forgiveness. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 20*, 250-259.
- Smith, C. (2011) *Lost in Transition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spring, J.A. (1996). *After the affair*. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, Inc.

- Sweeney, M.M. and Horwitz, A.V. (2001). Infidelity, initiation, and the emotional climate of divorce: Are there implications for mental health? *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 42(3), 295-309.
- Tabak, B. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2011). Perceived transgressor agreeableness decreases cortisol response and increases forgiveness following recent interpersonal transgressions. *Biological Psychology*, 87(3), 386-392.
doi:10.1016/j.biopsycho.2011.05.001
- Wallace, H. M., Exline, J. J., & Baumeister, R. F. (2008). Interpersonal consequences of forgiveness: Does forgiveness deter or encourage repeat offenses? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44(2), 453-460. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2007.02.012
- Wohl, M. J. A., & McGrath, A. L. (2007). The perception of time heals all wounds: Temporal distance affects willingness to forgive following an interpersonal transgression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 1023–1035.
- Whisman, M. A., Dixon, A. E., & Johnson, B. (1997). Therapists' perspectives of couple problems and treatment issues in couple therapy. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11(3), 361-366. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.11.3.361
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S., & Mandle, C. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11(4), 522-537. doi:10.1177/104973201129119299
- Van Lange, P. A. M., Rusbult, C. E., Drigotas, S. M., Arriaga, X. B., Witcher, B. S., & Cox, C. L. (1997). Willingness to sacrifice in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 1373–1395.
- Van Oyen Witvliet, C., Ludwig, T.E., and Vander Laan, K. L. (2001). Granting forgiveness of harbouring grudges: Implication for emotion, physiology, and health. *Psychological Science*, 12(2), 117-123. doi: 10.1111/1467-9280.00320.

Vogel, D., Tucker, C., Wester, S., & Heesacker, M. (1999). The impact of sex and situational cues on the endorsement of traditional gender-role attitudes and behaviours in dating couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 16*(4), 459-473.

Yárnoz Yaben, S. (2009). Forgiveness, attachment, and divorce. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 50*(4), 282-294. doi:10.1080/10502550902775952

Younger, J., Piferi, R., Jobe, R., and Lawler, K. (2004). Dimensions of forgiveness: The views of laypersons. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21*, 837-855.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**Forgive & Forget? Attitudes towards forgiveness in the case of multiple similar offenses**
Principal Investigator: Erika DeSchiffart

Forgiveness is often cited as a key ingredient to couple reconciliation. Numerous studies demonstrate that it predicts many positive outcomes, however, other research warns against upholding forgiveness as the ultimate solution for all couples. This study is being conducted in order to investigate the experiences of couples surrounding the forgiveness and reconciliation process after breaches or offenses in the relationship.

This is an invitation for you to participate in the following study. You will be asked to complete a survey, which should take you no longer than thirty minutes. The survey contains items measuring tendencies to both give and seek forgiveness, as well as questions concerning relationship breaches. As a participant, you have a choice of refusing to participate, not answering any questions or withdrawing at any time. Participation in research is voluntary. After completing the survey, you will be given an opportunity to indicate if you would like to participate in the second half of the study, which involves an hour interview with the principal researcher surrounding these same topics. Not everyone who gives their contact information will be contacted, but those who do participate in the interview will be given ten dollars in compensation as well as refreshments. Due to the nature of the study, if both partners in a couple complete the survey and give contact information, they are more likely to be selected for individual interviews. The research data will be kept until April 2018, and after which will be destroyed.

Those who will have access to the data collected are the Principal Investigator, Erika DeSchiffart, as well as her thesis supervisor; Dr. Martin Rovers. Participants can choose to request their scores to their tendencies for both giving and seeking out forgiveness by giving their e-mail address. Your e-mail address will not be disclosed to anyone except the principal researcher, and only for the purpose of sending your scores.

These topics can be distressing for some. If one would like to discuss the distress, one session of therapy will be made available to you through the Saint Paul University Counselling Centre. The research has been carefully reviewed and approved by the Saint Paul University's Research Ethics Review Committee. You will not benefit directly from participating in this study; however, the research will be very helpful for couple therapists in determining possible effects of forgiveness and infidelity. This will allow perhaps for a more effective therapeutic approach.

Confidentiality will be respected and no identifying information will be required; rather codes will be used in order to match the data of couples. The software used by this study, Survey Monkey, is an American based software so it is subject to the Patriot Act. This means that confidentiality of the data cannot be guaranteed nor the anonymity of you as a participant.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Erika DeSchiffart at the above e-mail. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact:

Research Ethics Board
Saint Paul University
recherche-research@ustpaul.ca

613-236-1393 ext. 2312

I have read the above information, and am hereby giving my informed consent to participate in this research project by selecting NEXT.

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

IMPORTANT: If you AND your partner are completing this survey, please place your self-generated identical matching code here: _____

- 1) What is your age? _____
- 2) What is your sex? _____
- 3) What is your ethnicity? _____
- 4) Are you in what you would consider a committed relationship? _____.
- 5) If you have indicated you are in a committed relationship, please specify for how long you have been in this relationship _____.
- 6) Would you identify yourself with a certain religious tradition? If so, please indicate _____.
- 7) How would you characterize your relationship with your romantic partner? _____.
- 8) How long have you known your partner? _____.

TENDENCY TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, with 1 = disagree completely and 5 = completely agree.

I do not feel able to seek forgiveness even when I:

Positively consider the person I have harmed

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Completely				Agree Completely

When the harm I have caused has clearly visible consequences on the person I have harmed

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Completely				Agree Completely

When I think I am entirely responsible for the harm done

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Completely				Agree Completely

Even when I have already been punished for the harm done

1 2 3 4 5
Disagree Completely Agree Completely

Even when the person I have harmed has already taken revenge on me for the harm done

1 2 3 4 5
Disagree Completely Agree Completely

My worldviews leads me to always seek forgiveness:

1 2 3 4 5
Disagree Completely Agree Completely

How frequently has your SPOUSE committed the following acts towards you in the past year, with 0 = never, and 6 = all the time, or everyday:

Forgot something that is important to me:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Flirted with someone else

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Was physically aggressive towards me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all	Rarely	Occasionally (5	Often	Frequently (At	All the

(Not once)	(2 or 3 times)	or 6 times)	(Every 2 or 3 weeks)	least once per week)	time (Every day)
------------	----------------	-------------	----------------------	----------------------	------------------

Acted excessively clingy with me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Kept a secret from me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Lied to me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Did something that he/she knew I did not want him/her to do

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Engaged in behaviour I do not respect

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Rude to/about one of my family members or friends

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Controlling of me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Was messy in a way that had a negative impact on me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Handled money poorly

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Did not support me when I needed it

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)
--------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------------------

Was emotionally distant from me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Was disrespectful to me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Downplayed the importance of something I think is important

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Made fun of me

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

Communicated with me in a negative way (spoke meanly or didn't listen to me, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all (Not once)	Rarely (2 or 3 times)	Occasionally (5 or 6 times)	Often (Every 2 or 3 weeks)	Frequently (At least once per week)	All the time (Every day)

For the purpose of this study, an affair or infidelity will be defined as “a sexual and/or emotional act engaged in by a person within a committed relationship and constitutes a breach of trust and/or violation of agreed-upon standards by one or both individuals in that relationship in relation to romantic/emotional or sexual exclusivity.

Based on this definition, has your current or a past partner ever in the time of your relationship engaged in infidelity? (Please indicate either a yes or a no, and whether or not they are a current or past partner) _____.

Based on this definition, have you engaged in infidelity in either a past or current relationship? (Please indicate either a yes or a no, and whether or not they are a current or past relationship) _____.

If so, did you and your partner reconcile (stay together), or are you in the process of reconciling after the experience of infidelity? (Yes/No) _____.

Have you ever experienced a situation in which your partner engaged in infidelity again, after deciding to stay together? (Yes/No, Past/Current Partner)_____.

Have you ever experienced a situation in which you engaged in infidelity again, after deciding to stay together? (Yes/No, Past/Current Partner)_____.

TENDENCY TO GIVE FORGIVENESS

Please answer the following questions based on the scenarios given with 1 = Definitely no, 4 = Maybe, and 7= Definitely Yes.:

You ask your partner to mail some important papers. You stress that it is imperative that the papers are mailed today. Your partner assures you he/she will mail them. When you return from work, the papers are still sitting on the table. Your partner says he or she forgot and apologizes.

	<i>Definitely No</i>		<i>Maybe</i>			<i>Definitely Yes</i>	
Would you feel forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Would you express forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IF you have had similar experiences in your relationship, how forgiving were you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Your partner comes home from a long day at work/school and you can tell he/she is stressed out. You try to comfort him/her but it doesn't seem to work. In fact, instead of calming down, your partner snaps at you and says, “leave me alone, you never make me feel better anyway.” The next day, your partner seeks you out and apologizes.

	<i>Definitely No</i>		<i>Maybe</i>			<i>Definitely</i>	
<i>Yes</i>							
Would you feel forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Would you express forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IF you have had similar experiences in your relationship, how forgiving were you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Though you've had a number of discussions about your partner's bad habit of leaving dirty dishes scattered around the family room, your partner continues to leave dishes in there. You have one last discussion about the issue and finally feel convinced that your partner will change the habit – he or she promises not to do it anymore. Nevertheless, the next day, you watch as your partner eats a messy bowl of ice cream, gets up, and leaves the house to go run some errands.

	<i>Definitely No</i>		<i>Maybe</i>			<i>Definitely</i>	
<i>Yes</i>							
Would you feel forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Would you express forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IF you have had similar experiences in your relationship, how forgiving were you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This month the two of you are particularly low on cash. If you do not spend ANY extra money, you will be able to barely scrape by. You stress this point to your partner who acknowledges the situation and promises not to spend any extra money. The next day, your partner comes home with a new CD.

	<i>Definitely No</i>		<i>Maybe</i>			<i>Definitely</i>	
<i>Yes</i>							
Would you feel forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Would you express forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IF you have had similar experiences in your relationship, how forgiving were you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Your partner goes out of town on a business trip. When he or she returns you can smell someone else's perfume/cologne on his/her clothing. You inquire about the scent but your partner says he/she has no clue about the source of the scent. The next day you find the name and phone number of an opposite sexed person in your partner's suitcase. You confront your partner who comes clean and says that he or she met someone during the business trip. Your partner tells you that he/she accepted the person's invitation to go dancing at a club with him/her. Your partner assures you that he/she did not have an affair, but acknowledges that

the other person made some not-so-subtle sexual advances while they danced. Your partner then asks for your forgiveness for the lying and the dancing.

	<i>Definitely No</i>		<i>Maybe</i>		<i>Definitely</i>
<i>Yes</i>					
Would you feel forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5
Would you express forgiveness?	1	2	3	4	5
IF you have had similar experiences in your relationship, how forgiving were you?	1	2	3	4	5

SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1=strongly disagree through 7 = strongly agree:

I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I feel that I have a number of good qualities

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly Agree</i>

All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I am able to do things as well as most other people

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I feel I do not have much to be proud of

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly Agree</i>

I take a positive attitude toward myself

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Strongly Disagree
Agree

Strongly

On the whole, I am satisfied with myself

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>						

I wish I could have more respect for myself

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>						

I certainly feel useless at times

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>						

At times I think I am no good at all

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>						

PERSONALITY TRAIT SCALE

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1 (Strongly disagree)- 7 (Strongly agree):

I am the life of the party

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>						

I sympathize with others' feelings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>						<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>						

I get chores done right away

Strongly Disagree
Agree

Strongly

For the following six questions, spirituality is defined as one's relationship to God, or whatever you perceive to be Ultimate Transcendence.

The questions use a sentence completion format to measure various attributes associated with spirituality. An incomplete sentence fragment is provided, followed directly below by two phrases that are linked to a scale ranging from 0 to 10.

Please circle the number along the continuum that best reflects your initial feeling.

a). In terms of the questions I have about life, my spirituality answers:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No Questions									Absolutely All My Questions	

b). Growing spiritually is:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
More important than anything else in my life								Of No Importance		

c). When I am faced with an important decision, my spirituality:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Plays Absolutely No Role									Is always the Over-riding Consideration	

d). Spirituality is:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The Master Motive of Life My Life, Directing Every Other Aspect Of My Life									Not Part of My	

e). When I think of the things that help me to grow and mature as a person, my spirituality:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Has No Effect Most on my Personal								Is Absolutely the Important Factor in		

Growth

Personal Growth

f). My spiritual beliefs affect:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Absolutely Every									No Aspect of	
Aspect of My Life									My Life	

Thank you for your participation in this part of our study. If you would be interested in participating in an interview surrounding the topic of forgiveness within relationships, please place your name and contact information below. Those who are chosen to complete an interview will receive a twenty dollar gift certificate to a restaurant for their time and participation. Again, due to the nature of the study, if both you and your partner give contact information, you will be more likely to be selected for an interview.

Name:

Contact Information (E-mail and/or phone number):

APENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

Interview Informed Consent

Forgive & Forget? Partner's attitudes towards forgiveness in the case of multiple similar offenses

Principal Investigator: Erika DeSchiffart

Information and Purpose: The interview for which you are being asked to participate in is a part of a research study that is focused on examining the perspectives of individuals who have experienced forgiveness and reconciliation in the face multiple offenses of a similar nature. The researcher is interested in the factors that keep persons motivated to offer forgiveness and to not re-offend their partner after being forgiven. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding under what conditions forgiveness is the most helpful, and of the “offender’s” perspective in the face of forgiveness.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately one hour. If you require more time you may ask for another thirty minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about your experiences concerning forgiveness. You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study, and you will still receive ten dollars in compensation. If you are interested in reviewing the copy of your transcript, it will be sent to you by e-mail. Your e-mail address will not be disclosed to anyone except the principal researcher, and the transcript will be sent to you via a secure University of Ottawa account.

Benefits and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information to the therapeutic community about the possible benefits and risks of forgiveness, as well as furthering understanding of peoples’ perspective on receiving and giving forgiveness. This will allow for perhaps a more effective therapeutic approach. These topics can be distressing for some and may cause some psychological discomfort. If you at any time wish to continue exploring your experiences with a registered therapist, please contact the above e-mail. You will be granted one free session of counselling through the Saint Paul University counselling centre. The research has been carefully reviewed and approved by the Saint Paul University’s Research Ethics Review Committee.

Confidentiality: The interview will be tape recorded; however, your name will not be recorded on the tape. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All of your information and interview responses will be kept completely confidential. Any quotes that will be used will not have any identifying information, and will be used only to support relevant themes and patterns.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher Erika DeSchiffart or her supervisor Dr. Martin Rovers. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact: Research Ethics Board, Saint Paul University, recherche-research@ustpaul.ca, 613-236-1393 ext. 2312.

By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time.

Signature _____ Date _____
Signature of the researcher _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Question: What is the experience of couples whose relationship includes multiple, similar offenses?

THEME 1: Benefits of forgiveness	SUBTHEME 1: Benefits to Self	If we don't forgive it is like the cancer of our soul.	If you have to harbour resentment it gets so heavy and you are just so angry all the time.	It makes me a better person to forgive because my reaction to other non-related instances is better.		
	SUBTHEME 2: Benefits to the relationship	"If I am lording something over my husband he knows that, my attitude changes towards him, I'm short with him.	So focusing on the one thing and not holding onto the other offense.	It would really mess up my life; it would make my day pretty hard. If I don't do the laundry then he won't fold it...a lot of partnership stuff		
	SUBTHEME 3: Forgiveness means forgetting.	Forgetting has always been a consistent thing. If I say I forgive than I forget about it. Except if that person reminds me but otherwise...when I say I forgive its forgotten.	So not holding it in memory, not holding it at later date so I can hold it against him.	Before we got married we had drama...and I would run away and leave him. Later on I had a girlfriend who asked for advice, we were married at the time, and I told her that her current boyfriend shouldn't be treating her like that and that she should leave if he did not change. Her		

				<p>reaction to me was that you have obviously forgotten all the drama you went through before you got married. So ya, I married him. So I have to forget. Otherwise every day I'll be thinking, he did this, he did that.</p>		
	<p>SUBTHEME 3: Respect for self and other</p>	<p>I wouldn't be with someone unless I thought they were totally awesome and they thought I was totally awesome. And they would have to think that they were totally awesome, and know that I am pretty wicked too.</p>	<p>We both think highly of ourselves and each other so I don't need to put up with that behaviour [punishing the partner for a long time i.e. stonewalling].</p>			
<p>THEME 2: Spirituality</p>	<p>It is an act of obedience to God to clear things up with me and God..I have to make sure I forgive. ..I have to expect that the other person will do it again, hope that they will not ,</p>	<p>It has religious overtones for me...it is not just like saying oh forget it...It is accepting that it is human nature and that you aren't going to be mad about it.</p>	<p>I feel I need to be clean hearted during the worship service. Does that offense happen often? Yes... You have to expect that the behavior will keep on going but have hope that God will change their heart</p>	<p>And you know..as I say I take alot. And I thank God for the fact that I am Catholic and I practice as much as possible...confession, counselling that comes with that helps a lot. I'd rather leave that to the Lord.</p>	<p>I think also that when I try to forgive I also to forgive with the expectation that there might never be a change in behaviour but I hold onto the hope that there will be.</p>	

	and that it part of my faith grounding is that I know God can work miracles in anybody and change all kinds of behavior.					
THEME 3: Empathy for their partner	I try to understand where he is at. It is easier with your partner than a stranger, you try to understand what is going on with him and remember his own spiritual journey and if his behavior is offensive to me he probably knows it.	I know him well enough to know where he is coming from...my husband is not just a perpetrator...	It is reminding yourself that we are all of a broken nature...I should not forget that he is human, just like any other person.	Forgiveness for me is really letting go not secretly being upset...people are human, they mess up...that was a mess up. Move along no one is perfect.	We all make mistakes, you have to extend empathy to the other person...you should be kinder to your husband than your friends because it is really easy to take someone you live with for granted...be extra nice to your spouse, they must be awesome because you married them.	
THEME 4: Difference between the severity of an offense, using other coping	My husband is always late, but is that enough to actively need to forgive? That is not a deep	What, do I have to forgive him because he doesn't put his socks in the laundry?	So it is always that same stuff that bugs you about your partner. Sometimes I bring it up but mostly I let the little stuff go.	You just have to let them go...pain, guilt, annoyance just get you to change something. That is a good impetus to	Like it is not important enough to keep fighting about it - is it really that important?	I expect him to change in that way to help him not the relationship, but I don't

<p>strategies</p>	<p>offense...I kind of have other coping mechanisms now...like I told him that we needed to be here at 9.</p>		<p>At least they are in the sink? At least he isn't a slob...which is more effort getting him to put his dishes in the dishwasher or putting them there myself?</p>	<p>change how you are interacting...but for things you cannot change how much happier will I be though if I let go of that annoyance. Why bother carrying all that angst? It is part of acceptance. It all depends on the behavior...I accept minor things.</p>		<p>expect him to get over every little thing that he does. I guess it depends on the situation. Certain things, like being clean, are easier than others.</p>
	<p>SUBTHEME 1: Important to always feel that there is a choice with the more severe offenses</p>	<p>If he cheats on me when we are married, I can choose to stay or leave...There is always a choice. If he was hitting me, I make a choice.</p>	<p>If I know that person is going to hurt me then I will not keep in that relationship. If they will be of hurt to me I let that person go.</p>	<p>Forgiveness is a choice because [if not] then it's a power play, isn't it?</p>		
	<p>SUBTHEME 2: Difference between forgiveness and reconciliation:</p>	<p>Yes...if you are going to stay in a relationship where there is forgiveness...the reconciliation is the process. Are the actions going to change? Is it going to escalate next time? All that stuff...that is the reconciliation process. Forgiveness is my work. To reconcile</p>	<p>To tell you the truth you can forgive someone...and then let them be...so the chance of them re-offending me is slim.</p>			

		that is couple work and a process he needs to be involved in				
THEME 5: Context Surrounding the Offense	SUBTHEME 1: Intentionality and attempts to change It is not like it is something done intentionally..	It's also realizing that the person isn't necessarily doing it on purpose. That's a big thing for me...why are you doing that?	I have a hard time forgiving him for that kind of stuff when its constant. When it is small or unintentional that that...which happens every couples of days...then usually we are pretty good at that stuff.	Over time it would be harder...if there was no discussion or attempt to change...that would be really hard.	I really don't feel that I have to guard myself with him. I feel safe with him. I know he didn't do it on purpose...so why would I stay mad?	You hope that the person has learned from that mistake and will not do it again...in case that happens again you see the attempts made to not do it again.
	SUBTHEME 2: The offending partner shows remorse	The pain that I think I felt, I think my husband felt more than that. It goes against his moral...not that he needed to be punished...but he felt that.	One thing I have noticed and tried to be consistent with is that the word sorry is not far from my mouth...If I am at fault, I'm sorry.	I definitely apologized up and down, almost more than I felt.		
THEME 6: It is not an either or situation, there are consequences as well as forgiveness.	All of the sudden silence plays a role...after I'm hurt maybe we will talk once in two days...even if you don't get	When it gets to that point where I am full...that is when I go into my shell. At times she does some things and I let it go...but when it gets to there I go quiet.	After a certain point you say I told you how many times? Sometimes I feel I have to get mad at him until it clicks.	He is still forgiving me because I am working on it...if I wasn't working on it, it wouldn't be the same situation.	Obviously if you forgive someone and there are no repercussions they would do it again.	I've told him before so it isn't like I am being a martyr. I've told him before and he hasn't done it then

	the message you clearly get it.					sometimes it is just easier to do it myself. Just forgiving as you go along.
	SUBTHEME 1: The big offenses are always discussed	So we put it off until we were both calmer and then we could discuss it.	Usually we try to talk about it as soon as it happens rather than waiting to bring it up much later...cause if you bring it up later you might now remember the external circumstances. So it is figuring out that...communicating...	After an hour of him being mad, and I was being very apologetic, he calmed down enough to ask me why and I began to explain to him how I felt ignored and I started bawling...like oh my God. So ya, he knew he had been taking me for granted...and I was like you can't do that. I'm not high maintenance but I'm not low maintenance either. So we kinda talked about it for a few days and eventually it was fine.	We have set up ways in which we need to communicate...she knows when to raise up issues. We cannot both be sick, poor, mad; angry...we cannot both be unhappy. So we know when to bring things up.	If he comes to me and says he is sorry I usually will talk it out...if I go to him and apologize there isn't much discussion.

Question: What motivates participants to avoid re-offending their partner? What do they experience in the face of forgiveness?

<p>THEME 1: Harm to Partner</p>	<p>I think knowing that I am hurting him stops me from re-offending.</p>	<p>The most important thing is that she is happy. If she is happy the house is happy.</p>	<p>Do unto others what you would have them do unto you...I respect her and when you say you respect someone... you don't want to do that again.</p>	<p>I guess if I thought I could get away with doing it for another couple months and only one weekend of fighting would it be worth it? No..his trust would be broken, and at that point he would either have to be ok with me doing that...or he would have to trust me to not do it again. And how do you fix trust once it has been broken like that?</p>		
	<p>SUBTHEME 1: The effect that re-offending will have on the relationship</p>	<p>When I hurt him...and it happens often...then do I say sorry? Ya...then do I from there, I don't</p>				

		know, the relationship stops getting pressed down...revitalized.				
THEME 2: The Consequences from the offense	I also don't want him to be angry...and I don't want to deal with all the drama. First of all I don't want to hurt him, but I also don't want the consequences.	My peace is the essential...I love my peace. If my peace is taken away from me, I would rather walk away from that thing.	I'm motivated [to not re-offend] by not disappointing him...we rarely disappoint one another it is not a pattern in our relationship.	Oh god...I would never hear the end of it. There were very few repercussions before...now he would make me quit videogames, or start snooping through my stuff...this and the emotional fallout...he would be really hurt I think.	I think it is my own disappointment in myself...I feel like I should be able to do this...he will express his frustration but he won't be like until you do this I am going to be really angry at you.	
	SUBTHEME 1: Forgiveness aids in the reconciliation process	The consequences change my behavior...but he forgiving me quickly motivates me to be in relationship with him. That is what gives me the community feeling with him. The forgiveness is the base of how we interact with	He is just a little less abrasive than me but that has been a few times where he has hurt me and I pull him aside after...and then he apologizes and then that is it. That is part of the strength of our marriage is that we deal with something and			

		each other...getting back to what we are for each other and towards each other is really what is more important to me. Like the punishment is surface and the forgiveness is the foundational.	move on. None of that stupid shit about cold shoulders or ignoring.			
--	--	--	---	--	--	--